

Heavy Laws

By Reg P. Wydeven
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Last week marked a monumental event – the welterweight unification title fight between Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao – which was years in the making. In front of a capacity crowd at the MGM Grand Gardens arena, Mayweather won by a unanimous decision over Pacquiao.

Because the match was anticipated for years, promoters charged pay-per-view fans \$99 to watch the fight. The 500 or so tickets to the bout that were available to the public went for thousands and thousands of dollars and sold out almost instantly.

They even sold tickets for \$10 to watch the boxers weigh in.

Despite the countless historical fights in Las Vegas, the Mayweather-Pacquiao fight was the very first time attendees were charged a fee to watch a weigh-in. And while the battle in the ring was interesting, the fight over the legality of selling tickets to the weigh-in was just as fascinating.

Many officials cited a Nevada law stating that public events, like meetings of the Nevada Athletic Commission, cannot charge for admission. These folks argued that weigh-ins fell under this category.

According to the Nevada Athletic Commission code, however, the requirements for a weigh-in are that each unarmed combatant must be weighed in the presence of the public, his or her opponent, a representative of the commission and an official representing the promoter. The code does not specifically state that the public can't be charged a fee for the right to view the weigh-in.

To be safe, NAC chairman Francisco Aguilar consulted with the Nevada Attorney General's office. The AG determined that although a weigh-in is open to the public, it is not considered an "official public meeting" because there are no deliberations or any policy decisions being made. "They said as long as the public is allowed to attend, it's legal for a fee to be charged," Aguilar explained.

Because of the high pay-per-view charge and the exorbitant ticket prices, many people felt that selling tickets to the weigh-in was just another boxing money-grab. In fact, all the money from ticket sales went to charity.

Aguilar explained that, "the main purpose for having tickets is for the safety and security of everyone. We don't want thousands of people outside the arena mad because they couldn't get into the building to watch. We would have a serious problem on our hands if that were to happen."

He elaborated, saying, "By making everyone have a ticket, you eliminate a lot of potential problems. People don't have to wait in line all morning to make sure they get in. It makes things easier for the security and the staff at the MGM. Because you're charging a fee, you don't have to worry about people hoarding tickets and not using them, which denies someone else who wants to go see the weigh-in the right to do so."

Mayweather chose to donate his portion of the ticket sales to the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation, which is a breast cancer charity he has supported for years. Pacquiao's share will be going to the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health, which has done extensive studies on the brain health of boxers.

If Mayweather and Pacquiao have a rematch, they will purportedly charge fans to watch them shop for the boxing trunks they'll wear at the fight.

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