



State of New Jersey  
OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL  
DEPARTMENT OF LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY  
STATE ATHLETIC CONTROL BOARD  
P.O. Box 180  
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0180

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TO: NJSACB Ringside Physicians  
FROM: Larry Hazzard, Sr., Commissioner   
SUBJECT: Combat Sports Contestant Weigh-Ins  
DATE: June 23, 2016

The purpose of this writing is to have you review the below material and then determine the appropriate timing of a weigh in for the professional combat sport contestant. I am requesting your input which I will then disseminate among you. After that time, I would like to then schedule a Skype teleconference to discuss a final agency position on the matter.

The issue of weight cutting and dehydration in combat sport has been hotly debated in recent times.

According to noted boxing writer Nigel Collins, the advent of weight divisions (circa 1886) was intended to ensure that boxers were evenly matched and that ability, rather than size, would determine the outcome. For almost a century thereafter, contestants were weighed in on the day of the contest itself. On November 13, 1982, Ray Mancini fought Duk Koo Kim for the WBA lightweight title live on CBS from Las Vegas in an outdoor arena at Caesars Palace. Four days after the bout, Kim died from brain injuries (blot clots) suffered in that contest. Reports and recollections state that Kim labored mightily in the days prior to the contest trying to cut down to the weight limit and was even jogging in a sweat suit on the morning of the contest. About this time, prominent ringside physician Dr. Flip Homansky of the Nevada Athletic Commission openly advocated that weigh-ins be moved



to the day prior to the contest. The thought was to allow a contestant a longer period of time to rehydrate after the weigh in. Most, if not all, regulating athletic bodies moved the weigh-ins to the day before the contest, to be in line with Nevada.

In October 2006, the New Jersey State Athletic Control Board issued a press release and formally adopted Mr. Jose Suliaman of the WBC's weight management policy for championship boxing matches. This policy required contestants to be weighed the day prior to the contest; but added weigh-ins 7 days and 30 days prior to the contest. The contestant was to weigh no more than 10% of the contracted weight 30 days out and no more than 5% 7 days out. As stated in New Jersey's release, the reasoning was that "unfortunately it seems that certain championship caliber fighters are in the habit of dieting and using steam rooms, saunas and associated tactics in the week prior to the fight in order to make weight. Subsequent to the customary (day before) weigh in, these same fighters gorge themselves with liquids and nutritional substances to attempt to regain proper physical stability to compete. This type of practice has a negative effect on a fighter's short and long term health. Further, such a threat to a professional's health and safety must be eliminated. The new weigh in procedure would not be necessary if championship caliber fighters conducted themselves like absolute professionals and stayed in competition shape year round and at or near their fighting weight."

Even prior to this 2006 announcement, NJ was, as still is, one of the few commissions to have a ringside physician present at the weigh in for major events, but to conduct the pre-fight physical on the night of the bout itself. At this examination, the contestant, among other reviews, is examined for signs of dehydration. Increased resting and non-resting heart rate, blood pressure, skin and mentation is checked. Further, a pre-fight urine sample is given for drug testing which can be checked for specific gravity levels. Contestants found to have been overly dehydrated have been indefinitely suspended pending medical testing and body scanning such as dexascan analysis.

The IBF addressed the issue of weight by the creation of a second weigh in for championship boxing matches to be held between 8am and 10am on the morning of the contest. At this second weigh in, boxers cannot weigh more than 10 pounds over their weight limit. This procedure was adopted by the Pennsylvania Athletic Commission.

The NCAA extensively studied the issue subsequent to the deaths of three wrestlers within 32 days in 1997. All three suffered hyperthermia and dehydration related deaths associated with intentional rapid weight loss. As a result, the NCAA moved weigh-ins to no earlier than 2 hours prior to competition. The NCAA also certified a minimum weight class for each contestant that they could possibly compete at. The NCAA prohibited the use of laxatives, emetics, diuretics, excessive food and fluid restriction, self-induced vomiting, hot rooms greater than 79 degrees F, hot boxes, saunas, steam rooms, vapor impenetrable suits, and artificial rehydration techniques (such as intravenous hydration).

Two studies conducted two years after the rule changes noted that wrestlers were competing at competition time within the specified weight class and were regaining much less weight post weigh in than previous to the rule changes. The goal of the rules has been said to make the focus much more about wrestling, and much less about weight. It should be noted that since these aforementioned NCAA reports, practices such as water loading diets, epsom salt baths and carbohydrate depletion diets have surfaced and become more routine in combat sports, most particularly MMA. These methods may add further danger to the health and safety of the combat sport athlete. For example, improper water loading could result in swelling of the brain in and of itself.

In December 2015, ONE championship (an MMA promotion based in Asia) introduced measures to limit weight cutting and dehydration. The promotion subjects its fighters to be within the upper limit of their weight class three weeks prior to their bout, and within six percent of the maximum limit eight weeks prior to the contest. The contestant is also subject to multiple weight checks on fight week and specific gravity tests, as well as a weigh in as close to 3 hours prior to the contest.

California recently announced a weigh in policy that allows contestants to weigh in as early as 30 hours prior to the start of the event. It was announced today that Nevada has temporarily allowed this policy for UFC competition to be held there next month. California is relying on the advice of Dr. Ayoub and the concept that the brain needs additional time to rehydrate. Meanwhile, California announced that it is studying whether to move the weigh ins to as far back as 72 hours prior to the start of the event. At the same time, the State of Ohio (with Ray Mancini as a newly minted Commission member has announced a move back to same day weigh ins. Ohio's position is that educated contestants will cut less weight if they have to compete on the same day that they weigh in on.

The UFC has announced that its contracted contestants will be asked, as of July 2016, to come in on Tuesday of fight week at no more than eight percent over their targeted weight limit. Fighters coming in over 8 percent will be subject to weight loss monitoring and weight loss education and counseling.

As a side note, the UFC, upon contracting with USADA to perform its drug testing pursuant to the WADA code, has banned the usage of intravenous hydration. Some commissions have since adopted this ban themselves. While USADA's primary concern was the usage of IV's as it relates to performance enhancing substances, such a ban changed the landscape for many contestants who utilized IV's as a crucial component of their post weigh in rehydration practices.

An examination of the Association of Ringside Physicians' website just today reveals the publishing of a position in favor of same day weigh ins. The position states that the NCAA model shows that competitors are less likely to embark on a drastic weight cut if they don't have 24 hours (or more) to rehydrate and recover. The group notes that the effectiveness

and success of same day weigh ins are directly tied to proper weight management programs.

It is worth noting that the hotly debated and worrisome issue of weight cutting and dehydration is an issue that is under the direct purview and control of the contestant and his or her manager. In short, it is an issue that can be managed and controlled, it is not an issue that is variable no matter what great measures are taken. Chris Romulo, a retired Muay Thai champion, was quoted in an article on Muay Thai Authority noting that his first trainer told him to train to fight, not for a fight. To Romulo, this meant staying in shape year round to avoid extreme weight cutting practices. It meant eating right, training and staying close to fight weight even when competition was not imminent.

Larry Hazzard, Sr. cites Bernard Hopkins as a modern day boxer who consistently maintains a healthy diet and a regular exercise program which keeps him very near his fighting weight. Hazzard, a former amateur boxer himself, recalls the professional boxers of the Newark NJ area in the 1950's and 1960's, fighting close to their natural weight and staying close to their competition weight thru a healthy diet and exercise program throughout the entirety of their careers. To Hazzard, the practice of cutting extreme amounts of weight in short periods evinces a lack of professionalism in the athlete himself.

HBO Sports brought another angle into the weigh in discussion via its usage of recording and reporting (albeit on a different scale and location) the contestant's weight just prior to the start of the contest. This was probably most widely discussed, and litigated after New York City's hosting of the boxing contest between Arturo Gatti and Joey Gamache. Gamache was said to be 145 on the HBO scale while Gatti weighed in at 160. Another example would be Julio Cesar Chavez, Jr. making of the 160 pound limit on the standard day prior weigh in and supposedly entering the ring at 181 pounds. At this juncture, it must be stated that Dr. Flip Homansky, circa 2014, has been widely reported to have become an advocate for going back again to the same day weigh in. Homansky has stated that same day weigh ins would reduce the above abuses and "a welterweight should not go into a fight much more than 147 pounds. It is a crime when a kid weighing 160 pounds fights somebody weighing 147."

Pennsylvania's longtime executive director continues to be outspoken that "our sport and our boxers suffer from ill-advised weight loss and weigh loss practices" and that "by granting them the privilege to weigh in well before the contest we are only encouraging boxers to starve so that by the time the actual competition takes place, the true weight class of the boxer becomes a farce." Sirb feels that fighters who need earlier weigh ins to allow even more time for rehydration should take such as a sign that they should move up a weight class.

Pat Reid of the Edmonton commission cites a study of over 500 contestants indicating that 70% of the contestants were no longer in the weight class they were the night before and, in many cases, were two weight classes higher.

Dr. Rasmussen, the Director of the famed Cleveland Clinic's Cerebrovascular Center Neurological Institute has recently state that the brain dehydrates and rehydrates "very quickly in a matter of minutes.' This statement should be explored.

It is obvious and apparent that regulating bodies, sanctioning groups and major promotions are paying attention to the issues and medical risks inherent with weight cutting and dehydration and are acting in an attempt to minimize risks. However, it is just as obvious and apparent that the actions widely vary and are in no way uniform or typical.

New Jersey wishes to gain your input in order to make te best decisions for both the health and safety of the contestant and also the integrity of the contest and sport itself. Change from established practice should be encouraged, but only when properly debated and analyzed carefully with due diligence.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and feedback.

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