

MARYLAND STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION

MINUTES - WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2019

On Wednesday, November 20, 2019, the Maryland State Athletic Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman David Norman at 3:06 p.m.. Present were the following: Chairman Norman; Commissioner Brian Boles (telephonically); Commissioner Chuck Gast (telephonically); Commissioner Lenny Moore; Commissioner David Shull; Patrick Pannella, Executive Director; and Eric London, Assistant Attorney General and Counsel.

COMMISSION POLICY AT WRESTLING EVENTS: PHYSICIANS TO BE PAID IMMEDIATELY UPON COMPLETION OF PERFORMING PHYSICAL EXAMS

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following report. At a recent Commission-sanctioned wrestling event promoted by James E. “Jimmy” Morris, III and held in Cambridge, Maryland, Mr. Morris failed to comply with the current Commission policy requiring that the physician who performs physical examinations of participating wrestlers and referees at wrestling events be paid immediately upon the completion of his or her duties. In Commission correspondence sent to Mr. Morris via e-mail on October 15, 2019, Mr. Morris was advised that this Commission policy will be strictly enforced. The Commission correspondence explained, further, that: (1) physicians performing such duties should reasonably expect to be able to depart a venue at the time when all referenced physical exams have been completed; (2) having to wait for any extended period of time will most likely lead to physicians being unwilling to provide such required medical services due to professional or personal obligations occurring in the hours following the completion of said duties; and (3) a wrestling event cannot be held unless a physician is available to perform the required physical exams. Mr. Pannella spoke later by telephone with Mr. Morris; Mr. Morris indicated that he will be fully compliant with this referenced Commission policy for all future wrestling events being promoted by him.

APPROVAL OF PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING EVENTS

Executive Director Pannella led a Commission discussion in regard to the wrestling events currently scheduled to be held in the State of Maryland.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Shull, seconded by Commissioner Moore, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the following professional wrestling events being promoted by Dennis W. Wipprecht, Jr.:

Saturday, December 21, 2019 - 7:00 p.m. Starting Time
Starlight Dance Studio
4800 Stamp Road - Temple Hills, Maryland
Promoter: Richard K. Thompson, advertising as
“Capital Combat Championship Wrestling” / “C3W”.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Shull, seconded by Commissioner Moore, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the following professional wrestling events being promoted by James E. Morris, III, advertising as “Adrenaline Championship Wrestling”:

Friday, January 24, 2020 - 7:00 p.m. Starting Time
Moose Lodge # 1456
1911 Crain Highway - Glen Burnie, Maryland
Promoter: James E. Morris, III, advertising as
“Adrenaline Championship Wrestling” / “ACW”; and

Saturday, January 25, 2020 - 8:00 p.m. Starting Time
American Legion Post # 91
601 Radiance Drive - Cambridge, Maryland
Promoter: James E. Morris, III, advertising as
“Adrenaline Championship Wrestling” / “ACW”.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Gast, seconded by Commissioner Boles, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the following professional wrestling event being promoted by Ring of Honor Wrestling Entertainment, LLC, advertising as “Ring of Honor”:

Friday, February 9, 2020 - TBA Starting Time - “Free Show”

The UMBC Events Center
1000 Hilltop Circle - Catonsville, Maryland
Promoter: Ring of Honor Wrestling Entertainment, LLC, advertising
as “Ring of Honor” / “ROH”.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

Chairman Norman provided the Commission with the following report in regard to the recent meeting of all board chairpersons within the Maryland Department of Labor and its Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing. The meeting was organized by, and led by, Labor Secretary Tiffany Robinson. Both Chairman Norman and Executive Director Pannella attended.

Secretary Robinson and her leadership team listened to a brief report presented by each respective board chairperson which provided a respective overview of each board’s operations, achievements and regulatory concerns. There was also time allotted for questions posed by Secretary Robinson. Chairman Norman advised that he found the meeting to be very productive and informative. Mr. Pannella noted that this was the first meeting of board chairpersons with a department secretary that he could recall during his long tenure with the Commission.

COMMISSION MANDATORY REST PERIOD FOR CONTESTANTS

Chairman Norman provided the Commission with the following report.

Commission Chief Physician Dr. John W. Stiller, M.D. had recently directed all Commission physicians performing post-bout physical exams of boxers and MMA contestants competing in contests to suspend each contestant for a minimum of 14 days, unless a longer medical suspension is being issued. A Commission physician may waive this “mandatory rest period” suspension if the physician opines medically that the contestant received no contact, or very little contact, during the contest. However, it is anticipated that such a practice of waiving such a medical suspension will be a rare occurrence.

Commissioner Gast opined that Dr. Stiller’s recent directive is a “smart move” which will further protect boxers and MMA contestants competing in the State of

Maryland, while also reinforcing the Commission’s strong commitment to fighter safety.

Counsel London noted that Commission regulations require that, unless the Commission otherwise approves, a contestant may not participate in another contest held in the State of Maryland for: (1) at least 14 days after a contest of four to eight rounds duration; and (2) at least 28 days after a contest of more than eight rounds duration.

Counsel London noted, further, that Commission regulations also stipulate that medical suspensions may be issued at the discretion of the Commission physician.

Executive Director Pannella noted that, in the past, a contestant who has won his or her contest in less than four rounds such as by knockout or by technical knockout has not always received a 14-day mandatory rest period suspension. Mr. Pannella opined, further, that Dr. Stiller’s recent directive will in effect “close the loophole” in this regard.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Shull, seconded by Commissioner Moore, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to adopt a policy requiring that all contestants competing in Commission-sanctioned boxing, kickboxing and MMA contests must be suspended medically for at least a minimum of 14 days unless a Commission physician opines that the contestant received no contact, or very little contact, during the contest.

COUNSEL’S REPORT

Counsel London reported that Commission members are currently exhibiting “excellent attendance” in meeting the State’s mandatory requirements related to Commission members attending two thirds of all scheduled meeting on a rolling basis.

REVIEW OF NOVEMBER 2, 2019 PROFESSIONAL BOXING EVENT

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following report in

regard to the professional boxing event promoted by TGB Promotions, LLC, advertising as “TGB Promotions”, televised live on the Fox Sports television network, and held on November 2, 2019 at The MGM National Harbor in Oxon Hill, Maryland.

The professional boxing event included 13 boxing contests and 112 scheduled rounds of boxing competition. Several of the boxing contests were competitive.

Wale Omotoso and Brian Castano competed in a scheduled 10-round boxing contest featured as the “World Boxing Organization (WBO) Intercontinental Junior Welterweight Championship” and won by Mr. Castano.

Jesus Cuellar and Javier Fortuna competed in a scheduled 10-round boxing contest featured as the “World Boxing Council (WBC) Continental Americas Lightweight Championship” and won by Mr. Fortuna.

REVIEW OF NOVEMBER 2, 2019 **PROFESSIONAL MMA EVENT**

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following report in regard to the professional MMA event promoted by John J. Rallo, III advertising as “Shogun Fights” and held on November 2, 2019 at The Royal Farms Arena in Baltimore, Maryland.

The MMA event included ten MMA contests and 30 scheduled rounds of MMA competition. Several of the MMA contests were competitive.

Executive Director Pannella recognized John Papavasiliou, Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing within the Maryland Department of Labor, for his outstanding efforts in “stepping in” for Mr. Pannella while Mr. Pannella was regulating a boxing event and leading the Commission’s regulatory team at this MMA event.

REVIEW OF NOVEMBER 14, 2019 **PROFESSIONAL MMA EVENT**

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following report in regard to “The Jonathan Ogden Foundation Charity MMA Event” promoted by John J. Rallo, III and held on November 14, 2019 at Martin’s Valley Mansion in Hunt Valley, Maryland.

Commissioner Boles attended the MMA event. Commissioner Boles remarked that he found the first MMA event he has ever seen in person to be “enriching”, noting that he is enjoying learning the “nuances” between the sports of MMA and boxing and between the Commission’s administrative work involving each sport.

The professional MMA event included four professional MMA contests and 12 scheduled rounds of professional MMA competition. Several of the MMA contests were competitive.

REVIEW OF NOVEMBER 16, 2019 **PROFESSIONAL BOXING EVENT**

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following report in regard to the professional boxing event promoted by Shabazz Brotherz, LLC, advertising as “Shabazz Brotherz” and held on November 2, 2019 at The La Fontaine Bleue in Glen Burnie, Maryland.

The professional boxing event included seven boxing contests and 32 scheduled rounds of boxing competition. Several of the boxing contests were competitive, with six of seven going the distance.

In the early portion of the boxing event, Mr. Pannella observed several problems developing with the boxing ring being utilized by the promoter. These issues included a significant bowing of ropes forming in two of the four respective ring ropes. Mr. Pannella stopped the boxing event from going forward until he was fully satisfied that the boxing ring was safe for boxing competition. Mr. Pannella expressed his concerns to the individual responsible for the boxing ring, who did not appear to know how to address Mr. Pannella’s expressed concerns.

Licensed manager James Hogan, who owns a boxing ring but was not associated with the boxing ring being utilized, volunteered to assist in effectively resolving

this matter. To ensure ring stability, Mr. Hogan fastened additional rope separators to the ropes while consistently going under the ring to adjust the cables connected to the ring turnbuckles after the conclusion of each respective boxing contest.

The Commission recognized Mr. Hogan for his outstanding volunteer efforts in making this boxing ring safe for boxing competition which, in turn, allowed this boxing event to continue to its conclusion.

SCHEDULED COMMISSION MEETINGS

The Commission held a discussion regarding future meeting dates. The Commission agreed to hold the following meeting dates and times in the Third Floor Conference Room, 500 North Calvert Street in Baltimore, Maryland:

Wednesday, December 18, 2019 at 3:00 p.m.;

Wednesday, January 22, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.;

Wednesday, February 19, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.;

Wednesday, March 25, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.; and

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 at 3:00 p.m..

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Commissioner Shull, and seconded by Commissioner Gast, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to adjourn the meeting at 3:53 p.m..

Patrick Pannella
Executive Director