

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE ABC:

Written by Charles Jay
Monday, 01 July 2002 18:00

To Tim Luckenhoff, President, Association of Boxing Commissions

: According to Section 11, Paragraph "c" of the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act - "NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE IN RATING",

"A sanctioning organization shall not be entitled to receive any compensation, directly or indirectly, in connection with a boxing match, until, with respect to a change in the rating of a boxer previously rated by such organization in the top 10 boxers, the organization -

(1) posts a copy, WITHIN 7 DAYS OF SUCH CHANGE, on its Internet website or home page, if any, including an explanation of such change, for a period of not less than 30 days."

On June 9, 2002, Golden Johnson had been officially stripped of his welterweight championship by the North American Boxing Federation.

As of June 19, 2002, a fight for the vacant NABF welterweight championship had already been arranged, sanctioned and announced - a bout between Teddy Reid of Washington, DC and Germaine Sanders of Illinois.

As of June 30, 2002, the NABF website, located at

<http://www.nabfnews.com>

, had ratings changes listed only through "April-May 2002", and which still do not offer an explanation as to why Johnson was stripped of his title, nor why Teddy Reid could be moved into the #5 spot at 147 pounds without beating anyone since an unsuccessful NABF title fight at 140 pounds, ahead of other fighters who were already in the welterweight ratings.

In the "newsletter" section of the NABF site, there was still a notation that Johnson was scheduled to fight against Germaine Sanders, despite the fact that Johnson had long since been taken out of that fight in favor of Reid, a fighter signed to a promotional contract with Arthur Pelullo's Banner Promotions. There is no mention of Teddy Reid in connection with that fight, which had already taken place last Friday.

I took the liberty of making a hard copy of all this, time-stamped from June 29, which I would be happy to forward on to any interested party, including yourself.

So what we're talking about here is a period of ten days and counting since the announcement of an NABF title fight with new contestants; 21 days, and counting, having passed since the organization's action against Johnson, and 37 days and counting since May 23, when Johnson was notified of the organization's intentions.

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And as of July 1, when this story is being completed as part of the "Operation Cleanup" series on TotalAction.com, there has still been no explanation posted on the website, as prescribed by Federal law. In fact, the NABF is still trying to explain how it dropped both Jose Luis Rivera and Danny Perez from the ratings two months ago, and it is removing fighters due to "inactivity", while at the same time apparently preparing to insert Reid near the top of one division despite an 0-0 record in that weight class, five months of inactivity, and nearly TEN months since his last win.

The NABF is in violation of the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act. It is not entitled to collect sanctioning fees for fights.

And I'm expecting the Association of Boxing Commissions to step forward and do something about it, as is its obligation and responsibility.

Let me get even more specific in supporting the case that the NABF is in violation. As I look at the Act as quoted above, the SPIRIT of that particular passage can reasonably be interpreted - that if a boxer is dropped from the top ten in an organization's rankings, it certainly has the potential effect of diminishing that fighter's earning capacity and window of opportunity, since in most instances the fighter needs to be in the top ten to challenge for a champion's title, or to stay in the running for a vacant shot at the championship.

To any reasonable person, it would then logically follow that the same spirit should apply in cases where a champion is "relieved" of his title in a manner in which it is not of his own volition, since quite obviously the drop in potential earning power, in almost all cases, is dramatically greater.

It is inconceivable that the law could be interpreted in any other way. After all, a champion suddenly without a championship wouldn't be entitled to less consideration, or less protection under this law than, say, a boxer who has lost a top ten ranking, would he?

Of course not. And the NABF has simply failed to provide the required information as to WHY it suddenly, surreptitiously denied Johnson an opportunity to defend his title in a fight it had already indicated would have been sanctioned. And it has not explained WHY the welterweight rankings were manipulated for the most recent month to allow Reid to be eligible for a title opportunity.

Given the facts - facts which are rather indisputable, I might add - that were put forward in Chapter 22 of "Operation Cleanup", can there possibly be any question but that Section 11 of the Ali Act has been violated?

I am not trying to be overly fastidious. Rather, I AM suggesting that there is a certain degree of reticence on the part of the NABF here, and that there is a strong motivation for such reticence; it is obviously to the organization's advantage to go "unchecked", since that state of affairs allows it the latitude to circumvent its own rules when convenient, in order to render preferential treatment toward one promoter or fighter, to the detriment of another, without fear of repercussion.

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I realize what you said before the Senate in May - that you have contacted Attorneys General in three different states for the purposes of reporting violations of the Ali Act, but that you never received a response, in all likelihood because they didn't have any familiarity with the Ali Act or, for that matter, the previous piece of legislation - the Professional Boxer Safety Act of 1996.

We can argue the possible reasons - and justification - for such unfamiliarity at a later time, but right now I am going to suggest a couple of courses of action for you:

The NABF president, Claude Jackson, is located in Texas, and the NABF's mailing address, as distributed to the state boxing commissions, is P.O. Box 3113, Port Arthur, Texas 77643. The boxing commission in Texas falls under the state's Department of Licensing and Regulation. The attorney assigned to that agency is:

Mr. Michael D. Chisum, General Counsel, Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation
P.O. Box 12157, Austin, Texas 78711. The phone number for the Attorney General is 512-463-2100.

Perhaps an inquiry with the state of Nevada would meet with more success. The listed address of the NABF's championship committee, headed by Sam Macias, is 14340 Sundance Drive, Reno, Nevada 89511, so the activity of Macias and his organization would arguably fall within the purview of the Nevada Attorney General.

The boxing commission in Nevada is somewhat unique in that it has the power to regulate sanctioning organizations -

"NRS 467.136 Registration of sanctioning organization or television network; fees, costs and deposit; regulations.

1. The commission may require a sanctioning organization or a broadcasting network for television that televises professional contests of unarmed combat in this state to register with the commission before it participates, directly or indirectly, in any professional contest or exhibition of unarmed combat.

2. If such registration is required, the commission shall adopt regulations that prescribe, without limitation, the requirements for registration and any fees for registration."

The Nevada State Athletic Commission is assigned a counsel by the state Attorney General's office. He is the Chief Deputy Attorney General, Keith Kizer. He is easy enough to reach by way of the Nevada commission office (702-486-2575) or the Attorney General's office (775-684-1100).

Not only is Mr. Kizer completely conversant with the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act, he has written extensively - and very eloquently, I might add - about reform-related issues.

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And I'll go one further - the United States Attorney might have an interest in this as well, particularly Joe Sierra, who is very familiar with boxing corruption cases from his experience prosecuting the IBF matter a couple of years ago; he's located in Newark, N.J., and can be reached through the general number - 973-645-2700.

Tim, I know you're a good guy with good intentions. But at this point there are no more excuses.

It's time to get to work.

CJ

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