

NABF'S VERSION OF OPEN SCORING IS NOT WHAT WE HAD IN MIND

Written by Charles Jay
Sunday, 30 June 2002 18:00

When I was a kid doing PR work for a promoter many years ago, I distinctly remember one instance where, at the end of a very close battle involving one of our fighters, I glanced over the shoulder of one of the Florida commission's supervisors so I could see the judges' scores. I then relayed the information about the final decision up to the ring, by virtue of a "thumbs-up" to one of our fighter's cornermen.

One of the self-important commission members, who was sitting around doing very little except look self-important (you know the type) caught what I was doing; he gave me a scowl and told me in no uncertain terms that it was not a very nice thing for me to do.

Okay - I eventually repaid his indignation somewhere down the road, when I refused to give him the 20 or so tickets he tried to extort out of us for every show, but that's beside the point.

The point IS - sure it was sneaky on my part, but I did it AFTER the fight was over. And even if it weren't, you can hardly blame a guy for trying to get a little edge for the fighter he's working with.

In

Chapter 10 of this series

, I mentioned that my idea for open scoring would be for both corners to be apprised of the judges' scores as the fight progressed, because I think it can be argued that they are entitled to that kind of information.

Of course, I didn't say that only ONE corner should have the info, and that it could, or should, be parceled out to a selected corner by an OFFICIAL IN CHARGE.

But now we have before us something that truly boggles the mind - a situation where a high-ranking official of a sanctioning body may have been giving out the judges' scores, at a moment when it was especially critical, to one - and ONLY one - of the combatants in a title fight his organization was sanctioning.

A source who was formerly in the camp of Teddy Reid, currently the NABF's welterweight champion, has told TOTAL ACTION that Sam Macias, the chairman of the NABF's championship committee, communicated the scores on the judge's cards to Reid's promoter, Arthur Pelullo (of Banner Promotions), during a July 21, 2000 fight between Reid and Golden Johnson, which was being "conditionally" contested for the NABF's 140-pound belt in Mount Pleasant, Mich. (Johnson came in over the weight, but if Reid won he would have been awarded the title).

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According to this source, who asked not to be identified, "Pelullo comes over to me after one of the middle rounds, either the sixth or seventh and says, 'You better tell Pepe (Reid's trainer, Pepe Correa) to get the kid moving, Sammy (Macias) says we are down two points on two cards and down one on the other'. I was floored. I was not shocked that we were losing, and I was not shocked that Pelullo as Teddy's promoter was telling me to tell the trainer to get going, but I really was shocked that Macias would be passing the scores of his officials to Pelullo during the fight."

It was entirely probable, and perhaps even mandatory, that Macias have unique access to the judges' scorecards. After all, the NABF appoints the ringside officials that are to be used for a championship fight, and Macias, who is not only chairman of the championship committee but also, as Vice-President, second in command to president Claude Jackson in the organization, was the NABF's chief official at the fight.

Obviously, it is dangerous to the integrity of the sport that an organization would venture to provide any privileged information to one fighter's camp - especially crucial information in a closely contested fight - when it consciously held back that same information from the other fighter. The Reid-Johnson bout was certainly very tight, and ultimately wound up going to a split decision, with Johnson getting the nod.

If Macias indeed distributed the judges' scores to one competitor to the exclusion of the other, it opens up a whole Pandora's box of questions - such as, how many times Macias may have performed this kind of "service" for Pelullo, who works often with the NABF, in order to benefit one of the many fighters Banner Promotions has put into NABF championship bouts. And in situations where Macias can position himself as a conduit between the judges' scoring function and the official tabulation of scorecards, how many times, if any, have those cards been manipulated to put Pelullo's fighter on the favorable side of a close decision? The possibilities are frightening, to say the least.

When presented with the scenario as a hypothetical, reaction from officials of a sanctioning body and a state commission were essentially the same.

"If my supervisor were passing on that kind of information, and I found out about it during the fight, the first thing I would do is inform our president, Marian Muhammad, and also the boxing commission," said Joe Dwyer, chairman of the IBF's championship committee. "If we found out about it some time after the fight, and could verify it, the Executive Committee would no doubt remove that person. There's simply no room for that."

"If I found one of my officials passing information like that on, that official would certainly have his license suspended. Giving information to one side or the other is not an official's job," says Tom Mishou, administrator for the Georgia Boxing Commission. "It's likely we would have a hearing that would involve not only that official, but also the manager, promoter or agent who received the information from him. And if they were found to be in violation, licenses could be revoked."

Interestingly enough, there is no provision in the Ali Act or the Professional Boxer Safety

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Act that specifically deals with Macias' alleged actions. And maybe that's not such a big surprise - it's such an egregious act that the possibility may never have even been considered.

Of course, there may be problems beyond that which is covered by a boxing law. There is something of an element of fraud involved when an official takes any action at all to influence the outcome of a fight, from outside the ring, and using his own position nonetheless, when such action it is not part of a specified regulatory function. And it certainly can make a very material difference, particularly in instances where a fight is in jeopardy of being stopped on the basis of a cut or some other type of injury, and the scorecards come very prominently into play.

It also brings up the question of whether sanctioning bodies should be licensed and closely regulated - either by every state individually (through some sort of model legislation) or by a national committee or commission, not only so that they could be held more accountable for their actions in a jurisdiction where one of their title fights takes place, but that actions can be taken to EXPEL them from jurisdictions, with the backing of nationwide reciprocal policy, when they are found to be committing acts such as those which are alleged here.

More food for thought that will probably fall on deaf ears.

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