

Fist fighting is depicted in Sumerian relief carvings in the 3rd millennium BC, while an ancient Egyptian relief at Thebes shows fist fighters and spectators (1350 BC). Both depictions show bare-fisted contests. In 1927 Dr E.A Speiser an Archaeologist discovered a stone tablet in Baghdad Iraq depicting two men getting ready for a prize fight, the tablet is believed to be 7,000 years old. Fist fighting or Boxing is also described in several ancient Indian texts such as the Vedas the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. As well as excavations done in Mohenjodaro and Harappa. The earliest evidence for fist fighting with a kind of gloves can be found on Minoan Crete (c. 1500 BC).

The ancient Greeks, and later the Romans, called boxing pugilism (a term now often used for boxing). The Greeks were the first to give rules to the sport: while clinching was strictly forbidden, there were, unlike modern boxing, no weight classes. Fights were not separated into rounds and had no time limit, ending at a knockout, or at a fighter abandoning the fight, or sometimes at the death of one of the fighters. Although gloves were used in practice, in competition fighters wrapped their hands in strips of hardened leather which protected the fist and caused unpleasant injuries for the opponent.

Homer's Iliad (ca. 675 BC) contains the first detailed account of a box fight (Book XXIII). According to the Iliad, Mycenaean warriors included boxing among their competitions honoring the fallen, though it is possible that the Homeric epics reflect later Greek culture. Another Greek legend holds that the heroic ruler Theseus, said to have lived around the 9th century BC, invented a form of boxing in which two men sat face to face and beat each other with their fists until one of them was killed. In time, the boxers began to fight while standing and wearing gloves (with spikes) and wrappings on their arms below the elbows, although otherwise they competed naked.

Boxing was first accepted as an Olympic sport in 688 BC, being called Pygme or Pygmachia. Participants trained on punching bags (called a korykos). Fighters wore leather straps (called himantes) over their hands, wrists, and sometimes breast, to protect them from injury. The straps left their fingers free. Legend had it that the Spartans were the first to box as a way to prepare for sword and shield fighting

In ancient Rome, there were two forms of boxing. The athletic form of boxing was adopted from the Greeks and remained popular throughout the

Roman world. The other form of boxing was gladiatorial. Fighters were usually criminals and slaves who hoped to become champions and gain their freedom; however, free men also fought. Eventually, fist fighting became so popular that even aristocrats started fighting, but the practice was eventually banned by Caesar Augustus. A fight between the agile Dares and the towering Entellus is described at length in the Roman national epic Aeneid (1st century BC).

In 393 A.D., the Olympics were banned by the Christian emperor Theodosius, and in 500 A.D., boxing was banned altogether by Theodoric the Great as being an insult to God because it disfigures the face, the image of God. However, this edict had little effect outside the major cities of the Eastern Empire. By this time Western Europe was no longer part of the Roman Empire. Boxing remained popular in Europe throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. It should be noted that wrestling, fencing and racing (both chariot and foot) were never banned by the late Romans, as they did not cause disfigurement.

Records of Classical boxing activity disappeared after the fall of the Roman Empire. However, there are detailed records of various fist-fighting sports that were maintained in different cities and provinces of Italy between the 12th and 17th centuries. The sport would later resurface in England during the early 18th century in the form of bare-knuckle boxing sometimes referred to as prizefighting. The first documented account of a bare-knuckle fight in England appeared in 1681 in the London Protestant Mercury, and the first English bare-knuckle champion was James Figg in 1719. This is also the time when the word "boxing" first came to be used.

Early fighting had no written rules. There were no weight divisions or round limits, and no referee. The first boxing rules, called the London Prize Ring rules, were introduced by heavyweight champion Jack Broughton in 1743 to protect fighters in the ring where deaths sometimes occurred. Under these rules, if a man went down and could not continue after a count of 30 seconds, the fight was over. Hitting a downed fighter and grasping below the waist were prohibited. Broughton also invented and encouraged the use of "mufflers", a form of padded gloves, which were used in training and exhibitions. The first 'boxing paper' was published in the late 18th century by successful Birmingham boxer 'William Futrell' who remained undefeated until his one hour and seventeen minute fight at Smitham Bottom, Croydon, on July 9, 1788 against a much younger "Gentleman" John Jackson which

was attended by the Prince of Wales.

Although bare-knuckle fighting was in almost every aspect far more brutal than modern boxing, it did allow the fighters a single advantage not enjoyed by today's boxers: The London Prize Rules permitted the fighter to drop to one knee to begin a 30-second count at any time. Thus a fighter realizing he was in trouble had an opportunity to recover. Intentionally going down in modern boxing will cause the recovering fighter to lose points in the scoring system.

In 1838, the London Prize Ring rules were expanded in detail. Later revised in 1853, they stipulated the following:

Fights occurred in a 24-foot-square ring surrounded by ropes.

If a fighter was knocked down, he had to rise within 30 seconds under his own power to be allowed to continue.

Biting, headbutting and hitting below the belt were declared fouls.

Through the late nineteenth century, boxing or prizefighting was primarily a sport of dubious legitimacy. Outlawed in England and much of the United States, prizefights were often held at gambling venues and broken up by police. Brawling and wrestling tactics continued, and riots at prizefights were common occurrences. Still, throughout this period, there arose some notable bare knuckle champions who developed fairly sophisticated fighting tactics.

In 1867, the Marquess of Queensberry rules were drafted by John Chambers for amateur championships held at Lillie Bridge in London for Lightweights, Middleweights and Heavyweights. The rules were published under the patronage of the Marquess of Queensberry, whose name has always been associated with them.

There were twelve rules in all, and they specified that fights should be "a fair stand-up boxing match" in a 24-foot-square ring. Rounds were three minutes long with one minute rest intervals between rounds. Each fighter was given a ten-second count if he was knocked down and wrestling was banned.

The introduction of gloves of "fair-size" also changed the nature of the bouts. An average pair of boxing gloves resembles a bloated pair of mittens and are laced up around the wrists. Gloves protected fighters from both

facial and hand injuries, their considerable size and weight making knock-out victories more difficult to achieve. The gloves could also be used to block an opponent's blows. As a result of their introduction, bouts became longer and more strategic with greater importance attached to defensive maneuvers such as slipping, bobbing, countering and angling. Because less defensive emphasis was placed on the use of the forearms and more on the gloves, the classical forearms outwards, torso leaning back stance of the bare knuckle boxer was modified to more modern stance in which the torso is tilted forward and the hands are held closer to the face.

The English case of *R v. Coney* in 1882 found that a bare-knuckle fight was an assault occasioning actual bodily harm, despite the consent of the participants. This marked the end of widespread public bare-knuckle contests in England.

The first world heavyweight champion under the Queensberry Rules was "Gentleman Jim" Corbett, who defeated John L. Sullivan in 1892 at the Pelican Athletic Club in New Orleans.

Throughout the early twentieth century, boxing struggled to achieve legitimacy, through the influence of promoters like Tex Rickard and the popularity of great champions from John L. Sullivan to Jack Dempsey. Shortly after this era, boxing commissions and other sanctioning bodies were established to regulate the sport and establish universally recognized champions.