



ERA I. London Prize Ring Rules (1743, 1838, 1853)

Early fighting had no written rules. There were no weight divisions, round limits and no referee, resulting in very chaotic fights. A system of headbutting, punching, eye-gouging, chokes, and hard throws, not recognized in boxing today were allowed. When a man could not come to scratch, (a line drawn in the center of the fighting area) he would be declared loser and the fight would be brought to a halt. Fights could also end if broken up beforehand by crowd riot, police interference, chicanery, or if both men were willing to accept that the contest was a draw. While fights could have enormous numbers of rounds, the rounds in practice could be quite short with fighters pretending to go down from minor blows to take advantage of the 30-second rest period.

London Prize Ring Rules, where originally created in 1743 by **Jack Broughton** (the 3rd Heavyweight champion in England's history), who to many, was known as the father of English boxing. He also invented the first boxing gloves called "Mufflers", which were used for training, but his set of rules governed bare-knuckle boxing. Even though Broughton's era brought rules to make boxing more civilized, there were still many moves in this era that are illegal in today's gloved boxing. Grappling was allowed during this time and many favored the use of cross-buttocks throws and suplexes. Although grabs below the waist were illegal, Clinching, known as chancery, were also legal and in-use. Fibbing, where a boxer would grab ahold of an opponent by the neck or hair and pummel him multiple times, were allowed. At this time, even Kicking was also allowed in boxing.

In 1838, the first of two revision to the London Prize Ring Rules took place. The significant changes from Broughton's version were predominantly based on the increased specification of fouls, and the detail of the original rules. This version of rules lasted up until 1853, where they were yet again, refined, utilizing further details, however, most of the changes were brought about, with the intent of solving common occurring disputes during matches, rather than the fighters' safety.

London Prize Ring Rules of 1838 and 1853: The Revisions to the 1743 Rules

1. That the ring shall be made on turf, and shall be four-and-twenty feet square, formed of eight stakes and ropes, the latter extending in double lines, the uppermost line being four feet from the ground, the lower two feet from the ground. That in the center of the ring a mark be formed, to be termed a scratch;

and that at two opposite corners, as may be selected, spaces be enclosed by other marks sufficiently large for the reception of the seconds and bottle holders, to be entitled "the corners."

2. That each man shall be attended to the ring by a second and a bottle-holder, the former provided with a sponge, and the latter with a bottle of water. That the combatants, on shaking hands, shall retire until the seconds of each have tossed for choice of position, which adjusted, the winner shall choose his corner according to the state of the wind or sun, and conduct his man thereto, the loser taking the opposite corner.
3. That each man shall be provided with a handkerchief of a colour suitable to his own fancy, and that the seconds proceed to entwine these handkerchiefs at the upper end of one of the center stakes. That these handkerchiefs shall be called "the colours;" and that the winner of the battle at its conclusion shall be entitled to their possession, as the trophy of victory.
4. That two umpires shall then be chosen by the seconds to watch the progress of the battle and take exception to any breach of the rules hereafter stated. That a referee shall be chosen by the umpires, to whom all disputes shall be referred; and that the decision of this referee, whatever it may be, shall be final and strictly binding on all parties, whether as to the matter in dispute or the issue of the battle. That the umpires shall be provided with a watch, for the purpose of calling time; and that they mutually agree upon which this duty shall devolve, the call of that umpire only to be attended to, and no other person whatever to interfere in calling time. That the referee shall withhold all opinion till appealed to by the umpires, and that the umpires strictly abide by his decision without dispute.
5. That on the men being stripped, it shall be the duty of the seconds to examine their shoes and drawers, and if any objection arises either as to insertion of improper spikes in the former, or substances in the latter, they shall appeal to their umpires, who, with the concurrence of the referee, shall direct if any and what alteration shall be made.
6. That both men being ready, each man shall be conducted to that side of the scratch next his corner previously chosen; and the seconds on the one side, and the men on the other, having shaken hands, the former shall immediately return to their corners, and there remain within the prescribed marks till the round be finished, on no pretense whatever approaching their principals during the round, on penalty of losing the battle.

7. That at the conclusion of the round, when one or both of the men are down, the seconds and bottle-holders shall step forward and carry or conduct their principal to his corner, there affording him the necessary assistance, and that no person whatever be permitted to interfere in this duty.
8. That at the expiration of thirty seconds (unless otherwise agreed upon) the umpire appointed shall cry "time," upon which each man shall rise from the knee of his bottle-holder and walk to his own side of the scratch unaided, the seconds and bottle-holders remaining at their corners; and that either man failing so to be at the scratch within eight seconds, shall be deemed to have lost the battle.
9. That on no consideration whatever shall any person be permitted to enter the ring during the battle, or till it shall have been concluded; and that in the event of such unfair practice, or the ropes and stakes being disturbed or removed, it shall be in the power of the umpires and referee to award the victory to that man who in their honest opinion shall have the best of the contest.
10. That the seconds and bottle-holders shall not interfere, advise, or direct the adversary of their principal, and shall refrain from all offensive or irritating expressions, in all respects conducting themselves with order and decorum, and confine themselves to the diligent and careful discharge of their duties to their principals.
11. That in picking up their men, should the seconds or bottle-holders willfully injure the antagonist of their principals, he shall be deemed to have forfeited the battle, on the decision of the umpires or referee.
12. That it shall be "a fair stand-up fight," and if either man shall willfully throw himself down without receiving a blow, he shall be deemed to have lost the battle; but that this rule shall not apply to a man who in a close slips down from the grasp of his opponent to avoid punishment.
13. That butting with the head shall be deemed foul, and the party resorting to this practice shall be deemed to have lost the battle.
14. That a blow struck when a man is thrown or down, shall be deemed foul. That a man with one knee and one hand on the ground, or with both knees on the ground, shall be deemed down; and a blow given in either of those positions shall be considered foul, providing always, that when in such position, the man so down shall not himself strike or attempt to strike.
15. That a blow struck below the waistband shall be deemed foul, and that, in a close, seizing an antagonist below the waist, by the thigh or otherwise, shall be deemed foul.

16. That all attempts to inflict injury by gouging, or tearing the flesh with the fingers or nails, and biting shall be deemed foul.
17. That kicking, or deliberately falling on an antagonist with the knees or otherwise when down, shall be deemed foul.
18. That all bets shall be paid as the battle-money after a fight is awarded.
19. That no person on any pretense whatever shall be permitted to approach nearer the ring than ten feet, with the exception of the umpires and referee, and the persons appointed to take charge of the water or other refreshment for the combatants, who shall take their seats close to the corners selected by the seconds.
20. That due notice shall be given by the stake-holder of the day and place where the battle-money is to be given up, and that he be exonerated from all responsibility upon obeying the direction of the umpires and referee; and that all parties be strictly bound by these rules; and that in future all articles of agreement for a contest be entered into with a strict and willing adherence to the letter and spirit of these rules, and without reserve or equivocation.
21. That in the event of magisterial interference, it shall be the duty of the umpires and referee to name the time and place for the next meeting, if possible, on the same day.
22. That should the event not be decided on the day named, all bets shall be deemed void, unless again declared on by mutual agreement: but that the battle-money shall remain in the hands of the stakeholder till fairly won or lost by a fight, unless each party shall agree to withdraw his stake.
23. That all stage fights be as nearly as possible in conformity with the foregoing rules.

[V. G. Dowling], *Fistiana; or, The Oracle of the Ring. Comprising a Defence of British Boxing; A Brief History of Pugilism, from the earliest ages to the present period.*

After the British Pugilists' Protective Association initiated the revised London Prize Ring rules in 1838, the new regulations spread quickly throughout Britain and the United States. While the new rule set was accepted in 1838, it took a couple of years before the new rules were widely followed. The main difference between the London Prize Ring Rules and boxing of today is:

- Padded gloves were occasionally being used during fights. Most fights were still Bareknuckle but Bareknuckle Fighting was slowly being phased out.

- Most fights had no round limits. A round limit could be agreed upon by the fighters. If no round limit was agreed upon, the fight would end when a fighter could not continue.

(In this game, for this era, there are regular 20 round scorecards as well as 40 round, 100 round and 200 round scorecards to give you the opportunity to extend a fight for many rounds if you choose to)

-When a fighter went down, the round ended, and he was helped to his corner. The next round would begin 30 seconds later, with each boxer required to reach, unaided, a mark in the center of the ring "The Scratch". If a fighter could not reach that mark by the end of 8 additional seconds, he was declared the loser.

(In this game, for this era, when each round ends, you will roll to see if a fighter is able to continue to the next round).

-Kicking, gouging, butting with the head, biting, and low blows were all declared fouls, but Fighters could use the upper body to wrestle the opponent to the ground. Below the waist wrestling was not allowed.

(In this game, for this era, it is possible for a fighter to be wrestled down to end a round. Also, the FOULS Chart includes some of these recent changes in rules)

-The Referee was the only "Judge" of who would be the winner of the fight. At this time, there was no 10 point scoring system. The Referee would keep a running total of who won each round and award the fighter with the most rounds won the victory if a round limit was set.

(In this game, for this era, you are the Referee. You will keep a running total of who won rounds. The fighter who knocked down his opponent was the winner of the round. You will not use the 10 point system)

-There were no weight limits thus the heavyweights had an advantage over most smaller fighters.

(In this game, for this era, weight classes are not used, but each fighter is still classified by their actual size IE: HW, MW, LW, FW. This means that when a Heavyweight faces a Lightweight, the Heavyweight will definitely have an advantage, etc)