



*"Boxing doesn't owe us; we owe it."*

"Boxing is tainted," said Floyd Mayweather a few weeks ago. "There are too many belts, too many champions."

Anyone at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas on September 14<sup>th</sup> would have noticed an Elvis-worthy display case featuring Mayweather's robes, gloves, and boots from past bouts. Several acronym-emblazoned "championship" belts were also featured. In a moment of clarity, the best pound-for-pound fighter on the planet waved them off— "I think we should have one belt and that's it."

"It's so crazy how I beat Miguel Cotto for the WBA Junior middleweight championship, right?" Mayweather said. "So how did Austin Trout beat Cotto for the WBA Championship and how is Canelo the WBA Champ?"

The WBA is the same cockeyed governing body that stripped Muhammad Ali when he gave Sonny Liston a rematch in 1965, prompting a laugh from sports writer Jimmy Cannon: "One word from them and the fight mob does as it pleases." In 1970, they ranked Joe Frazier #7 after he refused to participate in a tournament they were sponsoring. He was at his peak. In the eighties, bribes and pay-offs for higher rankings came to light. Today, despite the fact that there are only seventeen weight divisions, they identify thirty-five champions with an assortment of belts and vivid imaginations.

The WBA is one among many sanctioning bodies flourishing in an unregulated era where anyone and everything is up for grabs. Their trick titles are unwittingly propped up by fighters

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Written by Springs Toledo

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and puffed up by network executives operating under misguided assumptions about what fans really want.

What do fans really want? It begins with the truth.

**The Transnational Boxing Rankings Board** was formed one year ago October 11<sup>th</sup> on behalf of every fan, fighter, writer, and media figure fed up with fifty years of confusion and corruption. Our mandate springs from the best efforts of the past to “provide boxing with authoritative top-ten rankings, identify the singular world champion of every division based on strict reasoning and common sense, and to insist on the sport’s reform.”

What began with twenty-five boxing writers and record keepers representing twelve countries between the Americas and Australia has since increased to thirty-five representing fifteen countries now including Japan, New Zealand, and the Philippines.

What began as monthly rankings was soon switched to weekly rankings published online every Tuesday ( [www.tbrb.org](http://www.tbrb.org) ). Boxing historians in the membership pointed out that the tradition of “official monthly rankings” stretches back to 1928 and is worth preserving; these now appear in the “archives” section of the “Rankings” tab. We have also added a “Pound-for-Pound List” and a “Successions” tab presenting an abbreviated history behind each divisional throne. A Spanish-language version of the charter recently appeared on the home page of the website and there are plans to establish multi-lingual versions of the website.

### **Without Allies, We’re Bums**

The success of this initiative is dependent on the support of fans and media buzz. Over the past year, we have much to be grateful for.

Barely two weeks after our inaugural rankings were published, the initiative was mentioned on the *Wall Street Journal* website, founding member Tim Starks was interviewed by *The Classical*, and the

rankings earned a place on the popular

*Boxing.com*

and were adopted exclusively by

*The*

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*Sweet*

*Science.com*

and

*East Side Boxing*

(which also hosts a thread monitored by member Matt McGrain that has received over 34,600 hits thus far). A number of other websites have also adopted the rankings, including Mexico's

*Esquina Boxeo*

and Italy's

*boxingweb*

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*net*

, and they have been featured in

*The New Yorker, The Guardian,*

and

*NPR*

. Our Twitter account is nearing a thousand and we have approximately eight thousand social media shares directly from the website with an untold number of visits by other means.

Early in 2013, ESPN commentator Teddy Atlas contacted this writer to learn more about what we are trying to do for boxing. He decided to support the effort and on the March 29<sup>th</sup> edition of *Friday Night Fights*, he did so

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The segment began with an on-air question posed to Atlas: "Is something like this good for the sport?"

"It's not good—it's great." Atlas replied. "It might save the sport."

In August, *Friday Night Fights* included a featherweight bout between Jesus Cuellar and Claudio Marrero. Neither fighter was ranked in the *Transnational Boxing Rankings*

, though the WBA inexplicably had Marrero at number-two and Cuellar at four. Atlas shook his head at that. "It makes you wonder about some of these ratings," he said. "When are we gonna get some real ratings committees? I think there's one out there." The

*Transnational Boxing Rankings*

, he said, is "a group of national and international writers that have no biases. They have no agendas. They call it the way it is and they rate it the way it is."

### **The Robbery Clause**

“We wuz robbed!” Manager Joe Jacobs shouted into a radio man’s microphone minutes after Max Schmeling lost a decision to Jack Sharkey for the heavyweight championship of the world. Since that night in 1932, the term “robbery” has been used as a descriptive whenever the wrong man is declared the winner.

Eighty years to the month later, we introduced the robbery clause into our charter to address a major problem in boxing. If more than 75% of the Board believes that the judges’ decision in a non-championship fight is egregious enough to constitute a robbery, we reserve the right to rank the official loser over the official winner, effectively overturning the decision.

### **The Divisional Thrones**

Upwards of 90% of those routinely announced as champions are actually contenders. This is a focal point of a charter that rejects shortcuts and appointments to the top of the division. We look toward the path of combat to fill each divisional throne. If vacant, only the two top-ranked contenders can fight for it. This iron rule, controversial to some, is all that makes sense in boxing. And it is working better than we anticipated. When we began one year ago, we recognized four successions that began the moment a victor was declared in a bout between the rightful top two Ring-ranked contenders. Since then, Wladimir Klitschko has finally and convincingly assumed the heavyweight throne. Three more thrones have also been seized under our auspices as the new authority for a total of eight.

The seventh was seized in September when Mayweather himself defeated Canelo Alvarez, his next-best rival in the Jr. middleweight division. The bout was announced as a defense of his WBA “Super Title” which isn’t worth a fraction of the \$1,245,000 sanctioning fee. The truth is far more significant than seven figures or silly belts. The truth is, Mayweather has the last laugh; someone should tell him he’s a king.

His throne, recognized by a new rankings board with an old mandate, is not for sale. Four of us were there bearing witness —and keeping our hands in our own pockets.

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Floyd Mayweather's comments found on [www.mayweatherpromotions.com](http://www.mayweatherpromotions.com) ("The One Mayweather vs. Canelo" Floyd Mayweather Media Conference Call Transcript, 9/6/2013). Special thanks to Teddy Atlas for his efforts on our behalf and for all he has done and continues to do for the sport we love.

The Transnational Boxing Rankings are found at [www.tbrb.org](http://www.tbrb.org) .

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