

**RULES  
OF  
THE TENNESSEE ATHLETIC COMMISSION**

**CHAPTER 0145-06  
BARE-KNUCKLE BOXING**

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**0145-06-.01 APPLICABILITY.**

- (1) The provisions of this chapter shall apply to all bare-knuckle boxing contests held or scheduled to be held in the State of Tennessee and shall take precedent over any other rules, including but not limited to any rules of any sanctioning organization, that are in any way directly or indirectly in conflict with any other provision set forth in this chapter, unless the Commission modifies or waives such provision. The Commission may modify or waive any provision in cases of undue hardship, demonstrable impracticability, or necessity.
- (2) These rules shall be supplemental to those in Chapter 0145-02 to the extent that those rules do not conflict with any provision in this chapter. Any requirements, provisions, obligations, responsibilities, or duties in Chapter 0145-02 shall apply to bare-knuckle boxing bouts unless these rules state otherwise.
- (3) Any combatant, referee, promoter, second, announcer, matchmaker, judge, timekeeper, manager, or ringside physician who participates in a bare-knuckle boxing bout must comply with the licensing requirements of the Commission in Chapter 0145-01 of these rules.
- (4) Any combatant, referee, promoter, second, announcer, matchmaker, judge, timekeeper, manager, or ringside physician who participates in a bare-knuckle boxing bout must comply with all licensing applications, fees, and other requirements related to licensing for professional boxing.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 68-115-201, 68-115-203, and 68-115-204. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

**0145-06-.02 FIGHTING AREA.**

- (1) Bare-knuckle fighting bouts shall only occur in a ring or cage approved by the Commission and that promotes combatant, ring official, and spectator safety. The cage or ring must be approved prior to the bout and comply with the provisions of Rule 0145-02-.02 or Rule 0145-03-.02.
- (2) A bell or other device capable of producing a tone easily audible to the combatants and ring officials shall be fastened securely at or below the floor level of the fighting area.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 68-115-201 and 68-115-203. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

**0145-06-.03 HAND WRAPS.**

- (1) Hand wraps shall include the wrist and are restricted to twelve (12) yards of soft gauze bandage per hand and not more than two (2) inches in width, held in place by not more than ten (10) yards of surgical tape, no more than one (1) inch (25.4 mm) width. The surgical tape and/or gauze shall not be applied within one (1) inch of the knuckles.
- (2) No tape or gauze will extend within one (1) inch of a combatant's knuckles when a clenched fist is made.
- (3) No tape or gauze is allowed between or on a combatant's fingers, with the exception of the thumb. The thumb of a combatant may include a single wrap of tape when the wrist is being wrapped.
- (4) Wrapping of the wrist shall not extend more than three (3) inches past the wrist juncture.
- (5) No other gloves, wrappings, taping, or other items shall be applied to the hands of a combatant.

**Authority:** T.C.A. § 68-115-201. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

**0145-06-.04 PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND APPAREL.**

- (1) All combatants must wear such protective gear or equipment as deemed necessary by the Commission.
- (2) Each combatant shall wear appropriate shorts and wrestling or boxing shoes. Shoes shall be of soft material, and shall not be fitted with spikes, cleats, hard soles, or hard heels.
- (3) Each combatant shall wear a custom-made, individually fabricated mouthpiece. A round cannot begin without each combatant wearing a mouthpiece. If the mouthpiece is dislodged during the round, the referee will call "time" when there is a lull in the bout and have the mouthpiece replaced at the first opportune moment without interfering with the immediate action. The referee may deduct points if he or she feels the mouthpiece is being purposefully spit out.
- (4) Throughout the bout, male combatants must be equipped with and use equipment which will preclude any claim of incapacity due to low blows.
- (5) Female combatants shall wear attire to prevent the showing of cleavage as much as possible and are approved to wear an above the elbow or sleeveless form-fitting rash guard and/or sports bra(s). No loose-fitting tops and/or breast protectors shall be allowed.
- (6) When deemed necessary by the referee, a combatant shall have his or her hair secured in a manner that does not interfere with the vision and safety of either combatant. No object can be worn to secure the combatant's hair which may cause injury to either combatant. Inspectors shall ensure that the fingernails are clipped at a length so as not to cause injury to the combatant's opponent.
- (7) The wearing of jewelry is strictly prohibited during all contests.
- (8) A combatant may wear soft neoprene-type sleeves to cover only the knee(s) or elbow(s). Approved sleeves may not have padding, Velcro, plastic, metal, ties, or any other material considered unsafe or that may create an unfair advantage. There will be no other taping,

(Rule 0145-06-.04, continued)

covering, or protective gear of any kind on the upper body of a combatant, notwithstanding the wrapping and taping for a combatant's hands allowed by this chapter.

- (9) Each referee and all seconds (including a manager acting as a second) shall be equipped with surgical gloves which shall be worn throughout the bout.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 68-115-102, 68-115-201, and 68-115-203. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

#### **0145-06-.05 PETROLEUM JELLY.**

Combatants shall only be permitted to have petroleum jelly or another similar substance applied to his or her face. Combatants shall not be permitted to have excessive petroleum jelly or another similar substance on any part of their body, as determined by the sole discretion of the referee. Petroleum jelly or another similar substance shall be applied to the face prior to the bout by a licensed second acting as the designated cut-man or cornerman. The reapplication of petroleum jelly or another similar substance to the face may be allowed between rounds and shall only be applied by the licensed second acting as the designated cut-man or cornerman.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 68-115-102 and 68-115-201. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

#### **0145-06-.06 WEIGHT CLASSIFICATIONS.**

- (1) The following shall constitute the applicable weight classes for all contests in bare-knuckle boxing bouts. The allowable weight differential (in pounds) between combatants within major classifications shall be as permitted by the Commission at its discretion:
- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) Strawweight        | Through 107.9 lbs.    |
| (b) Flyweight          | 108 lbs. – 116.9 lbs. |
| (c) Bantamweight       | 117 lbs. – 125.9 lbs. |
| (d) Featherweight      | 126 lbs. – 135.9 lbs. |
| (e) Lightweight        | 136 lbs. – 145.9 lbs. |
| (f) Welterweight       | 146 lbs. – 155.9 lbs. |
| (g) Middleweight       | 156 lbs. – 165.9 lbs. |
| (h) Super Middleweight | 166 lbs. – 175.9 lbs. |
| (i) Light Heavyweight  | 176 lbs. – 185.9 lbs. |
| (j) Middle Heavyweight | 186 lbs. – 205.9 lbs. |
| (k) Cruiserweight      | 206 lbs. – 225.9 lbs. |
| (l) Heavyweight        | 226 lbs. – 265.9 lbs. |
| (m) Super Heavyweight  | 266 lbs. and above.   |
- (2) A promoter may establish its own weight requirements for championship or title fights.

(Rule 0145-06-.06, continued)

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 68-115-201 and 68-115-203. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

#### **0145-06-.07 ROUNDS.**

- (1) Bare-knuckle fighting bouts shall not extend past a total of six (6) rounds and a total of eighteen (18) minutes of fighting with one (1) minute rest period between rounds. The one-minute rest period does not count as part of the eighteen (18) minutes of fighting.
- (2) Promoters are authorized to mix bout cards and schedule bouts for two (2) or three (3) minute rounds. The Commission will consider the following information when approving bouts:
  - (a) Combatants record, including the record in other combative sports;
  - (b) Combative sports experience by the combatants;
  - (c) Skill level of the combatants;
  - (d) Physical condition of the combatants; and
  - (e) Any other relevant information before the Commission.
- (3) Rounds may be approved for two (2) or three (3) minutes in length. Bouts with two (2) minute rounds shall not exceed six (6) rounds for a total of twelve (12) minutes of fighting.
- (4) Bare-knuckle fighting combatants who are making a professional debut in a bare-knuckle bout shall be restricted to competing in a bout with no more than four (4) rounds that are two (2) minutes per round, unless the combatant has previous professional experience in boxing, mixed martial arts, or other combat sports.
- (5) Bare-knuckle fighting combatants shall not make a professional debut in bare-knuckle fighting bouts without sufficient prior experience in combative sports reviewed by the Commission.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 68-115-201 and 68-115-203. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

#### **0145-06-.08 SECONDS.**

Bare-knuckle fighting bouts shall follow the requirements in Chapter 0145-02 as it relates to the number and licensing of seconds and managers.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 68-115-201, 68-115-203, and 68-115-204. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

#### **0145-06-.09 AMATEUR EVENTS.**

Amateur and exhibition bare-knuckle boxing bouts are prohibited in the State of Tennessee. Combatants who participate in bare-knuckle boxing bouts must be licensed by the Commission as professional bare-knuckle boxing fighters.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 68-115-201, 68-115-203, and 68-115-204. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

**0145-06-.10 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REFEREE.**

- (1) Each bout shall be officiated by a referee who is licensed in accordance with Rule 0145-01-.03.
- (2) The referee in a bare-knuckle bout shall have the same duties, responsibilities, and authority as a referee under Chapter 0145-02.
- (3) In addition to the fouls listed in Rule 0145-02-.10, a referee may consider the following acts as fouls in a bare-knuckle bout:
  - (a) Putting a finger into any orifice of the opposing combatant or into any cut or laceration on the opposing combatant, including fish hooking;
  - (b) Pulling the opposing combatant's hair;
  - (c) Manipulating the opposing combatant's fingers;
  - (d) Striking an opposing combatant who is helpless as the result of blows but is supported by the ropes and does not fall;
  - (e) Butting the opposing combatant with the head, shoulder, knee, or elbow;
  - (f) Hitting the opposing combatant with the elbow or forearm;
  - (g) Hitting the opposing combatant on the back of the head or neck;
  - (h) Gouging the opposing combatant's eye in any manner;
  - (i) Using the ropes or cage to gain an advantage over the opposing combatant;
  - (j) Pushing the opposing combatant around the fighting area or into the ropes/cage;
  - (k) Timidity, excessive clenching, including intentionally spitting out the mouthpiece, running from an opposing combatant, or other similar behavior;
  - (l) Biting the opposing combatant;
  - (m) Headlocks;
  - (n) Throat punches or strikes directly toward the throat of an opposing combatant;
  - (o) Fingers outstretched toward the opposing combatant's face or eyes;
  - (p) Throws or takedowns;
  - (q) Engaging in any other action not described in this subsection that is deemed an intentional foul by the referee on the basis that the action poses a danger to the safety of either fighter, impedes fair and competitive play, or is unsportsmanlike;
  - (r) Spinning back fists; and
  - (s) Hammer-fists.
- (4) The referee is authorized to use any procedures to determine if a foul occurred, penalize a combatant, and/or to end the bout pursuant to Chapter 0145-02.

(Rule 0145-06-.10, continued)

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 68-115-102, 68-115-201, and 68-115-501. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

#### **0145-06-.11 SCORING.**

Scoring in bare-knuckle bouts shall follow the requirements of professional boxing contests listed in Rule 0145-02-.12.

**Authority:** T.C.A. § 68-115-201. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

#### **0145-06-.12 KNOCKOUTS, KNOCKDOWNS, AND DECISIONS.**

The referee shall have the sole authority to determine when a knockdown has occurred. The procedures for determining knockdowns, knockouts, technical knockouts, disqualification, technical decisions, draws, no contest, or any other decision to end a bout for a bare-knuckle contest shall be consistent with the rules of Chapter 0145-02.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 68-115-102 and 68-115-201. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

#### **0145-06-.13 FOULS AND FOUL-RELATED INJURIES.**

The referee shall have the sole authority to determine when a foul has occurred. A referee may consider acts listed in this chapter or Chapter 0145-02 as fouls. The referee may follow the procedures listed in Chapter 0145-02 regarding the use of instant replay and the determination of how fouls are handled regarding point deductions, ending a bout, or any other determination related to unintentional or intentional fouls.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 68-115-102 and 68-115-201. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.

#### **0145-06-.14 BARE-KNUCKLE BOXING PHYSICIANS.**

In addition to any considerations for approving ringside physicians for professional boxing contests, a ringside physician for a bare-knuckle boxing bouts shall have experience with laceration repair.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 68-115-201, 68-115-203, and 68-115-204. **Administrative History:** New rules filed December 5, 2024; effective March 5, 2025.