



CALIFORNIA STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION

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Members of the Commission

Peter R. Villegas, Chair

Dr. Vernon Williams, Vice Chair

AnnMaria De Mars

Christopher Gruwell

Douglas Hendrickson

COMMISSION MEETING OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 6, 2023

10:00 a.m. - Conclusion of Business

Location:

Millennium Biltmore Hotel, Bernard Room

506 South Grand Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90071

Commissioners Present

Chair Peter R. Villegas

Vice Chair Dr. Vernon Williams

Commissioner AnnMaria De Mars

Commissioner Christopher Gruwell

Staff Present

Andy Foster, Executive Officer

Patrisha Blackstock, Assistant Executive Officer

Kenneth Swenson, Legal Counsel

OPEN SESSION

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order / Roll Call / Establishment of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair Peter Villegas. Executive Officer (EO) Andy Foster called roll and a quorum was established.

Agenda Item 2 – Chairman's Opening Remarks

Chair Villegas welcomed everyone to the first meeting of 2023 and complimented EO Foster and the Commission on their hard work. Chair Villegas discussed the proposed bill for MMA Pension.

Agenda Item 3- Election of Officers Pursuant to the Requirements of Business and Professions Code Section 18606

Chair Villegas opened the meeting for nominations for officers of the Commission.

Chair:

Vice Chair Dr. Williams moved to nominate Chair Villegas to continue as Chair of the Commission.

Commissioner Gruwell seconded the motion.

The motion passed 3-0 by roll call vote. Chair Villegas abstained from voting.

Vice Chair:

Chair Villegas moved to nominate Vice Chair Dr. Williams to continue as Vice Chair.

Commissioner Gruwell seconded the motion.

The motion passed 3-0 by roll call vote. Vice Chair Dr. Williams abstained from voting.

Agenda Item 4- Review, Discussion, and Possible Action to Approve the December 12, 2022, Commission Meeting Minutes

EO Foster presented the meeting minutes of the December 12, 2022, Commission Meeting.

Commissioner Gruwell *moved* to approve the meeting minutes.

Commissioner Dr. DeMars *seconded* the motion.

No Commission or public comments

The motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.

Agenda Item 5- Discussion and Possible Action on Petition to Change Decision for Iman Williams vs Cashton Young bout on January 21, 2023, in Commerce, CA

EO Foster presented the petition to change decision and explained that he believed the petition was worthy of Commission attention. EO Foster explained that Referee Ivan Guillermo may have been in an odd position that caused him to miss a low blow punch and ruled it as a knockdown rather than a foul. The round was scored as a 10-8 in favor of Mr. Young due to the knockdown. EO Foster recommended changing the decision to a no contest and presented the video of the round in question for the Commissioners to review.

Commissioner Dr. De Mars explained that she was able to get a freeze frame of the moment of the punch and agreed that it was indeed a low blow. Commissioner De Mars

stated that the moment was so quick that it may also be the reason why Referee Guillermo missed the punch.

Referee Guillermo stated that he did miss the low blow punch and supports the Commission's decision to change the decision to a no contest.

Commissioner Gruwell moved to approve the change of decision to a no contest.

Commissioner Dr. De Mars seconded the motion.

Kai Amdur asked the Commission why the decision would be a no contest and not a win for Mr. Williams. Commissioner De Mars explained that by changing the decision to a win for the other fighter you would have to assume that a series of events would have occurred to lead to that fighter to winning and that we can't know that the events that occurred would have caused the other fighter to have won. Commissioner De Mars added that it isn't a foregone conclusion on who would have or wouldn't have won the bout.

The motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.

Agenda Item 6 – Discussion and Possible Action on Petition to Change the Decision for Matt Hampton vs Kallum Parker bout on October 22, 2022 in Commerce, CA.

EO Foster presented the petition to change decision and explained that the petitioner states that had the fence grabs been penalized, the outcome of the fight would have been different. EO Foster did not have a recommendation due to the difficulty in knowing how much the lack of penalty for the foul impacted the fight. EO Foster presented the video of the round for the Commission's review.

Commissioner De Mars explained that she did see two occasions where Mr. Parker grabbed the fence. However, she disagreed with the commentators that a point deduction would have changed the outcome of the fight for the same reasons in Agenda Item 5. Commissioner De Mars believes that it was referee error and should be changed to a no contest.

EO Foster explained that fighters typically learn not to grab the fence at the amateur level, but that it is a common foul in lower-level professional MMA fights. EO Foster explained that the referee missed enforcing the Commission's regulations on fence grabs and that by missing the foul it affected the outcome of the fight, he just doesn't know how much it impacted the outcome.

Commissioner Dr. De Mars moved to change the result of the bout to a no contest.

Vice Chair Dr. Williams seconded the motion.

Referee Milan Ayers stated that he takes full responsibility for the missed fouls. Mr. Ayers explained he did not see the first fence grab, but if he had the chance to referee this bout again, he would have deducted a point from Mr. Parker for preventing a takedown.

The motion passed by 4-0 roll call vote.

Agenda Item 7 – Discussion and Possible Action regarding Roy Englebrecht Promotions Request to Hold an Event using Trigon Combat Rules pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 4, section 533.

EO Foster explained that last year the Commission approved promoter Triller to hold an event similar to the Trigon rules set. EO Foster explained that Trigon is mostly boxing with throws in a triangle shaped ring. EO Foster believes the regulations give the Commission authority to decide if they would like to sanction the event. The promoter holding the event is Roy Engelbrecht.

EO Foster explained that he does not know how much the BYB company (bareknuckle boxing promoter) is involved with the Trigon Combat fighting and explained that he is not supportive of bareknuckle boxing at all. EO Foster clarified that BYB is not suggesting that bareknuckle boxing be held in California, but that BYB was named on the event permit request.

Roy Engelbrecht explained that the Trigon event is similar to the Triad Combat event proposed by Triller a few years prior. Mr. Engelbrecht explained that it is essentially boxing in a triangle shaped ring with unique gloves. Mr. Engelbrecht stated they have not begun to plan the event as they are waiting on approval from the Commission. Mr. Engelbrecht gave the measurements of the ring as 26 feet from point to flat side. EO Foster has not seen any data on the types of injuries sustained due to Trigon type fights but is concerned about the size of the angles on the triangle ring. Mr. Engelbrecht stated that his company is committed to the extra cost of training officials on the Trigon rule set and will be paying the same required box office fees. Legal Counsel Ken Swenson stated that California Code of Regulations Section 533 relates to MMA so it would be best to register the Trigon under MMA so they would not be required to pay the Pension Fund fees.

Chair Villegas clarified that the motion to approve would be for one Trigon event only.

Commissioner Gruwell moved to approve Trigon Combat for one event.

Vice Chair Dr. Williams seconded the motion.

No Commission or public comments

The motion passed by a 4-0 roll call vote.

Agenda Item 8 – Review, Discussion, and Possible Action regarding the request for delegation of amateur Muay Thai to World Boxing Council Muay Thai (WBC Muay Thai).

EO Foster explained that the World Boxing Council Muay Thai has been trying to put together a program in California, but he has not met with them to discuss the structure yet. EO Foster stated he is supportive of the WBC, but that Muay Thai is a different entity, and the Commission would be delegating authority for amateur Muay Thai. EO Foster stated he would like to learn more about the WBC Muay Thai program.

Patrick Rivera, Chairman of the WBC Muay Thai in the United States, described the work he and the WBC have been doing to help grow Muay Thai in America.

Chair Villegas recommended that Mr. Rivera meet with EO Foster to discuss the WBC's request for delegation so that he has more of an understanding and can make a recommendation at the next Commission meeting. EO Foster agreed and recommended the WBC speak with CAMO President JT Steele regarding how the CAMO delegation was organized.

Commissioner Gruwell moved to approve EO Foster's recommendation to begin discussions with WBC Muay Thai, for WBC Muay Thai to submit a written request with supporting documentation by May 1, 2023, and for WBC Muay Thai to come before the Commission at the June 5, 2023, meeting.

Commissioner Dr. De Mars seconded the motion.

Dennis Warner, licensed promoter, stated he is happy WBC is stepping up to request delegation for amateur Muay Thai. Mr. Warner suggested the Commission also keep the IKF as a delegation to allow promoters to have a choice in who they would like to work with.

EO Foster asked Mr. Warner if the WBC's headgear rule would impact promoters in any way. Mr. Warner stated he preferred to take headgear off and, if required to, does not believe promoters would use amateurs that have fought without headgear mainly because they would refuse to fight with headgear on.

Tor Saralamba, Consul-General of Thailand, described how deeply ingrained Muay Thai is in Thai culture and how they would love to be able to share the sport with the world. Mr. Saralamba explained how allowing the WBC to become a Muay Thai delegation would allow California to tap into the growing popularity of Muay Thai and would generate revenue and create jobs in California. Mr. Saralamba explained the Thai government has been working with the WBC for years to promote safety and sportsmanship in Muay Thai. Mr. Saralamba suggested that the Commission get to know more about the WBC's work and their rules and regulations.

Marna Hoskin supports anything that elevates the organization and professionalism of Muay Thai in California. Ms. Hoskin asked that the Commission support open invitationals that would allow fair access to advanced competition for all competitors.

Ivan Ramos, licensed promoter, stated that he would be willing to work under the WBC's headgear rule because it protects the athletes and allows them to progress towards the pros safely.

Jose Sulaiman, Director of the WBC Los Angeles office, explained that in the year 2000 the King of Thailand contacted the WBC to ask them to include Muay Thai. Mr. Sulaiman thanked the Commission for giving the WBC a chance and expressed support for the WBC Muay Thai program.

Adam Wagner expressed support for WBC Muay Thai.

Victor Beltran expressed support for WBC Muay Thai and their headgear rule.

[The motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.](#)

Agenda Item 9 – Review, Discussion, and Possible Action regarding the request for delegation of amateur kickboxing to the World Association of Kickboxing Organizations (WAKO).

EO Foster explained that he has not had any meetings with WAKO regarding their request.

Roy Baker, President of WAKO, explained WAKO would like to become a sanctioning body in California to be able to hold tests events under the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Program.

EO Foster asked if the WAKO really wanted to become a sanctioning body or if they would just like to work with the Commission to hold the test events. Mr. Baker explained they wished to develop a long-term relationship with California as well as the rest of the USA. Mr. Baker explained that they have a globally integrated database system, officials, and inspectors. EO Foster would like to meet with WAKO to discuss their program before making a recommendation. EO Foster asked if WAKO would be willing to work with the Commission for their test events. Mr. Baker says they would be but would also like to discuss the possibility of becoming a delegated entity.

Commissioner Gruwell stated that delegating authority takes time to develop and that the Commission will stick to the EO's recommendation especially since there is a path to have events working with the Commission.

Legal Counsel Ken Swenson informed the Commission that Commissions only has the ability to delegate authority to a non-profit organization so WAKO would need to confirm their non-profit status and submit articles of incorporation and bylaws.

Commissioner Gruwell moved to approve EO Foster's recommendation to begin discussions with WAKO, for WAKO to submit a written request with supporting documentation by May 1, 2023, and for WAKO to come before the Commission at the June 5, 2023, meeting.

Commissioner Dr. De Mars seconded the motion.

Rob Zbilski, President of WAKO USA Kickboxing, explained that WAKO USA is currently sanctioning events in some states in the USA.

The motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.

Commissioner Gruwell reminded everyone that becoming a delegated entity requires that they attend every Commission meeting to update the Commission.

Agenda Item 10 – Discussion and Possible Action to Sponsor or To Ratify The Sponsorship of Assembly Bill 1136 (Haney) -- An Act To Add Article 17 (commencing with Section 18888) to Chapter 2 of Division 8 of The Business and Professions Code – Requiring the Commission To Establish a Mixed Martial Arts Pension Fund, Similar To The Boxers' Pension Fund, and To Adopt Emergency Regulations To Implement, Interpret, or Make Specific The Act, and Making Related Legislative Findings and Declarations.

EO Foster explained that the MMA Pension Fund has been a goal of the Commission for a long time and that Assemblymember Matt Haney has drafted legislation to put before the Assembly for a vote. Chair Villegas thanked Commissioners Dr. De Mars and Gruwell for their work on the MMA Pension subcommittee. Commissioner Dr. De Mars stated that she had not talked to a single MMA fighter or coach that was against the MMA Pension bill.

Commissioner Dr. De Mars moved to ratify the sponsorship of the bill and take all actions necessary to work with Assemblymember Haney in moving the bill forward.

Commissioner Gruwell seconded the motion.

No Commission of public comments

The motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.

Chair Villegas praised the Commission's work on the MMA Pension bill, and it's work in providing for the safety and fairness of all participants in California.

Agenda Item 11 Discussion and Possible Action To Sponsor Or Support Bill To Amend Business and Professions Code Section 18824 -- Relating To Report of Tickets Issued and Sold, Gross Receipts, Gross Price Charged for Broadcast and Television Rights, and Tax on Admission -- To Increase The Limit Or Cap On The Gate Tax Or Fee From \$100,000, To \$200,000, and To Make Related Technical Changes.

EO Foster explained that the Commission asked for an increase in a previous Sunset Hearing, and which was not included in the bill. EO Foster noted that this is not an increase in the gate percentage, just an increase in the cap, and would mainly affect the largest of the promoters in California. EO Foster explained that this proposed bill came about when the DCA Budget Office told him that he needed to work on getting a fee or cap increase. EO Foster stated that the cap was last increased in the year 2000 and that the purpose of the bill is to increase revenue to the Commission. EO Foster estimates the cap increase would provide the Commission an additional \$200,000-300,000 in revenue a year. Chair Villegas reminded everyone that the Commission relies on other sources of revenue such as gate fees, rather than license fees like other boards under DCA.

Commissioner Gruwell praised EO Foster for his work on this bill and liked that the cap would not punish smaller events and promoters.

EO Foster pointed out that New York, Nevada, and Texas do not have caps on gate fees, and that Nevada's gate fee is 8% versus California's 5%.

Commissioner Gruwell moved to sponsor and support the bill to raise the cap on the gate tax from \$100,000 to \$200,000 and direct staff to work with Assemblymember Wendy Carrillo's office to move the bill forward.

Vice Chair Dr. Williams seconded the motion

No Commission or public comments.

The motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.

Agenda Item 12 - Discussion and Possible Action to Approve and Adopt Proposed Changes to Proposed Text of Section 299, of Article 6, of Division 2, of Title 4 of the California Code of Regulations – Dehydration and Rehydration – to set a maximum weight gain from the day of weigh-in to the day of competition.

EO Foster explained that this regulation is needed to address extreme weight-cutting and that the change has come from the Department of Consumer Affairs' Regulation Unit. EO Foster explained that the regulation would allow for the cancellation of bouts in which a

fighter on the event day weighs in at more than 15% of what they weighed on the weigh-in day. EO Foster explained that about 3% of fighters are coming in at over 15% and that this regulation would likely bring that number down to 0%.

Ken Swenson presented the proposed language found on page 77 of the meeting materials and suggested the following motions:

1. Approve and adopt the proposed regulatory text, as amended in the version included in the agenda materials at page 77, of Section 299, of Article 6, of Division 2, of Title 4 of California Code of Regulations – Dehydration and Rehydration – and set a maximum weight gain from the day of weigh-in to the day of competition.
2. Direct staff to take all steps necessary to notice the proposed text and to make any non-substantiative changes to the regulatory text and
3. If no adverse comments are received during the 15-day comment period, the Executive Officer be authorized and directed to take all steps necessary to complete the rulemaking and to adopt the proposed regulatory text as noticed.

Commissioner Dr. De Mars so moved the motion.

Commissioner Gruwell seconded the motion.

No Commission or public comments

The motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.

Agenda Item 13 - Discussion and Possible Action to Appoint Physician to Fill the Vacant position to the Advisory Committee on Medical and Safety Standards.

Agenda item 13 was tabled.

Agenda Item 14 - Discussion and Possible Action to Approve the Fighting Foundations' Concussion and Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) informational videos and posters for Commission use.

Agenda item 14 was tabled.

Agenda Item 15 - Discussion and Possible Action to Approve and Adopt a Commission seal pursuant Business and Professions Code section 18610.

EO Foster presented 3 options for the Commission seal for the Commission's approval found on page 80 of the meeting materials.

Vice Chair Dr. Williams moved to approve option 3.

Commissioner Gruwell seconded the motion.

No Commission or public comments.

The motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.

Agenda Item 16 - Discussion of the 2024 Strategic Plan.

EO Foster explained that he would like input from the Commissioners of ideas to include in the Strategic Plan that he can bring to the SOLID Team when they begin working on the plan in June.

Commissioner Dr. De Mars asked how much the licensing database will cost. EO Foster explained that the database was on hold due to the Commission having to divert resources.

Commissioner Gruwell asked what the Commission's timeline is for the new Plan. EO Foster explained he just wanted some ideas so that SOLID would not be starting from scratch in June.

Agenda Item 17 - Subcommittee Report, Discussion and Possible Action

Agenda item 17 was discussed during agenda item 10.

Agenda Item 18 – Executive Officer's Report

a. Budget update for the support fund, the neurological fund, and the pension program

EO Foster stated that the Commission had deposited \$1.3 million in the support fund, \$20,000 in the neuro fund, and \$62k in the pension fund. EO Foster is confident the Commission will exceed revenue projections by the end of the fiscal year and with the litigation coming to an end the Commission can divert funds back to combat sports. EO Foster has now been able to direct the AEO to begin hiring an office technician. EO Foster noted that because the Commission funds have been low, he has asked for a section loan from the Department but does not think it will be necessary now that the litigation is coming to an end. EO Foster stated that the commission reserve fund was down to \$250,000 which was down from \$2 million before COVID.

b. Report on the pending and proposed regulations

EO Foster provided updates on the following proposed regulations:

- Pension plan: The commission has been working with Benefit Resources and DCA on finalizing the proposed language regarding the break in service provision.

c. Status update of delegated entities

- **California Amateur Mixed Martial Arts Organization (CAMO)**

JT Steele, President of CAMO, commended the Commission on their work on the MMA Pension Plan and explained that it would help keep fighters in California and help promoters offer something to fighters that no other state has. Mr. Steele submitted his written report to the Commission, which is contained in the meeting materials. JT Steele informed the Commission that CAMO will be holding a promoter summit in Visalia on Friday, March 10th.

- **USA Boxing**

Mr. Mike McAtee, Executive Director of USA Boxing, submitted his written report to the Commission which is contained in the meeting materials.

- **United States Fight League (USFL)**

Jon Frank of the USFL submitted his written report to the Commission, which is contained in the meeting materials. Mr. Frank supported the Commission's work on creating the MMA Pension Plan and offered to help spread information for the Commission. Mr. Frank informed the Commission that USFL had 1 additional event since they submitted their report, for a total of 8 bouts and 0 injuries. Mr. Frank noted that in 2022 there were 310 bouts with 5 total injuries. Mr. Frank stated that they had 2 California athletes medal at the World MMA Championships in Serbia, Abigail Alvarez, and Victoria Anthony.

EO Foster asked for more information on the one loss of consciousness injury in the USFL report, noting that this injury was unusual for a youth event. Mr. Frank stated that it was the first time that has occurred, and the fighter was suspended. EO Foster asked why the referee was not able to stop the bout before the fighter lost consciousness. Mr. Frank explained that the referees usually stop fights before any loss of consciousness, but he did not have further information.

- **International Kickboxing Federation (IKF)**

Toni Fossum of IKF submitted her written report to the Commission, which is contained in the meeting materials. Mrs. Fossum summarized IKF's report to the Commission, noting that they sanctioned 7 events in the beginning of 2023 with 125 bouts and 41 medical suspensions. Mrs. Fossum informed the Commission that IKF held a training event for inspectors and officials that included trainings on gloved inspection, hand wrapping, and medical awareness. Ms. Fossum explained that fighters from 6 states participated in the Steve Fossum Memorial IKF West Coast Classic.

Ms. Fossum informed the Commission that IKF is currently waiting for paperwork to be processed by the state and would be handing over amateur sanctioning duties to the Commission until their paperwork is approved. EO Foster explained that the Commission will hire additional staff as necessary

to handle the increased workload, but if the Commission is required to sanction events for a prolonged time or if there are too many events for the Commission to handle there will have to be a discussion of how to continue at the June meeting.

EO Foster suggested IKF work with a California promoter for future tournaments they are looking to hold.

d. Staffing Update

EO Foster has been able to direct the AEO to begin hiring a new office technician.

e. Upcoming Event Schedule

EO Foster informed the Commission that the May 6th event has been moved to Mexico and that Tom Brown has scheduled a Showtime event on April 8th. Cage Warriors has a scheduled event June 2nd at Sycuan Casino. The Sugar Ray Leonard Charity event has been scheduled for May 24th.

f. Year End Summary

EO Foster presented the Commission's year end summary which can be found in the meeting materials.

Agenda Item 19 – Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

Ivan Ramos asked who he would contact now that IKF would not be sanctioning amateur shows. EO Foster stated amateur kickboxing promoters would need to contact the Commission office.

Cameron Frizzell updated the Commission on his progress on training to become a professional boxing referee.

Bill Henninger, Sanctioning Director of WAKO USA, clarified that WAKO's goal is to be able to work with promoters on every level in order to develop amateur athletes and enhance the sport of Kickboxing.

CLOSED SESSION

Agenda Item 20 - Pursuant to Government Code section 11126(e)(1), the Commission will confer with and receive advice from legal counsel and deliberate regarding the following matter: Gilbert W. Hedgpeth, et al. v. California State Athletic Commission, et al., Superior Court of the State of California, County of Los Angeles, Case No. 18STCV05608.

Agenda Item 21 - Next Commission Meeting will be on Monday, June 5, 2023, on Zoom.

Agenda Item 22 - Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:54 PM.