

# **MARYLAND STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION**

## **MINUTES - WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 2016**

On Wednesday, May 25, 2016, the Maryland State Athletic Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Arnold “Arnie” Dansicker at 2:09 p.m.. Present were the following: Chairman Dansicker; Commissioner Ben Alperstein; Commissioner Lenny Moore; Commissioner David Norman; Patrick Pannella, Executive Director; and Susan Cherry, Acting Counsel and Chief of Litigation. Absent: Commissioner Sean Malone.

### **APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 24, 2016 COMMISSION MINUTES**

The February 24, 2016 Minutes of the Maryland State Athletic Commission, which were previously distributed to all Commission members for review, were discussed.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Norman, seconded by Commissioner Alperstein, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the February 24, 2016 Minutes of the Commission.

### **APPROVAL OF PROFESSIONAL MMA EVENTS**

Executive Director Pannella led a Commission discussion in regard to the professional MMA events currently scheduled to be held in the State of Maryland.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Norman, seconded by Commissioner Alperstein, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the following professional MMA events being promoted by John J. Rallo, III:

Professional MMA Event  
Advertising as “Shogun Fights 15”  
Saturday, October 15, 2016 - 7:00 p.m. Starting Time  
The Royal Farms Arena  
201 West Baltimore Street - Baltimore, Maryland; and

Professional MMA Event

Advertising as “Charity MMA Event to Benefit  
The Jonathan Ogden Foundation”  
Thursday, November 3, 2016 - 8:15 p.m. Starting Time  
Martin’s Valley Mansion  
594 Cranbrook Road - Cockeysville, Maryland.

## **APPROVAL OF PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING EVENTS**

Executive Director Pannella led a Commission discussion in regard to the professional wrestling events currently scheduled to be held in the State of Maryland.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Norman, seconded by Commissioner Moore, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the following professional wrestling events being promoted by James “Jim” Hardwick:

Professional Wrestling Event  
Saturday, June 11, 2016 - 6:00 p.m. Starting Time  
Montgomery Blair High School  
51 University Boulevard East - Silver Spring, Maryland  
Promoter: James “Jim” Hardwick, advertising as “Blazermania”.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Norman, seconded by Commissioner Alperstein, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the following professional wrestling events being promoted by Dennis W. Wipprecht, Jr.:

Professional Wrestling Event  
Friday, August 19, 2016 - 8:00 p.m. Starting Time  
Joppa Market Place  
1000 Joppa Farm Road - Joppa, Maryland  
Promoter: Dennis W. Wipprecht, Jr., advertising as  
Maryland Championship Wrestling (MCW); and

Professional Wrestling Event  
Saturday, October 15, 2016 - 7:30 p.m. Starting Time  
Galena Volunteer Fire Department

90 East Cross Street - Galena, Maryland  
Promoter: Dennis W. Wipprecht, Jr., advertising as  
Maryland Championship Wrestling (MCW).

Upon a motion by Commissioner Norman, seconded by Commissioner Alperstein, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the following professional wrestling event being promoted by Event Services, Inc., A Wholly-Owned Subsidiary of World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc.:

Professional Wrestling Event  
Saturday, July 23, 2016 - 7:30 p.m. Starting Time  
The Wicomico Youth and Civic Center  
500 Glen Avenue - Salisbury, Maryland  
Promoter: Event Services, Inc., A Wholly-Owned Subsidiary of  
World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc..

### **REVIEW OF MAY 14, 2016 PROFESSIONAL BOXING EVENT AT THE MARYLAND STATE FAIRGROUNDS**

Chairman Dansicker and Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following review of the professional boxing event promoted by Shawstyle Productions, LLC, advertising as Shawstyle Productions, and held on May 14, 2016 at The Maryland State Fairgrounds (“Fairgrounds”) in Timonium, Maryland.

The Commission commended Shawstyle Productions for holding the first professional boxing event in the history of The Maryland State Fairgrounds. The Commission worked closely with this promoter in negotiating with Fairgrounds representatives to bring professional boxing to the venue. By all accounts, the boxing event was a great success.

Executive Director Pannella commended Rebecca Ensor-Williams, Operations Manager of The Maryland State Fairgrounds, for her noteworthy efforts in assisting in this regard.

The professional boxing event included nine professional boxing contests and 52 scheduled rounds of professional boxing competition, with one Maryland State

Championship boxing contest being featured.

Travis Reeves of Baltimore, Maryland competed in a scheduled ten-round boxing contest against Larry Pryor of Walkersville, Maryland for the “Maryland State Cruiserweight Title”. Mr. Reeves won this boxing contest by technical knockout at 0:42 of the eighth round.

Chairman Dansicker opined that “the paying crowd got its monies worth”, adding that the boxing contests were very competitive in spite of the fact that several of the boxers competing on one side of the boxing card had losing boxing records.

Chairman Dansicker noted that, rather than focusing on a boxer’s record in considering whether the boxer should be approved to compete in a proposed boxing contest, the Commission “pays attention” to the caliber and the quality of the opponents the boxer has competed against.

Chairman Dansicker further stated that, in determining whether or not a boxing contest being proposed will be competitive, the Commission considers how a boxer’s record was achieved.

Executive Director Pannella made special mention of the boxing contest which was held between Tyrieshia Douglas of Ashburn, Virginia and Anahi Torres of Mexico City, Mexico. Mr. Pannella reported that both boxers exhibited “outstanding sportsmanship”, both tapping gloves and hugging each other after the bell sounded marking the beginning of the last and eighth round. Mr. Pannella also praised the boxing skills of each boxer, noting that he observed little or no holding by either boxer and adding that each boxer was quite adept at “cutting off the ring” of her opponent and “forcing the action”.

Due to an unexpected and prolonged delay for vehicles to gain entry into the Fairgrounds parking lot from York Road, the promoter requested, and received permission from the Commission, to delay the start of the boxing event by one hour.

Executive Director Pannella opined that the delay in vehicles gaining entry into the Fairgrounds parking lot can be greatly reduced by extending the location of parking

lot attendants collecting fees for parking to several hundred feet from the parking lot entrance, allowing for more vehicles to enter quickly and eliminating any “bottle neck” effect of traffic on the York Road corridor.

Chairman Dansicker expressed a concern regarding the additional and extended amount of time which Shawstyle Productions allotted for entertainers and intermissions after spectators in attendance already had to endure a one hour wait for the boxing event to commence. Chairman Dansicker opined that, while the Commission wants to remain “business friendly”, it would be in the best interest of all parties involved if the Commission discussed this matter in detail with the promoter for appropriate planning purposes prior to Shawstyle Productions’ next scheduled boxing event in Maryland.

Chairman Dansicker expressed a concern regarding the light fixtures which were placed by Shawstyle Productions’ lighting representative in the immediate area just outside of each of the four corners of the boxing ring. In particular, the base of each light figure protruded into the area around the ring where people were walking. To avoid the hazard of people tripping over the “legs” of the light fixtures, the Commission is requiring that the base of each light figure be properly covered and that each light figure base be properly cordoned off.

Executive Director Pannella expressed a concern regarding the lack of air flow in the two dressing room areas designated for the boxers’ red and blue corners. Mr. Pannella stated that he would: (1) request that Shawstyle Productions place fans in these two areas; and (2) speak with Fairgrounds representatives to see if any alternative solutions can be found to reduce the temperature and produce a positive air flow in these two areas.

The Commission recognizes that certain unforeseen circumstances can, and do, occur when a promotion holds its first boxing event at a new location. The Commission pointed out that, by working closely with the promoter to find viable and mutually agreeable solutions to problems which arise, the boxing event will have a far better chance of running smoothly and being successful.

**PROFESSIONAL BOXER DARRYL WATKINS - COMPETED  
IN NEW JERSEY WHILE CONTRACTUALLY OBLIGATED**

## **TO COMPETE IN BOXING CONTEST IN MARYLAND**

Executive Director Pannella reported that professional boxer Darryl Watkins (Professional Boxer's Federal ID # MD 001955) competed in a boxing contest in the State of New Jersey on April 23, 2016; Mr. Pannella noted that Mr. Watkins had previously signed a Commission "Contract Between Promoter and Boxer" on April 7, 2016 to compete against Stephon Morris in a boxing contest promoted by Shawstyle Productions, LLC and scheduled to be held on May 14, 2016 at The Maryland State Fairgrounds in Timonium, Maryland.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Norman, and seconded by Commissioner Moore, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to sanction Mr. Watkins with a suspension for up to one year until, and unless, he fulfills the terms of his written contract with the promoter or can provide the Commission with a release and satisfaction of his obligations from the promoter.

## **SCHEDULE OF WRESTLING EVENTS FOR REMAINDER OF 2016**

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with a listing of all Commission-sanctioned wrestlers events scheduled to occur in the State of Maryland for the remainder of Calendar Year 2016.

## **WRESTLING SECONDS, MANAGERS AND REFEREES MAY NOT ENGAGE IN PHYSICAL CONTACT UNLESS LICENSED AS A WRESTLER**

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with a report regarding a recent incident that occurred at a Commission-sanctioned wrestling event in which a licensed second engaged in physical contact with a licensed wrestler during a wrestling match. In light of, and in response to, this incident, Mr. Pannella issued a Commission directive via written correspondence to all licensed promoters of wrestling events and their promoter representatives. Entitled "Seconds, Managers and Referees *May Not* Engage in Physical Contact While Participating in a Wrestling Event *Unless* Also Being Licensed as a Wrestler", the directive advised of the following.

Commission regulations require that only individuals who are licensed by the Commission as wrestlers may engage in physical contact of any kind while participating in a Commission-sanctioned wrestling event. The Commission requires that a wrestler applicant demonstrate to the Commission that he or she is “properly trained in the art of wrestling”.

Accordingly, Commission regulations do not permit non-wrestlers from engaging in physical contact of any kind while participating in a Commission-sanctioned wrestling event. Physical contact includes, but is not limited to, an individual “taking bumps”, being touched in any manner, or falling in any manner whether as a result of being touched by another individual or falling on his or own volition as a part of a planned or choreographed action.

Any individual acting as a second, manager or referee who will be engaging in physical contact of any kind while participating in a Commission-sanctioned wrestling event must: (1) also apply for, and obtain, a wrestler license from the Commission prior to engaging in such physical contact; and (2) demonstrate to the Commission that he or she is properly trained as a wrestler.

The Commission will strictly enforce Commission regulations regarding this matter. All individuals who violate this Commission directive, which clarifies the regulations, will be subject to disciplinary action.

### **PROFESSIONAL BOXER ANDRE ESPEUT COMPETING IN IOWA WHILE ON SUSPENSION IN MARYLAND**

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following report in regard to the professional boxing contest which was held in the State of Iowa between professional boxers Andre Espeut (Professional Boxer's Federal ID # NJ 077057) and Charon Spain on April 16, 2016, in which Mr. Espeut won this boxing contest by technical knockout in the second round.

When Mr. Espeut competed in his bout versus Mr. Spain, he fought while serving an “Indefinite Medical Suspension” imposed by the Commission on February 10, 2012. The Commission had charged Mr. Espeut with a statutory violation pursuant to Business Regulation Article §4-310(c)(2) Annotated Code of Maryland.

As a means of settling Case # MSAC-11-02 (“Maryland State Athletic Commission vs. Andre Espeut”), Mr. Espeut entered into a Consent Order with the Commission on January 24, 2012. In the Consent Order, among other stipulations, Mr. Espeut agreed to pay the Commission a \$1,500.00 fine via installment payments of \$375.00 within three days prior to each of his next four professional boxing contests. Within three days prior to competing in his bout in Iowa, Mr. Espeut was required to pay the Commission the second \$375.00 installment of the referenced fine.

The Commission notes that, in the State of Maryland and per Commission policy, any boxer who has been found guilty of violating Business Regulation Article §4-310(c)(2) Annotated Code of Maryland and who wins the boxing contest involving the referenced violation, must surrender his or her win and the boxing contest in question is officially ruled a “No Contest”.

In light of the facts as stated above, and as Mr. Espeut knowingly and willfully competed in his boxing contest in the State of Iowa on April 16, 2016 while serving an “Indefinite Medical Suspension” imposed by the Commission, the Commission has formally requested that: (1) The Iowa State Athletic Commission officially rule the boxing contest between Mr. Espeut and Mr. Spain to be a "No Contest"; and (2) The Iowa State Athletic Commission notify Fight Fax, Inc., the certified boxing registry of the Association of Boxing Commissions, of its action in this regard.

The Commission is currently awaiting the Iowa State Athletic Commission’s response concerning this matter.

### **COMAR.09.14.09.07 - COMMISSION TICKETS**

The Commission held a discussion in regard to COMAR.09.14.09.07 - Commission Tickets. Upon a motion by Chairman Dansicker, and seconded by Commissioner Norman, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to adopt the following policy to be implemented by the Executive Director with regard to ringside, or cageside, Commission seating. Any Commission member, other Commission representative, or individual employed in any branch of Maryland State Government as allowed by State law may bring with him or her one guest as a travelling companion to a Commission-sanctioned event. It is permissible for a Commission member, other

Commission representative, or individual employed in any branch of Maryland State Government as allowed by State law to bring with him or her an additional guest or guests to a Commission-sanctioned event to: (1) facilitate the attendance of a Commission member, other Commission representative, or individual employed in any branch of Maryland State Government as allowed by State law; or (2) promote the purposes or functions of the Commission.

### **NEXT COMMISSION MEETING**

Chairman Dansicker announced that the next Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 20, 2016 at 2:00 p.m. in the Third Floor Conference Room, 500 North Calvert Street, in Baltimore.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Upon a motion by Chairman Dansicker, and seconded by Commissioner Alperstein, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to adjourn the meeting at 3:33 p.m..

**Patrick Pannella**  
**Executive Director**