

Boxing

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were instituted in amateur boxing that improved safety measures. Some of those measures included increased monitoring by doctors, a ban from boxing for 30 days after a knockout and a standing eight count, where the referee stops the bout and counts eight seconds, issued after a strong blow.

The rules were instituted, at the time, to further separate amateur boxing from professional boxing.

According to Doug Emery, an international amateur boxing referee based in Lincoln, amateur boxing has about as much in common with professional boxing "as amateur wrestling and professional wrestling."

Emery, who has been involved in boxing for 41 of his 45 years, said both professional wrestling and professional boxing were spectator sports, so the rules were skewed to entertain.

In amateur boxing, however, a fighter scores no more points for a knockdown than for a well-executed punch.

"It takes away from 'I have to knock him down to score,'" he said.

Fighters can score by being smart and jabbing their way to victory, Emery said.

THE HEARING

The positions taken by the AMA were again cited by Griesen later in a letter he sent to all facility schedulers at UNL.

The letter, dated Oct. 18, 1995, said the Boxing Club, which had been recognized by ASUN as a student organization by this time, was to be allowed to use UNL facilities to meet. They were not, however, allowed to have any practices or matches.

That letter marked Griesen's first involvement with the club.

Grace later would ask for Griesen's help in getting the club back on campus.

"When Chad came to me, I said to him I would see that he would get a fair hearing," Griesen said.

Griesen couldn't attend the hearing he set up in November. He had a prior commitment that he could not reschedule.

Daryl Swanson, director of the Nebraska Unions, filled in for Griesen. He was given all the correspondence and articles that had been exchanged thus far.

That correspondence included nine articles

from Grace and other members of the Boxing Club detailing rule changes and studies disputing claims that boxing causes brain damage.

One of those studies was a 10-year, ongoing study done by Johns Hopkins University, one of the country's premier medical institutions. The study was started in 1986 and involved more than 500 boxers in six cities.

The study says amateur boxing does not cause brain damage.

Griesen said the information Grace sent him was not "medical enough" for him. He asked the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha to search for medical articles dealing with amateur boxing.

What he got back was a pile of opinion pieces, which he rejected. Only two articles, both conducted in England, were kept from that search.

Of the two studies, one supports Grace's claim that boxing is safe. The other disputes the first study and contradicts itself.

"It's not an easy matter," Griesen said. The studies, which were both done outside of the United States and not under USA Amateur Boxing Federation rules, were both published in January 1996.

Griesen said he did not have a problem using foreign studies. When asked, Griesen said one article did support Grace's claim that amateur boxing was safe, but he defended the other.

The study, by four English doctors, used British Royal Navy and Army boxers, who have different rules than the USA Amateur Boxing Federation.

"I think it is a pretty good study," Griesen said. "I think there is conclusive evidence that boxing causes brain damage."

Griesen said Grace asked him to consider other studies that proved the opposite. Grace, and many other defenders of amateur boxing, relied heavily on the Johns Hopkins study.

During the hearing, Grace said, he stayed away from comparing the safety of amateur boxing to football, soccer and rugby. He stuck to the study.

On Feb. 23, two months after the hearing, Griesen wrote a letter to those present at Grace's hearing: Peg Blake, interim director of the University Health Center and former associate vice chancellor for academic affairs; Campbell; Ralph Ewert, who is on the medical staff at the health center; and Swanson.

In that letter, Griesen wrote that, in his opinion, boxing should not be welcomed on campus. He asked the others for their

opinions.

"These findings" (of the two foreign studies) coupled with Stan Campbell's basic opposition to the sport because it includes the head as part of the point-scoring area, lead me to conclude that we should not lift our ban on amateur boxing on the UNL campus."

Grace said Campbell's position was obvious.

"Of course it is the target area," he said.

"It is the target area of all combative arts."

Campbell could not be reached for comment.

On Feb. 23, Griesen sent Grace a letter rejecting the Boxing Club's request.

DOUBLE STANDARD?

In the Office of Campus Recreation, just inside the doors of the Sapp Recreation Center, a list of club sports sits in a bin for interested students.

On that list are sports ranging from badminton to women's wrestling.

Most of the sports are non-contact. But a short list of sports includes rugby, hockey and men's and women's lacrosse.

Five combative arts are listed: Goju Ryu, fencing, Judo, medieval combat and Tac Kwon Do.

Only fencing and medieval combat have enough interest to practice as a club. And medieval combat exists only as an academic club — it doesn't meet for recreational purposes.

But they are listed by Campus Recreation as club sports.

"I don't think it is a double standard at all," Griesen said. "I think there is a big difference between a sport where (getting across a line, like rugby) is the objective to the sport where the objective is hitting your opponent."

But Emery said there was no comparison between the number of injuries sustained in amateur boxing and those sustained in football and rugby.

"I personally can't see how any of those (contact and combative arts club sports listed by campus recreation) can be any safer than boxing," Emery said. "If you are going to ban one, you ought to ban them all."

The problem, Emery said, was one of image.

"I am sure it is a mind set," he said. "It is not whether we can prove boxing is safe. They think boxing is a brutal sport, and they want to be against brutal sports."

"There is no question that boxing has an image problem."

But Grace said he avoided comparisons.

"I stayed away from throwing rocks at other sports," he said.

Grace stuck with his studies and came away empty-handed.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Griesen's decision rejecting the club was a major disappointment to members of the club.

Grace was expecting it. "I am not surprised at this outcome," he said. "I expected this, and I needed this. Nowhere did anyone ever say no to me the whole first semester. They just carted me around."

But the disappointment may have been great enough to decrease interest, Grace said. "They have ruined our club," he said. "If we would have gotten on campus right away, we had a lot of people."

"They have destroyed the club." Members had been practicing at the Lincoln YMCA, but monthly fees became too much for the club to handle.

Now all he wants is to hit bags, Grace said. His next proposal was going to be a boxing club that would just hit bags — no sparring, he said.

Campus Recreation does not have the equipment to allow the Boxing Club to hit bags, said Leah Hall Dorothy, director of club sports at Campus Recreation.

But the boxing club does. When the club was removed from campus, Campus Recreation confiscated its equipment.

On Jan. 27, 1995, the equipment was returned — two medicine balls, five speed bags, five hanging devices for speed bags, one chest protector, eight head protectors, three jump ropes, 10 pairs of boxing gloves and 10 pairs of heavy bag gloves.

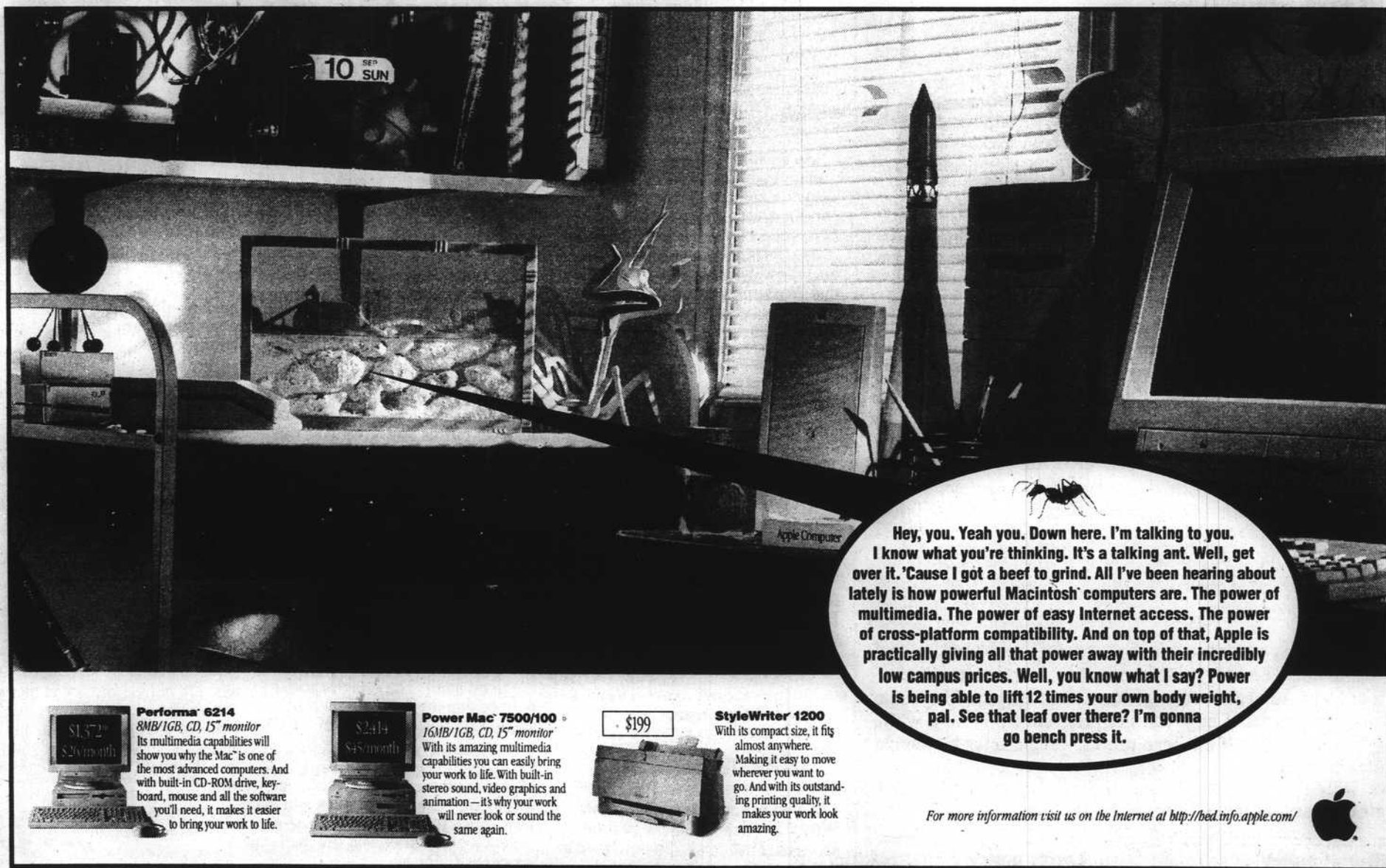
The equipment release was signed by Dorothy.

But barring a change of mind in administrators, Grace said the Boxing Club may never practice on campus.

Griesen said administrators had spent a great deal of time on the issue — before and after Grace asked them to review the new information.

"In light of new evidence, we felt there wasn't enough to make a change," he said. "We're not alone on this either. We're not the only (university) taking this stand."

"As far as I'm concerned, it's closed," Griesen said. "I'll stay open to new evidence ... that may tip the balance the other way."



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