

**RULES
OF
THE TENNESSEE ATHLETIC COMMISSION**

**CHAPTER 0145-01
GENERAL PROVISIONS**

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0145-01-.01 APPLICABILITY.

The provisions of this chapter shall apply to all professional unarmed combat contests held or scheduled to be held in the state of Tennessee.

Authority: Chapter 1149 of the Public Acts of 2008, § 2 and T.C.A. § 68-115-201 [effective July 1, 2008].
Administrative History: Emergency rules 0145-01 through 0145-05 filed November 7, 2008; effective though April 21, 2009. Emergency rule filed April 20, 2009; effective through October 2, 2009. New rule filed March 17, 2009; effective May 31, 2009.

0145-01-.02 DEFINITIONS.

As used in the rules of the Tennessee Athletic Commission, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (1) "Amateur" means a person who has never competed in an unarmed combat sport competition or contest for any purse or item of value, other than for a prize or item of value which does not exceed fifty dollars (\$50.00), including reasonable expenses, except those involved in Olympic organizations recognized by the Tennessee Athletic Commission as a sanctioning organization.
- (2) "Application fee" means the fee due at the time an application for a license is submitted to the Commission.
- (3) "Association of Boxing Commission" means the association recognized by state athletic commissions, which affiliate with such association regarding rules and regulations of unarmed combat sports. The association may also mean and be referred to as the "ABC Association for Professional Unarmed Combat Contests".
- (4) "Banned substances" means substances defined by the World Anti-Doping Agency, in addition to any illegal substance.
- (5) "Bare-knuckle boxing" means boxing where unarmed combatants do not wear gloves or any form of padding on their hands.
- (6) "Boxing" means unarmed combat to compete with the fists. Boxing may include bare-knuckle boxing, unless the application to bare-knuckle boxing would result in conflict with the requirements for bare-knuckle boxing in Chapter 0145-06 of these rules.
- (7) "Combatant" means any person eighteen (18) years of age or older who engages in a professional unarmed combat contest.
- (8) "Commission" means the Tennessee Athletic Commission.

(Rule 0145-01-.02, continued)

- (9) "Commissioner" means any member of the Tennessee Athletic Commission.
- (10) "Contest" means an unarmed combat sport competition in which licensed combatants compete for a purse or item of value greater than that amount authorized for an amateur event.
- (11) "Department" means the Department of Commerce and Insurance.
- (12) "Event" means an amateur event in which amateurs compete in an unarmed combat sport competition in accordance with Title 68, Chapter 115. "Event" does not include sparring wherein amateurs engage in unarmed combat for practice and not competition and is not promoted or organized by a promoter.
- (13) "Immediate family member" means a spouse, parent, sibling or child.
- (14) "Kickboxing" means unarmed combat involving the use of striking techniques delivered with the upper and lower body, and in which the combatants remain standing while striking.
- (15) "Manager" means a person who:
 - (a) Undertakes to represent the interests of another person by contract, agreement or other arrangement, in procuring arranging or conducting a professional contest in which such person will participate as a combatant;
 - (b) Directs or controls the activities of an unarmed combatant relating to the participation of the unarmed combatant in a professional contest;
 - (c) Receives or is entitled to receive at least ten percent (10%) of the gross purse of any professional unarmed combatant for services relating to the participation of the unarmed combatant in a professional contest; or
 - (d) Receives compensation for services as an agent or representative of an unarmed combatant.

The term does not include an attorney who is licensed to practice law in this state if the attorney's participation in any of the activities described in subdivision (a) is limited solely to the attorney's legal representation of a client who is an unarmed combatant.
- (16) "Matchmaker" means a person who brings together professional boxers, kickboxers or mixed martial art combatants or arranges professional contests of unarmed combat.
- (17) "Mixed martial arts" means unarmed combat using a combination of techniques from different disciplines of the martial arts, including kicking, wrestling, and striking, subject to applicable limitations set forth in the Tennessee Athletic Commission Act of 2008 and rules promulgated by the Commission.
- (18) "Permit" means a certification of approval for a contest, issued upon receipt of an application and fee that shall be established and collected, pursuant to the rulemaking authority of the Commission for professional contests.
- (19) "Person" means and includes individuals, corporations, limited liability companies, partnerships or associations, domestic and foreign.
- (20) "Physician" means a person licensed to practice medicine in the state of Tennessee.

(Rule 0145-01-.02, continued)

- (21) "Professional" means a person who competes in an unarmed combat sport contest in this state for the purpose of a purse or item of value greater than that amount authorized for an amateur event.
- (22) "Promoter" means any person who produces, stages, or sponsors any professional contest of unarmed combat.
- (23) "Purse" means the financial guarantee or any other remuneration for which combatants are participating in a professional contest and includes the combatant's share of any payment received for radio broadcasting, television or motion picture right.
- (24) "Ring official" means any person who performs any one (1) or more of the following official functions during the progress of a professional contest of unarmed combat:
 - (a) "Announcer" means a person authorized to act as an announcer at unarmed combat contests or amateur events.
 - (b) "Judge" means a person who is responsible for scoring the performances of the combatants in a professional contest;
 - (c) "Referee" means a person who is present in the ring during the professional contest and exercises general supervision;
 - (d) "Ringside physician" means a person licensed to practice medicine in the state of Tennessee and licensed by the Commission as a ring official;
 - (e) "Timekeeper" means a person who is the official timer of the length of the rounds and the intervals thereof in a professional contest of unarmed combat.
- (25) "Sanctioning organization" means an organization recognized by the Tennessee Athletic Commission that sanctions professional contests of unarmed combat and is required to comply with all provisions of this act. "Sanctioning organization" may also mean an organization recognized by the Tennessee Athletic Commission that adopts rules and regulations pursuant to the provisions of T.C.A. § 68-115-213.
- (26) "Second" means a person, including a manager, who is present at any professional unarmed combat contest to provide assistance or advice to combatants during a professional contest of unarmed combat.
- (27) "Show settlement" means the period of time immediately following the professional contest in which a Commission member or the Commission's administrator or his or her designee shall meet with venue personnel and the contest promoter to review ticket sales and collect fees due if paid immediately following the professional contest.
- (28) "Unarmed combat" means and shall include boxing, mixed martial arts, and kickboxing as defined and regulated under the provisions of the Tennessee Athletic Commission Act of 2008.

Authority: T.C.A. §§ 68-115-102, 68-115-201, and 68-115-404. **Administrative History:** Emergency rules 0145-01 through 0145-05 filed November 7, 2008; effective though April 21, 2009. Emergency rule filed April 20, 2009; effective through October 2, 2009. New rule filed March 17, 2009; effective May 31, 2009. Amendments filed May 8, 2019; effective August 6, 2019. Amendments filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

0145-01-.03 LICENSING.

- (1) No person, firm, or corporation shall promote any contest of unarmed combat, or participate in any contest of unarmed combat as a promoter, matchmaker, combatant, manager, second, announcer, referee, judge, ringside physician or timekeeper without a valid license issued by the Commission.
- (2) Applications for licenses shall be submitted on forms prescribed by the Commission. The applicant shall completely and truthfully respond to all questions or requests for information propounded on, or in connection with, the application. The license shall be denied if the applicant fails to respond to all questions or to provide any requested information. The Commission, or the Commission's administrator, may require any applicant to demonstrate his competence by submission of references or successful completion of a written or oral examination.
- (3) Applications for new licenses or the renewal of existing licenses shall be accompanied by a nonrefundable application fee of fifty dollars (\$50.00) as well as a license fee as stipulated below.

License fees are as follows:

Announcer \$ 100.00
Promoter \$ 500.00
Matchmaker \$ 100.00
Boxer \$ 25.00
Mixed Martial Artist \$ 25.00
Kickboxer \$ 25.00
Manager \$ 100.00
Second \$ 25.00
Referee \$ 75.00
Judge \$ 50.00
Timekeeper \$ 50.00

If the license is applied for within twenty-four (24) hours of the scheduled start of the contest, the applicant shall pay a twenty-five dollar (\$25.00) penalty in addition to the nonrefundable application fee for a total of seventy-five dollars (\$75.00).

Such fee shall not be prorated for any portion of a year. Every license shall expire two (2) years following the date of issuance. No license fee shall be charged for a Ringside Physician license.

- (4) No license issued by the Commission under this chapter shall be transferable.
- (5) All combatants applying for a license, or the renewal thereof, shall be required to submit, upon application, on a form approved by the Commission, a report of a medical examination, including but not limited to a dilated eye exam performed by a licensed optometrist or ophthalmologist and a blood test for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV, performed no earlier than ninety (90) days prior to applying for such license or renewal thereof. Professional combatants who are thirty-five (35) years of age or older shall have a neurological examination by a neurologist or neurosurgeon and submit a medical report thereof within thirty (30) days of applying for a license or renewal thereof. The Commission will not issue a license until it has the opportunity to review the report.
- (6) The Commission's administrator shall have the authority to examine the combatant's record, experience, skill and physical condition and may deny the issuance of a license if, in the administrator's opinion, the combatant's record, experience, skill and physical condition

(Rule 0145-01-.03, continued)

indicate the combatant is unqualified to participate in professional contests of unarmed combat. The applicant may appeal the administrator's decision to deny the issuance of a license to the Commission. Any such appeal will be heard at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission.

- (7) No person shall be permitted to compete in any contest of unarmed combat unless the person:
 - (a) Is at least eighteen (18) years of age; and
 - (b) Furnishes satisfactory identification (including photograph) to the Commission.
- (8) No promoter's license shall be issued or renewed unless the applicant presents a good and sufficient surety bond executed to the state of Tennessee in an amount no less than twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000.00).
- (9) Conviction of a felony or a misdemeanor by any applicant for a promoter, matchmaker, manager, judge or referee license or, in the event the applicant is a corporation, partnership or limited liability company, the partner or any party in responsible charge of the company, may disqualify the applicant from licensure.

Authority: Chapter 1149 of the Public Acts of 2008, § 2; Tennessee Athletic Commission Act of 2016; and T.C.A. §§ 68-115-201, 68-115-204, and 68-115-206 [effective July 1, 2008]. **Administrative History:** Emergency rules 0145-01 through 0145-05 filed November 7, 2008; effective though April 21, 2009. Emergency rule filed April 20, 2009; effective through October 2, 2009. New rule filed March 17, 2009; effective May 31, 2009. Amendments filed May 8, 2019; effective August 6, 2019. Amendments filed July 13, 2023; effective October 11, 2023.

0145-01-.04 PERMITS FOR PROFESSIONAL CONTESTS.

- (1) A promoter of a contest of unarmed combat shall obtain a permit from the Commission not less than thirty (30) days prior to the date of the contest.
- (2) Applications for permits shall be submitted on forms prescribed by the Commission. The applicant shall completely and truthfully respond to all questions or requests for information propounded on, or in connection with, the application. Applications for permits shall include, without limitation:
 - (a) The address where the contest is to be held;
 - (b) A list of the individual contests to be held, if more than one contest, including the names, addresses, phone numbers and contracted weights of all prospective contestants (i.e. the "contest sheet");
 - (c) If the program will be broadcasted, each date and network on which the program will be televised;
 - (d) A list of ring officials from which the Commission or the Commission's administrator may assign to the event. The Commission or the Commission's administrator may assign ring officials not contained in the list. The promoter will be responsible for payment for the ring officials' services; and
 - (e) Proof of medical insurance covering the combatant for any injuries sustained in any contest to be held under the permit in an amount of not less than twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000.00).

(Rule 0145-01-.04, continued)

Provided that the promoter has completed the application completely and provided all requested information, an application for permit will be processed within five (5) business days from the date of receipt.

- (3) The promoter shall immediately notify the Commission's administrator of any change in the information submitted pursuant to paragraph (2) above. The contest sheet shall be deemed final seven (7) business days prior to the contest.
- (4) If the Commission's administrator determines (on the basis of available information) that a proposed contest would not be reasonably and fairly competitive, the administrator shall so advise the promoter within five (5) business days after receipt of the application submitted in accordance with this rule. Unless the administrator is offered evidence or argument which causes him or her to reverse that determination, such contest shall not be held in this state and any permit issued for a program of multiple unarmed combat contests shall not include the same. The applicant may appeal the administrator's decision to the Commission.
- (5) If the Commission's administrator determines that a proposed venue would not be appropriate, the administrator shall so advise the promoter within five (5) business days after receipt of the application submitted in accordance with this rule. Unless the administrator is offered evidence or argument which causes him or her to reverse that determination, such venue shall not be utilized. The applicant may appeal the administrator's decision to the Commission.
- (6) The fee for the permit shall be three hundred dollars (\$300.00).

Authority: Chapter 1149 of the Public Acts of 2008, § 2 and T.C.A. §§ 68-115-201 and 68-115-205 [effective July 1, 2008]. **Administrative History:** Emergency rules 0145-01 through 0145-05 filed November 7, 2008; effective though April 21, 2009. Emergency rule filed April 20, 2009; effective through October 2, 2009. New rule filed March 17, 2009; effective May 31, 2009. Amendments filed July 11, 2018; effective October 9, 2018.

0145-01-.05 RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROMOTERS.

- (1) It shall be the responsibility of the promoter of an unarmed combat contest to inform all prospective participants that it will be necessary for them to be duly licensed in accordance with Rule 0145-01-.03 Licensing.
- (2) No promoter shall knowingly permit any person to act as a boxer, mixed martial artist, kickboxer, manager or second in any contest if such person is (or would be) prohibited from acting in such capacity by any provision of the Tennessee Athletic Commission Act of 2008 or any rules or regulations of the Tennessee Athletic Commission.
- (3) The promoter shall assure that the ringside physician is seated so as to have immediate access to the ring.
- (4) The promoter shall provide surgical gloves to all persons working in the ring. No promoter shall knowingly permit any person to act as a second (including a manager acting as a second) or referee in any contest unless such person is supplied with, and uses, such surgical gloves. The promoter is responsible for ensuring that acceptable sanitary standards are met with respect to dressing rooms, water bottles, towels or other equipment. Physicians and commission representatives shall specifically check at every contest or event for violations of these rules. The ring shall be swept, dry-mopped, or otherwise adequately cleaned before the event and prior to each fight.

(Rule 0145-01-.05, continued)

- (5) Prior to the initiation of any contest or event, a Commission representative shall inspect the bout area for safety and the promoter of the contest or event shall be required to make whatever changes to such area as are necessary in the judgment of the Commission representative.
- (6) The promoter shall ensure that the emergency equipment and procedures required by T.C.A. § 68-115-404 are provided for at each unarmed combat contest.
- (7) No person may arrange, promote, organize, or produce a professional unarmed combat contest without providing health insurance for each combatant to provide medical coverage for any injuries sustained in the contest in an amount not less than twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000.00). The promoter shall provide proof of such coverage at the time the promoter applies for a permit for a professional contest.
- (8) The promoter shall ensure the venue provides a sufficient ringside area for commission officials and ring officials to carry out their official duties.
- (9) The promoter shall be responsible for the cost of any tests or examinations ordered by the Commission's administrator, or his designee, pursuant to Rule 0145-01-.08.
- (10) The promoter shall file with the Commission's administrator a copy of any and all contracts entered into for the sale, lease, or other exploitation of broadcasting, television or motion picture rights for any professional contest.

Authority: Chapter 1149 of the Public Acts of 2008, § 2 and T.C.A. §§ 68-115-201, 68-115-204, 68-115-211, 68-115-213, and 68-115-214 [effective July 1, 2008]. **Administrative History:** Emergency rules 0145-01 through 0145-05 filed November 7, 2008; effective though April 21, 2009. Emergency rule filed April 20, 2009; effective through October 2, 2009. New rule filed March 17, 2009; effective May 31, 2009. Amendments filed July 11, 2018; effective October 9, 2018.

0145-01-.06 WEIGH-IN.

- (1) The promoter of a bout shall furnish an accurate scale for the weigh-in. Such scale shall be available to the contestants at least eight (8) hours prior to the weigh-in time.
- (2) Upon receipt of an application for a permit pursuant to Rule 0145-01-.04, the Commission's administrator shall establish a time and place for the weigh-in. In setting such time and place, the administrator shall consider any expressed preference of the promoter; however, the decision of the administrator shall be final.
- (3) Unless otherwise authorized by the Commission's administrator, the contestants shall appear at the time and place designated for the weigh-in.
- (4) All weigh-ins shall be under the supervision and control of the Commission's administrator and/or his or her designee.
- (5) Weigh-ins may occur up to forty-eight (48) hours before the scheduled start of a contest.

Authority: Chapter 1149 of the Public Acts of 2008, § 2 and T.C.A. §§ 68-115-201, 68-115-204, 68-115-401, and 68-115-402 [effective July 1, 2008]. **Administrative History:** Emergency rules 0145-01 through 0145-05 filed November 7, 2008; effective though April 21, 2009. Emergency rule filed April 20, 2009; effective through October 2, 2009. New rule filed March 17, 2009; effective May 31, 2009. Amendments filed May 8, 2019; effective August 6, 2019.

0145-01-.07 RING OFFICIALS GENERALLY.

- (1) No promoter, or official, director or stockholder thereof, shall act as a referee, judge, or timekeeper at any bout conducted by such promoter.
- (2) No person shall act or agree to act as a ring official under any circumstances which might reasonably appear to impair his or her capacity to exercise independent judgment.
- (3) No ring official shall consume, or be under the influence of, alcoholic beverages or drugs during the course of his official duties.

Authority: Chapter 1149 of the Public Acts of 2008, § 2 and T.C.A. § 68-115-201 [effective July 1, 2008].
Administrative History: Emergency rules 0145-01 through 0145-05 filed November 7, 2008; effective though April 21, 2009. Emergency rule filed April 20, 2009; effective through October 2, 2009. New rule filed March 17, 2009; effective May 31, 2009.

0145-01-.08 COMBATANTS GENERALLY.

- (1) The administration or use of drugs or stimulants, either before or during a bout, to or by any combatant, is prohibited. Any contestant violating this provision shall be subject to disqualification. For the purpose of verifying compliance with this rule, the Commission's administrator or his designee may require that one or both contestants in a bout submit to a urinalysis, blood test, or, if recommended by the ringside physician, any other pre- or post-fight examination.
- (2) All combatants shall attend the pre-fight rules meeting held the day of or the day before all professional contests, with the meeting to be conducted by the referee and the Commission's administrator or his or her designee.
- (3) Combatants shall obey the referee at all times during the bout.
- (4) Combatants shall act with proper sportsmanship at all times and shall obey the provisions of the Tennessee Athletic Commission Act of 2016 and these rules at all times.
- (5) In addition to the pre-licensing medical examination, all combatants shall complete a pre-contest medical form as provided by the Commission and be subject to a pre-contest medical examination to be performed by the ringside physician, or another physician as selected by the Commission's administrator. A pre-contest examination of a female combatant should include abdominal, breast, and pelvic examinations. Any female combatant shall provide the examining physician with the results of a pregnancy test performed on the combatant within the previous fourteen (14) days. If such results are positive, that combatant shall not be permitted to compete.
- (6) Combatants failing to appear for the weigh-in, any pre-fight meetings, the contest or bout, shall be subject to discipline which may include civil penalties or suspension at the discretion of the Commission.

Authority: Chapter 1149 of the Public Acts of 2008, § 2; Tennessee Athletic Commission Act of 2016; and T.C.A. §§ 68-115-201, 68-115-204, 68-115-216, 68-115-402, 68-115-403, and 68-115-405 [effective July 1, 2008]. **Administrative History:** Emergency rules 0145-01 through 0145-05 filed November 7, 2008; effective though April 21, 2009. Emergency rule filed April 20, 2009; effective through October 2, 2009. New rule filed March 17, 2009; effective May 31, 2009. Amendments filed July 13, 2023; effective October 11, 2023.

0145-01-.09 TREATMENT OR HOSPITALIZATION.

- (1) In the event of any serious injury, the ringside physician may immediately render any emergency treatment necessary, recommend further treatment or hospitalization if indicated. The ringside physician shall fully report the entire matter to the Commission within twenty-four (24) hours and subsequently thereafter, if necessary. Such physician may also require that the injured combatant and his manager remain in the ring or on the premises after the contest for such period of time as the physician deems advisable.
- (2) In the event that a combatant who has suffered a knockout or any severe injury has on such account been treated by the combatant's personal physician or has been hospitalized, the combatant or his manager must promptly submit to the Commission a full report from such physician or hospital.

Authority: Chapter 1149 of the Public Acts of 2008, § 2 and T.C.A. § 68-115-201 [effective July 1, 2008].
Administrative History: Emergency rules 0145-01 through 0145-05 filed November 7, 2008; effective though April 21, 2009. Emergency rule filed April 20, 2009; effective through October 2, 2009. New rule filed March 17, 2009; effective May 31, 2009.

0145-01-.10 CONTRACTS FOR COMBATANTS.

Every contract for the services of a combatant in any bout in this state shall be in writing and:

- (1) Include a term incorporating by reference the statutes and rules governing professional contests in Tennessee;
- (2) Contain no other terms in conflict with such statutes or rules; and
- (3) Be available for review by the Commission at any reasonable time upon request.

Authority: Chapter 1149 of the Public Acts of 2008, § 2 and T.C.A. § 68-115-201 [effective July 1, 2008].
Administrative History: Emergency rules 0145-01 through 0145-05 filed November 7, 2008; effective though April 21, 2009. Emergency rule filed April 20, 2009; effective through October 2, 2009. New rule filed March 17, 2009; effective May 31, 2009.