

BOXING AT HELSINKI

To the editor of the I.O.C Bulletin.

Since my return from Helsinki I have been surprised to find that many people in this country are under the impression that the boxing in the 1952 Olympic Games was marred by unsatisfactory refereeing and judging. Allow me to assure, that this is not the case. From my seat midway between the two rings and no farther than eight yards from either of them, I was in a position to watch every bout and also, as each one terminated, to examine the judges' scoring cards before I authorized the announcement of

the decision. I think I am therefore better qualified to assess the correctness of the decision than the Press representatives, the nearest of whom were at least 80ft. from one of the rings and some 20ft. above either of them, and who only saw the total scores of each bout published on the announcement board and not the round by round scores. One must remember that a boxer may have won the second and third rounds by small margins but have lost the first round by such a large margin that his opponent wins the bout, and this is often overlooked by

those who allow themselves to be carried away by the enthusiasm of the later rounds.

Of course, in a competition of 239 bouts lasting an entire week and involving boxers from 43 nations, and referees and judges from 28 countries, it would be impossible to satisfy everyone, and it may be that certain bouts were so close that different views may have been taken as to the winner. But it is for this reason that one has three judges for each bout, so that when differences occur the majority decide. Still, I can confidently say that though some very few boxers may have been eliminated from the competition rather earlier than, according to some opinions, they should have been, the 10 champions who were successful in the finals were undoubtedly the best boxers in the Olympic Games. In only one weight, which it would be invidious to specify, did I think that two boxers who did not reach the finals were worthy of doing so, but I still do not think either of them would have defeated the gold medallist. I would add that every referee and judge who functioned in Helsinki had been selected either as a result of his work in previous world or Continental events, or after a strict examination as to his capabilities. In addition, during the whole of the week's boxing each was subject

to a careful surveillance by the juries, who have the power to withdraw him from the competition if they consider his work is not of the highest standard. Further, no referee or judge is allowed to function in a match in which a boxer from his own country is engaged.

In conclusion, while in a sport involving human evaluation as opposed to the breasting of a tape or the measurement of a rod individual variations of judgement are bound to occur, the standard of judging was infinitely higher than that seen in the London Games in 1948, which received justifiable criticism. The improvement can be attributed to the vigorous steps taken by this association to avoid a repetition and I think it right that the facts should be known. Surely it is a disservice to a boxer to allow him to think that he has been defeated by inefficiency of the officials instead of by the superiority of his opponent, and would it not be far better to encourage him, by improvement of his training and style, to reach the point where he can win by his own merits?

Rudyard H. Russell,

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