

523 CMR 22.00: STATE CHAMPIONSHIP PROGRAM

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22.01: Title

The program outlined in 523 CMR 22.00 shall be formally known as the State Championship Program. There shall be separate championships for boxing and mixed martial arts.

22.02: Objectives

The purpose of 523 CMR 22.00 is to prescribe guidelines and criteria for the objective and consistent rankings of professional boxers and mixed martial arts contestants in furtherance of attaining the respective state championship in individual weight classes. The Commission recognizes that any ranking structure can be subjective in nature. Accordingly, 523 CMR 22.00 is intended to create a ranking structure that is objective, precise and consistent: based less on subjectivity and more on competition between active combatants so that when a state title bout is advertised, the general public is assured that it is, indeed, between two deserving individuals.

22.03: Philosophy

The philosophy behind the State Championship Program is to have the combatants themselves prove they are worthy of a top ranking. Movement in the rankings of top combatants should ultimately be based upon wins and losses and not on subjective criteria. For combatants to maintain top ranking, they should be, at the very least, active and competing against other ranked opponents. This type of ranking system is intended to increase activity among the top combatants of the state.

22.04: Ranking Panel

Rankings shall be determined by a three member panel appointed by the Commission for such purpose. There shall be one panel appointed for purposes of determining rankings of boxers and one panel appointed for purposes of determining rankings of mixed martial arts combatants. Appointment to the ranking panel shall be for a term of two years. Members of the panel shall serve at the pleasure of the Commission. No person may serve on both rankings panels.

22.05: Approval of Rankings

Once determined, the ranking panel shall forward the proposed rankings to the Commission for approval. The Commission may adjust the rankings, but shall generally defer to the recommendation of the ranking panel and shall exercise such discretionary authority with due circumspection.

22.06: Ranking Criteria

- (1) The following factors, in no particular order, shall be considered by the ranking panel in determining rankings:
  - (a) Overall win/loss record;
  - (b) Overall level of completion including records of opponents;
  - (c) Results versus common opponents;
  - (d) Overall level and frequency of activity;
  - (e) Level and frequency of activity within Massachusetts.
- (2) The following factors shall not be considered by the ranking panel in determining rankings:
  - (a) The identity of the combatant's promoter, manager or any other person with whom the combatant is affiliated.
  - (b) The attendance of the combatant or the combatant's affiliates at a convention, conference, or other function sponsored by the Commission.
  - (c) Any activity not directly related to a combatant's performance as a professional combatant with the exception of any activity that directly undermines the integrity of the unarmed combative sports.

22.07: Weight Classes

Unless otherwise indicated, there shall be rankings and a champion in each of the following nine weight classes:

- (1) Heavyweight;
- (2) Cruiserweight;
- (3) Light-heavy weight;
- (4) Middleweight;
- (5) Welterweight;
- (6) Lightweight;
- (7) Featherweight;
- (8) Bantamweight;
- (9) Flyweight.

22.08: Rankings

There may be up to ten combatants ranked in each weight class identified in 523 CMR 22.07. No combatant can be ranked in more than one division at one time. For a combatant to be ranked, they must reside in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, or if a non-resident, have fought in Massachusetts at least two times in the preceding calendar year for a boxer and four times in the preceding calendar year for a mixed martial arts combatant. In order for a boxer to be ranked, they shall have competed in at least two bouts scheduled for six rounds, or three bouts scheduled for four rounds.

22.09: Maintaining Rankings

- (1) In order to maintain a spot in the rankings, a boxer:
  - (a) shall compete in Massachusetts at least once during a 12 month period from the time the combatant gets ranked; and,
  - (b) shall have competed against another ranked boxer in Massachusetts within an 22 month period from the time the boxer gets ranked.
- (2) In order to maintain a spot in the rankings, a mixed martial arts combatant:

22.09: continued

- (a) shall compete in Massachusetts at least twice during a 12 month period from the time the combatant gets ranked; and
- (b) shall have competed against another ranked boxer in Massachusetts within an 12 month period from the time the combatant gets ranked.

(3) A combatant who does not meet the requirements set forth in 523 CMR 22.09(1) or (2) shall be immediately removed from the rankings. The combatant shall immediately regain eligibility once they alleviate the deficiency.

(4) Exceptions. If a combatant does not meet the requirements set forth in 523 CMR 22.09(1) or (2), they may maintain their ranking if they are able to demonstrate to the Commission's satisfaction that such shortcoming was due to injury said injury must be verified in writing by a licensed physician) or for any exceptional circumstance deemed acceptable to the Commission.

(5) If a ranked combatant loses to an un-ranked combatant, the ranked combatant shall be lowered at least one position in the rankings, and the un-ranked combatant shall be immediately considered for a ranking.

(6) If two ranked combatants compete against each other and the lower ranked combatant wins, the lower ranked combatant shall be elevated in the rankings, and the higher ranked combatant shall be lowered in the rankings.

22.10: Initial Determination of a Champion

The initial champion in each weight class shall be named by the Commission based upon a recommendation of the ranking panel in a manner described in 523 CMR 22.04 through 22.06. The combatant may not take possession of the championship belt unless they win it in an actual bout against a mandatory challenger. The Commission may elect not to name a champion in a particular weight class if it is determined that the class of combatant competing in that division is inadequate to determine a meaningful champion. In the event that no champion is named, the Commission may designate the top two combatants in that division as mandatory challengers for each other.

22.11: Champions

A combatant may become the champion of a particular weight class by either being named champion initially by the Commission as described in 523 CMR 22.10 or by defeating the combatant who holds the championship in a match sanctioned by the Commission. No combatant may hold a championship in more than one weight class at a time. No combatant who has held a world or international title shall be eligible to hold the state championship. There shall be no "Super Champion".

22.12: Rules of Engagement

Championship boxing bouts shall be scheduled for ten rounds. Championship mixed martial arts bouts shall be scheduled for five rounds. The match shall be conducted in accordance with the rules set forth in 523 CMR 15.00: *Boxing Contests and Exhibitions* for boxing and 523 CMR 16.00: *Mixed Martial Arts Contests and Exhibitions* for mixed martial arts.

22.13: Defense and Transfer of Title

(1) Title Defense. The champion shall defend their title in Massachusetts within nine months of receiving it and within nine months of their previous title defense. Failure of a champion to timely defend their title, without good cause as determined by the Commission, shall result in forfeiture of the title. In case of forfeiture, the Commission shall determine a new champion in the same manner as set forth in 523 CMR 22.10.

(2) Transfer of Title. If a combatant defeats the champion in a Commission sanctioned match by knockout, technical knockout, submission, decision, or disqualification, that person shall become the new champion of that weight class.

22.14: Interim Champions

There shall be no “interim” champions. If a champion is injured or otherwise incapacitated and thus cannot satisfy their title defense obligations set forth in 523 CMR 22.09(1) or (2), the Commission may for good cause grant the combatant an additional 60 day grace period in which to make the required title defense. If no title defense is made by either the end of the grace period or the mandatory defense period set forth in 523 CMR 22.09(1) or (2), whichever is later in time, the next two highest ranked combatants in that weight class shall compete for the title. Once the injured champion notifies the Commission that they are able to resume competing, that individual shall be the mandatory challenger for the new champion.

22.15: Mandatory Challengers

The Commission may identify a combatant as a mandatory challenger within a weight class. In order to be identified as a mandatory challenger, the combatant must either be ranked number two in the weight class, have won an elimination bout between top contenders from within the weight class, or designated as such pursuant to 523 CMR. If a mandatory challenger is identified in a weight class, the champion must fight that individual within nine months in order to maintain the title. Failure of the champion to do so shall be cause for the Commission to strip the champion of the title. In such a case, a new champion shall be determined consistent with 523 CMR 22.10. Failure of a mandatory challenger to accept a fight with the champion within nine months of being so named will result in that individual being stripped of the designation and being lowered in the rankings.

22.16: Discipline

At its sole discretion, the Commission may by majority vote remove any combatant from the rankings or strip a combatant of a championship for any violations of 523 CMR, violation of any law of the Commonwealth or the United States, or engaging in any behavior that undermines the integrity of unarmed combative sports. After such vote, the Commission shall notify the combatant of the decision in writing and reasons therefore. The combatant may appeal said decision within 30 days of receipt thereof and request a hearing before the Commission. Hearings shall be conducted pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A and 801 CMR 1.02: *Informal/Fair Hearings Rules*. The combatant shall be notified of such hearing in writing a reasonable period of time in advance. Mailing of such notice *via* first class mail to the address provided to the Commission as part of the licensing process shall be considered proper notice for these purposes.

22.17: Sponsorship

The Commission may accept sponsorship funds from public or private organizations or individuals for purposes of implementing and promoting the State Championship Program. Sponsorship funds may not be accepted from any organization or individual that has, or may have, a stake or interest, direct or indirect, in the outcome of any match or an individual boxer. Nor may funds be accepted from any organization or individual that is in any way under the regulatory authority of the Commission or Department of Public Safety. No sponsorship agreement entered into between the Commission and a sponsor shall in any way be construed so as to create any obligations beyond those otherwise set forth in 523 CMR upon any specific combatant, promoter or other licensee. By virtue of being ranked or obtaining a championship, a combatant consents to use of their name or likeness in any promotional materials disseminated by the Commission in furtherance of the State Championship Program. A combatant may refuse a ranking or championship by notifying the Commission of such in writing. Any promoter who promotes a championship event, consents to permit the Commission to engage in any reasonable promotional efforts including posting of signage at the event. Further, the promoter agrees to reasonably accommodate requests made by Program sponsors whenever possible.

## REGULATORY AUTHORITY

523 CMR 22.00: M.G.L. c. 147, § 46.