Anyone can have a bad night but there is a difference between bad biorhythms and incompetence. Incompetence should not be rewarded and Saturday night Russell Mora proved he is incompetent.

Mora stepped into a Las Vegas boxing ring that night with but two jobs. He was there to enforce the rules and to protect two fighters, Joseph Agbeko and Abner Mares. He did neither.

Were this the first time Mora was charged with such a responsibility and failed to adequately carry it out perhaps he could be excused… but it is not. He is the same referee who on Feb. 19th allowed Fernando Montiel to fight on against hard punching Nonito Donaire when he was

completely defenseless after being dropped in the second round. Montiel's legs lifted him but his mind remained on the floor, yet Mora allowed him to take two more crushing blows that led to an unnecessary beating, but fortunately nothing worse. No thanks to Mora.

Saturday Mora very likely cost Agbeko the IBF bantamweight title and the championship of SHOWTIME's bantamweight tournament because he is either blind or had no understanding of how to do his job. Mora missed more than a dozen low blows landed by Mares, most of them not borderline skirmishes along boxing's DMZ but shots well south of the belt line.

Five times he warned Mares to stop, which would indicate he at least saw some of them. Not once did he deduct a point. How many warnings do you get when you persist in throwing one of the sport's most debilitating punches? That is why it's banned in the first place.

Yet Mora kept acknowledging Mares' foul actions like an indulgent parent while refusing to penalize him for them. Finally, in the 11th round, Agbeko could take it no longer. When Mora hit him low again he went to his knees and Mora stepped in…and called it a knockdown! That resulted in the second 10-8 round for Mares in a fight so close Agbeko lost by majority decision.

"I hit him on the belt and the ref chose to give him a count,'' Mares said innocently. "I agreed with him.''

I'll bet he did but Agbeko had another opinion.

"I felt as though I was fighting two opponents in the ring,'' Agbeko said after the fight, "Abner Mares and the referee. He allowed Mares to hit me low repeatedly. I don't know why these things happened to me. I felt the ref was against me from the start. All I wanted was a fair fight.''

Agbeko had a right to expect that and he didn't get it. There are few criticisms worse about a referee than that he be judged to have acted against one fighter to the unfair betterment of another. It is said far more often than it happened but Saturday night it couldn't be said enough because Agbeko was fighting two people – Mares and the incompetence of Mora.

Since at some point one has to pass a physical and an eye exam to be licensed by the Nevada State Athletic Commission to serve as a referee, one can eliminate blindness as part of the problem with Mora. That leaves us only with corruption or incompetence. One is unconscionable and the other a dangerous attribute inside a boxing ring. I have no reason to think anything but incompetence was the issue with Mora, and where does that leave us?

It leaves us with a guy we should not see again officiating a boxing match anytime soon.

Perhaps Mora is a fine referee of undercard fights (although I would tend to doubt it). Perhaps it's just the pressure of big fights that turns him into someone incapable of either enforcing the Marquess of Queensberry rules or making common sense decisions.

Whatever the reason for his performance Saturday night or in the Donaire-Montiel fight, it doesn't matter. His job is far too important to the boxers who are risking their lives to allow him back into the ring under the bright lights.

Now perhaps, as we suggest, he does a better job in boxing's smaller venues. Although that seems unlikely because bad judgment under stress is bad judgment regardless of the size of the event that is for the Nevada Commission and its executive director, Keith Kizer, to determine. What should not be debated is his lack of fitness to be in the ring again in a fight between any of the sport's fastest and most dangerous protagonists.

Now some will suggest – and rightfully so – that Agbeko should have taken things into his own hands and administered some frontier justice long before Mares (22-0-1, 13 KO) had done the best ball striking since Tiger Woods was healthy.

He should have done what a then young Ricky Hatton did after fading champion Kosta Tszyu tried to save his junior welterweight title by slamming Hatton in the cup. When the referee did nothing, Hatton came back and returned fire, sending Tszyu slumping to the canvas. The fight went on and Tszyu never again strayed below the acceptable line of combat.

But the fact that Agebeko (28-3, 22 KO) chose not to retaliate does not let Russell Mora off the hook. In the heat of the moment anyone can miss a low blow, especially one on the borderline between good and evil. He might even miss two. But 15?

Mares' promoter, Oscar De La Hoya, claimed they were all on the belt line. No wonder he retired. He can't see any more either. Well, the only guys who could miss 15 low blows would be the other guy's promoter (in this case the Golden Boy), Mr. Magoo or Russell Mora.

None of them should be refereeing a prize fight again any time soon.