

The 6th Round

A couple of months ago I got this letter from a Dr. Michael Schwartz, who represents something called the "American Association of Professional Ringside Physicians". The good doctor, who apparently was miffed that we had not devoted a chapter, or two, or three, in our "Operation Cleanup" series to him and his organization, expressed himself thusly:

"Dear Mr. Jay:

I have enjoyed your series on "Operation Cleanup". Especially the last chapter entitled, "Boxing Bill". However, don't you feel you're being hypocritical criticizing Mr. Ken Nahigian for not responding to your requests? We, too, have sent YOU many e-mails and press releases concerning the wonderful work done by the American Association of Professional Ringside Physicians(AAPRP), however, you have never even had the courtesy of responding to us. We invited you to attend our Annual Medical Seminar in Baltimore next week, yet you didn't even have the courtesy to even respond with a "no thank you". You have never printed or commented on our certification program to insure that no "Kentucky" disasters occur again with unqualified ringside physicians working at boxing matches. In addition, you haven't even discussed our many educational programs intended to improve the quality of the ringside physician. Finally, not once have you discussed the excellent work done by the many ringside physicians across the country; those who work for little pay (sometimes less than the ring girls),the fact that they have an enormous liability potential and don't have additional malpractice insurance for these events and normally gets criticized for stopping a fight or letting one go on too long!

Next week, I will address over 75 ringside physicians in Baltimore. What would you like me to tell them when I state that reporters like yourself claim to care for the sport but rarely report on the good things these individuals are doing to save lives. I would appreciate a response at least in this instance; even if you disagree with my comments.

I actually see some good coming out of your columns. Now try to actually work with an organization of over 250 doctors that work to save these athletes and promote respectability and credibility in the sport."

Eagerly Awaiting Your Reply,

Sincerely,
Dr. Michael Schwartz
Chairman - AAPRP

I promptly returned his correspondence, indicating that I would be happy to respond to any of his concerns. I even tried to make it to his seminar, or at least to the pre-seminar party, which

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was held at a Ballroom Boxing event outside Baltimore, but I was too ill to travel.

I was supposed to be contacted by him after the convention was over.

Glad I didn't hold my breath.

He had apparently schmoozed Ken Nahigian (John McCain's errand boy) well enough at his get-together - and so your humble reporter quickly became irrelevant.

Well, if he had ever bothered to contact me again, this, in substance, is what I would have told him:

The reason I never bothered to respond to any of your PRESS RELEASES, Dr. Schwartz, is based, in part, on the nature of your first correspondence to me. It begins,

AAPRP ANNOUNCES 2002 AWARDS

Darien, Connecticut - July 11, 2002 - The American Association of Professional Ringside Physicians (AAPRP) announced today the 2002 AAPRP Award Recipients. They are as follows:

Ringside Physician of the Year - Dr. Barry Jordan

Administrator of the Year - Mr. Tim Luekenhoff (sic)

Outstanding Contribution to Boxing - Senator John McCain

I won't even go any further with the rest of the nonsense contained in this announcement.

I wonder - has it ever occurred to you, Dr. Schwartz, that if the likes of Tim Lueckenhoff and John McCain were doing not only what they SHOULD be doing, but what was WITHIN THEIR POWER to do, there might never have been the necessity for a series like "Operation Cleanup" in the first place? Can you possibly understand the logic behind that notion?

Can you understand that after six years of laws in effect to "reform boxing", what we have is a situation that is essentially no more orderly than it was before, because no one has ever taken enough care that even the more useful components of these laws might actually have to be ENFORCED? Does this constitute an "outstanding contribution to boxing", but rather, an INCOMPLETE and SLOVENLY contribution to boxing, almost as bad as if there were none at all?

Can you understand that because of the ineptitude of the "effort" to enforce the Ali Act and the Professional Boxer Safety Act, that some of the blame must fall at the feet of the organization Mr. Lueckenhoff presides over - the Association of Boxing Commissions - for not considering it important enough to educate attorneys general across the country as to what these laws are, and what they mean, especially as it concerns the area of fighter safety?

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And do you know how many fighters who have suffered wrongs have turned to the ABC, since there was nowhere else to go, and because a provision of the federal law may have been violated, and have been met with either a refusal to take action, an inadequate action, or simply no response whatsoever?

No, Dr. Schwartz, I haven't commented on your certification program "to insure that no 'Kentucky' disasters occur again with unqualified ringside physicians working at boxing matches" because you have NEVER sent a stern letter to the Kentucky Athletic Commission protesting such disregard for ring safety and inquiring as to WHY IN THE WORLD they would ever certify a physician to work a fight who was not licensed in that state to practice medicine. I have no evidence before me that you have EVER made an inquiry with either the Ohio or Kentucky medical boards about this physician (Dr. Manuel Mediodia), or registered a complaint with them, on behalf of your "organization", in which it is duly noted that he cannot and SHOULD NOT be permitted to represent the sport of boxing in any way, shape, or form, and in fact should be drummed out of the practice. I have NEVER seen anything in the way of complaint or protest to the American Medical Association regarding Dr. Mediodia either.

Can you show me documentation of such?

When I see you awarding Tim Lueckenhoff with "Administrator of the Year", I consider that a tacit approval of his "stewardship" of the ABC, and of the actions he has performed while at the helm. These actions included his apparent support of the retention of Kentucky commission chairman Jack Kerns as a First Vice-President and member of the ABC's Executive Board, working right alongside him, despite the fact that Kerns is largely responsible for, as you put it, the "Kentucky disaster".

If this helps one's qualifications as "Administrator of the Year", couldn't we have put Kerns' name on that list of nominees as well?

Kerns has put fighters in imminent danger time and again. Have you EVER raised a voice of protest to your "Administrator of the Year" or demanded to know why is allowed to continue in his position with the ABC?

Is there a reason on earth why anyone who is sincerely concerned with the issue of true boxing reform shouldn't be insulted and outraged at your pitiful choice of honorees?

And am I not fully entitled to an explanation of these choices before attributing one iota of credibility to your "organization"?

You bet your ass I am.

As far as I'm concerned, I'd like that explanation - in writing - for your "2002 AAPRP Awards" before I will give you or your club any consideration whatsoever.

But then again, you and I both know the rationale behind your choices, don't we? You want control of the nationwide medical databank that would be established if the United States

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Boxing Administration were to come into existence. You want to be empowered with controlling the process by which ringside physicians are certified and trained. You have heretofore been unsuccessful in those pursuits, and apparently you feel you can't get there without the approval of McCain's office and at least some cooperation with Lueckenhoff, Kerns and the ABC.

So let's be perfectly honest, shall we? The "awards" you give out are, in essence, for the sake of political expediency, are they not? When it comes right down to it, yours is just one more organization that is engaged in the practice of selling yourselves out for the sake of politics.

And you're wondering why you've never gotten the time of day from ME? Are you kidding?

Hey - while we're at it, let me ask you a couple more questions --

Aren't you the fellow who recommends that chiropractors, dermatologists, dentists, psychiatrists, and other practitioners of unrelated disciplines be allowed to work at ringside for professional boxing shows?

Is it not a fact that your "Vice-President/Assistant Secretary", Dr. Paul Wallace, is currently the subject of an inquiry in the state of California for insurance irregularities (egregious over-billing) as it relates directly to the treatment of fighters? And didn't you bestow your 2001 "Ringside Physician of the Year" award on him, during the very time he was engaging in the activities that have prompted this inquiry?

Your only saving grace is that you have a nice guy like Dr. Alan Fields on your board. But that's not enough to make up for everything else.

I'm not interested in phonies, fakers, or sellouts, Dr. Schwartz. I've invested too much in this. If your chief concern does not involve making a sincere statement about the betterment of boxing, but in becoming a stooge of the political system, simply take a number and wait by the door.

My office is crowded - I'll get around to you sooner or later. Or maybe not.

Anyway, Dr. Schwartz, thank you for "actually seeing some good" coming out of my columns.

I'm confident some good will come out of this one too.

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