Written by Joe Dwyer
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In the mind of the average boxing fan many things plague the sweet science, not the least of which is the officiating which, in the opinion of many, appears either biased or incompetent or both. The mission of IPRO is to raise officiating to the level of other sports.

The International Professional Ring Officials (IPRO) is an organization of more than two hundred of the nation's most respected Referees and Judges. It was created in 2001 by Barry Druxman, a referee/judge in Bellevue Washington, who recognized the need for greater training and dialogue among world rated officials The Executive Board consists of Druxman as President, Vice-President Joe Dwyer, (Judge, New York), Secretary/Treasurer, Glen Hamada (Judge, Washington), Dr Margaret Goodman, (Medical Director, Nevada) and Legal Advisor, Alan Krebs, (Attorney/Judge, Washington).

The organization provides boxing officials the opportunity to improve their officiating skills at the annual convention/training camp.

This year's convention was held at the Orleans Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada on July 14-15. The opening session for referees was hosted by Joe "I'm Fair but Firm" Cortez at his home in Las Vegas In a regulation sized ring within his fully equipped gymnasium built as an attachment to the house, Cortez went through the mechanics to be used in officiating a bout relating to hand and voice commands used in maintaining proper control of the action within the ring. Young boxers performing in the ring aided the instructor. In addition to Cortez, former world-class ref and current Director of the New Jersey Athletic Commission, Larry Hazzard, displayed his prowess in the squared circle. Robert Byrd and Vic Drakulich, two of Nevada's premier referees also gave instructions on their style of officiating. It was an enlightening experience for the over eighty members who attended.

Dr. Margaret Goodman explained the telltale signs that boxers will exhibit resulting from head trauma which will be an indication that the bout must be stopped. Further explanation was given relative to the significance of the type of lacerations sustained by fighters, the location of the cut (possible damage to optic nerve, etc.), rather than amount of bleeding being the criteria for stoppage.

Day two was dedicated to the judging segment of the training session, with the panel consisting of Judges Chuck Giampa and Paul Smith of Nevada, and Joe Dwyer of New York, who hosted a lively rap session on the various means that they utilize in maintaining complete attention on the action within the ring, as well as the pitfalls to be avoided so as not to allow distractions to alter their concentration. (Such as obstructed view by photographers, noise, etc.) All in attendance were in agreement that ongoing training seminars are necessary to keep at the top of one's game. Anything less deprives the boxers of their just due.

The current state of boxing mandates that officials be at their very best in providing fair, accurate, and honest decisions in boxing contests. More than ever before, the limited number of

televised boxing shows places a greater demand on the modern day fighter. For a young upcoming fighter to suffer a loss on his/her record as a result of a poorly officiated match is devastating to that person's career. In times past, many of the best boxers and champions had far from unblemished ring records and were able to spring back from a loss. That is not the case today.

Boxers seeking to make an appearance on the premier networks (HBO, Showtime) rarely get such an opportunity if they have less then an undefeated record. The proper training, confidence, and integrity of those of us privileged to officiate will be the answer to some young person attaining their dream. I'm sure that in doing our part they will do theirs.

In addition to IPRO many of the major Sanctioning Organizations (WBC, WBA, WBO and IBF) as well as select State Commissions conduct training seminars. The important thing is that ring officials attend one or more of these sessions to improve their skills. The IPRO Training Team is available to all organizations for the purpose of conducting seminars.

Membership in IPRO is open to all professional licensed referees, judges, inspectors and Commissioners. For further info go to IproOfficials.com or call (425) 867-5474.

We officials owe it to the game.