

How To Better Boxing: A Few Even Rounds Are Acceptable

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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Boxing judges must be allowed to score even rounds. The outcome of close fights because of the scoring and the decision reached by the three judges is always controversial. Scoring even rounds would help rid the possibility of one fighter getting the edge in all the questionable rounds. I'm tired of seeing a fighter have his hand raised via decision because he threw a couple jabs that missed at the close of a couple rounds during the bout and swayed the judges, thus earning him the nod.

Even rounds have been a part of boxing since the adoption of the Marquis of Queensberry rules and scoring them makes all the sense in the world. Today boxing judges are forced to pick a winner in every round regardless of how close it is. I think this is utterly ridiculous. Sometimes there are rounds in which neither fighter did enough to merit it. Often this is the case during the first or second round of a big fight when both fighters are tentative and trying to get a read on their opponent.

When two world-class championship caliber fighters are facing each other and are in top shape, it is almost impossible not to have one or two rounds in which neither fighter clearly had the advantage over the other. Why must judges be forced to pick a winner? All this does is tilt the fight in favor of one of the fighters who really might not have deserved the benefit of the doubt.

If judges scored even rounds, it would make the rounds that were clear stand out more. When a judge awards a round to a fighter that he had to split hairs over, he's committing a grave injustice to the loser. How do we know that he's not shading it towards the fighter he likes better? That's how you get lopsided decisions. If a judge gives all the questionable rounds to the same fighter, then it's easy to see how these decisions turn into such a farce. Scoring a few rounds even is not the crime some try to make it out to be and prevents one fighter from gaining an undeserved advantage over the other.

Some worry that if judges are given the latitude to score even rounds they'll abuse it and become lazy and won't make a decision. Which is of course a possibility. The fight often exhibited as the reason why even rounds must not be a part of the scoring system is the first bout between Roberto Duran and Sugar Ray Leonard. In that fight one of the judges scored it 3-2-10 in rounds for Duran. However, that's an extreme case and if I were the boxing czar, he would've proven to me that if he could only award Duran three or Leonard just two of the 15 rounds they fought, he's probably in the wrong line of work.

The answer to judges who abuse scoring even rounds is simple, let it be known they're being monitored and won't work if they're too liberal in scoring them. Again, most of the time there's a good case for one fighter earning the round over the other. The even round is only for when you literally have to split hairs deciding who won it. Judges should know how to score fights, and, if they do, there's seldom going to be a problem with too many even rounds.

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When I score fights I score even rounds and usually have one or two of them in my final score. I don't want to hear the crap that I have to make a decision, or I must revert to ring-generalship, or defense. The fact is, if there is no clean punching or effective aggression being exhibited, then it's splitting hairs deciding who gets the round. I don't think fights should be awarded for split hairs.

I have a rule that I force myself to follow when scoring a fight. If I haven't decided who should be awarded the round by the start of the next round, I score it even. I think even rounds are self-evident. I look at it this way, if I'm not decisive on whose round it is after watching it for three minutes and thinking it over during the minute in-between rounds, then to me scoring it even is a fair call.

With all that being said, not being allowed to score even rounds is just part of the problem in scoring fights. However, I believe that even rounds exist and are a legitimate part of the boxing scoring system. Giving the judges another tool to render a fair and just decision can only help boxing. If by chance you don't like the concept of judges being allowed to score a few rounds even, don't worry because it'll never happen, simply because it makes sense.

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