Written by Frank Lotierzo
Sunday, 29 August 2004 18:00

This may be a little late, but as they say, better late than never. After watching the boxing competition at the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, I think there is only one style to map out for an Olympic fighter. This is based solely off of the observations that I've made during the bouts I've watched, and I've watched just about all of them. The strategy I'm suggesting is what I see as the only way to neutralize the abysmal computer scoring and the blind, biased, or inept judges who push the computer buttons during the bouts.

Before divulging my fight strategy—believe me it's not Rocket Science—let me state a couple core beliefs I have regarding the fundamentals observed during the Olympic boxing tournament. First, I don't care what anyone says, punches landed to the body and upper torso are usually never scored by the judges. I've heard some dispute this saying they have seen body punches counted. Well, maybe I need my eyes checked, but I doubt it. I've watched just about every fight during these Games, and I can count on one hand how many blows to the body I've seen counted as points. To me, if anyone says they believe clean body punching is awarded points consistently, I question their eyesight or insight—because it just doesn't exist.

Secondly, just as the body punching is overlooked and ignored, so are set-up and finishing punches, like uppercuts and hooks. Again, I'm firm in this observation. Hooks and uppercuts are seldom awarded points by the Olympic judges. In fact, I think it's a waste of energy to instruct any Olympic fighter to throw an uppercut or hook to the body, unless maybe you're a Cuban fighter.

Another glaring deficiency in the scoring during these Games is that combination punches only count as a single point. Maybe the judges have slow fingers or they just don't like clean combination punching. The fact is a fighter can land two or three consecutive punches and usually only earns a single point an overwhelming majority of the time. Remember, in the Olympics, power punches don't count any more than a jab. Hooks and uppercuts are power punches, and take a lot out of a fighter to throw them. Under the current system, hooks and uppercuts have been virtually rendered useless. The other glaring thing I've noticed is that defense and making an opponent miss is not even acknowledged.

As an intent observer of the 2004 Olympic boxing tournament, I've come to the above conclusions. I feel so strongly about them that I would go as far as saying that they are much more than just tendencies. They are the rule in how these Olympic fights are viewed and scored. I've watched too much of it to believe or accept that I've misinterpreted what the system merits.

The style that I believe would be most effective and was the most consistent in the scoring is very basic and vanilla. That is a style that is nothing more than throwing one-twos while getting in and out. It's apparent that the judges like light touches with jabs and crosses. I would advise my fighter to throw one-twos, (jab-cross) getting in and out. Nothing but clean straight punches shot from mid range. I would also instruct him to just use basic defense after letting his punches

go. After punching, he should move away to one side or the other with his hands up and his elbows close to his body. If he does this, he's securing himself from being countered cleanly on the way out. As long as when he retreats he doesn't go straight back, he's shrinking the odds of his opponent being able to match his scores.

Since defense, body punching, combinations, and power punches, (hooks & uppercuts) aren't rewarded, I would advise my fighter to stick to boxing basics. Defense takes energy, throwing power punches and combinations saps energy, and punching to the body puts fighters in range to be hit and countered. Why waste a fighter’s energy using those fundamentals and tactics if they are overlooked and not rewarded?

Virtually all the fighters that advanced into the medal rounds used this style—a stand up style, throwing straight jabs and crosses while keeping their chin down and their hands up and elbows in. This is not complicated boxing, it's Boxing 101.

If Olympic boxing is the pinnacle of amateur boxing, then the fighters should fight like amateurs, using nothing more than straight jabs and one-twos, since they are most often rewarded. Just make sure the fighters you bring to this tournament have this rudimentary style down pat.