

The Texas Boxing Commission...Does Not Exist?

Written by Kelsey McCarson
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Through ongoing discussions with the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, TSS has learned the state of Texas does not have a boxing commission or a boxing commissioner.

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“Any commissioners we have in the state are appointed by the governor,” Susan Stanford, Public Information Officer for the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR), told TSS over the phone last week. “We do not have a boxing commission or a boxing commissioner here in Texas. There seems to be a lot of confusion around that point. I know lots of other states do, but Texas does not.”

While Dickie Cole has frequently been referenced in media reports as the state’s boxing commissioner, Cole is actually the Program Manager for the Texas Combative Sports Program, a statute managed by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation.

So is Texas off the hook? Not quite. The state’s Combative Sports Program is recognized by the Association of Boxing Commissions, as well as the federal government, as the legitimate authority overseeing all combative sports events in Texas. Whatever the governmental body and its Program Manager, Dickie Cole, are called, the basic requirements of a state boxing commission remain in play.

One of the chief obligations, of course, is the protection of event participants. Texas remains woefully behind its peer states in this area, especially regarding tests for performance enhancing drugs (PEDs). As [previously reported at TSS](#), the state’s standard nine-panel drug test, administered to four to six fighters per card at random, does not include screens for most PEDs, including anabolic steroids.

According to the state’s Combative Sports Administrative rules, however, Texas can order any drug test it pleases for any fighter on any card, blood or urine. But does it? Despite numerous dialogues with the TDLR, as well as submissions of several Open Record requests, TSS was unable to confirm how many times, if ever, Texas has ordered anything beyond the standard nine-panel screen. In fact, it appears the state does not even keep records of the information on hand.

“We do not keep those records,” confirmed Stanford, when questioned about the unavailability of the records through the Public Information Act.

When fighters like Canelo (*above, in Rachel McCarson photo*) come to Texas to fight, would it not make sense for them to be tested for the same substances as they are in Nevada and

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California, and for there to be transparency about the testing for the public?

Coincidentally, the program's Medical Advisory Committee has [proposed](#) several amendments to its Combative Sports Administrative Rules. These proposals were filed March 1, 2013 and are open for public comment until April 15. Among the proposed changes are updates and clarifications to the banned substances list as well as a mandatory 90-day suspension for any fighter testing positive for a banned substance.

According to the release, the updated banned substances list "is proposed to ensure that designer drugs, discontinued drugs, drugs under pre-clinical development, and drugs approved only for veterinary use are not approved." Moreover, three of the line items included originate from the World Anti-Doping Agency 2013 Prohibited list which the proposal says it is "designed to mirror."

While it appears on the surface to be a step in the right direction, fight fans in Texas may want to temper their enthusiasm until it can be confirmed whether the standard drug test ordered by the state will be updated as well. After all, many PEDs and anabolic steroids are already defined on the state's banned substances list. Texas just might not be testing for them.

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deepwater says:

the sad thing is no texas commission is better then a texas commission. let it be.