Let me tell you a little story about what can potentially happen when you've got no supervision, or supervision that is lacking, for a professional boxing match in a state without a boxing commission.

Several chapters ago, we briefly made reference to the May 31 show in Birmingham, Ala., where former world champion Meldrick Taylor fought. We also mentioned that Buddy Embanato - the Vice-Chairman of the Louisiana Boxing & Wrestling Commission, who also functions as Treasurer of the Association of Boxing Commissions - came in to supervise the fight, and was compensated for that purpose. I'm sure Embanato is adequate, or maybe even better than that, at what he does in Louisiana. Harry Barnette, matchmaker for the show, called him "a good boxing man".

Indeed, by all accounts, the fight ran smoothly from an organizational standpoint.

However, there was this little matter of ensuring that a proper bout contract was signed between Taylor and Dillon Carew, the New York-based Guyana native who had come to fight as a late replacement for Willie McDonald, who himself was a substitute for Jerry Smith, in the main event.

It seems that issue was not covered.

Had there been a contract required to be signed and filed with Embanato, for example, there would be a stipulation as to exactly how many rounds the fight would be scheduled for. Carew had been under the impression that the fight was a six-rounder, because that's what Johnny Bos, the agent who booked him into the fight, had been told. This was an assumption he carried all the way up to the time the bell (er, I'm sorry, the BOWL - a bell could not be found) sounded to end the sixth round. And according to him, no one had come to him and told him differently.

"That's why I blew it all out in the sixth," he says. "I came back to the corner at the end of the round, looking to take my gloves off. Then I saw the ring card girl walking around with a card that said 'Round 7'. At that point I really didn't know whether the fight was going to be eight rounds or ten rounds."

The extra rounds certainly made a tangible difference in the outcome of the fight. Carew, who had dropped Taylor twice (Taylor also received a standing eight-count), was ahead by three points on one card, and one point on another, with the other scorecard even, after six rounds. Carew, who had put on what he thought was a big finish in the sixth, was admittedly dead tired in the last two stanzas, and lost them on all three cards. As a result, Taylor was awarded the split decision win.

Carew, who also never got the opportunity to see Taylor weigh in, wasn't pleased, but he

took the decision philosophically. "This is America, and I guess you gotta chill," he says. "But back home (Guyana) you'd have a lot of bottles being thrown in the ring."

Barnette says the fight was announced as an eight-rounder when the fighters got to the ring, but concedes that Carew may not have heard that; understandably, he may not have been paying much attention to the ring announcer. "Taylor really wanted to fight a ten-rounder, but he settled for eight," is what Barnette has told us. Indeed, scorecards for a ten-round fight had been prepared. And the fight was listed as an eight-rounder on bout sheets that were circulated earlier that day; but there is no one who can confirm that Carew was ever informed of this.

The selection of officials was a little out of the ordinary as well. One of them was Jay Deas, who runs an outfit called Skyy Promotions, which puts on boxing shows in Tuscaloosa. Another judge, Jonathan Cohen, is a full-time chemist and part-time matchmaker who was pressed into service when some judges didn't show up. Ricco Ray, who was supposed to be a judge for the Taylor-Carew fight, actually wound up FIGHTING against Luis Collazo on the undercard. The referee, Kenny Woods, formerly managed the late Stephan Johnson.

Carew, who tells us he was asking for a contract but never got one, was actually lucky he even got paid.

Barnette took $1500 out of his own pocket to compensate Carew for his performance; he was supposed to be reimbursed by Jimmy Logan, the show's promoter, but Logan disappeared after the fight and his check to Barnette bounced. Other people have been stiffed as well, including the ring announcer, the ringside physician, and the judges. And since Logan did not pay the hotel in full, all the people who traveled to the fight from out of town had to pay for the last night of their stay.

Bos complained to Tim Lueckenhoff, president of the Association of Boxing Commissions, about the way the Carew situation was handled, operating under the assumption that it was essentially the ABC governing the fight in this non-commission state. Lueckenhoff's response to us was that Bos has been around the sport of boxing long enough to know that he shouldn't have let a fighter into the ring, no matter how short the notice, without a written contract in which terms were actually spelled out.

Well, yes and no. Yes, there's certainly a point to be made there, because no one can fully substantiate how long the fight was supposed to be, at least to Lueckenhoff's satisfaction, without the presence of a written contract. And Bos has been hoodwinked by enough people through the years to know that a handshake doesn't mean much.

However, from a supervisory perspective, the fight should not have been allowed to take place without a contract. And though Louisiana may not require such contracts to be filed, and the ABC may not either, there's no question they SHOULD. There is NO WAY a fight should be allowed to take place ANYWHERE without a contract, on file, with the local jurisdiction.

What if a fighter gets stiffed? What if a thieving manager took 75% of a kid's purse? What if a manager got paid on behalf of a fighter, then took the money and ran off with it? What if one fighter's connections look at the scorecards, and then decide the fight has to go extra rounds, which is not necessarily what Bos is claiming happened to Carew, but which could conceivably happen with no supervision? Is someone going to tell me that any of those things are consistent with the public interest, and that a mechanism shouldn't be in place to prevent them from happening, without forcing someone to go to court when they may not be able to afford it?

Maybe the problem lies in the fact that we don't know who really holds jurisdiction. For example, Federal law requires that fights in states without commissions be supervised by a commissioner from another state, with rules set forth by the ABC. But does this mean that the ABC, a trade association, has the authority to sanction a fight, or enforce certain rules?

If they do, how much accountability do they have for that which results from such enforcement, and who are they accountable TO?

Louisiana was the "supervising commission". Well, what is the real plausibility of enforcing the laws of the state of Louisiana within the borders of the state of Alabama? Is anyone in Alabama compelled to obey those laws?

And if they are, doesn't that mean that ALL the Louisiana commission's rules should have effect, including the selection of ring officials and any laws that might exist regarding contracts for bouts?

Is there any set of Federal rules and regulations that should, or could, apply here?

Most importantly, if the duration of a fight is going to be extended arbitrarily; if contracts are not going to be required; if promoters are going to be allowed to operate without being bonded, stiffing people as a result, and if inexperienced personnel are going to be inserted as officials, wouldn't one have to question the necessity, not to mention the wisdom, of even having an outside supervisor from another state?

What purpose did it really serve?

We'd like to have gotten an answer from Embanato, but unfortunately, our attempts to secure comment from him were unsuccessful.

It seems to me that we have some very poorly written law here, and as usual, it's the product of what happens when no one consults with anybody who has been in the business of professional boxing.

But then again, what else is new?

"The sport of boxing really needs an enema," says Bos.

As for what might come out - just use your imagination.

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