

**Association of Boxing Commissions**

**MMA Judging Committee**

**MMA Judging Criteria Revisions**

**2012 Report**

**Clearwater Florida Annual Conference**

**MMA Committee on Judging:**

Chair Jeff Mullen

**Members**

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## **Overview:**

In July of 2010 at the Association of Boxing Commissions annual conference in New Orleans a committee was struck to examine MMA judging.

The purpose of this committee was to examine a proposal made by Nelson "Doc" Hamilton to the ABC on the use of the ½ point judging system for MMA.

As a result of numerous discussions over the last several years involving all aspects of MMA judging the committee reported to the ABC membership in 2011 in Washington DC that one of their findings was to modify the current judging system (10 point must system).

The goal was not to change entirely the 10 point must system but to bring a greater clarity with respect to the overall criteria of MMA judging. The committee felt that by clarifying some of the criteria of the current judging system this would allow judges to make a more accurate score of the rounds and therefore enhance MMA judging.

## **Summary of Changes:**

### **1. Effective Defense Removed as a criteria:**

Effective Defense will no longer be considered a requirement for the following reasons:

1. The committee believes that offensive actions should be the only criteria used to score MMA matches. Offensive fighters are fighters which carry the fight and push the action, and make the fight happen.
2. Defense is its own reward. A fighter who chooses to avoid using defensive actions will invariably suffer the consequences. For example if a fighter decides that they do not want to block or avoid a strike, protect themselves from a submission, or avoid a throw or takedown then they will suffer the results of those offensive actions being used against them. The only role defensive action plays is to keep a fighter in the fight longer so that they can attempt to score using offensive actions.
3. Having two fighters avoid offensive actions and rely solely on defense goes against the basic primary consideration of any combative sport: To score using offense.

## **2. Striking and Grappling:**

Striking and Grappling are now considered to be given equal weight.

The old scoring system rewarded striking (as a primary consideration) more than grappling. Mixed Martial Arts is based on two skill sets - striking and grappling. The committee felt that grappling should not be a secondary factor in determining the outcome of a match. Grappling has a definitive skill set and athleticism and offensive capabilities which when used correctly can effectively end a fight. As such grappling skills should be rewarded and given equal weight to striking.

## **3. Damage:**

“Damage” is as a term has been used a descriptor when discussing the scoring of MMA rounds by officials. It is the committee’s recommendation that this terminology be replaced by the term “effective”. This was a strongly debated consideration with the committee and something the committee reviewed in its entirety. The following reasons were given to remove the descriptor “Damage”:

1. The legal considerations surrounding the term “Damage” as a descriptor were given considerable weight and as such the committee felt that using the word “Damage” may contribute to the potential for liability in the event of any litigation that commissions may find themselves involved in.
2. The sport of MMA is still relatively new and has not received sanctioning in various jurisdictions. The committee felt that “Damage” as a descriptor may play a factor in helping to determine future sanctioning if the term was taken out of context with many opposed to MMA as a sport.
3. ABC Instructors who currently use this as part of their teaching curriculum are advised to make any and all subsequent modifications to their course material.

The following is the committees working document which if accepted by the ABC membership would constitute the new judging criteria to be accepted as part of the Unified Rules of Mixed Martial Arts:

**Unified Rules of MMA – Judging Criteria**  
**Amended July 2012**

**Part 1**

**1. Definitions**

“**Effective striking**” is judged by determining the impact of legal strikes landed by a contestant and the number of such legal strikes. Heavier strikes that have a visible impact on the opponent will be given more weight than the number of strikes landed. These assessments include causing an opponent to appear stunned from a legal blow, causing the opponent to stagger, appearance of a cut or bruise from a legal strike and causing the opponent to show pain. Cumulative impact on a fighter will also be weighed. If neither fighter shows an advantage in impact of strikes, the number of strikes will determine the most effective striker.

“**Effective grappling**” is judged by considering the amount of successful executions of a legal takedown, reversals and submission attempts. Examples of factors to consider are take downs from standing position to mount position, passing the guard to a dominant position, and bottom position fighters using an active, threatening guard to create submission attempts. Submission attempts which come close to ending a fight will be weighted more highly than attempts which are easily defended. Submission attempts which cause an opponent to weaken or tire from the effort required to defend the technique will also be weighted highly in scoring. High amplitude takedowns and throws which have great impact will be scored more heavily than a takedown which does not have great impact.

“**Effective aggression**” is moving forward scoring with a legal technique or attacking from the guard with threatening submissions.

“**Cage/Ring Control**” is dictating the pace, place and position of the fight

**Part 2**

**2. Application**

All mixed martial arts bouts will be evaluated and scored by three judges. The 10-Point Must System will be the standard system of scoring a bout. Under the 10-Point Must Scoring System, 10 points must be awarded to the winner of the

round and nine points or less must be awarded to the loser, except for an even round, which is scored (10-10).

### **Part 3**

#### **3. Judging Criteria**

The 10-Point Must System will be the standard system of scoring a bout. Under the 10-Point Must Scoring System, 10 points must be awarded to the winner of the round and nine points or less must be awarded to the loser, except for an even round, which is scored (10-10).

Judges shall evaluate mixed martial arts techniques, such as effective striking, effective grappling, effective aggressiveness and Cage/ring control. Scoring evaluations shall be made giving equal weight to effective striking and effective grappling. It will be determined on a sliding scale. If a round is affected more by striking, then striking will be weighed more heavily. If a round is affected more by grappling than striking, then grappling will be weighed more heavily. Cage/Ring Control are secondary criteria to be used when effective striking and effective grappling are even. Effective aggression will be weighed more heavily than cage/ring control.

"1. A round is to be scored as a 10-10 Round when both contestants appear to be fighting evenly and neither contestant shows superiority by even a close margin. This score should rarely be used.

2. A round is to be scored as a 10-9 Round when a contestant wins by a close margin, landing the greater number of effective legal strikes, demonstrating effective grappling, and utilizing other effective legal techniques.

3. A round is to be scored as a 10-8 Round when a contestant wins by a large margin, by effective striking and or effective grappling that have great impact on the opponent.

4. A round is to be scored as a 10-7 Round when a contestant totally dominates by effective striking and or effective grappling, which put the opponent in great danger throughout the round. In a 10-7 round referee stoppage may be eminent. This score should rarely be used.