

Reformists are everywhere in the world of sports. The issues are always the same: Ways to play, run and pay a sport better.

Boxing is not without its reformists. Much like baseball's steroid controversy that sat high on the congressional docket, the fight game is raising motions and approvals in the senate. It's a push for a federal boxing commission – the first and only of its kind in professional sports.

Malcolm Garrett will agree boxing has its troubles. The Indiana-based trainer, manager and promoter stands shoulder to shoulder with most of the active boxing world in expressing his disgust at the thought of their sport falling into the hands of some political chump who has never stepped into the ring.

What audacity – teetering on brash insanity – for anyone on Capitol Hill to think they know better than those who've sealed the cuts, taken the punches or tried to set up an undercard.

Garrett wants to restore boxing's credibility – and he wants it without government interference. Oddly, he hopes to repair this business of bruising with something reformists have claimed has done most of the bruising.

He wants another set of letters – his own – in the alphabet soup of boxing.

Garrett's intention isn't to get his cut of the money or dilute the championship belt ranks. He just wants his organization to be the one to end all others – legitimately.

To do that, it all comes down to the ratings and how to acquire them. While every other organization does its ratings inside, Garrett wants an organization that leaves it to an outside entity: the boxing writers.

It's a system – although flawed to an extent – that has worked for collegiate sports, which depend on the *Associated Press* and *USA Today* polls to sort through the plethora of basketball and football teams each week.

"I think it would be received a lot better than people would think," Garrett said. "The only downside is, if you do things correctly and you have only one organization, it puts a lot of champions out of work."

Garrett hopes to enlist the top 50 or 60 boxing writers in the world to help rate fighters monthly. *The Ring* magazine has rated fighters for years, but without any true effect on the ratings that create contenders.

"*USA Today* ... they do a good job," Garrett said. "I don't always agree, but they do a good

job.”

One or two writers could vote a local bum or gym rat as the No. 1 contender in Paducah, Kentucky. While it's worrisome, it bears the likelihood of Bloomington, Indiana writers voting the hapless Hoosiers all the way to the top of the Division I college football polls.

Garrett will assure anyone, the law of averages makes this bum proof.

The point of this entire exercise is to kill the corruption, or merely scale it down to a non-factor in the scheme of champions and contenders. It's to take away the money speak between that allows organizations and promoters to put in “their guy” as the No. 1 contender, even if he isn't.

“I could get you ranked if I had enough money,” Garrett said.

Boxing has become too political for his liking. He believes the political structure reaches the referees, who work directly for the organization. They guide the fight for the eventual result of the organization's man coming out on top. As a reformist, one would have to expect him to espouse some conspiracy theories based on his own perception.

“[Organizations] are all corrupt, so we should eliminate them,” Garrett said. “If it's not political, why should they care who is No. 1?”

The writers could make a difference in such an organization. Garrett isn't the first to cry corruption on the part of the sanctioning bodies or their ratings. The beat writers – some of which may be susceptible to corruption, but in small doses – could for once end the chatter of political malfeasance.

But with this being Garrett's organization, which he hopes to launch by the end of 2005 or the beginning of 2006, it still leaves ethical questions of his influence. After all, he claims to have wrapped up \$100,000 in administrative costs to get the cogs rolling in this crusade.

He can easily quell those concerns by stepping aside, and that's what he's got in mind.

“I don't want to run this organization,” he said.

Garrett is much happier in the thick of the fight game most people can identify. He's got younger prospects such as featherweight Ricky Benavides he wants to train all the way to the top. He's on call at the fights to help out other corners with the taping and general consultation.

The guy hardly ever wears anything else but blue jeans and a t-shirt. That's proof enough he has no administrative aspirations.

But that doesn't diminish the care and hope he has for bringing boxing out of its decline and back into the mainstream.

“For God's sake, hockey has more credibility, and nobody watches that,” he said.

## Malcolm Garrett's Boxing Org

Written by Jesse K. Cox

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If Garrett's project becomes reality, it's assured everybody will be watching.