

REFEREE'S CALL:

Damage, Domination and Controversy

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Generally speaking, there is very little disagreement amongst fight fans and fight judges about who wins a fight when one competitor dominates his opponent and inflicts significantly more damage. However, as we all know, many fights end without a clear-cut winner, leaving the decision in the hands of the judges.

Occasionally, following a very close fight, after the judges' decision is announced and to the amazement and total disbelief of many fans, the "other fighter" won. Almost immediately, the ringside commentators and reporters start talking about a "controversial decision." Questions are asked; how can this be? Are the judges' blind, stupid, brain damaged, or corrupt? What the hell were they watching? Ultimately, it's decided that they suffer from all these afflictions, plus some that haven't yet been thought of.

Assuming not all judges suffer from the afflictions noted above, let's explore some alternative reasons that may explain why they are not completely brain dead, and the factors that influence their thinking.

First, there is a distinct difference between being a fan/spectator and a judge. According to Webster's Dictionary, a spectator by definition is "an observer of an event, one who looks and waits expectantly." By contrast, a judge is one who "forms an opinion and decides authoritatively after due deliberation." In other words, a spectator is a passive participant in the occasion; by contrast, the judge is an active participant.

Second, although political correctness would have us believe that all decisions/opinions are equal, such is not the case. Decisions about the outcome of a fight that are based on objective criteria are decidedly more

valid then those decisions which are subjectively made. In other words, decisions based on observable criteria (think judges) are more credible than decisions based on emotion (think fans) and feelings. Opinions are like buttocks, although everybody has one, some carry more weight than others.

During the course of a fight, fans (spectators) eat, drink, and look around for their friends. They talk with their girlfriend/boyfriend, play kissy-poo/huggy-bear and think about the after-party. Oh, and let's not forget, how they view the judges decision will be greatly influenced by any bets they placed on the fights.

During the course of a fight, reporters tape record the action being viewed, make notes about the action being viewed, talk to others about what is being viewed, and think about putting it all together for immediate posting after the event.

During the course of a fight, ringside commentators enthusiastically elaborate and sensationalize the action being viewed, all while listening to the director's comments and trying to look good on camera.

In contrast to multitasking fans, commentators, and reporters, judges direct 100% of their attention to the action being viewed, every second of every round. Their concentration is coupled with a deliberation of the criteria required for dispassionately scoring the action, such as:

- 1) Effective striking; Ask yourself, which fighter is landing the more damaging blows, or, the greater number of blows.
- 2) Effective grappling; takedowns, attempted submissions and/or near submissions.
- 3) Effective aggression; working to finish by way of strikes and/or grappling. Which fighter forces the action? Who is setting the tempo of the contest through his forward movement and scores effectively while blocking or avoiding his opponents counter strikes?
- 4) Octagon control; engaging an opponent when, where and how one chooses, think "The Ice Man".

All rounds are scored on a "Ten Point Must" system. This means, the winner of a round must receive 10 points. The loser of the round receives nine

points or less, depending on the action that constituted the round. All rounds are scored independently of the preceding rounds. Recognizing the length of time the action is standing or grounded, the judges use a sliding scale for scoring. In other words, if more than 50% of the action was standing; scoring priority is given to striking then grappling. If more than 50% of the action was on the ground, scoring priority is given to grappling then striking. If the action is 50/50, striking and grappling are weighed evenly. Now that you know what to look for, check out these examples.

10-10 Round: a) Neither competitor shows a clear dominance in a round. b) Both contestants appear to land an equal number of damaging strikes, or suffer an equal number of legal knockdowns. Evenly scored rounds are discouraged by most promoters and state athletic commissions and should be avoided if at all possible.

10-9 Round: One competitor appears to effectively outwork his opponent; having landed the greater number of effective legal strikes, had more takedowns, or was more threatening on the ground. In most contests, the majority of rounds are scored ten to nine.

10-8 Round: a) One competitor completely dominates his opponent by number of strikes or the severity of strikes, or, he scores a compelling knockdown. b) He takes his opponent down and employs an effective and damaging ground and pound.

10-7 Round: One competitor overwhelms and dominates his opponent with punishing strikes, multiple takedowns, and multiple knockdowns and/or near submissions.

In closing, judging is subjective in nature and performed by fallible human beings. However, unless you know the rules and the criteria for scoring, and unless you are willing to give your undivided attention for each and every minute of each round, you may want to give the judges the benefit of the doubt the next time your score disagrees with theirs. At the very least, sit back and enjoy the action and leave the judging to the pros. Remember, just watching a fight does not make you a judge, any more than watching porn makes you an actor.