

BOXING REFORMERS RE-EMBRACE A FRAUD

Written by Charles Jay
Monday, 12 August 2002 18:00

"JACK - DON'T LET THE DOOR HIT YOUR ASS ON THE WAY OUT"

That was going to be the title of this chapter.

Unfortunately, things didn't go as planned.

My understanding is that, at its annual meeting in Miami, there was going to be a meeting held among the Executive Board of the Association of Boxing Commissions, at which time the fate of Jack Kerns of Kentucky - America's most dangerous boxing commissioner and First Vice-President of the ABC - was going to be determined. And though no one had told me as much, I thought there was sufficient justification to expect that Kerns would be asked, politely or not, to tender his resignation from the ABC board - a post to which he was elected last year under circumstances that were, to put it mildly, dubious at best.

After all, common sense would seem to dictate this course of action, given the fact that under Kerns' watch, many of the Federal laws ABC members would aspire to uphold were violated.

But as we have illustrated time and again throughout the course of this book, common sense isn't running rampant these days in the ABC.

When all was said and done, Jack Kerns wasn't really asked to do ANYTHING by the ABC.

And so Kerns still remains a Vice-President and member of the Board for an association that holds itself out as an agent of positive change in the regulation of boxing.

According to one commissioner who was keeping tabs on the situation, "The feeling Jack had is that if he stepped down, it would hurt his lawsuit in Kentucky. It would be as if it were an admission of guilt."

The lawsuit he's talking about is the action that has been brought forth by the wife of former heavyweight champ Greg Page, who was nearly killed last March, quite possibly a result of Kerns' gross and illegal negligence in the area of boxing safety measures, which may even border on the criminal (don't let me rehash it here - just read

"Horse Manure Isn't the Only Thing That Stinks in Kentucky"

in our Special Reports section if you're not familiar with it).

Of course, the Page situation was exacerbated by the arrogant manner in which the state of Kentucky acted after the fact, as neither Kerns, commission director Nancy Black, nor the state's attorney general's office have been forthcoming with the truth at any time in the last

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17 months.

The reaction of the ABC with regard to the disposition of the Kerns matter is insulting - and I'm being charitable when I say that.

What they don't seem to grasp in that organization is that it is NOT up to Jack Kerns to tell the ABC whether HE'S stepping down; it is up to the ABC to tell HIM whether he can stick around.

Making Kerns look more credible for the sake of his lawsuit should not be the ABC's responsibility. By allowing him to stay on in a position that is supposed to mean something in the organization, the ABC is, in effect, contributing to the facade of respectability Kerns is trying to create. Therefore, they are aiding in his defense, and giving tacit approval of his actions, which have been demonstrated to be dangerous for fighters and contrary to the best interests of the sport.

So maybe these guys just don't care.

If they did, they might have availed themselves of procedures in place to remedy these types of situations.

According to Section 5.4 of the ABC's Constitution, "Removal of Officers/Directors":

"Any Officer or Director may be removed from his/her position by a majority vote of the Board of Directors. Any action shall be ratified by a majority vote of the membership attending the next meeting."

That means that they could have taken a positive step forward for boxing reform at any time they deemed necessary.

That means that in July of 2001, three months after Greg Sirb had appeared on ESPN's "Outside the Lines" program and made the following statement - "You know, obviously, some mistakes were made in Kentucky. With the doctor being at ringside, that's one thing. But not having the proper resuscitation equipment at ringside, that's a big problem. That's a big problem" - he could have stepped forward and objected to Kerns' election to the Board.

That means that during the fall of 2001 - after our series of stories on the impropriety of Kerns, his commission's executive director, Nancy Black, and the rest of the Kentucky regulatory apparatus in connection with Page, facts that have never been disputed - newly-elected ABC President Tim Lueckenhoff could have held a vote to recall Kerns from the Board.

None of that was ever explored.

And apparently it was not done in Miami, when the entire Board of Directors and the lion's share of ABC membership were present. On the agenda at that meeting were a lot of things,

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including considerable discussion of the proposed McCain boxing legislation, which is ineffectual at best; tattoo ads on fighters; an officials seminar, which may or may not make anyone judge a fight any better; an excellent medical presentation, with lessons no commission will wind up heeding; a confirmation that the ABC doesn't have any insurance for supervisors who travel to states without commissions (something we reported in Chapter 39), and about six hours of lunch.

But, even though there was ample opportunity, there wasn't ONE MINUTE dedicated to a procedure that would have advanced the ABC's message more than all of the aforementioned issues COMBINED - getting rid of an element that has brought considerable shame to the organization.

And save for a couple of commissioners I've talked to, there hasn't been the slightest bit of outrage about it.

That's sad, and pathetic.

To compound the absurdity, Ken Nahigian, John McCain's "right-hand man" with respect to the boxing legislation, was there, speaking for about 30 minutes, and not ONE WORD came out his mouth about the hypocrisy of having a misfit like Kerns involved on an executive level with this "boxing reform" group - a reaffirmation that Nahigian is just as hollow as the rest of them.

When is anyone with some balls going to step up to the table?

You know, over the course of time, I'm sure I'll line up on the same side as the ABC on a number of issues - that kind of thing is unavoidable. And I maintain friendships with some of its members.

But I don't want to hear any more bullshit lines about how this organization is operating "for the good of boxing". They can save that nonsense for someone much more gullible.

Until such time as they are prepared to do the RIGHT thing and get rid of the albatross that continues to eat away at any credibility it may have, I can't fully support, believe, or trust the ABC.

And I suggest you might not want to, either.

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