GRANT
TODO CON MEDIDA

At times, there seems to be a maxim in boxing: "If it ain't broke, fix it until it is."

One of the few things in boxing that ain’t broke is the time-honored rhythm of the sport; three minutes a round with sixty seconds between rounds. Much of the integrity that has existed in professional boxing since the 1800s comes from that rhythm and the conduct of the fights themselves.

NBC Sports Network is airing a series of fights that run occasionally on Saturday night. Earlier this month, Jon Miller (president of programming for NBC Sports and NBC Sports Network) wrote to the Association of Boxing Commissions and asked that promoters be allowed to increase the time between each round of a televised fight from 60 to 67 seconds.

Miller believes that the extra time between rounds is a concession that boxing should make to adapt to a business reality. More specifically, in his letter to the ABC, he declared, *“NBC has a major concern with the rigid timing between rounds set forth by the Boxing Commissions in each state. We feel strongly this mandate negatively impacts the quality of television production. The Fight Night Series will simply not survive without advertising support and allowing us to be storytellers. We must run two thirty-second commercial units between each round. The inability to come back from a one minute commercial break without any additional time to show highlights from the previous round and set up the next round is a disservice to the boxing viewer and most importantly the athletes who are giving their all in the ring.”*

It’s nice that Miller is concerned “most importantly” with “the athletes who are giving their all in the ring.”

His letter closes with the declaration, “*This change will make the sport more broadcast friendly and substantially increase a boxer’s ability to make a living on a platform other than the pay channels of HBO, Showtime, and PPV. The NFL, NBA, MLB and NHL all have adapted to this broadcast friendly model and, with their network partners, customized mutually beneficial television timings. This timing change will not negatively impact the integrity of competition but only enhance the content in building stars and elevating the great sport of boxing.”*

NBC wants the Association of Boxing Commissions to issue a policy statement in support of the proposed change. It would then be up to individual state athletic commissions to implement the

67-second rule or decline to do so. Presumably, other networks that are supported by advertising (such as ESPN) will follow NBC's lead if the change is approved.

Tim Lueckenhoff (president of the Association of Boxing Commissions) said on Thursday, "I will speak in favor of the proposal. Anything we can do to promote boxing is a positive."

Sports change. That's a given. Boxing has changed too.

In bare-knuckle days, a round lasted until a fighter was knocked down. He then had one minute to return to the center of the ring and continue the battle. Fighters now wear gloves instead of fighting with bare knuckles. Championship fights have evolved from "fights to the finish" to fifteen rounds to twelve. A fighter must now go to a neutral corner in the event of a knockdown rather than stand over a fallen opponent and throw punches as soon as his foe rises from the canvas. Weigh-ins have moved from the day of a fight to the day before to allow a fighter to replenish his body. Fighters now enter the ring to their own ring-walk music; something that was not contemplated by John L. Sullivan or Joe Louis.

Through it all, the 60-second period between rounds has been sacrosanct.

Boxing is different from other sports. Breaks in the action are carefully calibrated. Three-minute rounds with a one-minute rest period between rounds is at the core of professional boxing. In gyms across the country, an automatic bell sounds the familiar cadence that becomes second-nature to a professional fighter.

No matter how supporters of the 67-second rule style it, they're asking for a 7-second television timeout between rounds. *TV timeouts don't alter the nature of the game in football, basketball, baseball, or hockey. They would in boxing.*

Dr. Margaret Goodman is a neurologist who served previously as chief ringside physician and medical director for the Nevada State Athletic Commission. She is currently president and chairperson of the Voluntary Anti-Doping Association.

“Absolutely, the extra seven seconds could change the outcome of a fight,” Dr. Goodman says. “It would give a tired fighter extra time to recover. It would give his cutman an extra seven seconds to work on a cut. If a fighter is hurt, the extra time might allow him to keep fighting; but to me, that’s bad. If a fighter needs those extra seven seconds, he’s likely to be hurt more seriously as the fight goes on.”

Alex Ariza has earned a reputation as one of the foremost strength and conditioning coaches in boxing.

“It definitely could affect the outcome of a fight,” Ariza states. “Obviously, a fighter who is hurt or a fighter who is poorly conditioned would benefit to a degree from the extra seven seconds. But it goes beyond that. The most important measure of a fighter’s conditioning is how fast the fighter can get his heart rate down between rounds. With sixty-seven seconds, you’re talking about a fighter getting his heart rate down significantly more than if he has just sixty seconds between rounds. In some instances, you could see a fifteen-to-twenty-percent better recovery with those seven extra seconds. For me, everything is based on recovery time. I train fighters based on the sixty seconds that I have. Sixty-seven seconds between rounds would change the way I train a fighter. If I have an extra seven seconds to work with, I would condition the fighter differently.”

Would Evander Holyfield like an extra seven seconds between rounds if he fights again? I think so. Ask Bernard Hopkins if he would have liked an extra seven seconds between rounds when he fought Joe Calzaghe.

Also, not only could an extra seven seconds between rounds change the outcome of a fight; there would be a perception by fans in certain instances that it changed the outcome of a fight whether it did or not.

Greg Sirb is past president of the Association of Boxing Commissions and current executive director of the Pennsylvania State Athletic Commission.

“I understand the point that NBC is making,” Sirb notes. “But one minute between rounds has

been the standard for a long time and it works. We've given an extra one or two seconds on a few occasions in Pennsylvania. But even that troubles me because, once you start, it's a slippery slope. Seven seconds is too much. And what happens if someone comes back after that and asks for ten seconds?"

Should boxing have one set of rules for fights that are televised on advertising-supported television and another set of rules for all other fights?

Can the sport tolerate a situation where New Jersey says that there's sixty seconds between rounds, Ohio says sixty-five, and Texas says seventy?

How much can NBC really accomplish in those extra seven seconds?

How do we know that, over time, viewers won't simply get an additional station break or commercial plug: "Watch the news on NBC after the fights . . . SportsCenter on ESPN at eleven o'clock."

What if a network says that it will put a REALLY BIG fight on broadcast television? "We can get Floyd Mayweather. But to do it, we'll need ninety seconds between rounds for commercials."

Boxing didn't disappear from broadcast television because the networks had trouble getting their commercials in. Boxing disappeared from broadcast television because there weren't enough commercials. Advertisers didn't want their product identified with a sport that was perceived by the public as brutal and corrupt.

Fans today have a lot of complaints about boxing on television. The most common complaint is, "The fights sucked." Another complaint is that some commentators say stupid things and don't understand the sport. I don't recall hearing a fan complain, "My viewing experience was unsatisfactory because of the transition from the commercial break to the live action."

Boxing is now being asked to change one of its most fundamental rules. This shows a lack of respect for the history, traditions, and essence of the sport.

The World Cup is one of the most popular televised sports events on the planet. Games are played in 45-minute halves WITHOUT STOPPING PLAY FOR COMMERCIALS in either half. The television networks deal with it.

Television networks should adhere to the rules of boxing; not the other way around.

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His next book (And the New: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing) will be published later this summer by the University of Arkansas Press.

Comment on this article

MisterLee says:

I agree. This change sounds stupid.

amayseng says:

i think it is stupid too.

i also dont think 7 seconds changes a fight, how many tricks are out there to add more

time to recover a hurt fighter- the trainer drops the stool over, they throw water on the floor, too much vaseline to prompt the ref to hold time and have it wiped off....

there are many ways to postpone a few seconds to the next round

walkersmithjr says:

What's stupid is 7 instead of 10 seconds to begin with. We here in the USA might not be on the metric system but come on! The opinions of the "experts" don't mean a thing. I couldn't believe Goodman's and the others' comments. Poll the guys that count: the fighters, you know the ones that are sucking wind and trying to clear the headache and go back out there! Oh, they're too punchy to make sense of this complicated issue? Yeah, lets bring in the "experts", they know best. If you're so concerned about the boxers' health then abolish the sport! You can then be

sure that dementia pugilistica will probably not be in their futures! Such hipocrites!

walkersmithjr says:

I have be reading The Sweet Science for about 5 years now. Recently I decided to comment on articles because of some of the difference of opinion that I could not hold in any longer. I have always enjoyed and respected Radam and others' comments. Not this time, buddies! Let the licensed boxers vote on the issue, they're the only ones that count, OK?

walkersmithjr says:

What most of you are resisting is change. Gloves, mouthpieces, 8 counts, 12 rounds instead of 15, 3 knockdowns rule are just some the things that CHANGED. Do any of you have a problem with any of these? Which would you change back? The only one I have a problem with is the 3 knockdowns for obvious reasons. JMM rules! The lightweights that is!

walkersmithjr says:

Just a quick comment on my "name". I've actually had "boxing fans" ask me who he was. I just had to walk away. Pun intended...

dino da vinci says:

[QUOTE=walkersmithjr;18647]Just a quick comment on my "name". I've actually had "boxing fans" ask me who he was. I just had to walk away. Pun intended...[/QUOTE]

Well, we already have a Brown "Sugar", So THAT was taken.

You picked an interesting time to jump in.
When non-boxing people with authority get a say, they seem to almost instinctively wish to destoy the fabric of the sport.
Greg Sirb told me one time he wanted championship fights to be ten rounds down from twelve. Greg believed the results would be the same, that fighters would suffer less dehydration over the shorter distance. <Me: 15 rounds, that's the
championship distance> So, that's one. Three knockdown rule? Why? You want a Mercy Rule, go play softball. If you have a quality referee, (Think Smoger, Pat Russell or Bayless) this rule is unneccessary. And more than unneccessary, if favors a particular style of fighter. <Me: Scrap it.> So there's two. Standing Eight Count. This was implemented as much for the referee's benefit, as for the fighter, but actually more (in hindsight) for the referee. When it was originally proposed, the thought was, rather than the referee just pulling the plug, the eight seconds allow him some time to scrutinize the degree that the fighter is hurt. Obviously, if the fighter WASN'T getting caught with as many shots as the referee originally thought, the look of, 'what are you thinking about?' from the fighter while the referee's counting let's the referee not blow the fight up completely. With a top tier ref, this wouldn't even be neccessary. Think of it as early damage control.

This 67 second rule, would be the equivalent of moving the pitchers mound back to seventy-five feet, making the rim twelve feet off the ground, or moving the field goal posts to the goal line.

As for gloves and mouthpieces, that's the leather helmet in football. Although it's a change, you're mixing apples and oranges. They also, let women go to fights now.

67 seconds? More fighters would be seriously hurt, not less. You do the math.

Condor says:

Absurd that some executive would even suggest such a thing.

Hey Walker - There's not much love for SRR here. You watch. He's of the ilk of Dana Rosenblatt et al in the eyes of many. A guy that ducked EVERYONE and beat women without mercy.

Radam G says:

The licensed boxers that I holla at are against the 67. They said what about 69? Hehehehe! WOW! Don't dare be a dirty mind. Hahaha! Holla!

MisterLee says:

Lol.

stormcentre says:

What is this garbage? In this day/age it is a piece of cake to whip up a 20 second commercial unit. I know I have quite a few buddies in graphic design and advertising. These people aren't interested in the boxers. Sure, if there's a direct link and its contractually clear, that the fighters will earn more money then; perhaps the concept can move from the joke-avarice stage. But . .IMO once you let these networks and cooperations change the heart and soul of boxing -whats next? Different rules for fighters with more connected promoters?

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"The World Cup is one of the most popular televised sports events on the planet. Games are played in 45-minute halves WITHOUT STOPPING PLAY FOR COMMERCIALS in either half.

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dino da vinci says:

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Great post.

We have 27 weight divisions, 87 Sanctioning Organizations, Different Rules depending on location, Britian with their 2 minute rounds, and we'll need to add, how many seconds between rounds.

I can see it now. One of my kids will come home with homework.

V da V: Dad, you like problems, can you help me with these?
Me: Sure, son!
V da V: OK, Dad, Here's problem #1: Evander Holyfield has agreed to fight the Gold Metal winner of the 2024 Olympics. "Dad, can a defending champion fight a fighter making his pro debut?"
Me: Depends on the organization, son. As it is, I believe the EHWBO allows for such.
V: That's the one with the 1 minute round, 2 minute rest period, right?
Me: No son. You're thinking of the JTWBA. James' organization.
V: "Oh. Let me continue. Harold Lederman wins the purse bid."
Me: Purse bid or coin flip?
V: "Says purse bid."
Me: That's weird. Continue.
V: They agree to wear one 20 ounce glove, and one 10 ounce glove. "Umm, that's weird".
Me: Not really.
V: The one knockdown rule is in effect, only the token woman judge can stop the fight, and so long as one of the two referees believes the fight should continue, the fight should do so.
Me: Tuesday.
V: What day of the week is it? A) Tuesday B) Wednesday C) Saturday D) None of the above. "Hmm, Tuesday. How'd you know that?"
Me: That one was easy, my V. Olympians can only debut and fight for a world title with champions over 54 years of age that own their own sanctioning body, impliment purse bids, adhere to the one knockdown rule, providing a woman is scoring the fight (with or without a blindfold) ringside, with different weighted gloves if it's a Tuesday. And I'm just a little disappointed you didn't know that.
V: Sorry Dad.
Me: I'll try to look the other way this one time, son.

Radam G says:

Ddv, I had to keep reading that last post of yours for a few days. It reminds me so much of something that I would post, that I was trying to figure out how in the heck did you pull off a sneaky entry into my cranium, bang around a few of my neurons and punk 'em into shooting that above masterpiece to you.

Dang! I'm reminded of what TSS reader Riverside said one time to the effect: "This [Universe] is not just becoming psychological wild, but d@mn right spooky!"

C'mon, ddv! Don't be sneaking all up in my cranium. Hehehe! Leave my noggin to myself. It is just one, and only one, Radam G! Hehehe! Holla!

dino da vinci says:

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That's me using that neuron for a speed bag, my brother! Thanks for the compliment, G.

the Roast says:

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Dino is on a roll. Don't try to stop him, just get out of the way. I had to lie down for a little bit after reading this post.