

## *The Doc Is In:*

### **Judging Muay Thai**

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After watching a Muay Thai fight, you decided that without a doubt, the fighter in the blue corner is the winner. Since all of your buddies agreed, you knew that you were correct; however, to your amazement and total disbelief, the judges' decision favors the fighter in the red corner. How can this be? Were the judges blind, stupid, brain damaged, or corrupt? Ultimately, you decide that they suffer from all these afflictions. Assuming that not all judges suffer from the afflictions noted above, let's explore some alternative factors that might have influenced their thinking.

First, a brief review of the rules is necessary. Although Muay Thai allows for elbow strikes, modified Muay Thai, also known as International Rules Muay Thai, isn't as liberal. Punching, kicking and kneeing strikes are permitted to any part of the body with the following exceptions: back of the skull and neck, the spine, kidneys, throat, groin, and knees. No head butts, judo-type throws, trips, or joint locks are permitted. Generally, strikes to the opponent's arms are not considered scoring blows. The total number of fouls is too extensive to list here. Suffice it to say, a contestant can be disqualified for any intentional foul or repeated unintentional fouls.

Secondly, now that we know what scores and why it scores, let's look at how it's scored.

***Effective Striking*** - Ask yourself, which fighter is landing the more damaging punches, kicks, knees, and elbows, if legal?

***Effective Aggression*** - As a result of a planned attack, 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 opponent's

counter strikes?

***Defensive Skills*** - Successfully avoiding or defending the opponent's strikes by such maneuvers as blocking, weaving, bobbing, slipping, and good footwork. One who demonstrates these skills must also retaliate and land effective strikes to score.

***Ring Generalship*** - Sometimes defined as tactics, or, making one's opponent fight your fight. A good ring general knows how to take advantage of every situation and pace himself properly.

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. Scorecards are turned in at the end of each round.

Generally speaking, when judging kickboxing or Muay Thai, if the round seems fairly even, the edge in scoring will go to the fighter scoring more effectively with kicks and/or knee strikes.

Now, the last thing we need to know before we can score a fight is what constitutes a knockdown.

- If, as a result of being struck, any portion of a fighter's body touches the canvas, other than his feet, it is considered a knockdown.
- It is a knockdown if a fighter is defenseless and hanging over the ropes, which is preventing him from falling.
- Standing-8 counts are considered a knockdown. Referees give standing-8 counts when they believe a fighter is taking excessive punishment and requires a brief recuperative period.

Now that we know the who, what, why, and how of scoring, let's put it to use:

***10-10 Round:***

- Neither competitor shows a clear dominance in a round.
- Both contestants appear to land an equal number of strikes, damaging strikes, or suffer an equal number of legal knockdowns.

Most promoters and state athletic commissions discourage evenly scored rounds. Even-round scoring should be avoided whenever possible.

**10-9 Round:**

- One competitor wins by a close margin, having landed the greater number of effective legal strikes.

In most contests, the majority of rounds are scored 10-9.

**10-8 Round:**

- One competitor dominates his opponent by number or severity of strikes.
- One competitor scores a knockdown.

**10-7 Round:**

- One competitor overwhelms and dominates his opponent with punishing strikes and multiple knockdowns.

Although theoretically possible, 10-6 rounds are almost never scored. Such mismatches are usually stopped by the referee.

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.

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