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After watching the Olympic boxing for over a week at the 2004 Summer Games, I feel somewhat enlightened on the current state of boxing. I believe the Olympics have demonstrated why we see technically flawed fighters entering the professional ranks.

As a result of the computer scoring system used in the Olympics, the sport of boxing has become fencing. Everything is based on glove touches to the head and face. Ring generalship, defense, body punching, and power are completely ignored. For fighters to be awarded points in the Olympics, they must land a punch and have three of the five judges press the red or blue button representing them within one second. Under this current system, only punches, or should I say touches, to the head and face seem to be counted.

This is something that I've evidenced from all the coverage I've watched, and I've watched just about all that has been televised. There can be no doubt that the judges scoring the bouts are looking at one thing, the touches with the white portion of the boxing glove. I've seen fighters land several hooks and jabs to the stomach and chest and not a single point registered. I've also noticed that combinations are usually only awarded a single point. This system is so tilted towards movers and runners who just get in and get it out, that I must admit that it's becoming hard to watch, at least for me. Defense and making an opponent miss aren’t rewarded or stressed. And clean, hard effective punches count the same as a graze or a touch.

Infighting seems to be almost frowned upon. I know it's amateur boxing and there are only four rounds, which does somewhat nullify a good infighter and body attack. However, infighting should be more stressed than it is. Fundamentals are an absolute in Boxing 101, which is what the Amateurs/Olympics should be all about. Shouldn't this be the breeding ground for tomorrow’s pros? Like College Football is for the NFL or Double and Triple A is for Baseball.

I believe this is why we have so many fighters in professional boxing who are flawed fundamentally. Many of today's pros, even at the world class level, lack rudimentary boxing basics. It's rare today to see pros go to the body and fight inside. Basics such as hands held up and chin down aren't part of the structure of many of today's top pros. Double and triple jabbing is also a lost art. It's usually a jab followed by a right hand, sometimes followed by a hook—which is as basic as it gets.

Fighters today don't hook off their jab to the body or head, in order to set up their right hand and finishing punches. Head and shoulder feints are also a lost art. The fighters who use head and shoulder feints in professional boxing today can be counted on one hand. Another thing lacking is basic defense. Today, fighters either use their legs to move away from punches or their opponent just misses. Blocking and smothering punches with the gloves and arms is nonexistent. And forget about seeing a fighter stepping inside wide, looping punches and countering, because it just doesn't happen.

Maybe I'm too much of a cynic. It's just that I'd like to see fighters coming out of the amateur

and Olympic ranks with a core of boxing basics. I can't help but think that because of the way the amateur scoring system is structured, it helps younger fighters form bad habits. These are the type flaws that don't show up until they move up in the pro ranks. That's why we see many of today's top amateurs and Olympians getting upset and knocked off in the second year of their pro career, or in their 11th or 12th fight. Most of the time when this has happened, it wasn't the case of the other fighter being more skilled or better. It was just a case of him having better boxing basics.

In my opinion, the scoring system now used at the top amateur boxing tournaments throughout the world has held back and stagnated the growth of the young fighters turning pro. Basics are something that need to be embedded in a fighter's head early and often in their career. Once they start getting by on talent or learn how to beat the system used at the amateur level, they think they've arrived and there is nothing they can be taught. By the time they are pros with 10 or 15 fights under their belt, it's almost too late for them to learn or to even accept that they have to continue to learn and expand their game.

One last note on the Olympic Boxing at the 2004 Games

I said this last week, and it's even further seared in my mind. The judges are so biased towards the Cuban fighters it's sickening. They are very good, but they get the benefit of every single close call regarding the scoring of their fights.