

Melanie S. Griffin, Secretary

Ron DeSantis, Governor

**FLORIDA ATHLETIC COMMISSION
GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA**

DATE AND TIME

**June 3, 2026, at 3:00 PM
Beginning at 3:00 p.m. and continuing until all Commission business is complete**

LOCATION:

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/298278268647483?p=lj4Flo1YDTwfbpBWGp>

Meeting ID: 298 278 268 647 483

Passcode: zk32UT6K

Dial in by phone

[1 213-458-8552](tel:12134588552)

Phone conference ID: 253 481 555#

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

- I. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**
April 10, 2026, Meeting Minutes 2
- II. JAMES CROSBY VS. JACKSON STANFORD MATCH REVIEW. 5**
- III. RULES DISCUSSION 42**
 - A. Rule 61K1-3.008 Judge; License and Duties.
 - B. Rule 61K1-3.012 Referee; License and Duties.
 - C. Rule 61K1-3.027 Weight Classes for Boxing, Kickboxing and Mixed Martial Arts.
- IV. ADJOURN**

Melanie S. Griffin, Secretary

Ron DeSantis, Governor

To: Commission Members
Date: June 3, 2026
From: Timothy L. Shipman, Executive Director
Subject: Meeting Minutes

Commission Members,

Enclosed for your review and approval are minutes for the April 10, 2026, meeting.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

**FLORIDA ATHLETIC COMMISSION
GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES**

Conference call

April 10, 2026

CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Pike called the meeting to order April 10, 2026, at 1:30 p.m., and a quorum was established.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mrs. Tina Pike, Chair
Mr. Adrian Nunez, Commissioner
Mr. Alan Suskey, Commissioner
Dr. Cody Vanlandingham, Commissioner
Timothy Shipman, Executive Director
Gregory Pitt, Assistant Executive Director
Tina Tuller, Director Designee
Elizabeth Henderson, Chief Attorney
Mr. Lawrence Harris, Board Counsel
Lina Hurtado, Government Analyst II

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Mr. John Holley (Excused)

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

The Commission reviewed the December 10, 2025, meeting minutes. After discussion, the following motion was made:

MOTION: Mr. Nunez made a motion to approve the December 10, 2025, meeting minutes.

SECOND: Mrs. Pike seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

AMATEUR SANCTIONING ORGANIZATION APPLICATION REVIEW

The Commission reviewed the Amateur Sanctioning Organization application for Florida Amateur Boxing Confederation, Incorporated. After discussion, the following motion was made:

MOTION: Mr. Nunez made a motion to approve the Amateur Sanctioning Organization application.

47 **SECOND:** Mr. Suskey seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

48

49 **DISCIPLINE CASES**

50

51 Peter J. Fernandez Case No. 2024-070697

52

53 After discussion, the following motion was made:

54

55 **MOTION:** Dr. Vanlandingham made a motion to accept the proposed \$250.00 fine and \$156.92
56 cost.

57

58 **SECOND:** Mr. Nunez seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

59

60 Nahuel Caniza Case No. 2025-053054

61

62 After discussion, the following motion was made:

63

64 **MOTION:** Mr. Nunez made a motion to adopt the findings of facts and conclusions of law set
65 forth in the administrative complaint.

66

67 **SECOND:** Mr. Suskey seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

68

69 **MOTION:** Mr. Nunez made a motion to impose a penalty of \$2,000.00 in fines and \$110.57 in
70 costs and indefinite suspension until fine and cost are paid in full.

71

72 **SECOND:** Dr. Vanlandingham seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

73

74 **ATTORNEY GENERAL REPORT**

75

76 Mrs. Elizabeth Henderson presented the rules report

77

78 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

79

80 Timothy Shipman discussed number of events for the fiscal year 2025- 2026.

81

82 **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

83

84 Time was allotted for public comments.

85

86 **MOTION:** Mrs. Pike made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

87

88 **SECOND:** Mr. Nunez seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

89

90 The meeting was adjourned.

Melanie S. Griffin, Secretary

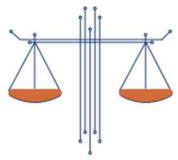
Ron DeSantis, Governor

To: Commission Members
Date: June 3, 2026
From: Timothy L. Shipman, Executive Director
Subject: James Crosby vs. Jackson Stanford Review

Commission Members,

Enclosed for your review are materials related to the match involving James Crosby and Jackson Stanford. Below is a link to the match.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RiXJ5yV1nTI>



March 7, 2026

VIA FEDEX AND EMAIL

Office of the General Counsel
Florida Athletic Commission
c/o Department of Business and Professional Regulation
2601 Blair Stone Road
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: Petition for Administrative Hearing and Request for Formal Determination

Fighter: James R. Crosby, Ph.D.

Bout: J.R. Crosby vs. Jackson Stanford, August 9, 2025, Osceola Heritage
Park/Kissimmee, Bout No. 17

Dear Counsel:

Please find enclosed Petitioner James R. Crosby's Petition for Formal Administrative Hearing and Request for Official Agency Determination, filed pursuant to sections 120.569 and 120.57(1), Florida Statutes. The Petition challenges the Florida Athletic Commission's continued recognition and publication of the bout results as a loss, which constitutes agency action affecting Petitioner's substantial interests.

As set forth in the Petition, the Commission's prior denial letter dated October 20, 2025 did not satisfy the notice requirements of section 120.569(1), Florida Statutes, because it lacked hearing-rights information and applicable deadlines. Accordingly, the Petition is being filed directly with the Commission, as required under chapter 120, for the agency to determine (1) whether legally sufficient notice of intended agency action has been issued, and (2) whether the Petition should be accepted as a challenge to existing agency action.

The Petition identifies multiple disputed issues of material fact, including, but not limited to, the repeated illegal strikes to the back of Petitioner's head, the referee's failure to intervene under applicable Commission rules, and whether the resulting rule violations affected the outcome of the bout under Rule 61K1-3.033(4), Florida Administrative Code.

In accordance with Chapter 120, and as stated in the Petition, Petitioner respectfully requests that the Commission:

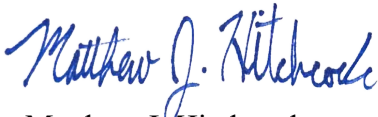
1. Accept the attached Petition as timely and legally sufficient, or if the Commission asserts that no final agency action has yet occurred, issue a proper Notice of Intended Agency Action or Final Order that complies with §120.569 and Rule 28-106.111.

2. Upon finding that disputed issues of material fact exist, refer the matter to the Division of Administrative Hearings for a formal evidentiary hearing under §120.57(1), Florida Statutes.

Please confirm receipt of the enclosed Petition and advise whether the Commission intends to (a) treat this filing as a challenge to existing agency action, (b) issue a proper notice initiating agency action, or (c) refer the matter to DOAH for formal hearing.

Should the Commission require any further information for review, processing, or determination of next procedural steps, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,



Matthew J. Hitchcock
Florida Bar No. 50835
Halcyon Law PLLC
11161 East State Road 70, Suite 110-594
Lakewood Ranch, FL 34202
888-330-5747
Matt@Halcyon-Law.com
Counsel for James R. Crosby, Ph. D.

Cc: Florida Athletic Commission
Timothy L. Shipman, Executive Director

STATE OF FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION
FLORIDA ATHLETIC COMMISSION

IN RE: Match Result Dispute / Complaint of:
JAMES R. CROSBY,

Petitioner,

vs.

Agency File No.: _____

FLORIDA ATHLETIC COMMISSION,
an agency of the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation,

Respondent.

_____ /

PETITION FOR FORMAL ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING
AND REQUEST FOR OFFICIAL AGENCY DETERMINATION

James R. Crosby ("Petitioner"), by and through undersigned counsel, and pursuant to sections 120.569 and 120.57(1), Florida Statutes, Chapter 548, Florida Statutes, and Chapter 61K1, Florida Administrative Code, including but not limited to Rules 61K1-3.0001 and 61K1-3.012, Florida Administrative Code, and Rule 28-106.201, Florida Administrative Code, files this Petition for Formal Administrative Hearing and Request for Official Agency Determination concerning the professional mixed martial arts bout described below, and states:

I. PARTIES

1. Petitioner is an individual professional mixed martial arts fighter licensed under Chapter 548, Florida Statutes, who is a resident of Florida. Petitioner's substantial interests are directly affected by the Commission's actions described herein.

2. Respondent, the Florida Athletic Commission ("Commission"), is a commission within the Department of Business and Professional Regulation responsible for the regulation and supervision of professional boxing, kickboxing, and mixed martial arts in Florida pursuant to Chapter 548, Florida Statutes.

II. AGENCY ACTION AT ISSUE

3. On August 9, 2025, Petitioner participated in a sanctioned professional MMA bout against Jackson Stanford at Osceola Heritage Park in Kissimmee, Florida, conducted under the jurisdiction and supervision of the Commission.

4. During round one, Mr. Stanford delivered multiple strikes to the back of Petitioner's head (at least seven to eight), and the referee failed to intervene, stop the action, or otherwise enforce the foul rules. Petitioner tapped thereafter to protect himself from further harm.

5. Following the illegal blows, additional strikes occurred to the side of Petitioner's head. Petitioner contends those later strikes occurred after the repeated illegal blows and the referee's failure to intervene had already compromised Petitioner's ability to intelligently defend himself.

6. At the conclusion of the bout, the referee declared Mr. Stanford the winner by submission (strikes), based on Petitioner's tap, and the result was recorded by the Commission as a loss on Petitioner's official record.

7. On August 10, 2025, Petitioner submitted a written complaint and dispute via email requesting that the Commission review and correct the bout result on the grounds that repeated illegal blows and referee inaction affected the outcome of the match (See Exhibit 1). In support of that request, Petitioner provided the Commission with a video clip identifying the disputed strikes and a photograph of the resulting injury (See Exhibit 2).

8. On or about October 20, 2025, the Commission (through its Executive Director) issued a written denial letter stating that Petitioner's request to overturn the match result was 'denied' and that the result would remain recorded as 'a loss by submission of round one at two minute and thirty nine seconds,' based on the Commission's evaluation of video footage and medical review. A true and correct copy of the letter is attached as Exhibit 3.

9. The Commission has continued to recognize and publish the bout as a loss on Petitioner's official record and has declined to correct the bout result, thereby taking agency action affecting Petitioner's substantial interests.

10. The October 20, 2025 denial letter did not provide the notice required by 120.569(1), Florida Statutes, and Rule 28-106.111(1), Florida Administrative Code, because the letter contains no statement of a right to a hearing, no applicable deadlines, and no indication the action was final.

11. Rule 28-106.111(2), F.A.C., generally provides a 21-day petition deadline from receipt of written notice, but Rule 28-106.111(1) requires notice content consistent with section 120.569(1), and Rule 28-106.111(4) preserves equitable tolling as a defense.

III. STATEMENT OF WHEN AND HOW NOTICE WAS RECEIVED

12. Petitioner received notice of the Commission's denial via a letter dated October 20, 2025, which was transmitted to Petitioner by email and received on or about October 20, 2025.

IV. JURISDICTION AND SUBSTANTIAL INTERESTS

13. The Commission's refusal to correct the bout result and its continued recognition of the bout as a loss constitutes agency action affecting Petitioner's substantial interests within the meaning of section 120.569, Florida Statutes.

14. The official bout result affects, among other things, Petitioner's professional record, rankings, earning capacity, future licensing and matchmaking opportunities, and regulatory reporting obligations.

15. Florida courts and administrative tribunals recognize that professional licensing, earnings, and reputation constitute substantial interests protected by Chapter 120.

16. Petitioner is therefore entitled to a formal administrative hearing under sections 120.569 and 120.57(1), Florida Statutes.

V. REFEREE'S DUTIES AND AUTHORITY UNDER COMMISSION RULES

17. Under Rule 61K1-3.0001(9), Florida Administrative Code, a "Referee" is an individual who enforces the rules relating to the conduct of a bout.

18. Rule 61K1-3.012(3)(c), Florida Administrative Code, requires the referee to call time out and consult with the physician when a participant receives an injury that may incapacitate the participant, and restricts others from rendering aid before the physician has examined the participant.

19. Rule 61K1-3.012(3)(d), Florida Administrative Code, provides the referee authority to: (1) terminate a match when continuation is unreasonably dangerous (technical knockout); (2) disqualify a participant who commits an intentional foul and award the decision to the opponent; (4) terminate a match if a participant has been injured and continuation might subject

the participant to a debilitating or life-threatening injury; and (6) enforce discipline and the rules pertaining to the conduct and behavior of participants and corners.

20. Petitioner contends the referee's failure to intervene after repeated illegal blows, including failure to call time out, consult the physician, deduct points, stop the bout, or disqualify Mr. Stanford breached these duties and materially contributed to Petitioner's decision to tap and the recorded outcome. Although Rule 61K1-3.012(3)(d) confers discretion on the referee as to the appropriate corrective action, that discretion must be exercised consistently with the referee's duty to enforce the Commission's rules and does not extend to permitting a bout to be decided by repeated fouls or to declining all corrective action where illegal conduct materially affects a participant's ability to defend.

21. Petitioner does not seek review of the referee's in-bout decision itself but rather challenges the Commission's subsequent agency action refusing to correct the bout result after notice of rule violations.

VI. DISPUTED ISSUES OF MATERIAL FACT

22. Petitioner disputes the nature, number, and location of the blows delivered by Mr. Stanford, including at least seven to eight strikes to the back of Petitioner's head, and whether those blows constituted illegal fouls under Commission rules and standards applicable to professional MMA.

23. Petitioner disputes whether the referee correctly applied the Commission's rules and exercised the authority described in Rule 61K1-3.012(3)(d), Florida Administrative Code, including whether the referee should have halted the action, consulted the physician, deducted points, stopped the bout, or disqualified Mr. Stanford.

24. Petitioner disputes the Commission's stated conclusion in the October 20, 2025 letter that the strikes were 'clean legal strikes' and 'without violation of the base of the skull and spine,' and disputes the adequacy and correctness of the Commission's video review and medical evaluation. Petitioner disputes whether the referee's failure to intervene allowed the illegal conduct to continue and directly contributed to Petitioner's decision to tap.

25. Petitioner disputes whether subsequent legal strikes occurred only after the repeated illegal blows and referee inaction had already compromised Petitioner's ability to intelligently defend himself, and whether those later strikes negate or cure the effect of the prior fouls.

26. Petitioner disputes whether the violations of Chapter 548, Florida Statutes, and Commission rules affected the result of the match within the meaning of Rule 61K1-3.033 (4)(a), Florida Administrative Code (as reflected in the Commission's published standard for changing match results), such that the decision must be changed as directed by the Commission.

27. Because these and other material facts are in dispute, Petitioner requests a formal administrative hearing under section 120.57(1), Florida Statutes, before an Administrative Law Judge of the Division of Administrative Hearings.

VII. STATEMENT OF ULTIMATE FACTS

28. During round one, Mr. Stanford delivered at least seven to eight strikes to the back of Petitioner's head while Petitioner's head was turned or otherwise positioned such that the blows landed to the back of the skull and/or upper neck region.

29. The referee did not stop the action, did not call time out to consult the physician, did not deduct points, and did not otherwise enforce the foul rules, despite the repeated nature of the illegal blows.

30. After the repeated illegal blows, additional legal strikes occurred to the side of Petitioner's head. Petitioner contends the later strikes occurred only after the illegal blows had already compromised Petitioner's ability to intelligently defend himself.

31. Petitioner tapped thereafter to protect himself from further harm in light of the cumulative illegal blows and the referee's failure to intervene. Petitioner will present video evidence of the bout at the formal hearing.

32. Petitioner will present video evidence of the bout, including both the clip previously provided to the Commission and a complete recording of the bout depicting the full sequence of events before, during, and after the disputed strikes, to demonstrate the number, location, and cumulative effect of the illegal blows and the referee's failure to intervene.

33. Immediately following the bout, Petitioner was treated by the event physician, who applied two staples to a laceration on the back of Petitioner's head (See Exhibit 2).

34. Petitioner contends that, under Chapter 548, Florida Statutes, and applicable Commission rules, the outcome should be corrected to a non-loss result because the match result was affected by rule violations and referee inaction.

VIII. RULES AND STATUTES INVOLVED

35. Sections 120.569 and 120.57(1), Florida Statutes (Administrative hearings affecting substantial interests).

36. Chapter 548, Florida Statutes (Regulation of professional mixed martial arts and Commission authority).

37. Rule 28-106.201, Florida Administrative Code (Petition initiation and required contents).

38. Rule 61K1-3.0001(9), Florida Administrative Code (definition of referee).

39. Rule 61K1-3.012(3)(c) and 61K1-3.012(3)(d)1,2,4,6, Florida Administrative Code (referee duties/authority to consult physician, stop bouts, disqualify for intentional fouls, and enforce rules).

40. Rule 61K1-3.033(4)(a), Florida Administrative Code (Decision final; exceptions; change of result where violations affected the outcome), as applied by the Commission's published standard.

IX. RELIEF REQUESTED

41. Accept this Petition as timely and legally sufficient under sections 120.569 and 120.57, Florida Statutes, and Chapter 28-106, Florida Administrative Code;

42. Determine that there are disputed issues of material fact and refer this matter to the Division of Administrative Hearings for a formal administrative hearing under section 120.57(1), Florida Statutes;

43. After issuance of a Recommended Order by the Administrative Law Judge and the conclusion of any exceptions process, enter a final order (a) finding that violations of Chapter 548 and/or Commission rules occurred and affected the result of the match within the meaning of Rule 61K1-3.033(4)(a), Florida Administrative Code; and (b) directing that the official bout result be changed from a loss for Petitioner to disqualification of opponent, no contest, or other appropriate result;

44. In the alternative, if the Commission declines to treat this Petition as a challenge to existing agency action, issue a proper Notice of Intended Agency Action or Final Order complying with Chapter 120, Florida Statutes, including a clear statement of hearing rights and deadlines; and

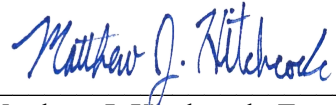
45. Grant such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

Halcyon Law PLLC

11161 East State Road 70, Suite 110-594

Lakewood Ranch, FL 34202

Tel: 888-330-5747



Matthew J. Hitchcock, Esq.

Florida Bar No. 50835

Matt@Halcyon-Law.com

Counsel for Petitioner Dr. James R. Crosby

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

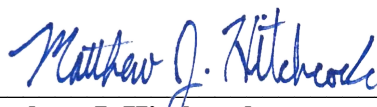
I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the foregoing Petition for Formal Administrative Hearing and Request for Official Agency Determination has been furnished by Federal Express commercial delivery service, United States Mail (first-class), and electronic mail on this 7th day of March 2026, to:

Office of the General Counsel
Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation
2601 Blair Stone Road
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1016
ogc@myfloridalicense.com
(via Federal Express and electronic mail)

Florida Athletic Commission
2601 Blair Stone Road
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1016
FAC@myfloridalicense.com
(via U.S. Mail and electronic mail)

Timothy L. Shipman, Executive Director
Florida Athletic Commission
2601 Blair Stone Road Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1016
timothy.shipman@myfloridalicense.com
(via U.S. Mail and electronic mail)

Halcyon Law PLLC
11161 East State Road 70, Suite 110-594
Lakewood Ranch, FL 34202
Tel: 888-330-5747

By: 

Matthew J. Hitchcock
Florida Bar #50835

EXHIBIT 1

Petitioner's Email

From: **Dr. J.R. Crosby DOCJ, MBA** <james.crosby2010@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Aug 10, 2025 at 10:34 PM
Subject: 8/9 fight James Crosby vs Jackson Stanford
To: <timothy.shipman@myfloridalicense.com>

Good evening Mr. Shipman. I would like to have you when you are able review the fight of myself James Crosby vs. Jackson Stanford on the combat night pro mma card. I was clearly struck in the back of the head multiple times including with an elbow that caused me to be stunned and injured which should have been stopped for a disqualification I believe. I was even given staples in the back of my head way below the hair line after the fight due to those. When possible I would appreciate if you can review the fight to have the loss over turned. Thank you. Combat night states they have additional footage to be reviewed. It happened multiple times through the first round before the stoppage.

EXHIBIT 2

Photograph of Resulting Injury



EXHIBIT 3
Denial Letter



Department of
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

RON DESANTIS, GOVERNOR



MELANIE S. GRIFFIN, SECRETARY

October 20, 2025

Re: James Crosby Formal Complaint Request in Case of Match James Crosby vs. Jackson Stanford, on August 9, 2025, Combat Night Promotions, Florida Athletic Commission Response, Request by James Crosby

Mr. Crosby,

The Florida Athletic Commission has received your complaint, which we understand is of great importance to you, concerning the result rendered of the match between Yourself and Jackson Stanford in an Mixed Martial Arts Match, with Combat Night Promotion, held in Orlando Florida, FL, August 9, 2025.

The Florida Athletic Commission reviewed your complaint thoroughly and with utmost fairness; however, your request to overturn the match results is **denied**. The results will remain officially recorded in the national combat registry as a **loss by submission of round one at two minute and thirty-nine seconds due to clean legal strikes to the head with the strikes to the rear right side of the head without violation of the base of the scull and spine**. The conclusion of the decision was determined upon evaluation of video footage and medical review of pre-post-match physical results.

Our commitment to fairness and impartiality is unwavering and guides every decision we make. We assure you that your case was thoroughly reviewed with these principles in mind.

If you have any questions or need any further information, don't hesitate to get in touch with the Florida Athletic Commission at (850) 488-8500 or email me directly: timothy.shipman@myfloridalicense.com

Sincerely,

Timothy L. Shipman

Executive Director
Florida Athletic Commission
Department of Business & Professional Regulation
2601 Blair Stone Road
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1016

1-850-488-8500 Main
1-850-717-1379 Direct
1-850-491-7584 Cell

From: [Dr. J.R. Crosby DOJ, MBA](#)
To: [Shipman, Timothy](#)
Cc: [Pitt, Gregory](#); [Lawson, Kasey](#)
Subject: Re: James Crosby - Complaint Response - by The Florida Athletic Commission
Date: Tuesday, October 28, 2025 7:41:07 PM
Attachments: [Outlook-kx1mhvek.png](#)
[Outlook-u3hwt3za.png](#)
[Outlook-3l1chax.png](#)

[NOTICE] This message comes from a system outside of DBPR. Please exercise caution when clicking on links and/or providing sensitive information. If you have concerns, please contact your Knowledge Champion or the DBPR Helpdesk.

Good evening I just wanted to confirm the fight footage of the actual foul was received. I was very clearly hit numerous times in the back of the skull well beyond where the legal strikes are allowed and need several staples through the entire back of skull from the hits where even the ref and state officials at the fight stated that as in the illegal strike zone. Thank you

On Mon, Oct 20, 2025 at 10:14 AM Shipman, Timothy
<Timothy.Shipman@myfloridalicense.com> wrote:

Good morning Mr. Crosby,

Attached is the appeal decision letter by the Florida Athletic Commission.



Timothy L. Shipman
Executive Director Florida Athletic Commission

Florida Department of Business & Professional Regulation
Office: (850) 491-7584

Fax: (850) 922-2249

Organizational Email: FAC@MyFloridaLicense.com
Timothy.Shipman@MyFloridaLicense.com



Melanie S. Griffin, Secretary

Ron DeSantis, Governor

May 27, 2026

To: Florida Athletic Commission, Board of Commissioners

Ref: Referee Authority in Mixed Martial Arts Contests and Guidance Regarding Non-Reversal of Referee Decisions

Florida Athletic Commissioners, the purpose of this memorandum is to outline the legal and regulatory authority vested in referees officiating mixed martial arts (“MMA”) contests in the State of Florida and to provide guidance regarding the non-reversal of referee decisions made during the course of a contest. This memorandum relies upon the Unified Rules of Mixed Martial Arts, Chapter 548, Florida Statutes, and Rule 61K1-3.002, Florida Administrative Code.

Applicable Authority:

Chapter 548, Florida Statutes:

Chapter 548, Florida Statutes, governs boxing, kickboxing, and mixed martial arts events regulated by the Florida Athletic Commission.

Section 548.046, Florida Statutes;

Section 548.046 provides for the appointment and use of officials, including referees, for sanctioned combat sports contests.

Section 548.052, Florida Statutes:

Section 548.052 authorizes the Commission to adopt rules governing:

- conduct of contests,
- officiating standards,
- contestant safety,
- fouls,
- decisions, and
- duties and authority of referees.

Pursuant to this statutory authority, the Commission has adopted administrative rules governing referee conduct and authority.

Rule 61K1-3.002, Florida Administrative Code

Rule 61K1-3.002, Florida Administrative Code, establishes the duties and authority of referees officiating combat sports contests within the jurisdiction of the Commission.

Under the rule, referees are charged with:

- maintaining control of the contest,
- enforcing Commission rules,

- supervising contestant conduct,
- determining fouls,
- protecting contestant safety, and
- stopping contests when necessary.

The rule places operational authority for in-contest decisions with the referee as the controlling official inside the ring or cage.

Unified Rules of Mixed Martial Arts

Florida utilizes the Unified Rules of Mixed Martial Arts as the governing standards for MMA contests.

The Unified Rules expressly provide; **the referee is the sole arbiter of a contest.**

The Unified Rules further authorize the referee to:

- stop the contest at any time due to safety concerns,
- determine the occurrence of fouls,
- deduct points,
- disqualify contestants,
- halt action,
- resume action, and
- Otherwise, control the conduct of the bout.

This authority is necessary to ensure fighter safety, maintain order, and preserve the integrity of the contest.

Referee Discretion and finality of In Contest Decisions:

The referee's authority during an MMA contest is discretionary in nature and entitled to substantial deference due to:

- the real-time nature of combat sports officiating,
- immediate safety considerations,
- the referee's proximity to the action, and
- the need for prompt decision-making.

Referee determinations made during the live conduct of a contest, including stoppages, fouls, technical rulings, and safety interventions are generally considered final absent evidence of:

- fraud,
- corruption,
- bad faith,
- collusion,
- clear rule misapplication, or
- procedural irregularity materially affecting the outcome.

Neither Chapter 548, Florida Statutes, nor Rule 61K1-3.002 contemplates routine substitution of judgment by the Commission for discretionary calls properly made by the referee during the contest.

Reversal of Referee Decisions:

Consistent with the Unified Rules of MMA, Chapter 548, Florida Statutes, and Rule 61K1-3.002, referee decisions made during the course of a contest should generally not be reversed unless there exists:

1. a clear violation of applicable rules;
2. evidence of misconduct or impropriety;
3. an administrative or procedural error affecting the official result; or

4. compelling evidence demonstrating that the referee acted outside the scope of authorized discretion.

The referee functions as the final in-contest authority and sole arbiter regarding:

- fighter safety,
- contest control,
- enforcement of rules,
- stoppages,
- fouls, and
- immediate officiating determinations.

Accordingly, Commission review of referee actions should remain limited and deferential in order to preserve:

- regulatory consistency,
- officiating integrity,
- fighter safety protocols, and
- the orderly administration of professional MMA contests.

Conclusion:

Under Florida law and the Unified Rules of Mixed Martial Arts, referees possess broad discretionary authority to control MMA contests and ensure contestant safety. The Unified Rules specifically identify the referee as the “sole arbiter of a contest,” while Chapter 548, Florida Statutes, and Rule 61K1-3.002, Florida Administrative Code, provide the statutory and regulatory framework supporting that authority.

As a matter of regulatory guidance, discretionary referee decisions made during the live conduct of a contest should not be reversed absent extraordinary circumstances involving fraud, misconduct, procedural error, or clear misapplication of governing rules.

If you have any questions or need any further information, don't hesitate to get in touch with the Florida Athletic Commission at (850) 488-8500 or email me directly: timothy.shipman@myfloridalicense.com

Respectfully Submitted,

Timothy L. Shipman

Executive Director
Florida Athletic Commission
Department of Business & Professional Regulation
2601 Blair Stone Road
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1016
President, Association of Boxing Commission
And Combative Sports
1-850-488-8500 Main
1-850-491-7584 Cell

61K1-3.033 Scoring System; Scoring, Criteria; Knockdowns, Fouls; Determination of Win or Draw; Decision Final, Exceptions.

(1) Scoring System.

Scoring shall be by the “10 point must” system. The winner of any round shall be awarded 10 points. The loser of any round shall be awarded one to nine points. When a round is even, each participant shall be awarded 10 points. Partial or incomplete rounds shall be scored. Any point deduction occurring during the partial round will be deducted as if a complete round were being tabulated. In kickboxing, points may be deducted from the points earned from each of the scoring judges for failure to execute the number of required kicks.

(2) Boxing and Kickboxing – Scoring, Criteria; Knockdowns, Fouls. The awarding or deducting of points by the judges and referee, the determination as to the occurrence of knockdowns, knockouts and fouls and the procedure to be used following such occurrence shall be accomplished in the following manner and based on the following criteria, which criteria is listed in the order of importance:

(a) The only fair punch is a punch delivered with the padded knuckle part of the glove to the front or side of the head or body above the belt, and the participant who delivers such a punch shall be awarded points in proportion to its damaging effects.

1. A clean knockdown shall be highly scored. A knockdown is scored as soon as it occurs. The participant who takes advantage of the full 9-second count shall be credited with ring generalship that would not be credited to him if he arose immediately and, in a groggy condition, tried to continue. If he arises before the count of nine and handles himself well, either aggressively or defensively after he is on his feet, he shall be credited with ring generalship. If the participant who is down arises during the count, the referee may, if he deems it advisable, step between the participants for such period of time to assure himself that the participant who has just arisen is able to continue. When so assured, he shall, without loss of time, order both participants to proceed with the match. The following shall be used to determine when a knockdown has occurred and the procedure to be followed after a knockdown has occurred:

a. A participant shall be considered to be knocked down when:

(I) Any part of his body, other than his feet, is on the floor,

(II) He is hanging helplessly over the ropes,

(III) He is rising from a down position, or

(IV) At the conclusion of a round in a match, he leaves the ring and fails to be in the ring when the bell sounds indicating the beginning of the next round.

b. When a participant is knocked down, the referee shall order the opponent to retire to the farthest neutral corner of the ring by pointing to that corner, and shall immediately begin a 10-second count over the participant who is down. He shall announce the passing of the seconds, accompanying the count with a downward motion of his arm. The knockdown timekeeper, by effective signaling, shall provide the referee the correct one second interval for his count. The referee’s count is the official count.

c. If the participant taking the count is still down when the referee calls the count of 10, the referee shall wave both arms to indicate that the participant has been knocked out, provided however, that if the participant is counted out by virtue of his failure to be in the ring when the bell sounds indicating the beginning of the next round, the match shall be terminated and the participant who was counted out shall be declared the loser by technical knockout.

d. If a participant is knocked down and is down at the time the bell rings to end the round, the timekeeper shall continue to keep time and the referee shall continue to count. If the downed participant fails to rise before the count of 10, the participant shall be considered to have been knocked out in the next subsequent round. If the participant rises before the count of 10 and the referee determines that the contest can continue, both participants shall be afforded the full one minute rest period between rounds, beginning when one of their seconds comes onto the ring apron, regardless of the amount of time used during the knockdown and subsequent counting by the referee. If a participant is knocked down and is down at the time the bell rings in the final round, the timekeeper shall continue to keep time and the referee shall continue to count. If the downed participant fails to rise before the count of 10, the participant shall be considered to have been knocked out in the final round.

e. If both participants are knocked down at the same time, counting shall be continued as long as either remains down. If both participants remain down until the count of 10, the match shall be terminated and the decision shall be a technical draw.

f. A participant who has been knocked down shall be required to take a count of eight whether or not he has regained his feet before the count of eight has been reached.

g. If a participant who is down arises before the count of 10 is reached, and then goes down immediately, without being struck,

the referee shall resume the count where he previously stopped counting.

h. When a participant is knocked out, the referee shall perform a full 10 second count before terminating the match, provided however that if, in the opinion of the referee or physician, the participant requires immediate medical attention, the referee shall not be required to count to 10.

i. If a participant is knocked out of or has fallen out of the ring the referee shall immediately begin a count of 20. The referee shall not allow the match to resume until he has at least counted to 18.

j. If the participant who is not down and who has been ordered to a neutral corner, fails to stay in the neutral corner, the referee and knockdown timekeeper shall cease the count and shall not resume the count until the participant has retired to the neutral corner.

k. If a towel is thrown into the ring when a participant is down, the towel shall be ignored and the referee and knockdown timekeeper shall continue to count as if it had not appeared.

2. If a participant slips, falls down or is pushed down, the referee shall order him to his feet immediately.

3. An unintentional foul may result in a deduction of a point, as determined by the referee. The referee shall determine whether or not a point is to be deducted, using as his criteria the severity of the foul and its effect upon the opponent. When the referee determines that he shall deduct a point from a participant, he shall immediately advise the participants, judges, and commission representative supervising the event of such action. The referee shall not tolerate continual and repeated commission of fouls by a participant. The referee shall give warning to a participant who continually and repeatedly commits fouls and when, in the opinion of the referee, the participant has displayed persistent disregard for the rule governing the commission of fouls, the referee shall disqualify the participant, terminate the match and provide such findings to the commission for appropriate action. Points for fouls shall only be deducted in the round in which the fouls occurred. A participant shall not be penalized in a subsequent round for fouls that occurred in a previous round. The following actions are considered to be fouls, the committing of which may result in a deduction of points:

- a. Punching below the belt,
- b. Punching an opponent who is down or is getting up after being down,
- c. Holding an opponent with one hand and punching with the other,
- d. Holding or deliberately maintaining a clinch after several warnings,
- e. Wrestling or kicking,
- f. Butting with the head or shoulder or using the knee,
- g. Punching with an open glove, or with the butt of the hand, the wrist or elbow and all backhand punches,
- h. Striking deliberately at that part of the back near the spine and over the kidneys,
- i. The deliberate use of the rabbit punch or any punch struck at the back of the neck near the base of the skull and which is not the result of the opponent turning his head to avoid a punch,
- j. Jabbing the opponent's eyes with the thumb of the glove,
- k. The use of abusive language in the ring,
- l. Any unsportsmanlike trick or action causing injury to an opponent,
- m. Punching on the break,
- n. Punching after the bell has sounded ending the round,
- o. Roughing at the ropes,
- p. Pushing an opponent around the ring or into the ropes,
- q. Tripping or stepping on the opponent's foot, or
- r. Spitting out of the mouthpiece or allowing the mouthpiece to fall out of the mouth. Referees shall handle ejection of the mouthpiece in the manner described in Rule 61K1-1.009, F.A.C., of these rules,
- s. Punching or flicking with the open glove,
- t. Clinching after warning has been given; and,
- u. The following apply to kickboxing in addition to a. through t. provided above:
 - (I) Kicking with the knee, or kicking into the knee or to the inside region of the thigh, and sweeps to the inside region of the leg or shin-to-shin sweeps,
 - (II) Leg checking which is the act of extending the leg to check an opponent's leg to prevent opponent from kicking,
 - (III) Grabbing or holding an opponent's leg or foot followed by a takedown, strike, or kick,
 - (IV) Anti-joint techniques which is the act of striking or applying leverage against any joint; and,

(V) Holding the ropes with one hand while kicking, punching, or defending with the other hand or the legs.

4. Except in the case of biting or punching while the opponent is down, when the referee determines that a participant has intentionally committed a foul, the referee shall deduct one or more points. Point deductions for intentional fouls shall be accomplished in the same manner as subparagraph 3., above.

a. If an intentional foul causes an injury, and the injury is severe enough to terminate the bout immediately, the participant causing the injury shall lose by disqualification.

b. If an intentional foul causes an injury, and the injury results in the bout being stopped in a subsequent round, the injured participant shall be declared the winner by technical decision if the injured participant is ahead on a majority of the judges' score cards and if not, the bout will be declared a technical draw.

c. If at any time during the match the referee determines that a participant has bitten an opponent, the match will be halted and that participant shall be disqualified.

d. The first offense of punching while down shall result in the deduction of 2 points from the score of the participant who punches his opponent while his opponent is down, unless the first offense, as determined by the referee, is blatant and a clear disregard of the rule. If such determination is made by the referee, the participant committing the foul shall be immediately disqualified and his opponent shall be declared the winner by disqualification. The second offense of punching while down shall result in the disqualification of the participant committing the offense and his opponent shall be declared the winner by disqualification.

(b) Points for aggressiveness shall be awarded to the participant who sustains the actions of a round by the greatest number of skillful attacks;

(c) Consideration shall be given for sportsmanlike conduct, close adherence to the rules and refraining from taking technical advantage of situations which are unfair to his opponent. Points shall be deducted from a participant for unsportsmanlike conduct, disregard of the rules and taking technical advantage of situations which are unfair to his opponent;

(d) Consideration shall be given for clever defensive work such as avoiding or blocking a punch;

(e) Consideration shall be given where ring generalship is conspicuous. Ring generalship includes the ability to:

1. Quickly recognize and take advantage of every opportunity presented,

2. Cope with a diversity of situations,

3. Anticipate and neutralize an opponent's form of attack; and,

4. Force an opponent to adopt a style of boxing at which he is not particularly skillful,

(f) Points shall be deducted when a participant persistently delays the action of a match by clinching, holding or lack of aggressiveness.

(g) In kickboxing, 8 legal kicks delivered above the belt shall be required. For each legal kick less than the minimum number required, a participant shall be penalized by the deduction of 1 point not to exceed 3 points in any one round. Each knockdown shall be recognized as a legal kick delivered above the belt.

(h) Sweeps must be obvious attempts to unbalance the opponent and not an attempt to injure the leg of the opponent. Sweeps must be executed with the arch part of the foot and delivered to the outside portion of the forward leg only.

(3) Determination of Win or Draw.

(a) A participant who knocks out his opponent shall be declared the winner of the match.

(b) If both participants are knocked down at the same time and both participants remain down until the count of 10, the match shall be considered a technical draw.

(c) A participant who is awarded a technical knockout shall be declared the winner of the match.

(d) When the winner of a match is to be determined by the number of points awarded or deducted or by the number of rounds awarded to each participant, the scores for all rounds shall be compiled for each judge and the following criteria shall be used:

1. Three wins shall be declared a win by unanimous decision,

2. Two wins and one draw shall be declared a win by majority decision,

3. Two wins and one loss shall be declared a win by split decision,

4. One win and two draws shall be declared a draw announced as a majority draw,

5. One win, one draw and one loss shall be declared a draw announced as a draw,

6. One win and two losses shall be declared a loss,

7. Three draws shall be declared a draw,

8. Two draws and one loss shall be declared a draw,
9. One draw and two losses shall be declared a loss; and,
10. Three losses shall be declared a loss.

(e) A participant shall not be declared the winner of a match on a claim of low blow foul, and a participant shall not lose a match by reason of an unintentional low blow foul.

(f) No participant shall be awarded a match based on an unintentional foul unless the foul was unintentional butting. If a match is temporarily halted because of an unintentional foul, the referee shall determine whether the participant who has been fouled can continue. If the referee determines that the participant can continue, the referee shall order the match to be continued. If the referee determines that the participant is unable to continue the match as a result of an unintentional foul other than for butting, the referee will give the injured participant five (5) minutes in which to recover and continue. If at the end of the five (5) minute recovery period the fouled participant is unable to continue the boxing match, the fouled participant shall be declared the loser by technical knockout. During the five (5) minute recovery period neither participants' seconds may assist the participants in any way. If a participant is unintentionally butted in a match so that he cannot continue, the referee shall declare the result of the match using the following criteria:

1. During a four round boxing match, if the unintentional butt occurs prior to the scoring of the third round and the fouled participant is unable to continue, the result shall be a no decision,

2. During a six, eight, ten or twelve round boxing match, if the unintentional butt occurs prior to the scoring of the fourth round and the fouled participant is unable to continue, the result shall be a no decision,

3. During a four round boxing match, if the unintentional butt occurs in any round subsequent to the scoring of the third round or occurs prior to the scoring of third round but the participant is not determined to be unable to continue until after the scoring of the third round, the determination of win, loss or draw shall be based upon the score cards of the judges as a technical decision whereby partial rounds will be scored,

4. During a six, eight, ten or twelve round boxing match, if the unintentional butt occurs in any round subsequent to the scoring of the fourth round or occurs prior to the scoring of fourth round but the participant is not determined to be unable to continue until after the scoring of the fourth round, the determination of win, loss or draw shall be based upon the score cards of the judges as a technical decision whereby partial rounds will be scored,

(g) When an injury is produced by a fair punch but because of the severity of the injury the match cannot continue, the injured participant shall be declared the loser by a technical knockout.

(h) If a participant refuses to continue a match while physically able to do so, the referee shall disqualify him, award the match to his opponent, and shall direct that the purse be withheld. The referee shall provide a written report to the commission. If the commission determines that the participant refused to continue a match while physically able to do so, the commission shall require that the participant's purse shall be forfeited to the commission and shall impose a period of suspension for a period not less than 6 months.

(i) In any case where the referee determines that both participants are not honestly competing, that a knockdown is intentional and predetermined by both parties or a foul has been pre-arranged so as to cause the match to be terminated, he shall not finish the knockdown count or disqualify either participant for fouling or render a decision, but shall instead terminate the match not later than the end of the round and order the promoter to surrender the purses of both participants to the commission representative pending an investigation of the alleged violation. The announcer or referee shall inform the audience that no decision has been rendered.

(j) If, in the opinion of the physician, the referee has received an injury, the seriousness of which prevents him from continuing to officiate, and the commission representative is unable to locate another qualified person to act as referee, the match shall be terminated, no decision shall be rendered and the purses of both participants shall be withheld. The commission shall then rule as to the disposition of the purses.

(4) Decision Final, Exceptions.

(a) A decision rendered at the conclusion or termination of any match is final and shall not be changed unless it is determined that any of the following occurred:

1. There was collusion affecting the result of any match,
2. The compilation of the round or match score cards of the referee and judges shows an error which indicates that the decision was awarded to the wrong participant,
3. There was a violation of Rule 61K1-1.0043, F.A.C., of these rules, relating to drugs or foreign substances, or

4. There was a violation of Chapter 548, F.S., or the rules set forth herein which violation affected the result of the match.

(b) If it is determined that any of the above occurred, the decision rendered shall be changed as directed by the commission.

(5) Conditions of the Match in Mixed Martial Arts.

(a) The conditions of the match for any mixed martial arts match as proposed to the executive director shall be deemed to include the following as fouls:

1. Butting with the head,

2. Eye-gouging of any kind,

3. Biting,

4. Hair pulling,

5. Fishhooking,

6. Groin attacks of any kind,

7. Small joint manipulation to include fingers and toes,

8. Putting a finger into any orifice, cut, or laceration on an opponent,

9. Striking to the spine or back of the head to include, without limitation, hand strikes, punches, kicks and knees,

10. Striking downward using the point of the elbow,

11. Throat strikes of any kind to include, without limitation, grabbing the trachea,

12. Clawing, pinching, twisting of the flesh,

13. Grabbing the clavicle,

14. Kicking or kneeing to the head of a grounded opponent, or stomping a grounded opponent. An opponent is grounded when any part of the body, other than the soles of the feet are touching the fighting area floor. To be grounded, the palm of one hand (a flat palm) must be down, and/or any other body part must be touching the fighting area floor. A single knee or arm makes the fighter grounded without having to have any other body part in touch with the fighting area floor.

15. Kicking to the kidney with the heel of the foot,

16. Spiking an opponent to the canvas on the head, crown of the head, or neck,

17. Throwing an opponent out of the ring or fenced area,

18. Holding the shorts or gloves of your opponent,

19. Spitting at your opponent,

20. Engaging in any unsportsmanlike conduct that causes injury to an opponent,

21. Holding the ropes or fencing,

22. Attacking an opponent during the rest period, while under the care of the referee or ringside physician, or after the bell has sounded the end of a round,

23. Flagrant disregard for instructions of the referee,

24. Timidity to include, without limitation, avoiding contact with an opponent, intentionally spitting or consistently dropping the mouthpiece, or faking an injury,

25. Interference by the corner,

26. Throwing in the towel by the corner,

27. Using abusive language in the ring or fenced area,

28. In the standing position, outstretching fingers toward an opponent's face or eyes.

(b) A mandatory 1 point deduction will be standard for any intentional foul that produces an injury.

Rulemaking Authority 548.003, 548.006 FS. Law Implemented 548.057 FS. History—New 4-6-89, Amended 8-28-89, 1-1-90, 1-9-91, Formerly 7F-1.035, Amended 9-10-95, 4-3-00, 6-1-04, Formerly 61K1-1.035, Amended 8-24-17, 6-21-22.

61K1-3.004 Physician; License and Duties; Authority.

(1) License.

(a) No person shall act as a physician in any match held in Florida without first having obtained a physician license as required by Chapter 548, F.S.

(b) No physician shall have financial or pecuniary interest in any participant under the jurisdiction of the commission.

(c) No physician shall also be licensed as a booking agent, promoter, foreign copromoter, concessionaire, manager, matchmaker or representative of a booking agent and shall not act as a booking agent, manager, matchmaker or representative of a booking agent.

(2) In addition to the duties, responsibilities and authority outlined in these rules, a physician shall also have the following duties, responsibilities, and authority:

(a) Two physicians shall be present at each match and render service and assistance as provided for in these rules. A physician shall be located near each participant's corner in a designated seat for the duration of each match. No match shall be allowed to begin or continue unless at least one physician is in his designated seat.

(b) If, at any time during the match, the physician is of the opinion that a participant has received severe punishment or injury, or that to continue the match would pose the threat of unreasonable harm or injury to a participant, the physician shall advise the referee that the match should be terminated. In this event, however, **the referee is the sole arbiter of the match**, and, as such, the referee is the only individual authorized to stop a match.

(c) In the event of injury to or illness of any person under the jurisdiction of the commission and while located on the premises where a program of matches is being conducted, the physician shall have complete charge of such person, shall provide medical assistance, and shall be accorded the full cooperation of all commission representatives and licensees present.

(d) Whenever a knockout occurs in any match, the physician shall examine the participant knocked out at the time of the knockout and in the dressing room immediately after the match. In the event of a knockout or other serious injury, the physician shall remain on the premises to provide medical attention as needed. When the physician is satisfied that the injured or knocked out participant has recovered to the extent that the physician releases the participant from the physician's care, the physician shall, prior to releasing participant, instruct participant as to the danger signs of which the participant should be aware and which would indicate the need to seek immediate medical attention.

(e) The physician shall not leave the premises until after the decision in the final match has been rendered, physician is satisfied that physician's services are no longer necessary and the executive director or commission representative have cleared participant to leave.

Rulemaking Authority 548.003 FS. Law Implemented 548.003(2), 548.017, 548.021, 548.046, 548.047 FS. History—New 2-7-85, Formerly 7F-1.10, Amended 5-8-88, 4-6-89, 5-13-90, Formerly 7F-1.010, Amended 9-10-95, 4-3-00, 6-1-04, 12-6-10, Formerly 61K1-1.010, Amended 12-5-24.

61K1-3.012 Referee; License and Duties.

(1) License.

(a) No person shall act as a referee in a match held in Florida without first having obtained a referee license.

(b) If, during the course of a match, the referee receives an injury or is unable to continue acting in his capacity as referee, the commission representative shall:

1. Select another qualified person to act as referee for the remainder of the match and program of matches; or
2. If no qualified person is available, cancel the remainder of the match and program of matches.

(c) No person who has financial or pecuniary interest in any participant shall be granted a referee license.

(d) No referee shall also be licensed as a booking agent, manager, matchmaker, participant, representative of a booking agent, second or trainer and shall not act as a booking agent, manager, matchmaker, participant, representative of a booking agent, second or trainer.

(e) No referee licensed in this state shall act as a referee at any boxing, mixed martial arts or kickboxing match in a state without a state boxing commission or similar governmental authority unless the match is supervised by a state boxing commission or similar governmental authority.

(f) No referee shall also serve as a supervisor or serve on the ratings committee or recommend boxers to the ratings committee for a sanctioning body. The applicant must have a demonstrated record and evidence that he/she has the ability to perform the duties outlined below. The executive director may issue a temporary certificate pending final action by the Commission.

(2) Applicants for a professional referee's license will be reviewed, evaluated and processed in the following manner:

(a) Any person desiring to become licensed for the first time as a professional boxing referee, shall submit the appropriate application for license.

(b) At its first meeting after November 1 of each year, and following the submittal of the application for license, the commission shall render a decision as to whether or not the license will be granted.

(c) Applicants for a referee license will be permitted to officiate at the discretion of the executive director for observation purposes. The executive director shall cause to be issued a temporary certificate for this purpose by collecting a license application and fee from the applicant. The executive director shall be cognizant of the relative importance of the match, the number of scheduled rounds and any other factors that may contribute to a difficult set of circumstances for a referee early in his career.

(d) Applicants for a referee license will be admitted free of charge to professional boxing venues for the purpose of observing and interacting with licensed referees, provided however, that in the case of television events and such other events which by their nature severely limit ringside access, permission to sit at ringside will not be authorized. In the case that an event is sold out, authorization will not be granted to attend the event. Travel and other expenses will be borne solely by the applicant.

(e) At its first meeting after November 1 of each year, the executive director shall recommend to the commission a list of professional referees to be licensed or renewed as officials in this state and the commission shall approve or disapprove the recommendations.

(3) Duties.

(a) A referee shall submit to an annual physical examination to establish physical fitness. The result of this examination shall be filed with the commission. The executive director or commission representative may require the referee to be examined by a physician immediately prior to officiating a match at his discretion.

(b) Prior to the beginning of each match, and periodically for the duration of the match, the referee shall examine the participants' gloves, equipment, and person to ensure that no unsafe or improper condition exists. In boxing and kickboxing, before allowing a match to continue after a participant has been knocked down, the referee shall wipe clean the surface of the gloves of the participant who was knocked down.

(c) When a participant receives an injury which the referee believes may incapacitate the participant, the referee shall call time out and consult with the physician as to the advisability of allowing the match to continue. No person shall attempt to render aid to or move a participant other than what may be required to move the participant inside the ropes or to remove the mouthpiece of a participant who has been counted out during the course of a match before the physician has examined the participant. However, the referee shall remove the participant's mouthpiece.

(d) The referee shall have the authority to:

1. Terminate a match at any time when the referee determines that one of the participants has such superior skills or ability as to make such match unreasonably dangerous to the other participant and shall be recorded as a technical knockout;

2. Disqualify a participant who commits an intentional foul and award the decision to the opponent;
3. Terminate a match and disqualify either or both participants if the referee determines that either or both participants are not competing in earnest;
4. Terminate a match if either participant has been injured and is in such condition that to continue the match might subject the participant to a debilitating or life threatening injury;
5. Temporarily or permanently halt a match if the referee believes that a significant health hazard exists, when such hazard could reasonably be anticipated to create a significant danger to the participants or the public; and,
6. Enforce discipline and the rules, as set forth herein, pertaining to the conduct and behavior of participants, managers, trainers, and seconds.

Rulemaking Authority 548.003 FS. Law Implemented 548.003(2), 548.017, 548.056, 548.057 FS. History—New 2-7-85, Amended 11-24-85, Formerly 7F-1.19, Amended 4-6-89, 1-1-90, 1-9-91, Formerly 7F-1.019, Amended 9-10-95, 4-3-00, 6-1-04, Formerly 61K1-1.019.



ASSOCIATION OF BOXING COMMISSIONS AND COMBATIVE SPORTS UNIFIED RULES OF MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

AS APPROVED APRIL 2001. AMENDED 2010. AMENDED AUGUST 3, 2016. AMENDED WITH PROCEDURES JULY 26, 2017. AMENDED WITH PROCEDURES AUGUST 1, 2018. AMENED WITH PROCEDURE AUGUST 1, 2019. AMENED WITH PROCEDURES AUGUST 1, 2023. AMENDED WITH RULE CHANGES JULY 23, 2024, REQUESTED IMPLEMENTATION DATE OF NOVEMEBER 2024.AMENDED WITH NONSUBSTAINAL CHANGES AUGUST 6, 2025.

Note: These are the Official Unified Rules of MMA. Any other form of these rules may not be called the “Unified Rules of MMA” and shall be referred to by the name of the commission sanctioning the/an event.

1. Each round shall consist of a five (5) minute duration (professional), with a one (1) minute rest period between rounds.
 - a. No contests shall exceed five (5) rounds and/or twenty-five (25) minutes.
 - b. Bouts may consist of one (1), two (2), three (3), four (4), or five (5) rounds, with a five (5) minute duration.
 - c. No contestant shall exceed competing more than five (5) rounds and/or twenty-five (25) minutes of fighting in a twenty-four (24) hour period.
2. The referee is the sole arbiter of a bout and is the only individual authorized to stop a contest. This shall not preclude a video or other review of a decision under the procedure of the applicable regulatory authority if a protest is filed claiming a clear rule violation.
 - a. The authority of a referee begins when the inspector(s) exit the cage/ring and does not end until the inspector(s) re-enter the cage/ring, upon conclusion of the fight.
3. Instant replay may be used to review a “Fight Ending Sequence” and shall only be used after a fight has been officially stopped. Once instant replay has been used to review a fight ending sequence, the fight shall not be resumed.
4. All fighters are required to wear a mouthpiece during competition. The round cannot begin without the mouthpiece. If the mouthpiece is dislodged during competition, the referee will call time and have the mouthpiece replaced at the first opportune moment, without interfering with the immediate action. Points may be deducted by the referee if he/she feels the mouthpiece is being purposefully spit out.
5. If an MMA bout is being conducted in a ring and is a fighter is knocked out of the ring, the fighter must return to the ring unassisted by spectators or his/her seconds. If assisted by anyone, the fighter may lose points or be disqualified with such a decision being within the sole discretion of the referee. Once knocked from the ring, the competitor will have five (5) minutes to return to fighting surface, similar to an accidental foul, but shall be examined by the ringside physician before returning to action.
6. The reapplication of petroleum jelly or another similar substance, may be allowed between rounds and shall only be applied by an approved cutman or licensed cornerman, all other foreign substances are not allowed.
7. In the case of a laceration, the topical use and application of the following approved medicines is allowed:
 - a. Solution of adrenaline 1/1000.
 - b. Avitene
 - c. Thrombin

8. In instances where the fight has to be concluded due to unforeseen, non-combat related issues, the fight may go to the scorecards if:
 - a. If the bout is scheduled for 3 rounds, 2 rounds of the contest must be completed
 - b. If the bout is scheduled for 5 rounds, 3 rounds of the contest must be completed
9. Hand Wraps.
 - a. A maximum of one roll (no more than 2" wide by 15 yards in length) of white, soft, cloth gauze is permitted per hand. The gauze may not exceed the wrist of the competitor's glove. The exposed thumb is an option to be protected.
 - b. A maximum of one roll (no more than 1.25" wide by 10' in length) of white athletic tape is permitted per hand. The tape may not exceed the wrist of the competitor's gloves. Tape may be placed through the fingers but may not cover the knuckles. The exposed thumb is an option to be protected.
 - c. A single layer of elastic or flex-type tape is allowed to be applied over the completed wrap.
 - d. Approved tape/gauze of all brands may be allowed.
10. Joint/Body Coverings.
 - a. Other than the competitor's hands, there will be no taping, covering, or protective gear, of any kind, on the upper body. This includes, but is not limited to: joint sleeves, padding, or any form of brace/body tape.
 - b. A competitor may use a soft neoprene type sleeve to cover only the knee and/or ankle joints. Approved sleeves may not have: padding, Velcro, plastic, metal, ties, or any other material considered to be unsafe or that may create an unfair advantage. Tape, gauze, or any materials other than the approved sleeves are not permitted.
11. Cage/Ring Attire.
 - a. All mixed martial artists will be required to wear such protective gear as deemed necessary by the Commission.
 - b. Male contestants shall not wear any form of clothing on their upper body.
 - c. Male and female mixed martial artists shall wear the appropriate trunks, mouthpiece, and gloves. Male mixed martial artists shall also wear the appropriate groin protection.
 - d. Female mixed martial artists shall wear a short sleeved (above the elbow) or sleeveless form fitting rash guard and/or sports bra(s). No loose-fitting tops and/or breast protectors shall be allowed. Female competitors will follow the same requirements for bottom covering as the male competitors, minus the requirement for groin protection.
 - e. The hem of the trunks may not extend below the knee.
 - f. Fighting shorts/trunks shall not have exposed Velcro, pockets, or zippers.
 - g. Mixed martial artists in the same match, contest, or exhibition may wear different color trunks or be designated by glove taping and/or glove coloring to the corner they are assigned.
 - h. Mixed martial artists shall not wear shoes in the cage or ring.
 - i. When deemed necessary by the referee all mixed martial artists shall have their hair secured in a manner that does not interfere with the vision and safety of either contestant.
 - i. No object can be worn to secure the contestant's hair which may cause injury to either contestant.
 - j. The wearing of jewelry will be strictly prohibited during all contests.
 - k. Wearing body cosmetics shall be prohibited during all contests. Wearing facial cosmetics shall be at the discretion of the commission and/or referee.

Standing up or Breaking Fighters

The Referee shall either stand up or break the fighters when neither fighter is able to or fails to demonstrate real, significant and/or sustained effort to advance towards finishing the fight by any method. Simply maintaining what may be perceived as a superior position will not be considered effort to advance towards finishing the fight nor grounds for a guaranteed opportunity to maintain that position.

Fouls

1. Butting with the head;
 - a. The head may not be used as a striking instrument in any fashion. Any use of the head as a striking instrument whether head to head, head to body or otherwise is illegal.
2. Eye gouging of any kind;
 - a. Eye gouging by means of fingers, chin, or elbow is illegal. Legal strikes or punches that contact the fighter's eye socket are not eye gouging and shall be considered legal attacks.
3. Biting or spitting at an opponent;
 - a. Biting in any form is illegal. A fighter must recognize that a referee may not be able to physically observe some actions and must make the referee aware if they are being bit during an exhibition of unarmed combat.
4. Fish Hooking;
 - a. Any attempt by a fighter to use their fingers in a manner that attacks their opponent's mouth, nose or ears, stretching the skin to that area will be considered "Fish hooking". Fish hooking generally is the placing of fingers into the mouth or your opponent and pulling your hands in opposing directions while holding onto the skin of your opponent.
5. Hair pulling;
 - a. Pulling of the hair in any fashion is an illegal action. A fighter may not grab a hold of his opponent's hair to control their opponent in any way. If a fighter has long hair, they may not use their hair as a tool for holding or choking in any fashion.
6. Spiking the opponent to the canvas onto the head or neck (pile-driving);
 - a. Any throw with an arc to its motion is to be considered a legal throw. It does not matter if the opponents head hits the canvas. A pile driver is considered to be any throw where you control your opponent's body placing their feet up in the air with their head straight down and then forcibly drives the opponents head into the canvas or flooring material. It should be noted when a fighter is placed into a submission hold by their opponent, if that fighter is capable of elevating their opponent, they may bring that opponent down in any fashion they desire because they are not in control of their opponent's body. The fighter who is attempting the submission can either adjust their position or let go of their hold before being slammed to the canvas.
7. Strikes to the spine or the back of the head;
 - a. The back of the head starts at the Crown of the head with a one (1) inch variance to either side, running down the back of the head to the occipital junction.
 - b. This area stretches out at the occipital junction (nape of the neck) to cover the entire width of the neck. It then travels down the spine with a one (1) inch variance from the spine's centerline, including the tailbone.
8. Throat strikes of any kind and/or grabbing the trachea;
 - a. No directed throat strikes are allowed. A directed attack would include a fighter pulling his opponents head in a way to open the neck area for a striking attack. A fighter may not gouge their fingers or thumb into their opponent's neck or trachea in an attempt to submit their opponent. If during stand-up action of a fight a strike is thrown and the strike lands in the throat area of the fighter, this shall be viewed as a clean and legal blow.
9. Fingers outstretched toward an opponent's face/eyes;
 - a. In the standing position, a fighter that moves their arm(s) toward their opponent with an open hand, fingers pointing at the opponent's face/eyes, will be a foul. Referees are to prevent this dangerous behavior by communicating clearly to fighters. Fighters are directed to close their fists or point their fingers straight up in the air when reaching toward their opponent.
11. Groin attacks of any kind;
 - a. Any attack to the groin area including, striking, grabbing, pinching or twisting is illegal. It should be clear that groin attacks are the same for men and women.

12. Kneeing and/or Kicking the head of a grounded opponent.
 - a. A grounded fighter is defined as:
A fighter shall be considered grounded and may not be legally kneed or kicked to the head when any part of their body other than their hands or feet is in contact with the canvas (ground).
13. Stomping of a grounded fighter.
 - a. Stomping is considered any type of striking action with the feet where the fighter lifts their leg up bending their leg at the knee and initiating a striking action with the bottom of their foot or heel.
 - b. Axe kicks are not stomping. Standing foot stops are NOT a foul. As such, this foul does not include stomping the feet of a standing fighter.
14. Holding opponent's gloves or shorts.
 - a. A fighter may not control their opponent's movement by holding onto their opponent's shorts or gloves. A fighter may hold onto or grab their opponent's hand as long as they are not controlling the hand only by using the material of the glove, but by actually gripping the hand of the opponent. It is legal to hold onto your own gloves or shorts.
15. Holding or grabbing the fence or ropes with fingers or toes;
 - a. A fighter may put their hands on the fence and push off of it at any time. A fighter may place their feet onto the cage and have their toes go through the fencing material at any time. When a fighter's fingers or toes go through the cage and grab hold of the fence and start to control either their body position or their opponent's body position it now becomes an illegal action. A fighter may not grab the ropes or wrap their arms over or under the ring ropes at any time. The fighter may not purposely step through the ropes. If a fighter is caught holding the fence, cage or ring rope material the referee may issue a one-point deduction from the offending fighters scorecard if the foul caused a substantial effect in the fight. If a point deduction for holding the fence occurs, and because of the infraction, the fouling fighter ends up in a superior position due to the foul, the fighters should be re-started by the referee, standing in a neutral position.
16. Small joint manipulation;
 - a. Fingers and Toes are small joints. Wrists, Ankles, Knees, Shoulders and Elbows are all large joints. Grabbing the majority of fingers/toes at once is allowed.
17. Throwing an opponent out of the ring or caged area;
 - a. A fighter shall not throw their opponent out of the ring or cage.
18. Intentionally placing a finger into any orifice, or into any cut or laceration of your Opponent;
 - a. A fighter may not place their fingers into an open laceration in an attempt to enlarge the cut. A fighter may not place their fingers into an opponent's, nose, ears, mouth, or any body cavity.
19. Clawing, pinching, twisting the flesh;
 - a. Any attack that targets the fighter's skin by clawing at the skin or attempting to pull or twist the skin to apply pain is illegal.
20. Timidity (avoiding contact, or consistently dropping the mouthpiece, or faking an injury);
 - a. Timidity is defined as any fighter who purposely avoids contact with his opponent or runs away from the action of the fight. Timidity can also be called by the referee for any attempt by a fighter to receive time by falsely claiming a foul, injury, or purposely dropping or spitting out their mouthpiece or other action designed to stall or delay the action of the fight

21. Use of abusive language in the fighting area.
 - a. The use of abusive language is not allowed during MMA competition. It is the sole responsibility of the referee to determine when language crosses over the line to abusive. It should be clear that fighters can talk during a match. The mere use of auditory language is not a violation of this rule. Examples of abusive language would be (Racially motivated or Derogatory language).
22. Flagrant disregard of the referee's instructions;
 - a. A fighter MUST follow the instructions of the referee at all times. Any deviation or non-compliance may result in the fighter's disqualification.
23. Unsportsmanlike conduct that causes an injury to opponent;
 - a. Every athlete competing in the sport of MMA is expected to represent the sport in a positive light emphasizing sportsmanship and humility. Any athlete that disrespects the rules of the sport or attempts to inflict unnecessary harm on a competitor who has been either taken out of the competition by the referee or has tapped out of the competition shall be viewed as being unsportsmanlike.
24. Attacking an opponent after the bell has sounded the end of the period of unarmed combat.
 - a. The end of a round is signified by the sound of the bell and the call of time by the referee. Once the referee has made the call of time, any offensive actions initiated by the fighter shall be considered after the bell and illegal.
25. Attacking an opponent on or during the break;
 - a. A fighter shall not engage their opponent in any fashion during a time-out or break of action in competition.
26. Attacking an opponent who is under the care of the referee;
 - a. *Once the referee has called for a stop of the action to protect a fighter who has been incapacitated or is unable to continue to compete in the fight, fighters shall cease all offensive actions against their opponent.*
27. Interference from a mixed martial artist's corner or seconds;
 - a. Interference is defined as any action or activity aimed at disrupting the fight or causing an unfair advantage to be given to a corner's combatant. Corners are not allowed to distract the referee or influence the actions of the referee in any fashion.

A. Intentional Fouls

1. If an intentional foul causes an injury, and the injury is severe enough to terminate the bout immediately, the fighter causing the injury shall lose by disqualification.
2. If an intentional foul causes an injury and the bout is allowed to continue, the referee shall notify the authorities and deduct two (2) points from the fighter who caused the foul. Point deductions for intentional fouls will be mandatory.
3. If an intentional foul causes a laceration and/or swelling and the bout is allowed to continue, and the injury results in the fight being stopped by either another legal or illegal strike, after:
 - 2 of the 3 scheduled rounds is completed or.
 - 3 of the 5 scheduled rounds is completed.

The injured fighter will win by TECHNICAL DECISION if they are ahead on the score cards; and the bout will result in a TECHNICAL DRAW if the injured fighter is behind or even on the score cards.
4. If the fighter injures himself/herself while attempting to intentionally foul their opponent, the referee will not act in their favor, and this injury shall be the same as one produced by a fair blow.
5. If the referee feels that a fighter has conducted themselves in an unsportsmanlike manner, they may stop the action of the fight to deduct points or stop the bout to disqualify the fighter.

B. Accidental Fouls

1. If an accidental foul causes an injury severe enough for the referee to stop the bout, the bout will result in either a NO CONTEST or DISQUALIFICATION if stopped before:

- 2 of the 3 scheduled rounds is completed or,
- 3 of the 5 scheduled rounds is completed.

2. If an accidental foul causes an injury severe enough for the referee to stop the bout after:

- 2 of the 3 scheduled rounds is completed or,
- 3 of the 5 scheduled rounds is completed.

The bout will result in a TECHNICAL DECISION awarded to the fighter who is ahead on the score cards at the time the bout is stopped.

i. Partial or incomplete rounds will be scored. If no action has occurred, the round should be scored as an even round. This is at the discretion of the judges.

3. If a fighter, during the course of a round, visibly loses control of bodily function (vomit, urine, feces), the fight shall be stopped by the referee and the fighter shall lose the contest by a Technical Knockout (TKO) due to Medical Stoppage.

i. In the event a loss of bodily function occurs in the rest period between rounds, the ringside physician shall be called in to evaluate if the combatant can continue. If the combatant is not cleared by the ringside physician to continue, that combatant shall lose by a Technical Knockout (TKO) due to Medical Stoppage.

ii. If fecal matter becomes apparent at any time, the contest shall be halted by the referee, and the offending combatant shall lose by a Technical Knockout (TKO) due to Medical Stoppage

C. Foul Procedures: If a foul is committed, the referee shall:

1. Call Time;
2. Check the fouled mixed martial artist's condition and safety; and
3. Assess the foul for potential point(s) deductions and/or time considerations.
4. During all time out procedures, there shall be no coaching of a contestant permitted.

D. Eye Poke Foul Procedure:

1. Once the Referee calls time for the foul, the fighter is permitted the use of a cold compress or wet towel on the injured eye.
 2. Unless the fighter requires immediate medical attention the Referee and Ringside Physician shall allow the fighter time to compose themselves so the fighter can then give a verbal "yes" or "no" that they can see.
- **This procedure does not preclude the Ringside Physician from being able to evaluate the injury at any time during the timeout.**

E. Time Consideration:

1. If a foul to the groin or eye poke occurs and the competitor is able to continue, the fouled contestant may have up to five (5) minutes to recover.
2. Fighters injured severely enough by a foul to require medical consultation may be given up to five (5) minutes, at the referee's discretion, for evaluation by the ringside physician before a decision to continue is rendered.
3. At no time may a referee call a timeout to evaluate the impact of a legal strike, other than when a laceration is present.

F. Utilizing a Cutperson after a foul but during a round:

1. When a Fighter is the recipient of either an accidental or intentional foul and receives a laceration from the illegal action, the Referee in charge after calling time and putting the fighters into neutral corners MAY call upon the cutperson assigned (or in regional shows a corner with no coaching permitted) to the injured fighters corner to enter the cage during the 5-minute break and administer aid to the cut to help stop the bleeding. Then when cleared by the Ringside Physician the fighter can return to the action, with no more than the 5-minute time elapsed. The cutperson may only work on the cut or cuts associated with the foul.

A. Judging Criteria

- a. All bouts will be evaluated and scored by a minimum of three (3) judges.
- b. The 10 Point Must System will be the standard of scoring about.
 - i. Under the 10-Point Must Scoring System, 10 points must be awarded to the winner of the round and nine points or less must be awarded to the loser, except for a rare even round, which is scored (10-10).
- c. Judges shall evaluate Mixed Martial Arts techniques, such as effective striking/grappling(Plan A), effective aggressiveness(Plan B),and control of the fighting area(Plan C).Plans B and C are not taken into consideration unless Plan A is weighed as being even.
- d. Evaluations shall be made in the specific order in which the techniques appear in (c)above ,giving the most weight in scoring to effective striking/grappling, and effective aggressiveness, and control of the fighting area.
- e. Effective striking is judged by determining the damage/effect of legal strikes landed by a contestant solely based on the results of such legal strikes. Effective grappling is assessed by the successful executions and impactful/effective result(s)coming from: takedown(s), submission attempt(s), achieving an advantageous position(s) and reversal(s).
- f. Effective aggressiveness means aggressively making attempts to finish the fight.
- g. Fighting area control is assessed by determining who is dictating the pace, place and position of the bout.

1.Thefollowing objective scoring criteria shall be utilized by the judges when scoring a round:

- (i) Around is to be scored as a 10-10 Round when both contestants have competed for whatever duration of time in the round and there is no difference or advantage between either fighter;
- (ii)Around is to be scored as a 10-9 Round when a contestant wins by a close margin; where the winning fighter lands the better strikes or utilizes effective grappling during the round;
- (iii)A round is to be scored as a 10-8 Round when a contestant wins the round by a large margin by damage, dominance, and duration of striking or grappling in a round.
- (iv)A round is to be scored as a 10-7 Round when a contestant is completely dominated by damage, dominance, and duration of striking or grappling in a round.

2. Damage: A judge shall assess if a fighter damages their opponent significantly in the round, even though they may not have dominated the action. Damage includes visible evidence such as swelling and lacerations. Damage shall also be assessed when a fighter's actions, using striking and/or grappling, lead to a diminishing of their opponent's energy, confidence, abilities and spirit. All of these come as a direct result of damage. When a fighter is damaged by strikes, by lack of control and/or ability, this can create defining moments in the round and shall be assessed with great value.

3. Dominance: As MMA is an offensive based sport, dominance of a round can be seen in striking when the losing fighter is forced to continually defend, with no counters or reaction taken when openings present themselves. Dominance in the grappling phase can be seen by fighter staking dominant positions in the fight and utilizing those positions to attempt fight ending submissions or attacks. Merely holding a dominant position(s) shall not be a primary factor in assessing dominance. What the fighter does with those positions is what must be assessed. In the absence of dominance in the grappling phase, as set forth in paragraph 3 of the promulgated rules, to be considered dominate, there must be a singularly or in combination, some types of submission attempts, strikes, or an overwhelming pace which is measured by improved or aggressive positional changes that cause the losing fighter to consistently be in a defensive or reactive mode

4. Duration: Duration is defined by the time spent by one fighter effectively attacking, controlling, and impacting their opponent; while the opponent offers little to no offensive output. A judge shall assess duration by recognizing the relative time in a round when one fighter takes and maintains full control of the effective offense. This can be assessed both standing and grounded.

5. Scoring of Incomplete Rounds: There should be scoring of incomplete rounds. If the referee penalizes either contestant, then the appropriate points shall be deducted when the scorekeeper calculates the final score for the partial round

B. Types of Decisions

a. Submission by:

- i. Tap Out: When a contestant physically uses of their body to indicate that he or she no longer wishes to continue; or
- ii. Verbal Tap Out: When a contestant verbally announces or voluntarily/involuntarily screams in pain or distress to the referee that they do not wish to continue;
- iii. Technical Submission: When a legal submission act results in unconsciousness or broken/dislocated bone(s)/joint(s).

b. Technical Knockout (TKO) by:

- i. Referee Stoppage: the referee stops the contest because the combatant IS NOT INTELLIGENTLY DEFENDING HIMSELF/HERSELF;
 1. Strikes
 2. Laceration
 3. Corner Stoppage
 4. Did Not Answer the Bell
- ii. TKO due to Medical Stoppage;
 1. Laceration
 2. Doctor Stoppage
 3. Loss of control of bodily function.

c. Knockout (KO) by:

- i. Referee Stoppage: the referee stops the contest because the combatant CANNOT INTELLIGENTLY DEFEND HIMSELF/HERSELF.
 1. Due to Strikes

d. Disqualification:

- i. When an injury sustained during competition as a result of an intentional foul is severe enough to terminate the contest, multiple fouls have been assessed, and/or there is flagrant disregard for the rules and/or referee's commands.

e. No Contest:

i. When a contestant is prematurely stopped due to accidental injury and a sufficient amount of time has not been completed to render a decision via the score cards.

f. Decisions:

i. Unanimous Decision: When all three judges score the bout for the same contestant;

ii. Split Decision: When two judges score the bout for one contestant and one judge scores for the opponent; or

iii. Majority Decision: When two judges score the bout for the same contestant and one judge scores a draw;

iv. Technical Decision: When a bout is prematurely stopped due to injury from an accidental foul and a contestant is leading on the score cards;

g. Draws:

i. Unanimous Draw – When all three judges score the bout a draw;

ii. Majority Draw – When two judges score the bout a draw; or

iii. Split Draw – When all three judges score differently and the score total results in a draw;

iv. Technical Draw - When an injury is sustained during competition as a result of an intentional foul and the bout is allowed to continue, then later the injury requires stoppage from either a legal or illegal strike to the affected area after ½ of the scheduled rounds has been completed, if the injured contestant is even or behind on the score cards at the time of stoppage, the decision is a Technical Draw.

Weight Classes

Weight Class

Atomweight

Straw Weight

Flyweight

Bantamweight

Featherweight

Lightweight

Super Lightweight

Welterweight

Super Welterweight

Middleweight

Super Middleweight

Light Heavyweight

Cruiserweight

Heavyweight

Super Heavyweight

Weight

up to and including 105 lbs.

over 105 to 115 lbs.

over 115 to 125 lbs.

over 125 to 135 lbs.

over 135 to 145 lbs.

over 145 to 155 lbs.

over 155 to 165 lbs.

over 165 to 170 lbs.

over 170 to 175 lbs.

over 175 to 185 lbs.

over 185 to 195 lbs.

over 195 to 205 lbs.

over 205 to 225 lbs.

over 225 to 265 lbs.

over 265 lbs.

*a. **Allowances within Division:** there are no allowance restrictions if both combatants weigh-in within the same contracted division.*

*b. **Weight Miss Catch Weight:** If a person misses the contracted weight and the two competitors are in different weight classes, the heavier opponent shall not exceed five (5) lbs. of the lower weighing fighter.*

*c. **Contracted Catch Weight(s):** there is no weight spread allowance between contracted catch weight fighters, so long as both competitors are below the contracted weight. Commissions may deny Catch Weight fights if they see the weight differential as a large enough disparity to the safety of either of the fighters.*

Melanie S. Griffin, Secretary

Ron DeSantis, Governor

To: Commission Members
Date: June 3, 2026
From: Timothy L. Shipman, Executive Director
Subject: Rules Discussion

Commission Members,

Enclosed for your review are proposed rule updates to Rule Chapter 61K1-3, F.A.C. These rules were previously approved by the commission on December 10, 2025. However, after additional internal review, the following changes to the previously approved rules are proposed:

Rule 61K1-3.008: “First-time” removed from (2)(a)1. to account for situations in which an applicant’s subsequent application is approved following an initial denial.

Rule 61K1-3.012: “First-time” removed from (2)(a)1. to account for situations in which an applicant’s subsequent application is approved following an initial denial.

Rule 61K1-3.027: Super cruiserweight and heavyweight differentials in (2) updated to conform to national standards.

61K1-3.008 Judge; License and Duties.

(1) License.

(a) No person shall act as a judge in a match held in Florida without first having obtained a judge license.

(b) A judge shall not also be licensed as a booking agent, manager, matchmaker, participant, representative of a booking agent, second, or trainer.

(c) No judge shall have a financial or pecuniary interest in any participant.

(2) Applications for a professional judge license will be reviewed, evaluated, and processed in the following manner:

(a) Any person desiring to become licensed for the first time as a professional boxing, kickboxing, or mixed martial arts judge shall submit to the commission the appropriate application using Form BPR-0009-450, entitled "Application for License" (06/23), which is incorporated in Rule 61K1-3.001, F.A.C. The form can be obtained from the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Florida Athletic Commission, 2601 Blair Stone Road, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1016, or at the Commission's website at: <http://www.myfloridalicense.com/dbpr/pro/sbc/index.html>.

1. All applicants for a boxing, kickboxing, or mixed martial arts judge license must first be licensed as a trailing judge issued a temporary certificate by the executive director unless otherwise provided in this rule. A trailing judge license authorizes an applicant to unofficially score bouts for evaluation and training purposes under the supervision of the commission, executive director, or designee. Licensure as a trailing judge allows for the evaluation of an applicant's knowledge, judgment, and ability to perform the duties outlined in this rule prior to the issuance of a judge license and does not authorize the holder to officiate in any official capacity during a sanctioned event. Temporary certificates are required for any person desiring to unofficially score a match for evaluation purposes. A license application shall be submitted with the same information and fee as a judge license.

2. An applicant may be issued a judge license after unofficially scoring a minimum of 100 rounds of boxing or 50 rounds of kickboxing or mixed martial arts in this state for a minimum of 12 months as a trailing judge and demonstrating during this period that he or she has the ability to perform the duties outlined in this rule. ~~For boxing and kickboxing, the application shall include a certification from the executive director attesting that the applicant has completed the unofficial scoring of a minimum of 50 rounds of professional boxing or kickboxing held in this state and has been unofficially judging in this state for a minimum of twelve months with a temporary certificate issued by the commission which is in good standing. The applicant must have a demonstrated record and evidence that he/she has the ability to perform the duties outlined below. The executive director may issue a temporary license pending final action by the commission. The commission shall render a decision as to whether or not the application for judge license shall be approved, which decision is solely that of the commission. If a license application is not granted by the commission, the commission shall set forth the reasons for not granting the license.~~

3. ~~For mixed martial arts, the application shall include a statement of experience inclusive of any certifications attained as an official in any of the martial arts, grappling, boxing, or kickboxing. If satisfied with the credentials of the applicant, the executive director may cause to be issued a temporary certificate for evaluation purposes, whereby the holder shall unofficially score professional mixed martial arts events held in this state for a period of time to be determined by the executive director; however, under no circumstances shall this period be longer than a total of 50 rounds and 12 months. If the temporary certificate holder has unofficially scored 100 rounds during an 18-month period, the executive director shall present the applicant to the commission for a final decision on licensure.~~

~~(b) Foreign licensed Officials from jurisdictions outside this state may be temporarily licensed by the executive director upon demonstrating an ability to perform the duties outlined in this rule below. The foreign licensed official's record and ability shall be verified by obtaining records from a central repository and any such other information as the executive director prior to licensure deems necessary to qualify the official. After issuance of a temporary license, the chairman of the commission shall approve or disapprove the license, in accordance with these rules.~~

~~(c) At its first meeting after November 1 of each year, the commission shall review the performance of each licensed professional judge in Florida and shall approve or disapprove any application for renewal or subsequent application.~~

~~(c) (d) The executive director shall limit to three the number of trailing unofficial judges at each event. The commission will make arrangements for trailing unofficial judges to enter the premises of assigned the programs of matches free of charge and have an appropriate seat from which to judge the contests, provided however that in the case of television and such other events which by their nature severely limit ringside access, permission to sit and judge at ringside will not be authorized. In the case that the event is sold out, authorization will not be granted to attend the event free of charge. Travel and other expenses of the trailing unofficial judge shall be borne solely by the trailing unofficial judge. Trailing Unofficial judges must present their scorecards to the~~

commission representative prior to the announcement of the result by the announcer and all contests within one program of matches must be judged by the ~~trailing unofficial~~ judge in order for any contest within that program of matches to be included in the trailing judge's statistical record.

(3) Duties.

(a) The number of judges shall be assigned in accordance with these rules and Section 548.057(9), F.S. In the event that sufficient judges are not available, a referee shall be selected to act as a judge for that specific program of matches.

(b) No match shall begin or continue unless the appropriate number of judges, according to these rules, are in their designated seats.

1. For boxing, there shall be three judges.

2. For kickboxing, there shall be three judges for scoring and two judges for kick counts, if so required.

3. For mixed martial arts, the appropriate number of judges will be contingent upon the conditions of the match approved by the commission for each particular event.

(c) It shall be the duty of each judge to:

1. Be fully informed of and conversant with the rules, regulations, standards, guidelines and policies of Chapter 548, F.S., the rules set forth herein, with particular attention given to Rule 61K1-3.033, F.A.C., of these rules;

2. Observe carefully at all times during the match the performance of the participants;

3. Appraise such performance fairly, accurately and expertly using Chapter 548, F.S., and the rules set forth herein;

4. Inscribe the result of such appraisal after each round on the round score card or match score card, whichever is appropriate, according to the scoring system adopted herein; and,

5. Complete and sign the round or match score card and deliver it to the referee, executive director or commission representative at the conclusion of each round.

(d) Judges who are officially scoring a match shall utilize Form BPR-0009-459, entitled "Round Score Card," (06/23) incorporated herein by reference which may be obtained from the Commission office or <http://www.flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-17236>, and Form BPR-0009-457, entitled "Official Scorecard," (06/23), incorporated herein by reference, which may be obtained from the Commission office or <http://www.flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-17235>. The forms can be obtained from the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Florida Athletic Commission, 2601 Blair Stone Road, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1016, or at the Commission's website at: <http://www.myfloridalicense.com/dbpr/pro/sbc/index.html>.

Rulemaking Authority 548.003 FS. Law Implemented 548.003(2), 548.017, 548.056, 548.057 FS. History—New 2-7-85, Amended 11-24-85, Formerly 7F-1.13, Amended 4-6-89, 5-13-90, 1-9-91, Formerly 7F-1.013, Amended 9-10-95, 4-3-00, 6-21-04, 12-6-10, Formerly 61K1-1.013, Amended 10-14-18, 1-2-25, _____.

61K1-3.012 Referee; License and Duties.

(1) License.

(a) No person shall act as a referee in a match held in Florida without first having obtained a referee license.

(b) If, during the course of a match, the referee receives an injury or is unable to continue acting in his capacity as referee, the commission representative shall:

1. Select another qualified person to act as referee for the remainder of the match and program of matches; or
2. If no qualified person is available, cancel the remainder of the match and program of matches.

(c) No person who has financial or pecuniary interest in any participant shall be granted a referee license.

(d) No referee shall also be licensed as a booking agent, manager, matchmaker, participant, representative of a booking agent, second or trainer and shall not act as a booking agent, manager, matchmaker, participant, representative of a booking agent, second or trainer.

(e) No referee licensed in this state shall act as a referee at any boxing, mixed martial arts or kickboxing match in a state without a state boxing commission or similar governmental authority unless the match is supervised by a state boxing commission or similar governmental authority.

(f) No referee shall also serve as a supervisor or serve on the ratings committee or recommend boxers to the ratings committee for a sanctioning body. The applicant must have a demonstrated record and evidence that he/she has the ability to perform the duties outlined below. ~~The executive director may issue a temporary certificate pending final action by the Commission.~~

(2) Applicants for a professional referee's license will be reviewed, evaluated and processed in the following manner:

(a) Any person desiring to become licensed for the first time as a professional boxing, kickboxing, or mixed martial arts referee, shall submit to the commission the appropriate application using Form BPR-0009-450, entitled "Application for License" (06/23), which is incorporated in Rule 61K1-3.001, F.A.C. The form can be obtained from the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Florida Athletic Commission, 2601 Blair Stone Road, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1016, or at the Commission's website at: <http://www.myfloridalicense.com/dbpr/pro/sbc/index.html> the appropriate application for license.

1. All applicants for a boxing, kickboxing, or mixed martial arts referee license must first be licensed as a trailing referee by the executive director unless otherwise provided in this rule. Licensure as a trailing referee allows for the evaluation of an applicant's knowledge, judgment, and ability to perform the duties outlined in this rule prior to the issuance of a referee license and does not authorize the holder to officiate in any official capacity during a sanctioned event.

~~(b) At its first meeting after November 1 of each year, and following the submittal of the application for license, the commission shall render a decision as to whether or not the license will be granted.~~

2. (e) Applicants for a referee license will be permitted to attend assigned programs of matches officiate as a trailing referee at the discretion of the executive director for observation purposes. The executive director shall cause to be issued a temporary certificate for this purpose by collecting a license application and fee from the applicant. In making trailing referee assignments, the executive director shall be cognizant of the relative importance of the match, the number of scheduled rounds and any other factors that may contribute to a difficult set of circumstances for a referee early in his career.

3. (d) The commission will make arrangements for trailing referees to enter the premises of assigned programs of matches free of charge. Applicants for a referee license will be admitted free of charge to professional boxing venues for the purpose of observing and interacting with licensed referees, provided however, that in the case of television events and such other events which by their nature severely limit ringside access, permission to sit at ringside will not be authorized. In the case that an event is sold out, authorization will not be granted to attend the event. Travel and other expenses will be borne solely by the trailing referee applicant.

4. An applicant may be issued a referee license after serving as a trailing referee for a minimum of 12 months and demonstrating during this period that he or she has the ability to perform the duties outlined in this rule.

~~(c) At its first meeting after November 1 of each year, the executive director shall recommend to the commission a list of professional referees to be licensed or renewed as officials in this state and the commission shall approve or disapprove the recommendations.~~

(b) Officials from jurisdictions outside this state may be licensed by the executive director upon demonstrating an ability to perform the duties outlined in this rule. The official's record and ability shall be verified by the executive director prior to licensure.

(3) Duties.

(a) A referee shall submit to an annual physical examination to establish physical fitness. The result of this examination shall be filed with the commission. The executive director or commission representative may require the referee to be examined by a

physician immediately prior to officiating a match at his discretion.

(b) Prior to the beginning of each match, and periodically for the duration of the match, the referee shall examine the participants' gloves, equipment, and person to ensure that no unsafe or improper condition exists. In boxing and kickboxing, before allowing a match to continue after a participant has been knocked down, the referee shall wipe clean the surface of the gloves of the participant who was knocked down.

(c) When a participant receives an injury which the referee believes may incapacitate the participant, the referee shall call time out and consult with the physician as to the advisability of allowing the match to continue. No person shall attempt to render aid to or move a participant other than what may be required to move the participant inside the ropes or to remove the mouthpiece of a participant who has been counted out during the course of a match before the physician has examined the participant. However, the referee shall remove the participant's mouthpiece.

(d) The referee shall have the authority to:

1. Terminate a match at any time when the referee determines that one of the participants has such superior skills or ability as to make such match unreasonably dangerous to the other participant and shall be recorded as a technical knockout;
2. Disqualify a participant who commits an intentional foul and award the decision to the opponent;
3. Terminate a match and disqualify either or both participants if the referee determines that either or both participants are not competing in earnest;
4. Terminate a match if either participant has been injured and is in such condition that to continue the match might subject the participant to a debilitating or life threatening injury;
5. Temporarily or permanently halt a match if the referee believes that a significant health hazard exists, when such hazard could reasonably be anticipated to create a significant danger to the participants or the public; and,
6. Enforce discipline and the rules, as set forth herein, pertaining to the conduct and behavior of participants, managers, trainers, and seconds.

Rulemaking Authority 548.003 FS. Law Implemented 548.003(2), 548.017, 548.056, 548.057 FS. History—New 2-7-85, Amended 11-24-85, Formerly 7F-1.19, Amended 4-6-89, 1-1-90, 1-9-91, Formerly 7F-1.019, Amended 9-10-95, 4-3-00, 6-1-04, Formerly 61K1-1.019, Amended

61K1-3.027 Weight Classes for Boxing, Kickboxing and Mixed Martial Arts.

(1) Boxing Weight Classes:

Name	Weight (lbs)	Weight Differential (lbs)
<u>Mini Flyweight</u>	<u>Up to 105</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Light Flyweight</u>	<u>Over 105 to 108</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Flyweight</u>	<u>Over 108 to 112</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Super Flyweight</u>	<u>Over 112 to 115</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Bantamweight</u>	<u>Over 115 to 118</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Super Bantamweight</u>	<u>Over 118 to 122</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Featherweight</u>	<u>Over 122 to 126</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Super Featherweight</u>	<u>Over 126 to 130</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Lightweight</u>	<u>Over 130 to 135</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Super Lightweight</u>	<u>Over 135 to 140</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Welterweight</u>	<u>Over 140 to 147</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Super Welterweight</u>	<u>Over 147 to 154</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Middleweight</u>	<u>Over 154 to 160</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Super Middleweight</u>	<u>Over 160 to 168</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Light Heavyweight</u>	<u>Over 168 to 175</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Cruiserweight</u>	<u>Over 175 to 200</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Heavyweight</u>	<u>Over 200</u>	<u>No limit</u>

Name	Weight (lbs)	Weight Differential (lbs)
<u>Flyweight</u>	<u>Up to 112</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Bantamweight</u>	<u>113 to 118</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Featherweight</u>	<u>119 to 126</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Junior Lightweight</u>	<u>127 to 130</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Lightweight</u>	<u>131 to 135</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Junior Welterweight</u>	<u>136 to 140</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Welterweight</u>	<u>141 to 147</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Junior Middleweight</u>	<u>148 to 154</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Middleweight</u>	<u>155 to 160</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Light Heavyweight</u>	<u>161 to 175</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Cruiserweight</u>	<u>176 to 190</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>Heavyweight</u>	<u>191 and above</u>	<u>No limit</u>

(2) Kickboxing Weight Classes:

Name	Weight (lbs)	Weight Differential (lbs)
Atomweight	Less than 108	4
Super Atomweight	<u>Over 108 109</u> to 111	4
Flyweight	<u>Over 111 112</u> to 114	4
Super Flyweight	<u>Over 114 115</u> to 117	4
Bantamweight	<u>Over 117 118</u> to 120	5
Super Bantamweight	<u>Over 120 121</u> to 124	5
Featherweight	<u>Over 124 125</u> to 128	5
Lightweight	<u>Over 128 129</u> to 132	6
Super Lightweight	<u>Over 132 133</u> to 137	6

Light Welterweight	Over 137 138 to 142	6
Welterweight	Over 142 143 to 147	7
Super Welterweight	Over 147 148 to 153	7
Light Welterweight	Over 153 154 to 159	7
Middleweight	Over 159 160 to 165	8
Super Middleweight	Over 165 166 to 172	8
<u>Light Heavyweight</u> Cruiserweight	Over 172 173 to 179	8
<u>Light Cruiserweight</u>	Over 179 180 to 186	9
<u>Cruiserweight</u>	Over 186 187 to 194	9
Super Cruiserweight	Over 194 to 195 -207	<u>12</u> 9
Heavyweight	Over 207 208 to 223	<u>15</u> 12
Super Heavyweight	Over 223 224 and above	unlimited

(3) Mixed Martial Arts Weight Classes:

Name	Weight (lbs)	Weight Differential (lbs)
Flyweight	Up to 125	8
Bantamweight	Over 125 126 to 135	10
Featherweight	Over 135 136 to 145	10
Lightweight	Over 145 146 to 155	10
Welterweight	Over 155 156 to 170	15
Middleweight	Over 170 171 to 185	15
Light Heavyweight	Over 185 186 to 205	20
Heavyweight	Over 205 206 to 265	20
Super Heavyweight	Over 265 266	unlimited

(4) No boxing, kickboxing or mixed martial arts match shall be permitted with a weight difference greater than the weight differentials listed above without the approval of the executive director or his or her designee and in accordance with the requirements of section 548.043(2), F.S.

Rulemaking Authority 548.003 FS. Law Implemented 548.043(2) FS. History--New 12-10-15, Amended _____.