

## Olympic Boxing for Beginners

There are few Olympic sports which have the historic tradition that Olympic boxing has built over the years. Great boxers such as Oscar de la Hoya, George Foreman, and "The Greatest" himself, Muhammad Ali (then known as Cassius Clay) have fought and succeeded on the international stage at the Summer Olympic Games. Nowadays, it lives on as one of the more popular, and sometimes controversial, Olympic sports. Whether you'll be watching along with 13,000 other fans at the Worker's Indoor Arena, or watching from the comfort of your own home, let's prepare yourself for boxing at the 2008 Beijing Olympics with this basic history and explanation of Olympic boxing.

Surprisingly, the first modern Olympics didn't include boxing as an Olympic sport. The reason? It was considered too violent. However, in 1904 boxing debuted at the St. Louis Olympic Games, albeit only as a demonstration sport. In 1908, boxing was included as a medal sport in London, but was once again, not a part of the Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden four years later. Finally, in the 1920 Olympic Games, boxing returned to stay (there were no 1916 Olympics).

There has never been women's boxing in the Olympic Games, though in 2012 there will be for the first time ever. Somewhat appropriately, London will host those Summer Olympics, since London was also host when boxing first appeared as a medal sport in 1908.

Olympic boxing is notable for several reasons. For one, there are actually two bronze medals in Olympic boxing. Each loser in the two semifinal bouts receives a bronze medal. Also, the boxing tournament is a single elimination one, so there is very little margin for error- actually, there is none.

Some of the rules and guidelines of Olympic boxing are different from the professional boxing ones that many fans are more familiar with. Olympic boxing separates competitors into twelve weight classes, ranging from light flyweight (approximately 106 pounds) to super heavyweight (over 200 pounds). Also, all competitors are made to wear headgear, similar to amateur boxing in the United States.

Some of the rules of Olympic boxing, particularly the scoring and judging system, have been controversial over the years. In Olympic boxing, points are scored by hitting the opponent in the head or torso, as long as it is a legal blow. Judges don't score the bouts by round, giving ten points to the winner. Instead, they use an electronic scoring system to register how many punches land.

When a punch lands, the judge presses a button, and if three of the five judges

do so, a point is registered. Judges must also hit the button within one second of the others. However, if a flurry is exchanged, judges are told to wait until it is over, then give a point to whomever they feel got the better of the exchange. As you can see, the judging is quirky, to say the least.

At the end of the fight, if the time is up and neither fighter has been defeated, points are added up to decide the winner. If the fight is a draw, the judges vote based upon who they felt fought the better fight. However, there are no points awarded for a knockdown, so a punch that results in a downed opponent is no more valuable than a jab that lands, if a knockout doesn't result. Similarly to in most boxing bouts, three knockdowns in a single round result in a technical knockout, although in the Olympic Games, four knockdowns in a total fight also give the same result.

The combination of these somewhat strange rules and judging guidelines have led to some controversial decisions and frustration from fans and competitors alike. However, Olympic boxing has remained as one of the purest outlets for boxers to ply their trades, and also remains one of the greatest tests possible for the world's top amateur pugilists.

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