
Emergence And Development Of Boxing

Tracing the emergence of boxing is a difficult task (Murphy and Sheard, 2006, and Sugden, 1996). Most historical accounts required in order to do this are not available. However, even with these difficulties, this essay will attempt to assess how prize fighting emerged and what occurred in society for boxing to develop from prize fighting in the working class to the modern popular sport we have today. The changes and adaptations prize fighting made to the rules and regulations in order to fit into society will be addressed and to what degree Elias' and Dunning's (1896) concept of the civilising process controlled and added significance to the development of boxing and how this development affected society will be addressed.

Sport is a product of culture and society; what is accepted as a sport in one time and place may not be seen as such in another (Sugden, 1996). Tranter (1998) argues some sports and activities that occur in the modern day still have characteristics of popular recreational activities therefore showing comparison to which sports were fashionable in pre-industrial society. He goes on to argue that prize fighting was one of these sports and became widely popular in 1790 with little signs of declining until 1840 because the sport reflected the culture and the harshness of eighteenth century rural life. Deterioration of prize fighting was expected due to changing attitudes towards violence in society no longer coinciding with the cruel and violent nature of the unruly blood sport (Tranter, 1998). Downing (2010) explains how Elias and Dunning refer to this change as the civilising process. Molnar & Kelly (2013) explain the civilising process to be the idea that 'there is a link between the long-term structural development of societies and changes in people's social behaviour and habitus', a social concept which was accepted by everyone in society to be respectable (Molnar & Kelly, 2013, p.137 and Downing, 2010).

Boxing as prize fighting has been used as forms of self-defence for centuries. Its earlier years are seen cruel and harsh by today's society; however, the ancient Greeks and Romans used this style of fighting as a reflection to their moral and ethical values which mirror blood, brutality and roughness. In order to understand why contemporary boxing is the way it is today, it is essential to explore the emergence of boxing to understand the current structure of figuration.

Murray (2008) identified that the origins of boxing can be traced back to the ancient Mesopotamia period. However, given that boxing is simply punching an opponent with one's fist, and is seen as a necessary need for survival, it should be a much older sport (Murray, 2008). Murphy and Sheard (2006) have explained that much of the evidence to trace boxing back further is not accessible. Anderson (2007) has recognised one of the first reports of a prize fight to be between the Ancient Greeks at The Funeral Games around 1184BC. He discussed how the Greeks required this essential release through prize fighting because of the society's violent and harsh culture. Anderson (2007) describes the Greeks to be cultured enough in the art of prize fighting and the techniques needed to recognise this sport as an exhaustive test of cardiovascular and muscular endurance and skill. In addition to Anderson (2007), Golden (1998) explains how the Greeks correctly judged prize fighting to be a sport that is very physically demanding and causes the most bodily harm and damage. Anderson (2007) goes on to explain that to ensure sports fans got their money's worth of the fight, the law provided an immunity clause for those fatal homicide accidents during fights. Such contenders were aware that these fatal accidents that appeared in prize fights were a risk to the sport. The significance

this clause held is that if fighters were to be held responsible and charged over ring deaths then the amount of fighters would have reduced as would the spectators and the sport would not have been able to develop to modern boxing without this initial clause.

Sugden (1996) found that a Roman bare-knuckle fight held little comparison to the fights the ancient Greeks held. He demonstrates that accounts of these fights can be found in the Roman literature which arose after the Glorious revolution of 1688, where King James II was dethroned, giving parliament more power over than the monarch and the emergence of a political democracy began, allowing the re-emergence of blood sports, including boxing. Sugden (1996) is sure that boxing started to develop in the seventeenth century as a leisure pastime sport. He further reports that the Romans developed their sports structure from the Greek athleticism cult with it eventually reaching the contrary form of the gladiatorial events. This blood lust from the spectators allowed the development from bare knuckle fights to the addition of the caestus (Sugden, 1996). Collins, Hauser and Krystal (2020) mention a caestus to be a leather glove the Romans used to inflict more pain and blood onto their opponent. It could have spikes and metal sewn into the leather and was worn like a gauntlet (Collins, Hauser & Krystal, 2020). Anderson (2007) found that like the Greeks, the Romans authorised killings in the colosseum, such deaths were seen as deaths by mishap and the opponent could not be held accountable. He continues to explain that prize fighting was respected by the Romans, they acknowledged the level of its integrity and masculinity. Therefore, a rule was created that to hit an opponent that could not defend himself was seen to be disreputable and did not coincide with the ethos of the sport (Anderson, 2007). Anderson here has shown how society has developed enough to know the difference between fair play and winning at all costs. Both Sugden (1996) and Anderson (2007) have reported that the upper class Romans trained gladiators in both armed and unarmed battles in sponsored specialised training facilities. Similarities can be seen here with the modern equivalent of boxing: the gladiator colosseum, spectators, training facilities, the addition of the caestus etc. can all be viewed as precursors to the modern day sport.

Anderson (2007), Young (2000) and Guttmann (2000) note how the English interest in sport had violent themes. The character of England's medieval sports was aided through the societal need to be regularly intoxicated and carry weapons in their day to day life (Anderson, 2007 and Koskivirta, Forsstrom & McAlester, 2005). Guttmann (1981) found that boxing in England was able to take an advantage to King Henry VIII's ascent to power. He continues to discuss how Henry VIII's approving judgement of sporting activities mirrored his individual attraction to sport and the slow development of other popular recreational activities that had begun to take a more organised and socially acceptable practice. Such views on boxing and other sports were displayed in the growth of confidence and increased safety of the English realm (Anderson, 2007 and Guttmann 2981). The nature of boxing at the time is best shown through the Whitsun Games of Devonshire village where boxing was the most dominating event of the games (Brailsford, 2007). Brailsford (2007) speculates that the restorations of the new calmer social norms enhanced the re-emergence of violent sports and boxing grew from this by taking advantage from the restoration.

Ernoehazy (2007) mentions how by the end of the seventeenth century, boxing's increased fame and occurrence of organised fights was being shown in newspaper reports. He clarifies how boxing re-emerged in England with fights being attended to at the Royal theatre of London. Boxing as an organised, spectator sport had vastly grown in recognition and the violent gladiator bare knuckle fights had vanished with the collapse of the Roman empire (Ernoehazy, 2007). Murphy and Sheard (2006) reported how Elias had shown attention to the emergence of

today's contemporary boxing due to the distinctive difference from the gladiator style prize fights of the Romans and the Ancient Greeks. They argued that this development of boxing was based on the sportization process that surfaced in the eighteenth century.

Boxing has been evident, as prize fighting, through both Greek and Roman times. However, a myth arose that a gentleman called James Figg became the first person to create the sport (Anderson, 2007). James Figg was recognised as a champion of England for being a talented fighter and coach however he did not create the sport, he was 'the first person to commercialise boxing and to develop it as a business. (Sheard, 2004). Figg's skilful fighting talents motivated gentlemen to learn how to fight and the public's opinion on boxing started to have a positive effect on society. This was shown by the increased number of spectators and sponsors at the events that the academy held (Anderson, 2007). From this increased demand to learn how to self-defence, Figg started his own boxing academy in 1719. This was a significant part of the civilising process. Downing (2010) found that these boxing events had a social class mix of spectators in the audience. She goes on to argue how this mix of social classes was the start for the developing idea of a British man. Sheard (2004) found that learning how to self-defence rather than using guns and other weapons became fashionable at this time. The upper class men wanted to learn how to fight in order to attack men, not just for self-defence. Regardless of this, this new trend was forcing boxing to become more civilised from the increased popularity the sport was bringing. Sheard (2004) mentions that Elias's argument, for these new developments, was that Britain's period of violence was ending. The end of this period had significant effects for the increasing civilisation of boxing and other pastime sports in the early eighteenth century. Society was looking for more sophisticated methods to solve conflict (Downing, 2010). From this increased need of tutors, James Figg's business grew among the aristocracy and the young gentry. These young men gained an interest in boxing through the lessons taught by Figg, however they would not want to participate because they could not chance being beaten and bruised (Anderson, 2007). The upper class would instead spectate fights, gamble on them and sponsor a fighter themselves. By these methods they were still involved in the fights and gained as much thrill from spectating on the outside as the lower class fighters (Sheard, 2004)

James Figg was an important aspect for the increasing development of boxing. His academies, and the demand to learn self-defence, allowed the upper class to get involved with the sport from the outside and gain as much excitement as the fighters.

In the eighteenth century, prize fighting began to move from urban to rural settings (Murphy and Sheard 2006 and Sheard 2004). Murphy and Sheard (2006) found that before the movement began, boxing theatres had begun to emerge where an audience could be formed and were able to gamble on the events. Murphy and Sheard continue to suggest that both the fighters and the people that built this new business would benefit from these events. Having boxing theatres limited injury to the fighters and allowed a fee to be charged for spectators to view the events (Downing, 2010 and Murphy and Sheard 2006). Such advantages created a more controlled structure to prize fighting. This new form of exhibition boxing held the possibility that events would become easy to foretell, making them mundane for the audience and ultimately did not fit the initial gambling purpose with which it was intended for (Sheard, 2004). The significance gambling held, especially in this time period, cannot be ignored. Remembering the Broughton rule change in 1747 was brought forwards to preserve the attraction that betting contributed to events, and not for the medical concerns for the fighters. Sheard (2004) argues that if prize fighting continued this path in urban areas then the end result of boxing may have been safer

for the fighters. On the other hand, boxing may have also ended a lot sooner without the income that gambling used to bring into the sport. Downing (2010) adds to Sheard (2004) and argues that had these urban boxing theatres become secure in the urban environment then boxing might have become a sport comparable to wrestling, where it's there for more fun and enjoyment of the production than an actual sport. In order to sidestep the restrictions of the urban setting, exhibition boxing moved to rural areas. Here, the less honourable gentleman of the elite and upper class regulated and managed the events. The movement allowed prize fighting to resume and establish as a means of gambling (Anderson, 2007). This movement was a significant part for the development of contemporary modern boxing. It provided both boxing and the new exhibition prize fighting with higher chances of eventually developing into sports.

Modern day people of society see boxing as harsh and cruel and do not think that boxing is worthy enough to be named a sport (Murphy and Sheard, 2006). How can a sport, that is still seen as cruel and violent, have already been through the civilising process? It is important to understand how much modern day boxing has developed from its prize fighting years. Sheard (2004) explains how the culture and ethics of boxing in the Greeks and Romans time was established from their standards, basing boxing on notions of honour and masculinity and not with sportsmanship or fair play (Sheard, 2004). He continues to argue how since the late eighteenth century, the rules and regulations administering the sport have become more protective in order to restrict the violence in the sport. Each set of new rules, alongside the adoption of a parliamentary system of government, had significant effects on the sportization process of boxing (Sheard, 2004).

In 1743, the Broughton rules were the first set of written rules to be introduced into boxing (Jordan, 1993). Jordan suggests that Jack Broughton implemented these rules for the fighter's protection in the ring where deaths sometimes occurred. The rule explained that if a fighter could not carry on fighting after a 30 second count, the fight would be ended, and their opponent would be made the winner. This was the first sign of the sport becoming more controlled and regulated ('The Evolution of the Boxer', 2018). Broughton also expressed the need for muffers, a form of padded gloves, to protect the boxers from harm during training. This whole set of new rules disallowed certain punching methods in an attempt to control what violence was allowed (Sheard, 2004).

Following the Broughton rules, the London prize ring rules developed in 1839 (Jordan, 1993). This rule change changed the size of the ring separating the spectators by ropes. If a fighter got knocked down, they would have a 30 second rest till the fight restarted in the middle of the ring. Punching below the waist was now a disallowed move, as was eye gouging and head butting (Billinge, 2018). These London prize rules also included that if a fighter was to not abide by the rules then they would be penalised (Billinge, 2018).

Written in London 1865 and established in 1867, the Marquess of Queensbury rules was the first to include boxing gloves in all fights for amateurs and professionals. If the gloves became damaged during a fight, to tear or blow, then they would have had to be changed to another pair that had the referee's approval. These rules controlled violence in the fights even more. Having referees protected the fighters from becoming too hurt and defenceless. Wrestling, hugging and shoes with springs were no longer allowed. The count for the fighter, if knocked down, to stand up without any help was reduced from 30 to 10 seconds and the length of round reduced to 3 minutes ('The Marquess of Queensbury Rules', 2015 and 'Marquess of Queensberry rules', 2018). Murphy and Sheard (2006) and Sheard (2004) discuss that after the establishment of the

Queensbury rules, an attempt towards fair play for all fighters was introduced. The addition of weight divisions allowed fighters to use skill rather than size to defeat their opponent (Murphy and Sheard 2006 and Sheard 2004). These rules were formed to make the sport more attractive to the middle class and to remove its association with street fighting (Boddy, 2005).

Amateur Boxing Association (ABA), known since 2013 as England Boxing, was founded in 1880 by the prime London clubs at the time. The clubs needed an organisation that would aid the expansion of boxing and who would create boxing fixtures and provide rewards for the winners. Since the development of the association, ABA has governed the rules for all boxing events which are associated with them ('Our History - England Boxing', 2019). The ABA introduced drug testing into boxing to encourage fair play and integrity first in 1985.

Each of these rule changes helped the civilisation process of boxing. By decreasing the damage inflicted on the fighters, regulating more through an official referee, the introduction of weight divisions all developed prize fighting into the modern sport of boxing that society has today. In the modern society boxing may still be perceived as violent, however when compared to what prize fighting used to be like before the first set of rules, it is simple to see the adaptations that have been made to the sport in order for it to reflect the nature of the current society.

Elias used the civilising process to find a trend that could explain changes in the development of society (Roberts, 2009). The main discussion in the civilising process is how over subsequent years western culture became more ordered by individuals changing how they act in certain situations, society began to channel their emotions internally rather than externally (Roberts, 2009).