

REFEREE'S CALL:

Believe It Or Not

by Nelson "DOC" Hamilton

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If you've ever wanted to be a fly on the wall, I'm inviting you into my room. It's May 26, 2005, and I'm in town to referee a Muay Thai show. I'm in room 1410 at the Plaza Hotel Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, its 4:45 pm and I'm writing my next column for Grappling magazine when my cell-phone rings.

Hi Doc, it's Terry Trebelcock. How're you doing? I'm good Terry, what's up? Doc, we have a major problem. Dan Lambert, from the Abu Dhabi Grappling Championships called me and said that they received a "Cease and Desist Order" from the California State Athletic Commission (CSAC). They were told to cancel the Grappling Championships scheduled to take place at the Pavilion at Long Beach on 05/28 and 05/29/05. Can you help me, who can I contact about this? Do you know why they are trying to shut it down? They have no jurisdiction over a grappling event! I don't know Doc, is there someone we can call. Yes! Here are two numbers for Dean Lohius who is the Chief Athletic Inspector for the Commission. Give him a call and get back to me if you have any problem. Thanks Doc. No problem Terry.

5:00 pm and the phone rings again. Hi Doc, John McCarthy. Hi John, how're doing? I'm o.k. but the Abu Dhabi championships are in trouble. Guy Nievens, the promoter, called and told me that they may be closed down by the State. I know, John, Terry Trebelcock just called and told me about the "Cease and Desist Order" Does Guy have any idea why they were served? No! Can you tell me who we can contact to get this straightened out? Sure, call Dean Lohius, he's CSAC's chief inspector. I will also try and get in touch with him. Thanks Doc. No problem John. I immediately call Dean. Hi Dean, Doc here, we have a problem!

I know, Terry said he spoke with you and you told him to call me. That's right; did you get it straightened out? No, I told him I would look into it.

Dean, a huge mistake has been made! This event has been scheduled for at least a year. The promoters have invested a lot of time and money and the competitors have come in from all over North and South America. There is no reason for issuing this "Cease and Desist Order." There is no striking in this event; it is pure grappling, which means that it is not regulated by the Commission. Shutting down this show will cause irreparable damage to the promoters as well as the relationship between the Commission and the MMA community. I understand Doc! Are you sure that there is no striking? I'm positive! There is no striking of any type! Hold on Doc, I'm getting another call.

After holding for approximately three minutes; Doc that was John McCarthy calling. He told me the same thing that you did. I understand! Based on your assurances that there is no striking, I will have the "Cease and Desist Order" rescinded tomorrow. You can reassure the promoter that the event can go on. Thank you Dean. I call John to inform him of our victory. He tells me that he has already called Guy Nivens and reassured him based on his conversation with Dean. Thanks for you help Doc! No problem John, I'm glad I could help.

There is an important lesson to be learned here. State Athletic Commissions, like most governmental bureaucracies are for the most part uninterested and unknowledgeable about the martial arts. They make no distinction between judo, traditional jujitsu, BJJ, karate, and MMA. Therefore, learned and passionate practitioners of the arts must make every effort to volunteer their expertise and attempt to educate the powers that be. If you have an opportunity to advise your state commission on martial arts related issues, do it. Try and establish a working relationship with the commission's representatives. You just may prevent some other event from being shut down.

As the famous radio broadcaster, Paul Harvey says, "and now you know the rest of the story."