



OP ED: IS BOXREC SUPPRESSING LEGITIMATE RESULTS? AND SHOULD THE ABC DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?

By Hunter Leon 26/07/2021



"Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." (Sir John Dalberg-Acton).

The more power a person attains, the less accountability to reign in that person's behavior. Such is the case with the Association of Boxing Commissions' (ABC) failure to oversee the contract it awarded to BoxRec in 2016, when the BoxRec website was contracted to be the official record keeper for the ABC, replacing Fight Fax. By allowing BoxRec to do as it pleases, there appear to be no checks and balances in place to

restrain the harm BoxRec is doing to fighters. BoxRec's sole responsibility is to act as record keeper for fights that take place around the world. It is NOT BoxRec's responsibility to judge which results it deems credible. Yet, with no oversight from the ABC, this is exactly what is taking place.

EDITOR'S NOTE: THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS EDITORIAL BELONG TO THE AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE VIEWS OF BOXINGTALK OR ITS STAFF.

On April 10, 2021 a boxing event took place in Dubai, UAE. The promoter of record for the event was Lion Heart Boxing Productions, a U.S. company. The show was supervised by the United Arab Emirate Boxing Federation (UAEBF) which by UAE law is responsible for combat sports in the Emirates, both professional and amateur. In the main event, women's boxer Ivana Habazin, a former world champion, fought a ten-round fight for a WBC regional title. The fight, which ended when Habazin's opponent, Nana Chakhvashvili, did not come out for round three, can be seen in its entirety here (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b86UxZA9vzU>). Chakhvashvili is currently listed as 7-16 on BoxRec. She has been stopped twice in little more than two months, but no promoter, boxing commission or network programmer could discover that from looking at BoxRec. The co-feature that night saw women's boxing legend Layla McCarter defeat another Georgian, Elene Sikmashvili, currently listed as 9-9 on BoxRec. That fight is also suppressed by BoxRec but undoubtedly took place as can be seen on this full-fight video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bI7_K40HFM&t=1353s). Sadly, also on the card was Sebastian Eubank, who subsequently passed away. Present at the event was former champion Amir Khan, as a WBC representative. Khan presented Habazin with a WBC belt after her win.

The UAEBF assigned the judges, referees, and ring doctor. All fighters submitted their medicals, boxing licenses, and had to submit proof of a negative PCR test that had to be taken 24 hours before the official weigh-in which took place on April 9th. Further, the event was streamed live

across many social media platforms and was televised by tape delay on Fite.tv.

After the event took place, the UAEBF provided BoxRec with the official results of all fights that took place, yet, to date, **BoxRec has refused to publish the results or include them in the boxers' records**, claiming they have not approved the UAEBF as an ABC member and further made public claims that the fights did not meet their standards.

Shortly thereafter, the Zimbabwe National Boxing and Wrestling Control Board, (ZNBWBC), acting in a supervisory role, and an ABC member, also submitted the official fight results on behalf of the promoter and their fighter Brendon Denes, who fought in the same event. Like the UAEBF, BoxRec disregarded the result.

Prior to 2016, under former ABC President, Timothy J. Lueckenhoff (2001-2015), the ABC stated that it would not provide BoxRec with official boxer registry status [as I understand it] due to its failings and more importantly its inaccuracies. Evidence of BoxRec's continued failure was detailed in a 2017 complaint to the United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The complaint was later supplied to the ABC by various sources. **EDITOR'S NOTE: The FTC has jurisdiction over enforcing the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act. As far as Boxingtalk can tell, the FTC never acted on the complaint.**

The items in the complaint fall into two distinct categories;

1. BoxRec's flawed process for record updating and recording, a process that is prone to misuse by unscrupulous people with a vested interest, such as promoters and managers.
2. BoxRec's failure to update boxers records submitted by a number of recognized boxing commissions since April 2016.

Further, in August 2016, shortly after the appointment of BoxRec as the official registry, then ABC President Michael Mazzulli was presented with the allegations of BoxRec's failings. In an e-mail Mazzulli wrote to BoxRec dated September 6, 2016, he stated, "all ABC Boxing record keepers will actively recognize and record all pro boxing contests for all commissions that are sent in by those boxing commissions recognized by the ABC." BoxRec has failed to comply but Mr. Mazzulli and the ABC executive board took no action against the site, instead, choosing to ostracize those that had alerted him of BoxRec's failings and wrongdoing.

Disturbed by BoxRec's actions, Charles Muniz, manager of Habazin, wrote a letter in May 2021 to acting ABC President Mr. Brian Dunn, asking the ABC to intervene. In response to the letter, Mr. Dunn wrote the following: "I am sorry to hear about this situation. Unfortunately, I am afraid there is nothing I can do to help resolve it. Boxrec is the official record keeper of the ABC, but they are also a private company, not even based in the United States. I'll admit to not really understanding how boxing 'commissions' work internationally, as it is much different than in the US (and other international ABC member commissions). After many conversations with John [Sheppard, BoxrRec's founder] and Marina [Sheppard], they DO understand the situation and they only record what they deem to be accurate. That's not to say your boxer did not actually compete, I believe she did, and I won't even argue that those results SHOULD be documented, but if I liken it to some illegal underground boxing event that may actually happen in the US that

is not regulated by the proper commission, those results could not be officially recorded. Neither situation is the boxer's fault, but unfortunately, those results would still not be recorded. I know you said you spoke to John Sheppard, but he would be the only one you could convince to include those results."

Subsequent to Mr. Dunn's response, several more emails were sent to him and the ABC executive committee asking for a copy of the BoxRec contract under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), among other requests, all of which have been ignored.

The question the public needs to ask is how does a non-profit government entity award a contract to a company and then give them free reign to act as it pleases with absolutely no oversight or accountability? All the fighters that participated in the April 10th event did their job. They prepared to compete, risked their lives, only to have the result of their efforts arbitrarily excluded by a website acting as the final judge and jury, while the ABC does nothing to intervene. So much for protecting fighters' interests.

Staying active and building a winning record is how fighters move up in sanctioning organizations rankings. Higher rankings equates to higher purses. By not publishing fighters' results, the harm can be irreparable to boxers who may be denied consideration for big fights on the basis of their seeming inactivity. This behavior by BoxRec is not an isolated case, as other complaints (<https://boxrec.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=200083>) have been lodged against them over the past few years.

BoxRec claims they only publish results from approved commissions. A careful examination shows that they have published results of fights when no commission was even present; Anthony Joshua vs Andy Ruiz, and Amir Khan vs Billy Dib in Saudi Arabia are just two of many. No-commission cards held in Mexico during the height of the coronavirus pandemic had found their way onto BoxRec, listed as no contests.

So why has the ABC allowed BoxRec to act in such an arbitrary manner? The answer to that question may soon be revealed in a rumored lawsuit being prepared for U.S. federal court that will allege BoxRec's acquiescence to criminal behavior in the UAE.

The ABC is currently holding its annual convention in Orlando, Florida. What the ABC needs is new leadership that resolves to protect fighters and that investigates the decisions being made by BoxRec. The ABC needs to put in place some mechanism whereby disputed or questioned fight results are handled independently and not by an organization that has run amuck with no oversight.

BoxRec should be nothing more than a record keeper and the site should be held responsible by the ABC for their actions and not be allowed to do as it pleases because when absolute power is allowed to go unchecked, there's nothing to restrain their impulses which in turn breeds abuse and corruption.

If the ABC lacks the resources or gumption to investigate and regulate BoxRec, and if a lawsuit emerges with credible allegations of criminal activity, the organization can send a referral to the

FBI for further investigation. As it stands now, boxers have no recourse given the ABC's lack of oversight and inability to protect boxers' rights.

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