



EUROPEAN BOXING UNION (EBU) – NEWS (December, 2024)

Dear boxing friends

To be positive and smiling is without any doubt more attractive and as well much easier than complaining and criticizing. But can we stay positive in every situation? Honestly I cannot, it is one of my weak points that I have to show what I feel, and I beg you to excuse me if I do that as well when addressing to you.

As I expressed many times already, I am proud of the quality of our EBU-championship contests, which are authorized according to our correct ratings. In order to maintain this quality we should therefore authorize unrated fighters to contest for our titles only in very few and special cases. It happens that fighters are unable to perform in the very last moment, mostly for medical reasons. Then the promoter is in trouble and needs an acceptable replacement. No boxer likes to accept a championship-contest on short notice, and in such cases the promoter is inclined to offer unrated opponents because the rated ones are asking for more money. That is exactly what happened with the latest EBU-Heavyweight-championship contest. The champion, **Oleksandr Zakhozhyi (UKR)** was scheduled for a voluntary defence of his title against the rated Heavyweight **Arnold Gjergjaj (CH)**. Unfortunately **Gjergjaj** pulled out for medical reasons only a few days ahead of the contest. Obviously the promoter had not prepared for a replacement and was in need to find one at very short notice. What he found was an unrated opponent, who is 20 cm smaller and about 11 kg lighter than the champion, having fought until now as a Cruiserweight. To my great astonishment the majority of the EBU-Council authorized that mismatch? Although not rated and engaged at very short notice, the challenger **Labinot Xhoxhaj (KOS)** surprised everybody by outpointing the champion in a street brawl. **Zakhozhyi (UKR)** was obviously not well prepared and found no way to prevent from being outworked. The fight itself was an unworthy slugfest, a shame for the EBU. I wonder who will promote the next EBU-Heavyweight championship, which used once to be the flagship of the EBU? This said, I congratulate **Labinot Xhoxhaj (KOS)** for his surprising performance.

There is no doubt, professional boxing needs boxers, promoters and an interested audience. The comeback of the 58 years old **Mike Tyson (US)** against the young influencer **Jake Paul (US)** gathered a crowd of 72'300 and 108 million global Netflix viewers, an unbelievable financial success! But was it good for boxing? Did anybody care for the health risks of the exchampion, challenged in a real fight by the 27 years young **Jake Paul (US)**? Was the fight itself anything worth to be seen? Professional boxing is a very tough sport and needs to be taken seriously, to be controlled and cared of. The interest for the health and integrity of our boxers has to be higher evaluated than the sensation for the public. When getting old we are slowly losing our strength, and it was clearly to be seen that the overmatched **Tyson (US)** had nothing to offer any more. Knowing about the risks of taking punches to the head over a longer period (C.T.E.) that fight was not worth the risk. Our boxers are not gladiators, they are sportsmen that want to win their fights but need to stay healthy. Unfortunately such fights encourage other older fighters to try a comeback, like **Oliver McCall (US)**, who is still active with 59 years of age, and we all remember his problems when he was much younger!

Please show responsibility and care for all boxers not only for those that are licensed with you!

With my warmest personal regards

Peter Stucki, EBU-President