BOXING CANADA

COMPETITION INTRODUCTION CONTEXT

REFERENCE MATERIAL

(Version 1.8 – August 28th, 2018)

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National Coaching Certification Program

BOXING CANADA – COMPETITION INTRODUCTION

Reference Material

National Coaching Certification Program

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Table of Contents

		Pages
Acknowledgements		8
Foreword		9
Program Overview	NCCP Program Overview and New Structure	10
	Boxing Canada's Competition introduction Development Model	11
	Professional Development for Boxing Coaches	17
Chapter 1 – Teaching Process and Methodology	1.1- Steps of the Teaching Process	19
Chapter 2 – Performance Analysis	2.1- Introduction	21
	2.2- Performance Analysis Process	21
	2.3- Coaching Interventions Following the Performance Analysis	25
	2.4- Application of the Performance Analysis Process to Basic Boxing Skills	26
	2.5- Common Errors in Boxing Technique	36
Chapter 3 – Intermediate Boxing Skills	3.1- Basic Boxing Skills Covered in the Instruction beginners Manual	38
	3.2- Review of Fundamental Boxing Skills: Stance and Footwork	39
	3.3- The Side-Step or Shift, with the Front Foot	41
	3.4- Pivot	42
	3.5- The Lead Hand Hook	42
	3.6- Defence against the Lead Hand Hook to the Head	43
	3.7- The Lead Hand Hook to the Body	44
	3.8- Defence against a Lead Hand Hook to the Body: Elbow Block	45
	3.9- Combinations with the Lead Hand Hook	45
	3.10- The Rear Hand Uppercut	50
	3.11- Defence against the Rear Hand Uppercut to the Chin: Lead Hand Block	51
	3.12- Defence against a Lead Hand Uppercut to the Body: Elbow Block	51
	3.13- Combinations with the Rear Hand Uppercut	52
	3.14- Variation of the Jab	54
	3.15- Advanced Defences against the Jab to the Head	55
	3.16- Various Counters	57

Table of Contents (continued)

		Pages
Chapter 4 – Strategy and Tactics in Boxing	4.1- General Considerations	64
	4.2- Strategy and Tactics: Definitions	65
	4.3- Tactical Principles	66
	4.4- Boxing-Specific Tactics – Key Points about Feinting	68
	4.5- Body Feints	69
	4.6- Arm Feints	69
	4.7- Drawing	70
	4.8- Exposing the Body and Head to Attack	70
	4.9- Circling away from the Rear Hand	70
	4.10- Infighting	71
	4.11- Ring Tactics when Fighting Opponents of Different Physiques, Styles, and Techniques	72
	4.12- Teaching Tactics	74
Chapter 5 – Sparring	5.1- Introduction and General Considerations	77
	5.2- Purpose of Sparring	77
	5.3- Types of Sparring	78
	5.4- Safety Recommendations for Sparring	81
Chapter 6 – Assessing Novice Boxers for Proficiency	6.1- Introduction	84
	6.2- Assessment Level – Bronze	86
	6.3- Assessment Level – Silver	87
	6.4- Assessment Level - Gold	89
Chapter 7 - Preparation Programs for Club-Level Boxers	7.1- Introduction	92
	7.2- What is a Sport Program?	93
	7.3- Boxing Canada's LTAD Model: Review and Key Points	95
	7.4- Designing an Appropriate Preparation Program for the Boxer	102
	7.5- Classification of Boxing Skills	104
	7.6- Classification of Exercises	108
	7.7- Sample Club-Level Boxing Programs	113

Table of Contents (continued)

		Pages
Chapter 8 – Providing Support to the Boxer in Competition	8.1- Introduction	125
	8.2- Before the Bout	125
	8.3- During the Bout	127
	8.4- After the Bout	130
	8.5- Basic post-fight recovery plan	132
Chapter 9 – Basic Sport Psychology for Boxing Coaches	9.1- Introduction	134
	9.2- The Question of Coaching and Confidence	135
	9.3- Building Confidence through First Hand Boxing Experiences	136
	9.4- Building Skills and Confidence through Observational Teaching and Learning	136
	9.5- Building Confidence through Coaching Feedback	137
	9.6- Building Confidence through Sources of Social Support	138
	9.7- Building Confidence through Mental Training	139
Chapter 10 – Planning a Boxing Event	10.1- Introduction	141
	10.2- Leading Up to the Event	141
	10.3- Day of the Event	143
	10.4- After the Event	144
References		145

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FOREWORD

This manual is the second in a series of revised reference documents that Boxing Canada has produced in 2010 to support the implementation of its competency based program for Competition introduction coaches.

The first document, designed specifically for *Instruction beginners coaches*, dealt with the basic technical aspects of coaching our sport such as the demands of boxing, safety in teaching a combat sport, basic sport pedagogy, fundamental boxing skills, as well as essential ringcraft notions and key rules about scoring. The *Instruction beginners* manual also introduced the all important aspect of Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) in Boxing, which consists in a series of stages aimed at ensuring a sound, safe, and fun progression of participants through the sport of Boxing in order to promote their effective development as athletes. All these concepts and notions remain, of course, extremely relevant to *Competition introduction coaches*, who are expected to master them thoroughly and to help out their apprentices, so they can develop into successful practitioners.

The *Competition introduction* reference document builds up from what was presented in the *Instruction beginners* manual**.** It includes more advanced technical and tactical notions that should be taught to Boxers who compete at club level. It also expands significantly in the areas of performance analysis and programming, in order to allow coaches to put in place activities that will allow their boxers to have an adequate technical, tactical, physical, and mental preparation as they embark into the first stages of their competitive careers. It is critical to insist on the fact that boxers must be thoroughly prepared before they are involved in any competition, first and foremost for their safety, but almost equally importantly to ensure they go through a positive experience and have the opportunity to learn about the sport and about themselves when they step into the ring. For this reason, a simple assessment system is presented in Chapter 6, to help coaches evaluate the progression of their boxers, as well as their readiness for competition.

As mentioned previously, planning and programming are two important areas in which Competition introduction coaches must acquire some knowledge, and develop some competence. In order to complement the NCCP Multisport Module on *Designing a Sport Program* that *Competition introduction coaches* are expected to attend as part of their training, general programming guidelines as well as sample Boxing programs for typical club-level participants are outlined in Chapter 7.

Chapter 8 deals with supporting the boxer in competition, and lists key aspects the coach should pay attention to before, during and after a fight. A sample recovery plan is also proposed to help the athlete recover from the competition.

Chapter 9 deals with basic sport psychology notions for a combat sport, and presents some strategies to help coaches work on the confidence of their boxers. Chapter 10 goes over a series of steps coaches and club administrators should follow when organizing a local or regional Boxing competition.

This document contains a lot of information, which cannot all be dealt with during a coach training workshop. It should therefore be consulted regularly and on an “as-needed basis” as a reference. I trust that this manual will be a useful tool to *Competition introduction coaches,* and to *all* Boxing Coaches for that matter. I welcome comments and suggestions for improving it and making it even more effective.

Daniel Trépanier, High Performance Director

National Coaching Certification Program

Program Overview

The National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) is a coach training and certification program for all coaches in more than 60 sports. The NCCP is moving towards a competency-based approach where coaches are:

- trained in NCCP outcomes relevant to the participants that they are coaching
- evaluated by demonstrating coaching outcomes to a specified standard

The core competencies of coaching are valuing, interacting, leading, problem-solving, and critical thinking. These competencies will be woven throughout all NCCP training and evaluation activities.

Who am I coaching?

The new structure of the NCCP is based on the participants' needs, which are identified within streams and contexts.

Community Sport stream

Initiation CSp-Init
Ongoing participation CSp-Ong

Initiation context
Participants of all ages are encouraged to participate in the sport and introduced to sport basics in a fun, safe, and self-esteem building environment regardless of their ability.

Ongoing participation context
Participants of all ages are encouraged to continue participating in the sport for fun, fitness, skill development, and social interaction.

Competition stream

Introduction Comp-Int
Development Comp-Dev
High performance Comp-HP

Introduction context
Children and/or adolescents are taught basic sport skills and athletic abilities in a fun and safe environment and are typically prepared for local and/or regional level competitions.

Development context
Adolescents and young adults are coached to refine basic sport skills, to develop more advanced skills and tactics, and are generally prepared for performance at provincial and/or national level competitions.

High performance context
Young adults are coached to refine advanced skills and tactics and are typically prepared for performance at national and international level competitions.

Instruction stream

Beginners Inst-Beg
Intermediate performers Inst-Imd
Advanced performers Inst-Adv

Beginners context
Participants of all ages, with little or no sport experience, are taught basic sport skills.

Intermediate performers context
Participants, who already have some experience and proficiency in the sport, are taught to refine basic skills and introduced to more complex techniques.

Advanced performers context
Participants who are experienced and already proficient in the sport are taught to refine advanced skills and techniques.

What do I need to be able to do?

Within each context, coaching outcomes are defined by the National Sport Organizations (NSOs) that clearly outline what you must be able to do in order to meet the needs of participants in that context. Contact your NSO to find out which context is relevant to you and what you need to do to achieve accreditation.

Coaching Outcomes

- Make Ethical Decisions
- Provide Support to Athletes in Training
- Plan a Practice
- Support the Competitive Experience
- Analyze Performance
- Design a Sport Program
- Manage a Program
- Sport-specific Outcomes (as determined by the sport)

How do I achieve accreditation?

Coaches can receive three types of accreditation in any of the above contexts:

In Training
Coach needs to be trained in additional outcomes.

Trained
Coach has completed training in designated outcomes.

Certified
Coach has been evaluated in designated outcomes and has acknowledged the NCCP Code of Conduct.

Coaching Association of Canada

For more information go to www.coach.ca

The National Coaching Certification Program is a collaborative program of the Government of Canada, provincial/territorial governments, national/provincial/territorial sport organizations, and the Coaching Association of Canada.

Boxing Canada's Competition introduction Development Model

Introduction

Boxing is a Club-based sport. For this reason, Competition introduction coaches play a critical role in the growth and development of the sport in Canada.

As part of the shift that is currently being operated towards a competency-based approach throughout the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP), Boxing Canada has decided to make significant adjustments to its Coach Development System (CDS) in order to:

1- Improve its quality, and make it more accountable to Boxing Canada's membership and to the general public.

2- Make it more accessible to interested candidates.

3- Identify clearly what people must be able to do in order to obtain a particular designation.

Many of these changes concern directly how Competition introduction coaches will be trained and certified in the future.

The new Coach Development System (CDS) in Boxing

Some of the key principles and features of the new CDS in Boxing include the recognition that:

- There exist different types of Coaches in the Boxing system, and what is expected of each type of Coach must be clearly outlined.
- *Coach Training* and *Coach Certification* are two distinct processes.
- *Coach Certification* must be based on the person's *demonstrated ability to do* certain things considered important. These "important things" make up the *certification requirements*.
- *Certification requirements* may vary according to (1) the type of coach, (2) the characteristics of the athletes and programs the coach is involved in, and (3) the actual role and responsibilities of the coach in these programs.
- Generally speaking, certification is *not* about defining the "perfect coach". Rather, it represents the formal acknowledgement that a person can perform to a particular standard. Some form of *evaluation* is therefore required in order for a Coach to become certified.

- *Coach Training* is the process that prepares candidates to meet the various certification requirements. Coach training can take many forms, such as Boxing-specific workshops, multi-sport workshops, individual studies, online education, etc.

- Depending on the person's background and experience, Coach training needs may vary. While some individuals may not need to go through all the training opportunities that are made available, everyone must meet the certification requirements in place to become certified.

- In most cases, a *progressive approach* is necessary for Coaches to develop and to acquire the necessary skills, competences, and experience that are necessary to provide effective support to athletes in training and in competition. The role and the responsibilities of a developing coach should therefore evolve gradually within a Club.

- Mentoring is a highly effective means of complementing the more formal coach training and education approaches; for this reason, Clubs should offer mentoring opportunities to developing coaches.

- Certification should not be "granted for life". Once a Coach is certified, he or she should continue to learn and to develop. For instance, coaches may demonstrate that they remain current by being involved in recognized professional development activities.

Pathway for developing and certifying Competition introduction coaches

Given the points outlined in the previous section, Boxing Canada has identified the following pathway for developing Competition introduction coaches:

- A person who wishes to become a Competition introduction will initially be considered an *Instruction beginners coach.*

- *Instruction beginners coaches* will work under a certified Competition introduction, who will play the role of a mentor. They will also attend formal coach training workshops, in order to be exposed to a variety of notions that support effective coaching. Those include: (1) Boxing Canada's Instruction beginners Workshop and (2) the NCCP Competition-Introduction multiport workshop Part A which, among other things, deals with effective practice planning and ethical decision-making.

- Upon attending *one* of these formal coach training workshops, the candidate will be considered as a "Boxing Instruction beginners in Training" in the NCCP database.

- When the candidate has attended *both* training workshops, he or she will be considered as a "Trained Boxing Instruction beginners" in the NCCP database.

- "Trained Boxing Instruction beginners coaches" will have two options:

    - to complete the three evaluation requirements in place for "Instruction beginners coaches" and become "certified" (see table on the following page); and/or

- to complete the online NCCP *Make Ethical Decisions* evaluation, and continue their training by entering the "Competition introduction" program.

- Upon successful completion of the evaluation requirements listed in the table below, the candidate will be considered as a "Certified Boxing Instruction beginners" in the NCCP database.

	EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS †	CRITERIA (What will be evaluated)	EVALUATION METHODS
Instruction beginners coaches	*** Make Ethical Decisions (MED)**	Apply correctly the NCCP ethical decision-making process.	Online analysis of ethical scenarios requiring the application of the NCCP MED process.
	Analyze Performance (Basic Skills)	Detect errors made by athletes who are performing basic Boxing skills. Correct such errors, consistent with Boxing Canada's skill development model.	Video analysis of Boxing skills. Each candidate will receive a DVD featuring all the skills dealt with during the NCCP Instruction beginners workshop. For each skill, a variety of segments will be provided, ranging from "perfectly executed" to "needing major improvements". As part of the evaluation, each candidate will be randomly assigned three (3) segments of "skills needing technical corrections". He or she will be required to complete and submit a written or audio performance analysis of these videotape segments, accompanied by a series of technical corrective measures, consistent with Boxing Canada's skill analysis model and technical guidelines.
	Provide Support to Athletes In Training	Ensures that the practice environment is safe. Implements an appropriately structured and organized practice / training session. Makes interventions that promote learning during the practice / training session.	Submissions of two (2) videos showing the Candidate coaching in his or her Club environment. The focus of each video will be assigned to the candidate from a list of pre-determined themes. Videos must meet the guidelines developed by Boxing Canada relative to format as well as to image and sound quality in order to be acceptable.

† All three evaluation requirements must also be completed by candidates who wish to be certified as Competition introduction coaches

* Mandatory to enter the *Competition introduction* program

- While working at Club level with their mentor, *Trained* or *Certified* Instruction beginners coaches who wish to become *"Competition introduction coaches"* will continue their training and preparation, in order to be adequately prepared to successfully complete *all* the evaluation requirements that Boxing Canada has identified for the *Competition introduction* context.

- The following workshops will be made available to *Trained* or *Certified Instruction beginners coaches* : (1) Boxing Canada's Competition introduction workshop; and (2) NCCP Competition-Introduction multiport workshop Part B, which deals with effective teaching, mental preparation, and program design.

- Upon attending *one* of the above formal coach training workshops, the candidate will keep his or her designation as a *Trained* or *Certified* Instruction beginners, and will also be recognized as a *"Boxing Competition introduction - In Training"* in the NCCP database.

- When the candidate has attended *all four* training workshops available for Instruction beginners and Competition introduction coaches, he or she will be considered as a *"Trained Boxing Competition introduction"* in the NCCP database. If the coach is also certified as an Instruction beginners, this recognition will also appear in his or her NCCP database record.

- To become a "Certified Boxing Competition introduction", a candidate will have to successfully complete *all* the evaluation requirements applicable, i.e. (1) the three that apply to Instruction beginners coaches; and (2) the three additional requirements that apply to Competition introduction coaches only (see table next page).

***Note**: The process outlined in this section should apply to the vast majority of individuals who wish to become coaches. However, in each system, exceptional circumstances sometimes arise; provisions are in place for those instances to be dealt with on case by case basis by Boxing Canada and its provincial/territorial partners.*

Competition introduction coaches	EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS	CRITERIA (What will be evaluated)	EVALUATION METHODS
	Support to Boxer in preparation for a fight	Conduct a general assessment of a boxer and determine readiness for competition.	Using the template provided by Boxing Canada (Silver or Gold levels), the coach provides an assessment of a Club-level Boxer in the areas of skills, tactics, and readiness for a competition. The coach also provides a video of the boxer performing the various assessment activities to the Evaluator.
		Develop a competition plan	Based on this assessment, the coach uses the template provided by Boxing Canada, and outlines a competition plan for the boxer in order to ensure the first competitive experience is as positive as possible.
	Analyze Performance (Intermediate Skills & Tactics, and Readiness for a Competition)	Detect technical errors made by athletes who are performing intermediate-level Boxing skills.	Video analysis of intermediate Boxing skills and tactics using an evaluation DVD provided by Boxing Canada (see description of method in the table that shows the evaluation requirements for Instruction beginners). OR Onsite evaluation in the candidate's gym, if feasible.
		Detect tactical errors made by athletes in Club-level training or competitive situations.	
		Correct such errors, consistent with Boxing Canada's skill development model, ringcraft principles, and pedagogical approaches	
	Plan a Training Session	Identify appropriate logistics for a practice/training session.	Coach submits a practice plan and an Emergency Action Plan that will be marked as part of a portfolio.
		Identify appropriate activities for each part of the practice/training session.	
		Design an Emergency Action Plan.	

The table on the following page presents a summary of the training and certification steps and requirements for Boxing Canada's Instruction beginners and Competition introduction coaches.

Steps in the Process of Becoming a *Certified Coach*, and Corresponding Designations in the NCCP Database

Coach Training	Boxing Terminology Showing in NCCP database following attendance to specific training workshops	Evaluation requirements for Certification Purposes	Boxing Terminology Showing in the NCCP database upon successful completion of the specified evaluation requirement(s)
1- Boxing specific - Instruction beginners Workshop *	Instruction beginners - *In Training*	Three (3) requirements. See the *Instruction beginners* evaluation requirements table for details.	Instruction beginners – Certified
2- Multisport – Competition Introduction Part A *	Instruction beginners - *Trained*		
3- Boxing specific – Competition introduction Workshop †	Competition introduction – *In Training*	Six (6) evaluation requirements: the three that apply to *Instruction beginners coaches*, plus three additional ones that apply only to *Competition introduction coaches.* See the *Instruction beginners* and the *Competition introduction* evaluation requirements tables for details.	Competition introduction – Certified
4- Multisport – Competition Introduction Part B †	Competition introduction – *Trained*		

* and † : The order in which training occurs is <u>not</u> important. It is the attendance to <u>all</u> the identified workshops that determines the coach's status as "Trained".

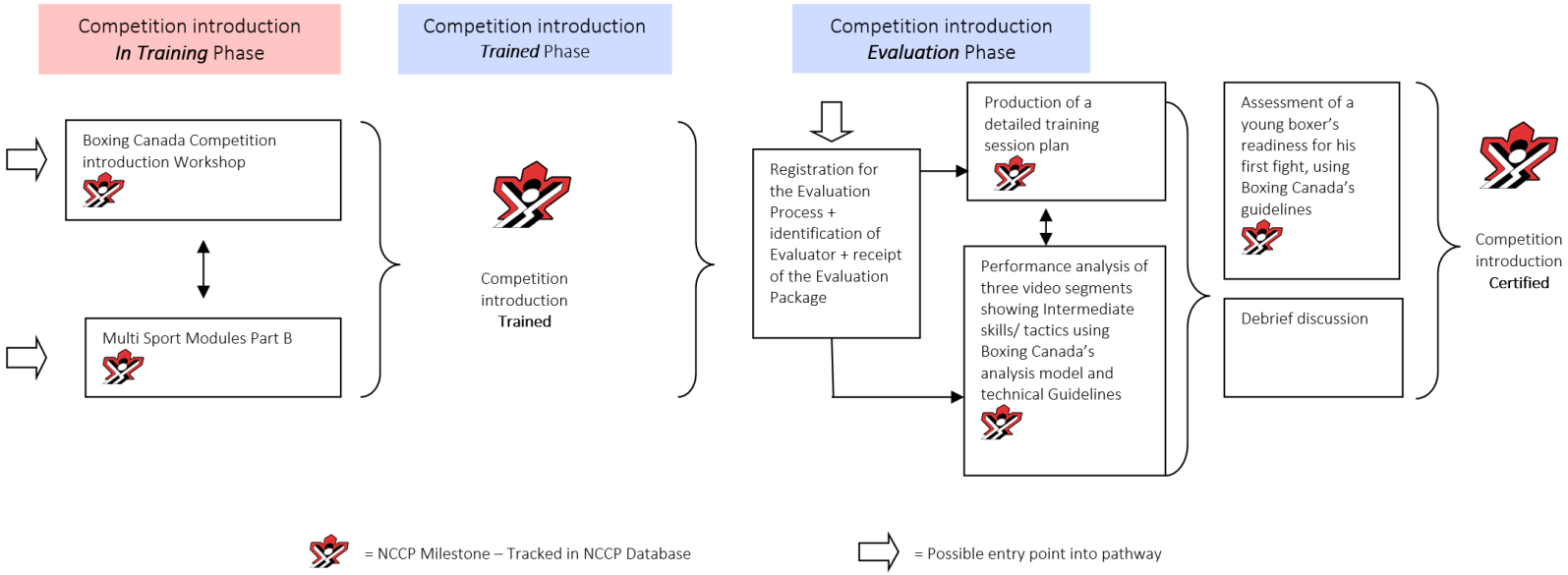
To be considered "Competition introduction – Trained", the candidate must attend all four (4) coach training workshops listed in the above table.

A coach can have more than one "status/designation" in the NCCP database, e.g.: Instruction beginners Trained AND Competition introduction in Training; or Instruction beginners Certified AND Competition introduction Trained, etc.

The evaluation requirements successfully completed by an Instruction beginners are also recognized in the Competition introduction certification process.

To be certified as a Competition introduction, *all* the evaluation requirements identified by Boxing Canada must be completed successfully (i.e. the three that apply to both Instruction beginners and Competition introduction coaches, and the three that apply to Competition introduction coaches only).

BOXING CANADA COMPETITION INTRODUCTION TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION PATHWAY



Professional Development for Boxing Coaches

As mentioned previously, NCCP certification in Boxing should not be "granted for life". Once a Coach is certified, he or she will be required to continue to learn and to develop in order to maintain his or her certification status.

To support the vision Boxing Canada has outlined for its Coaching Development System, it will be particularly important that certified Competition introduction coaches engage actively and regularly into recognized professional development (PD) activities. In particular, they should seek to improve specific skills that will enable them to contribute effectively in the process of developing qualified human resources in the Boxing system.

In the future, Boxing Canada will therefore develop and offer a variety of PD opportunities in the following areas:

- Mentoring
- Leadership
- Management and development of human resources
- Coaching female boxers

In cooperation with other NCCP partners, Boxing Canada will also offer PD opportunities in more technically oriented domains such as:

- Specific strategies and methods to support long-term athlete development
- Coaching female athletes in general
- Coaching effectiveness
- Theory and methodology of training
- Designing advanced sport programs
- Mental preparation and performance
- Nutrition
- Recovery and regeneration techniques
- The effects of environmental factors on sport performance
- Etc.

CHAPTER 1 – TEACHING PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

1.1- Steps of the Teaching Process

A lot of practical information about effective teaching is included in Chapter 4 of the *Instruction beginners* manual. This knowledge also had to be practically applied throughout many of the activities featured in the *Instruction beginners* workshop.

Because teaching is such an integral part of the coaching process, *Competition introduction coaches* are of course expected to apply these principles and methods when they teach, and to refine on an ongoing basis the way they design and implement their activities, in order to support sustained learning on the part of their boxers.

Competition introduction coaches are invited to consult the information included in Chapter 4 of the *Instruction beginners* manual as necessary regarding specific aspects of the teaching methodology.

As a reminder, the diagram on the following page outlines the key steps of the process coaches should follow to teach effectively.

Figure 1.1- Representation of the coaching/teaching process.

1- Organization and Set-up

- Includes safety measures, and how the activity starts and finishes
- Athletes should be actively involved for at least 50% of the duration of each drill/activity
- Coach must be able to move around and supervise

2- Explanations and Demonstrations

- Describe the aim of the exercise
- Outline what is to be done and how
- Describe points of reference/cues for success
- Identify criteria of successful performance
- Consider different learning styles

3- Observation

- Ensure that athletes are actively engaged and achieve a good rate of success
- Move around without interfering with athletes
- Observe both individuals and the group
- Analyze performance and verify if success criteria are achieved

4- Intervention and Feedback

- Identify the cause of failure/error
- Adapt the activity as needed
- Help athletes by reassuring them or by providing clear/specific information about key aspects of their performance
- Explain and demonstrate again if necessary.
- Question athletes.
- Recognize successful performance

5- Assess the Effects of the Feedback

- Give athletes time to practise again
- Check whether they have acted on the feedback

Adapted from the Coaching Association of Canada NCCP Introduction to Competition, Teaching and Learning Module.

CHAPTER 2 – PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

2.1- Introduction

One of the most important roles the Coach plays in providing support to an athlete is the analysis of his or her performance. Performance analysis occurs during the *Observation stage* of the teaching process (see Chapter 1), and it should take place *before* the coach makes any intervention with the athlete. The Coach analyzes performance in order to:

(1) detect possible technical or tactical errors

(2) identify the potential causes of such errors

(3) rank potential causes in order of priority for intervention

As a follow-up to the performance analysis, the Coach must select and implement appropriate corrective measures, decide what type of intervention is best suited, and determine how best to provide feedback to the athlete.

2.2- Performance Analysis Process

A basic *Performance Analysis Process* focusing *exclusively* on the technical aspects of fundamental Boxing skills was presented in the Instruction beginners manual. This basic process will be expanded in the Competition introduction manual: instead of dealing *exclusively* with the technical aspects of skill execution, a wider range of factors that may affect the athlete's performance will also be taken into consideration.

As a result, Competition introduction coaches will be expected to make teaching interventions that are more "sophisticated", and reflect a greater understanding of the multifaceted demands of Boxing.

Table 2.1- Performance Analysis Process

Steps	This step involves that…
Step 1: Having a clear picture of what the desired performance should be	The coach must *know what the desired outcome* of the performance should be. In other words, the Coach must know exactly *what* the athlete should do in order to perform the skill effectively, and *how* this should be done. This information becomes the point of reference or the *referent* used by the Coach in the analysis. The information presented in this chapter represents a referent for specific Boxing skills.
Step 2: Observing the athlete's performance	The Coach must observe the performance from an appropriate vantage point, in order to see clearly the various components of the skill(s) being executed by the athlete.
Step 3: Comparing the athlete's performance with a referent	As he or she observes the performance, the Coach makes a *mental comparison* between (1) what the athlete is actually doing and (2) the "referent" for the skill in question, i.e. what a "good performance" should be.
Step 4: Deciding whether or not to make an intervention	As the Coach compares the athlete's performance with the referent (i.e. the "desired performance"), he or she must answer the following question: *"Does the gap between the athlete's performance and the referent justify an intervention"?* and make a judgment call. If the answer is "no" or "not yet", then the coach should not intervene. However, if the answer is "yes", then an intervention should be made. The key question is, of course, *"When does the gap reach the critical point that makes a coaching intervention necessary?"* There are no easy answers here, and it is only with experience that Coaches will get to learn "where to draw the line", and establish their own "threshold for intervention". However, as a general rule, coaches should intervene when: • The safety of a participant may be at risk. In this case, the activity the boxer is involved in should be stopped immediately. • Fundamental aspects of the skills are involved. • Behaviours that can lead to "bad habits" are repeated over and over by the boxer.
Step 5: Identifying the potential causes of errors	Once it has been determined that the quality of the athlete's performance is such that an intervention is necessary, the Coach must push the analysis further and *identify the potential causes of errors*. The Coach must also *rank these causes in order of priority,* as this will have clear implications on the *type of intervention* that should be made. Table 2.2 lists a series of potential factors to consider when analyzing the athlete's performance. Coaches should go through this list in the recommended sequence, as this may help them to identify causes that are *external* to the athlete (environment, equipment), as well as causes that are not necessarily *technical* in nature (e.g. affective, cognitive, physical).
Step 6: Selecting appropriate corrective measure(s)	The last step in the process is the selection of the appropriate corrective measure(s), and their implementation. Tables 2.4 to 2.7 show how the performance analysis process described in this section can be applied to specific Boxing skills.

Table 2.2- Factors that can affect performance and that should be considered when conducting in-depth performance analyses.

Factors	This Factor Relates to …
1- Equipment	Boxing- specific gear that could be a limiting factor on the performance, e.g. poor footwear, poor fit, gloves that are too heavy, etc.
2- Environment	Any environmental cause that could lead to performance deficiencies, e.g. surface, lighting, temperature, etc.
3- Affective	Internal issues that could be related to the performer's perception of the task or activity, e.g. fear, lack of motivation/interest, etc.
4- Cognitive / mental	The thoughts or thought processes the performer must use when executing a given task or action, e.g. lack of understanding, confusion, choice of decision, concentration, etc.
5- Physical / Motor	Physical athletic abilities that could have limiting effects on the athlete's performance given the particular demands of the task or activity he or she is involved in, e.g. strength, stamina, flexibility, speed, etc.
6- Tactical	The *intent* of the skill execution, given the sport-specific circumstances that prevail at a particular moment. For instance, a particular tactic an athlete may be trying to apply can be too demanding for his or her current technical or skill level: even if it is a good thing to do given the circumstances, it is beyond the athlete's capabilities at the present time.
7- Technical	The execution and or biomechanics of skill execution.

Figure 2.1 illustrates certain aspects the Coach can detect when using a Performance Analysis Process. The four scenarios likely to occur when an athlete is asked to perform a training task are that he or she:

1. Does not engage in the task proposed by the coach.
2. Engages in the task, but does not achieve the intended outcome.
3. Engages in the task, and achieves only parts of the intended outcome.
4. Engages in the task, and achieves the intended outcome perfectly.

To evaluate the degree to which the intended outcome is achieved, the coach should consider variables such as (1) ***consistency and predictability*** i.e. the task can be accomplished all or most of the time, and in a variety of conditions that may range from simple to more complex; and (2) ***efficiency***, i.e. the outcome is achieved using the correct form of movement, which is characterized by optimal power output for the amount of energy expanded, and a lower risk of sustaining an injury as a result of a high number of repetitions. These concepts are shown in Figure 2.2 on the following page.

One of the key purposes of the training process is to make the boxer capable of achieving a high degree of precision and predictability when performing a given offensive or defensive move, through the execution of efficient movements.

Figure 2.1- Aspects the Coach can detect when using a performance analysis process.

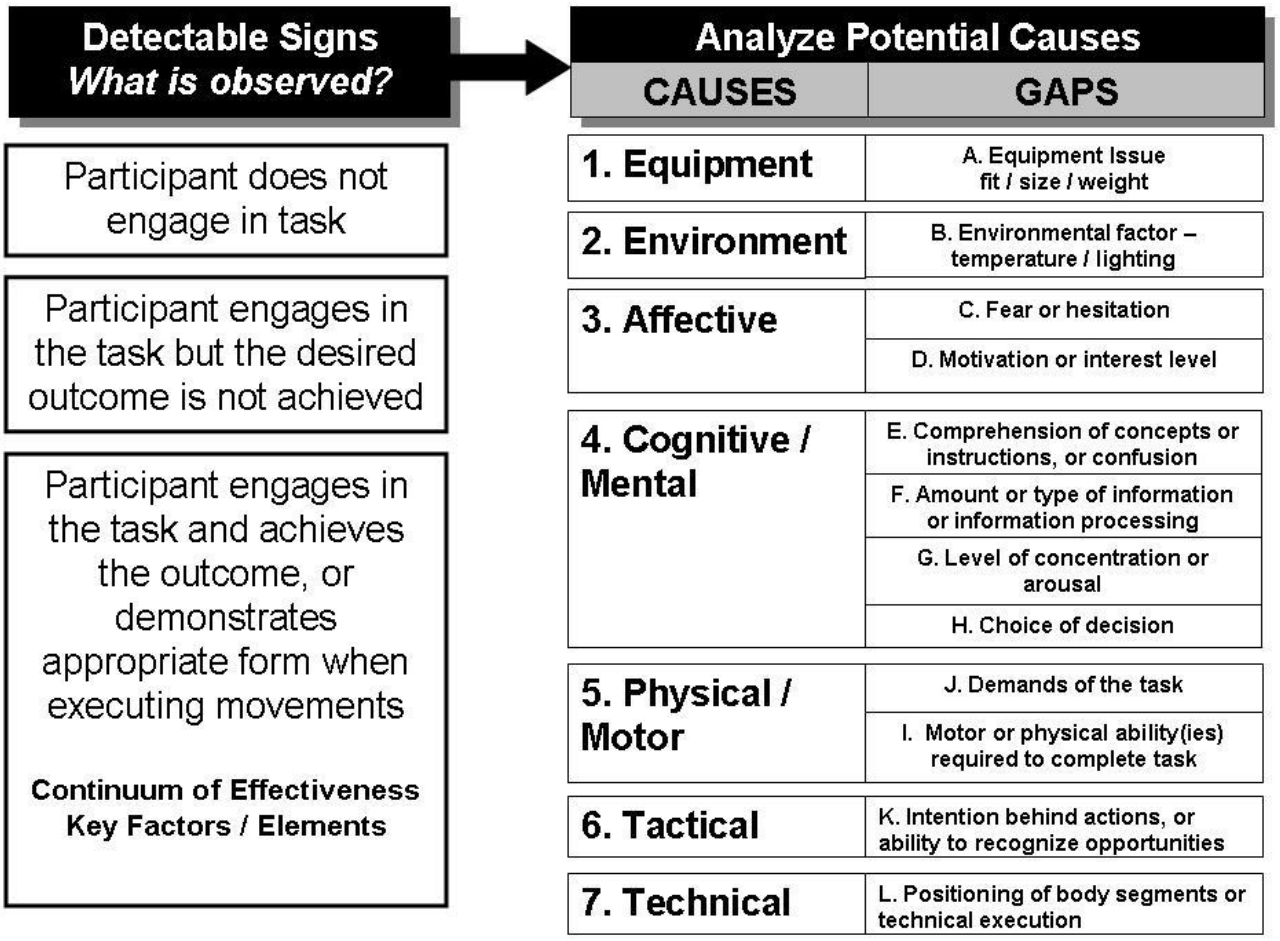
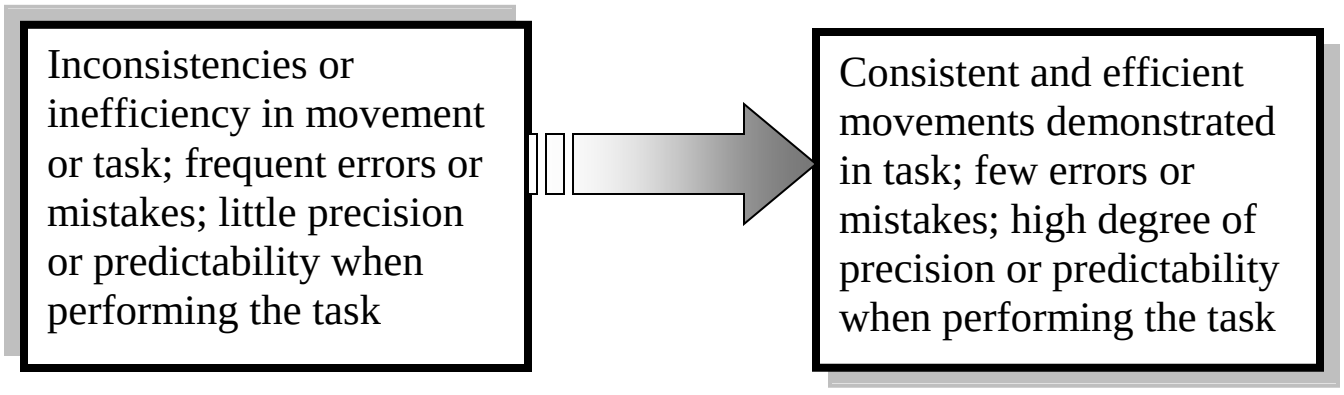


Figure 2.2- Continuum of Effectiveness when Performing a Task.

Continuum of Effectiveness when Performing a Task



2.3- Coaching Interventions Following the Performance Analysis

Depending on the factor or factors that negatively impact the athlete's performance, the coach has several options: the activity can be adjusted to suit the current capabilities of the performer, and/or specific teaching interventions can be initiated.

When the main factors causing performance errors or inconsistencies are due to the environment, the equipment used by the athlete, and/or the physical demands involved, the coach can make one or more of the following interventions:

- Makes adjustments to the equipment to ensure size, weight, quality, and fit are appropriate to the athlete.
- Change the place where the activity/drill is taking place, or ask the athlete to move to another spot, to reduce the negative effect of particular environmental or facility factors.
- Reduce the physical or perceptual demands of the task, by making them easier or simpler (e.g. by decreasing the speed/ intensity of movements, the duration of each effort, or the timing/coordination required).
- Adjust the work to rest ratios, to allow more recovery between repetitions or series of repetitions.
- Adjust the progression used for teaching the skill or the activity (e.g. by reducing the degree of uncertainty involved in the task, the number of variables the athlete has to process or think about, etc.; see Chapter 7 of the Instruction beginners manual for more details).

When performance errors or inconsistencies are due to cognitive, affective, tactical or technical factors, the coach can make one or more of the following interventions:

- Ask questions to the athletes to find out what he or she think has to be done, is trying to do when performing the task, is not clear about, is concerned with, etc.
- Help or reassure the athlete if necessary (in the case of affective causes, for instance).
- Re-explain the purpose and the nature of the task, using individualized strategies (e.g. taking into consideration the athlete's preferred learning style).
- Demonstrate the correct technique /tactic again.
- Simplify - use an analogy or example to get the message across
- Use re-focusing or visualization strategies.
- Ask the athlete to focus on the desired outcome (i.e. what he or she is trying to accomplish), rather than on the process (how to do it, when he or she is doing it).

2.4- Application of the Performance Analysis Process to Basic Boxing Skills

Tables 2.3 to 2.7 on the following pages present an application of the performance analysis process described in this section to a series of basic Boxing skills. Possible coaching interventions are also identified, depending on the factors that may cause errors or inconsistencies in the athlete's performance.

Figure 2.3- Performance Analysis during a Pad Session.

SKILL	OUTCOME	Key Performance Indicators / Factors	
2.3- STANCE May be observed in all elements of the practice.	Boxer can maintain balance at all times to ensure that he or she can defend or attack in static and dynamic (pendulum movements) positions.	**Lower body position** • Standing position with feet shoulder width apart (too wide a stance will inhibit movement ability) • Body weight is evenly distributed between both feet (centered) • Rear heel is raised and should be offset from the midline of body • Both knees are slightly flexed with the rear knee flexed at a greater angle than the front knee. • Feet are offset at approx 45° in relation to the opponent. **Head position** • Should be still with the boxer watching his opponent "through the eyebrows" to avoid lifting his or her chin	**Hand position.** • The forward hand is carried at shoulder height in the same plane that will enable boxer to pivot and punch, with the knuckles loosely clenched, and turned slightly inwards. • The rear hand is offset from the collar bone, with palm slightly open for catching yet ever ready for punching • Wrist straight for both hands. • Both elbows should be comfortably tucked in to protect the ribs **Shoulder position** • The trunk should be kept as upright as possible with the front shoulder slightly elevated to protect the chin.

Analysis of Causes	Priority H / M / L	Key indicators for intervention (GAP)	Common Corrective Measures
Equipment	L	Footwear does not fit athlete Laces not tied Clothing too big or baggy	Ensure athlete clothing and footwear is appropriate for boxing practice. Clarify expectations for clothing and footwear.
Environment	L	Surface area deficiencies (uneven, water, dirt, damage) Too many boxers in training area (over crowded)	Ensure surface area is well maintained and dry. Move practice / athlete to different area. Alternate athletes practicing skill(s) to ensure adequate space.
Affective	M	Low motivation, athlete bored or not interested in the task Poor attitude, athlete feels that he or she knows the skill. Anxiety depending on context in which the skill is practiced (i.e. individual study versus technical sparing)	Explain why the skill is important. Identify specific process goals. Encourage athlete by reinforcing or rewarding good behaviours. Reinforce training expectations. Simplify progression.
Cognitive / mental	M	Poor concentration, unable to focus on task. May be distracted. Possible learning disabilities. Do not understand instructions.	Clarify instructions or key learning points. Simplify progressions. Use refocusing strategy. Separate athlete and work with on a more individual basis. Adjust groups based on abilities. Use others to assist in teaching. Use model of skill (demonstration). Ask athlete questions for understanding.

SKILL	OUTCOME	Key Performance Indicators / Factors
2.4- FOOTWORK May be observed during footwork drills, technical sparring, focus pad drills, shadow boxing or technical drills with a partner.	Boxer can advance, retreat, move laterally and circle in all directions to achieve a balanced position in which to attack or defend.	**Advancing** • The foot movements should be short, one foot being in contact with the floor at all times. Pushing off with the ball of the back foot, slide the front foot forward bringing the back foot up quickly into the original stance position. **Retreating** • Push off the ball of the front foot, the rear foot takes a slightly longer sliding pace back than in the equivalent forward movement. The front foot slides into position to maintain the balanced stance. **Moving right (Lateral / Circling)** • Push off of left foot while right foot shuffles laterally. To circle, the right foot rotates slightly counter clockwise and the left foot is slid back into boxing stance. **Moving left (Lateral / Circling)** • Push off of right foot, while left foot shuffles laterally. To circle, the left foot rotates slightly clockwise and the right foot is slid back into boxing stance.

Analysis of Causes	Priority H / M / L	Key indicators for intervention (GAP)	Common Corrective Measures
Equipment	L	Footwear does not fit athlete Laces not tied Clothing too big or baggy	Ensure athlete clothing and footwear is appropriate for boxing practice. Clarify expectations for clothing and footwear.
Environment	L	Surface area deficiencies (uneven, water, dirt, damage) Too many boxers in training area (over crowded)	Ensure surface area is well maintained and dry. Move practice / athlete to different area. Alternate athletes practicing skill(s) to ensure adequate space.
Affective	M	Low motivation, athlete bored or not interested in the task Poor attitude, athlete feels that he or she knows the skill. Anxiety depending on context in which the skill is practiced (i.e. individual study versus technical sparing)	Explain why the skill is important. Identify specific process goals. Encourage athlete by reinforcing or rewarding good behaviours. Reinforce training expectations. Simplify progression.

SKILL	OUTCOME	Key Performance Indicators / Factors
2.4- FOOTWORK **(cont.)** May be observed during footwork drills, technical sparring, focus pad drills, shadow boxing or technical drills with a partner.	Boxer can advance, retreat, move laterally and circle in all directions to achieve a balanced position in which to attack or defend.	**Advancing** • The foot movements should be short, one foot being in contact with the floor at all times. Pushing off with the ball of the back foot, slide the front foot forward bringing the back foot up quickly into the original stance position. **Retreating** • Push off the ball of the front foot, the rear foot takes a slightly longer sliding pace back than in the equivalent forward movement. The front foot slides into position to maintain the balanced stance. **Moving right (Lateral / Circling)** • Push off of left foot while right foot shuffles laterally. To circle, the right foot rotates slightly counter clockwise and the left foot is slid back into boxing stance. **Moving left (Lateral / Circling)** • Push off of right foot, while left foot shuffles laterally. To circle, the left foot rotates slightly clockwise and the right foot is slid back into boxing stance.

Analysis of Causes	Priority	Key indicators for intervention (GAP)	Common Corrective Measures
Cognitive / mental	M	Poor concentration, unable to focus on task. May be distracted. Possible learning disabilities. Do not understand instructions. Chooses wrong decision or does not recognize when to move or employ footwork.	Clarify instructions or key learning points. Simplify progressions. Use refocusing strategy. Separate athlete and work with on a more individual basis. Adjust groups based on abilities. Use others to assist in teaching. Use model of skill (demonstration). Check for understanding.
Physical / Motor	M	Boxer fatigued or tired (This may depend on the context in which the skill is practiced – i.e. individual study versus technical sparing) Boxer injured. Speed and intensity of activity.	Simplify task demands. Give appropriate rest. Provide breaks for water. Remove boxer from activity to attend to injury. Reschedule activity. Adjust timing of task. Provide remedial fitness program to increase fitness.
Tactical	H	When attacking, does not advance then retreat - "in and out". When defending, does not move laterally or circle away from dominant hand of the opponent. Tactic chosen must ensure that stance is maintained at all times, and that the boxer is constantly moving (never stand still).	Use demonstrations to show boxer movements in relation to opponent. Choose, adjust or simplify tactic that enables boxer to maintain fluid movement (footwork). Simplify activity or work on individual study. *Ensure proper stance prior to footwork.*
Technical	H	Boxer unable to maintain precision or consistency in maintaining skill. One or more key performance factors is deficient (see above). Boxer crosses legs or disrupts proper stance. Incorrect stance.	Use demo to reinforce appropriate key factor. Explain key factor enabling the boxer to progress further with the skill. Use key performance factor to explain how to improve skill. Adjust activity to ensure key factor is performed successfully.

SKILL	OUTCOME	Key Performance Indicators / Factors
2.5- JAB May be observed in technical sparring, bag work or focus pads, or technical drills with a partner	Boxer attacks / engages opponent while maintaining range / distance to put defender in a vulnerable position to enable opportunities to score points (connect) with dominant hand.	The Boxer: • Aims for the opponent's head with the back knuckles • Points the knuckles down by slightly flexing wrist • Snaps the jabbing arm with a slight pivot at hip and shoulder • Rotates forearm inward in the last third of the distance to the target • Slides front foot forward before impact • Guards chin with dominant hand with elbow tucked in to protect the body • Retracts the jabbing hand quickly along the same path as the delivery • Ensure proper footwork to maintain a balanced stance • Recognize opportunity to continue attack or retreat

Analysis of Causes	Priority H / M / L	Key indicators for intervention (GAP)	Common Corrective Measures
Equipment	L	Footwear does not fit athlete Laces not tied Clothing too big or baggy Poor quality of gloves, hands not protected (wrapped)	Ensure athlete clothing and footwear is appropriate for boxing practice. Clarify expectations for clothing and footwear. Ensure that boxer's hands are appropriately protected to promote safety.
Environment	L	Surface area deficiencies (uneven, water, dirt, damage to canvas) Ring is maintained for safe boxing. Too many boxers in training area (over crowded)	Ensure surface area is well maintained and dry. Move practice / athlete to different area. Alternate athletes practicing skill(s) to ensure adequate space.
Affective	M	Low motivation, athlete bored or not interested in the task Poor attitude, athlete feels that he or she knows the skill. Anxiety depending on context in which the skill is practiced (i.e. bag work / focus pads versus technical sparing)	Explain why the skill is important. Identify specific process goals. Encourage athlete by reinforcing or rewarding good behaviours. Reinforce training expectations. Simplify progression.
Cognitive / mental	M	Poor concentration, unable to focus on task. May be distracted. Possible learning disabilities. Do not understand instructions. Chooses wrong decision or does not recognize when to move or deliver jab.	Clarify instructions or key learning points. Simplify progressions. Use refocusing strategy. Separate athlete and work with on a more individual basis. Adjust groups based on abilities. Use others to assist in teaching. Use model of skill (demonstration). Check for understanding.

SKILL	OUTCOME	Key Performance Indicators / Factors
2.5- JAB (continued) May be, observed in technical sparring, bag work or focus pads, or technical drills with a partner	Boxer attacks / engages opponent while maintaining range / distance to put defender in a vulnerable position to enable opportunities to score points (connect) with dominant hand.	• Aiming for the point of the chin with the back knuckles • Knuckles point down by slightly flexing wrist • Snap the jabbing arm with a slight pivot at hip and shoulder; • Rotate forearm inward in the last third of the distance to the target. • Slide front foot forward before impact; • Guard chin with dominant hand with elbow tucked in to protect the body; • Retract the jabbing hand quickly along the same path as the delivery; • Ensure proper footwork to maintain a balanced stance • Recognize opportunity to continue attack or retreat.

Analysis of Causes	Priority H / M / L	Key indicators for intervention (GAP)	Common Corrective Measures
Physical / Motor	M	Boxer fatigued or tired (This may depend on the context in which the skill is practiced – i.e. bag work / focus pad versus technical sparing) Boxer injured. Poor speed and intensity of punches (Too hard or too slow). Athlete feels pain in hands, elbow, shoulder. Boxer tense not relaxed.	Simplify task demands. Give appropriate rest. Provide breaks for water. Remove boxer from activity (attend to injury or re-focus) Adjust timing of punches or range. Provide remedial fitness program to increase fitness. Explain purpose and reasons why skill is effectively achieved (pros and cons). Use demonstration (self or other athlete)
Tactical	H	Inability to maintain stance and footwork to ensure proper range. Poor timing of punches to hit target (This may depend on the context in which the skill is practiced – i.e. bag work / focus pads versus technical sparing). Selection of tactics are too advanced (i.e. punching combinations) for the level of athlete	Use demonstrations to show athlete positioning (bounding) or relationship to opponent. Choose, adjust or simplify tactic that enables boxer to maintain stance / pendulum movement. Simplify activity or work on individual study. *Ensure proper stance and footwork prior to delivering punch.*
Technical	H	Athlete unable to maintain precision or consistency in maintaining skill. One or more key performance factors is deficient (see above). Chin too high. Chin not protected with dominant hand. Jabbing shoulder too low. Stance and footwork fails or is not maintained (i.e front leg straightens). Improper knuckle position on contact.	Use demonstrations to reinforce appropriate key factor. Provide feedback explaining key factor enabling the boxer to progress further with the skill. Use key performance factor to explain how to improve skill. Adjust, modify or simplify activity to best ensure key factor is performed successfully. *Ensure proper stance prior and footwork to delivering punch.*

SKILL	OUTCOME	Key Performance Indicators / Factors
2.6- BLOCK (JAB) May be observed in technical sparing, technical drills with a partner or focus pad drills.	Boxer protects head by using the palm of dominant hand to intercept opponent punch (jab) and avoid getting hit or scored upon.	• Dominant hand moves from guard to rotate outwards with the palm facing opposition jab. • Intercept the opposing jab in the open palm of dominant hand • Keep the forearm rigid so that the glove is not forced back into the face. • Keep glove close to chin during interception • Ensure proper footwork to maintain a balanced stance • Recognize opportunity to counter attack or retreat.

Analysis of Causes	Priority H / M / L	Key indicators for intervention (GAP)	Common Corrective Measures
Equipment	L	Footwear does not fit athlete Laces not tied Clothing too big or baggy. Poor quality of gloves (gloves tied improperly / Lace tip not removed) - Hands protected (wrapped) Poor fitting / quality head gear. No mouth guard (Sparing)	Ensure athlete clothing, footware, gloves, headgear and mouth guard is appropriate for boxing practice. Clarify expectations for boxing equipment. Ensure that boxer's hands and head are appropriately protected to promote safety.
Environment	L	Surface area deficiencies (uneven, water, dirt, damage to canvas) Ring is maintained for safe boxing. Too many boxers in training area (over crowded)	Ensure surface area is well maintained and dry. Move practice / athlete to different area. Alternate athletes practicing skill(s) to ensure adequate space.
Affective	M	Low motivation, athlete bored or not interested in the task Poor attitude, athlete feels that he or she knows the skill. Anxiety / level of arousal depending on context in which the skill is practiced (i.e. bag work / focus pads versus technical sparing) Fear of being hit.	Explain why the skill is important. Identify specific process goals. Encourage athlete by reinforcing or rewarding good behaviours. Reinforce training expectations. Simplify progression. Reduce speed intensity of task. Increase range / distance from opponent so punch cannot hit target (face).
Cognitive / mental	M	Poor concentration, unable to focus on task. May be distracted. Possible learning disabilities. Do not understand instructions. Chooses wrong decision or does not recognize when to move in order to block the jab.	Clarify instructions or key learning points. Simplify progressions. Use refocusing strategy. Separate athlete and work with on a more individual basis. Adjust groups based on abilities. Use others to assist in teaching. Use model of skill (demonstration). Ask athlete questions for understanding.

SKILL	OUTCOME	Key Performance Indicators / Factors
2.6- BLOCK (JAB) – cont. May be observed in technical sparing, technical drills with a partner or focus pad drills.	Boxer protects head by using the palm of dominant hand to intercept opponent punch (jab) and avoid getting hit or scored upon.	• Dominant hand moves from guard to rotate outwards with the palm facing opposition jab. • Intercept the opposing jab in the open palm of dominant hand • Keep the forearm rigid so that the glove is not forced back into the face. • Keep glove close to chin during interception • Ensure proper footwork to maintain a balanced stance • Recognize opportunity to counter attack or retreat.

Analysis of Causes	Priority H / M / L	**Key indicators for intervention (GAP)**	**Common Corrective Measures**
Physical / Motor	M	Boxer fatigued or tired (This may depend on the context in which the skill is practiced – i.e. bag work / focus pad versus technical sparing) Boxer injured or feels pain in hands, elbow, shoulder. Boxer is tense not relaxed.	Simplify task demands. Give appropriate rest. Provide breaks for water. Remove boxer from activity (attend to injury or re-focus) Adjust timing of punches or range. Explain purpose and reasons why skill is effectively achieved (pros and cons). Use demonstration (self or other athlete). Provide remedial training program to increase fitness.
Tactical	H	Inability to maintain stance and footwork to ensure proper range. Poor timing of block and range. (This may depend on the context in which the skill is practiced – i.e. focus pads versus technical sparing). Lacks understanding of purpose of block in relation to options for defense or counter- attack. Selection of tactics are too advanced (i.e. punching combinations of opponent) for the level of boxer blocking.	Use demonstrations to show athlete positioning (bounding) or relationship to opponent. Choose, adjust or simplify tactic that enables boxer to maintain stance / pendulum movement and range. Adjust speed and/or range of punches. Explain purpose or question boxer on potential options to engage in skill and consequence of improper execution. *Ensure proper stance and footwork to enable effective block and or counter punch*
Technical	H	Athlete unable to maintain precision or consistency in maintaining skill. One or more key performance factors is deficient (see above). Head throws back / flinch / head move up. Stance and footwork fails or is not maintained (i.e balance shifts too far to rear leg).	Use demonstrations to reinforce appropriate key factor. Provide feedback explaining key factor enabling the boxer to progress further with the skill. Use key performance factor to explain how to improve skill. Adjust, modify or simplify activity to best ensure key factor is performed successfully. *Ensure proper stance and footwork to enable effective block or counter punch.*

SKILL	OUTCOME	Key Performance Indicators / Factors
2.7- PARRY (JAB)	Boxer protects head by using dominant hand to direct opponent's punch (jab) away from the scoring area.	• Allow the opposing jab to within a fraction of the target -- • With a slight pivot move the forearm and rigid palm of the right glove to deflect the jab over the left shoulder. • Deflect at the opposing wrist to commit the jabber to counter with jab, left hook or straight punch with dominant hand • Ensure parry remains in center line, minimal movement.

Analysis of Causes	Priority H / M / L	Key indicators for intervention (GAP)	Common Corrective Measures
Equipment	L	Footwear does not fit athlete Laces not tied Clothing too big or baggy. Poor quality of gloves (gloves tied improperly / Lace tip not removed) - Hands protected (wrapped) Poor fitting / quality head gear. No mouth guard (Sparing)	Ensure athlete clothing, footwear, gloves, headgear and mouth guard is appropriate for boxing practice. Clarify expectations for boxing equipment. Ensure that boxer's hands and head are appropriately protected to promote safety.
Environment	L	Surface area deficiencies (uneven, water, dirt, damage to canvas) Ring is maintained for safe boxing. Too many boxers in training area (over crowded)	Ensure surface area is well maintained and dry. Move practice / athlete to different area. Alternate athletes practicing skill(s) to ensure adequate space.
Affective	M	Low motivation, athlete bored or not interested in the task Poor attitude, athlete feels that he or she knows the skill. Anxiety / level of arousal depending on context in which the skill is practiced (i.e. bag work / focus pads versus technical sparing) Fear of being hit.	Explain why the skill is important. Identify specific process goals. Encourage athlete by reinforcing or rewarding good behaviours. Reinforce training expectations. Simplify progression. Reduce speed intensity of task. Increase range / distance from opponent so punch cannot hit target (face).
Cognitive / mental	M	Poor concentration, unable to focus on task. May be distracted. Possible learning disabilities. Do not understand instructions. Chooses wrong decision or does not recognize when to move in order to parry the jab.	Clarify instructions or key learning points. Simplify progressions. Use refocusing strategy. Separate athlete and work with on a more individual basis. Adjust groups based on abilities. Use others to assist in teaching. Use model of skill (demonstration). Ask athlete questions for understanding.

SKILL	OUTCOME	Key Performance Indicators / Factors
2.7- PARRY (JAB) – continued	Boxer protects head by using dominant hand to direct opponent's punch (jab) away from the scoring area.	• Allow the opposing jab to within a fraction of the target -- • With a slight pivot move the forearm and rigid palm of the right glove to deflect the jab over the left shoulder. • Deflect at the opposing wrist to commit the jabber to counter with jab, left hook or straight punch with dominant hand • Ensure parry remains in center line, minimal movement.

Analysis of Causes	**Priority** H / M / L	**Key indicators for intervention (GAP)**	**Common Corrective Measures**
Physical / Motor	M	Boxer fatigued or tired (This may depend on the context in which the skill is practiced – i.e. bag work / focus pad versus technical sparing) Boxer injured or feels pain in hands, elbow, shoulder. Boxer is tense, not relaxed.	Simplify task demands. Give appropriate rest. Provide breaks for water. Remove boxer from activity (attend to injury or re-focus) Adjust timing of punches or range. Explain purpose and reasons why skill is effectively achieved (pros and cons). Use demonstration (self or other athlete). Provide remedial fitness program to increase fitness
Tactical	H	Inability to maintain stance and footwork to ensure proper range. Poor timing of parry and range. (This may depend on the context in which the skill is practiced – i.e. focus pads versus technical sparing). Lacks understanding of purpose of parry in relation to options for defence or counter-attack. Selection of tactics is too advanced (i.e. punching combinations of opponent) for the level of boxer parrying.	Use demonstrations to show athlete positioning (bounding) or relationship to opponent. Choose, adjust or simplify tactic that enables boxer to maintain stance / pendulum movement and range. Adjust speed and/or range of punches. Explain purpose or question boxer on potential options to engage in skill and consequence of improper execution. Ensure proper stance and footwork to enable effective parry and or counter punch
Technical	H	Athlete unable to maintain precision or consistency in maintaining skill. One or more key performance factors is deficient (see above). Head throws back / flinch / head moves up / over rotation of pivot / over extension of parry hand / ineffective redirect of opponent punch. Stance and footwork fails or is not maintained (i.e. balance shifts too far to rear leg).	Use demonstrations to reinforce appropriate key factor. Provide feedback explaining key factor enabling the boxer to progress further with the skill. Use key performance factor to explain how to improve skill. Adjust, modify or simplify activity to best ensure key factor is performed successfully. Ensure proper stance and footwork to enable effective parry or counter punch.

2.5- Common Errors in Boxing Technique

Many experienced boxers frequently ignore basic principles, thinking that small deviations from them do no harm, especially when boxing weaker opponents. However, these small errors add up quickly, and may become bad habits that are difficult to correct. This section outlines some common errors that coaches are likely to observe in training or in competition.

- After a few minutes of boxing, or when they feel some stress, many boxers have a tendency to revert back to their "natural" position and to perform natural movements, as opposed to using the correct stance and footwork. This tendency is especially noticeable among beginners, who have not yet done a sufficiently high number of repetitions of the correct movements. However, it may also be observed in more experienced boxers as they get tired, or become too casual over time. It is important that boxers avoid such errant tendencies, because they are at the root of most flaws and mistakes in boxing technique.

- One of these basic errors is an improper placement of the feet, either in the stance or during footwork. Boxers must neither keep their legs together nor place the feet too far apart. Placing the feet – especially the rear foot – flat is incorrect; boxers must always stand on the ball of the rear foot. The feet should also be parallel to each other. The foot on the guard side (right side for a right handed boxer), must always be placed behind, and slightly to the side compared to the front foot. Otherwise, the rear hand is immobilized, and twisting the body becomes very difficult.

- In footwork, many boxers tend to step on the heel, and then on the ball of the foot. This is incorrect, as it makes any rapid movement forward very difficult. Instead, the boxer should always stand on the ball of his or her feet. Another error is crossing the legs, which throws the boxer off balance.

- Constant muscular tension or stiffness is another common mistake. Boxers must learn to remain relaxed in the boxing stance, and in their movements.

- Boxers – especially beginners – often retract the hip to protect the stomach. This error makes every movement difficult, as does an exaggerated pressing of the chin to the body.

- Lowering the front shoulder is yet another widespread error. So is unconsciously lifting the head; this blunder puts the boxer in danger – he/she may be knocked out cold. Some boxers also tend to hold their head in an unusual manner, which makes it very difficult for them to punch properly.

- Many boxers tend to lower their hands as the fight progresses. Both hands should be kept high, at the level used in the boxing stance. When one hand goes forward during the throwing of punches, the other hand must protect the head and body against the opponent's counterpunches. The same should be done when the boxer is delivering combinations of punches.

- When delivering a punch, or when defending against a punch, boxers sometimes unconsciously move their head on the "wrong side", i.e. the side that makes them more vulnerable to a blow by the opponent. For instance, if a right hander opponent throws a jab with the left hand, the boxer should "slip" to the right side; slipping to the left side would expose the boxer to a punch from the opponent's right hand. They should always keep the chin down, their hands up, and never stop watching the opponent.

CHAPTER 3 – INTERMEDIATE BOXING SKILLS

The purpose of this chapter is to describe intermediate boxing skills. The key points outlined under each skill provide coaches with the information they need to effectively teach each technique.

3.1- Basic Boxing Skills Covered in the Instruction beginners Manual

As a reminder, the Instruction beginners manual deals with the following basic Boxing skills:

1. Boxing Stance
2. Footwork
3. Fundamental Aspects of the Straight Punch
4. The Jab to the Head
5. Defence Against the Jab to the Head
6. Jab to the Body
7. Defences Against the Jab to the Body
8. Straight Power Punch to the Head
9. Defence Against the Straight Power Punch to the Head
10. Straight Power Punch to the Body
11. Defence Against the Straight Power Punch to the Body
12. Basic Combination Punching With the Jab
13. Basic Combinations Using the Straight Power Punch
14. Counter Punching with the Straight Power Punch
15. Covering Up

Coaches should refer to the *Instruction beginners manual* for specific descriptions of the above basic techniques. The Competition introduction *manual* will deal primarily with advanced variations of some of these skills, and with new techniques that should be taught to the developing boxer as he or she gains more experience.

3.2- Review of Fundamental Boxing Skills: Stance and Footwork

Importance of a Proper Stance, Balance, and Footwork

As was emphasized in the Instruction beginners manual, a proper stance, balance, and effective footwork are critical in Boxing. Without them, boxers cannot execute offensive or defensive moves correctly, and therefore become highly vulnerable.

Balance is the ability to achieve and maintain stability. There are two types of balance relevant to Boxing: (1) **static balance**: adopting a controlled body position in a stable environment (2) **dynamic balance**: maintaining control of the body during movement, and/or stabilizing the body by performing muscular contractions to offset the effect of an external force.

Because the success of nearly all boxing skills depends upon the stability of the athlete's stance and the ability to remain in balance when moving in the ring, key factors affecting balance will be discussed in the next section.

Factors Determining Balance

There are two things to watch for when analyzing if the boxer's position allows him or her to be in balance:

1- the *size* of the base of support, and

2- the location of the *center of gravity* (C of G) relative to the base of support

The key points coaches should know about these factors are listed below.

- The boxer's feet constitute his or her base of support. A wider base leads to more stability.
- The C of G is an imaginary point around which body weight is evenly distributed; in the standing position, the C of G is located around the belly button.
- The position of the C of G moves as the configuration of the body changes:
    - it gets *higher* if the arms are raised or the legs are extended, and
    - it moves *away* from the belly button if the upper body is bent over or to the side
- The position of C of G relative to the base of support is what determines balance:
    - lower = more stable; and
    - the C of G must always remain inside the base of support, otherwise the body falls down.

To achieve adequate balance while boxing, the athlete must therefore:

1. flex his/her knees;
2. ensure his/her support base is adequate; this is done by keeping a sufficient gap between his/her feet, and by keeping one foot ahead of the other;

Of course, this must be done to an "optimal degree", and the boxer must experiment to find the position of the feet that gives him or her the best balance base, that is, the position that enables to move the upper body from side to side, as well as forward and backward, without having to move the feet (Pictures 3.1 and 3.2).

Picture 3.1- Boxing Stance (front view)

Picture 3.2- Boxing Stance (side view)

The stance pictured above enables the boxer to (1) launch a wide variety of punches both singly and in combination, (2) feint effectively, and (3) execute defensive moves, while constantly keeping his or her centre of gravity inside the support base, therefore remaining in balance and in control of his or her body.

Coaches must ensure that their athletes, even the more experienced ones, assume a sound boxing stance at all times, and are capable of executing forward and backward steps, as well as steps to the left and to the right, with fluidity and with complete control and balance.

Balance and Footwork

Some exercises and games for improving balance and footwork were outlined in the *Instruction beginners* manual, and coaches should not hesitate to use these drills as necessary, even with experienced boxers. Patience and perseverance in coaching bring their own reward. Time is therefore well spent if the boxer can learn the balanced stance and basic foot movements that enable him/her to advance, retreat and circle both direction. Practicing footwork should be part of the normal shadow boxing routine; the boxer should use the gymnasium mirror to check his/her balance and the position of his/ her hands.

3.3- The Side-Step

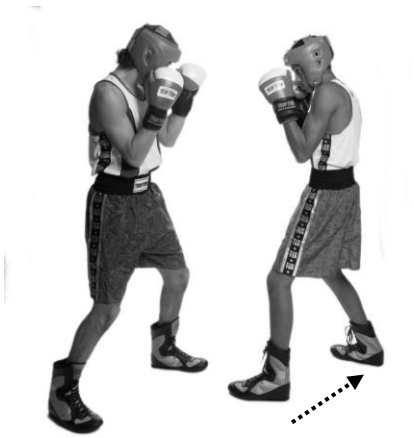
Side Step in the Rear Foot Direction

Most boxers are happiest when their opponent moves forward and backward in an orthodox manner. Few boxers are comfortable when the target suddenly shifts to the side, outside the normal line of vision, leaving them open to quick bursts of counterpunching.

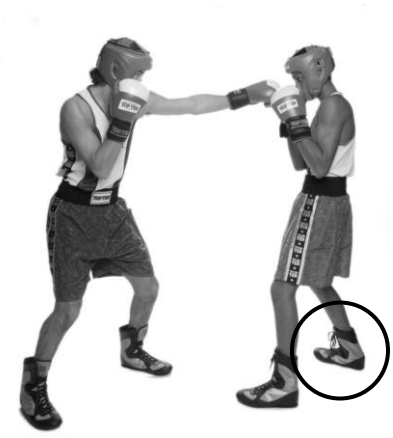
When the coach feels that the boxer has mastered the simple footwork involved in the four basic moves – advancing, retreating, circling right and circling left – he/she should introduce the sidestep. This movement can be very useful to the boxer as a defensive move against the jab (see the boxer to the right in Pictures. 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5).

To perform the side-step with the front foot, the boxer:

- moves the front foot quickly back toward the rear foot (Picture 3.3);
- steps off swiftly to the rear foot direction, transferring the weight to that foot (Picture 3.4);
- pivots back into the normal stance and either resumes the attack or continues to side-step to the rear foot direction. As can be seen in Picture 3.5, by side-stepping the defending boxer has moved to the outside to avoid the opponent's jab.



Picture 3.3- Side-Step



Picture 3.4- Side-Step

Picture 3.5- Side-Step

Boxers should practice this footwork skill in pairs, taking turns to shift out of the line of the partner's shuffling advance.

3.4- Pivot

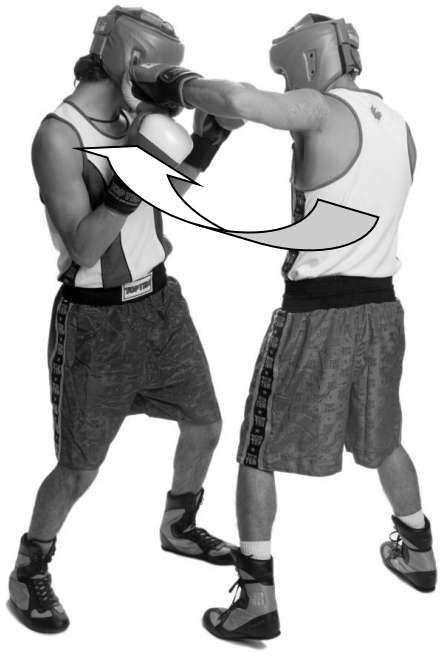
The pivot is a relatively simple manoeuvre to learn. It is based on "economy of movement", and is performed with the front foot, either in a clockwise or anti- clockwise direction. To execute the Pivot, the Boxer:

- Transfers his or her weight to the ball of the front foot.
- Rotates in a half circle, thus cutting down the ring space with a minimum of energy expenditure.

When the boxer uses the Pivot, the opponent must use additional footwork to circle, thus expanding more energy in the ring.

3.5- The Lead Hand Hook to the Head

The hook with the lead hand is perhaps the most effective punch in the boxing repertoire if it is delivered correctly. As the name "hook" suggests, it is a bent arm blow which is used mainly as a counter punch or as part of a combination of punches. It is a difficult punch to defend against as it is thrown from outside the main line of vision. Surprise is the key factor of its success – the opponent rarely sees it coming.



Picture 3.6- Lead Hand Hook to the Head

To perform the Lead Hand Hook to the head, the Boxer:

- Shifts the weight to the rear leg.
- Pivots explosively at the hip and shoulders, using the firm rear side of the body as a hinge.
- Keeps the front arm relaxed in a hook shape, and quickly whips it in an arc through the target.

Key points:

- To enable the hips to swivel, the front foot pivots inwards on the ball of the foot.
- At the moment of impact, the rear knuckles are in contact with the target. The palm is facing the floor.
- Keep the rear hand in a high guarding position.

3.6- Defences against the Lead Hand Hook to the Head

To defend against a Lead hand Hook to the head, the boxer can use the following moves:

1. Forearm block
2. Ducking

These techniques are described below.

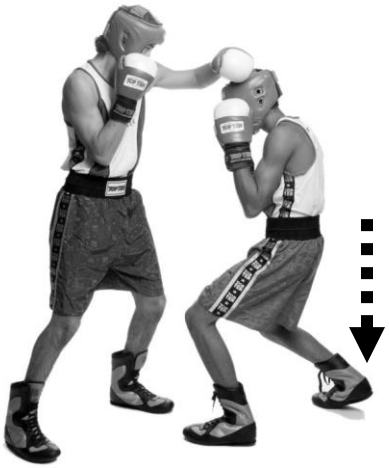
Forearm Block

Picture 3.7- Forearm block

To perform this defence, the boxer:

- Blocks the opponent's blow with his or her forearm, tucking the elbow in to protect the body.
- Holds the open glove slightly away from the head to avoid a jarring effect.

Ducking



Picture 3.8- Ducking

When ducking, the boxer:

- Bends the body very slightly forward from the waist
- Flexes the knees to drop the head under the oncoming hook
- Carries the hands high, keeps the chin down, and watches the opponent

The boxer can duck from all distances, short, medium, long.

3.7- The Lead Hand Hook to the Body

The Lead Hand Hook to the Body (Picture 3.9) is strictly a counterpunch. It is sometimes referred to as a uppercut with the lead hand (Picture 3.10) because of the steep angle of the attack. The punch lands either in the solar plexus or in the area of the liver.

Note: The pictures below show variations of hook to the body

Picture 3.9- Hook with the Lead Hand

Picture 3.10- Hook with the Lead Hand

Executing the hook is dangerous because of the need to drop the lead hand before delivery, thus creating a brief opening for the opposition's rear hand.

To deliver the hook with the lead hand to the body, the boxer:

- tilts the T shape of the shoulders forward and sideways to the front foot direction;
- carries the front arm in a flexed position; the forearm is roughly parallel to the floor; the boxer should try to maintain a 90° angle at the elbow joint with the palm upward; hand slightly flexed
- makes sure that the front foot is well inside the opponent's leading foot, that is, beneath his chin;
- pivots explosively at the hip and shoulder during the hook upward into the solar plexus;
- brushes the flexed guarding arm against the hip as the weight transfers to the rear foot.

This particular skill will need constant practice because the punch must be precise and accurate to be effective. A careless lead hand hook to the body (for example, one that lands *below* the belt), can result in warning or instant disqualification.

3.8- Defence against a Lead Hand Hook to the Body: Elbow Block

The boxer performs the elbow block (Picture 3.11) by:

- pivoting at the waist to block the hook with either elbow (right elbow in this example);
- turning the body to meet the punch, *without* moving the arms;
- keeping the chin down throughout the movement.

Picture 3.11- Elbow Block

3.9- Combinations with the Lead Hand Hook

Balance and Rhythm are Key Factors to Effective Combination Punching

Once the boxer knows the techniques required for the basic punches, he/she should be taught sequences or *combinations* of punches, and learn to deliver them without upsetting his/her balance. Rhythm and balance are the keys to good combination punching. To sustain bursts of punching, the boxer must have a high level of fitness.

Progressions when Teaching Combination Punches

The boxer should first develop the basic patterns of combination punching through individual repetitions at low speed. Then, he or she should move on to working on the heavy bag in controlled conditions. The next level of progressions should then be: (1) pad sessions led by the coach (see Chapter 7 of the *Instruction beginners* manual), or (2) partner work in which the other boxer uses the palms of his/her gloves as pads. However, the coach should make sure that the pads or gloves are held in the correct position for punching, i.e. in the centre of the body, in order to provide the boxer with a realistic target.

After a few sessions, the boxer should have progressed from acquiring the basic patterns, to punching the bag, to punching pads or a partner's gloves. The next progression – before the

boxer tests the skill in sparring – requires that the coach use a glove to jab with his/her leading hand. Because most combinations are performed as a counter to a lead, this stage is transitional; when performing this type of drill, the coach leads and the boxer slips into range to deliver the required pattern of punches.

In combination punching, the boxer must remember to:

- not deliver each blow of the combination with full power; only the last one or two punches of the sequence should be delivered at maximal intensity;
- let his or her feet follow the opponent; as the punches connect, the opponent will naturally move away if he/she can; the boxer's feet must follow the opponent if the boxer is to stay in punching range;
- work on flexibility in the hip and shoulder joints; lack of flexibility will inhibit the range and variety of combination punches possible.

The Jab, Forward Step and Lead Hand Hook to the Head

The jab, forward step and hook with the lead hand to the head (Pictures 3.12 and 3.13) are some of the basic moves in boxing. Executed properly, this combination is a good indication that the boxer's skills have reached a good level. This move must be made smoothly and quickly, and to do so the boxer:

- steps in with a fast, light jab to the head;
- withdraws the jab along the same path;
- slides the front foot forward quickly to stay in punching range;
- turns the hip and shoulder, and delivers a lead hand hook to the head while pivoting on the ball of the front foot and transferring the body weight to the rear foot.

Picture 3.12- Combination: Jab

Picture 3.13- Followed by a Hook

The Double Hook: The Lead Hand Hook to the Body and to the Head

To deliver a double hook (Pictures 3.14, 3.15 and 3.16), the boxer must punch in a steep path to the body and switch immediately to hook on a more horizontal position to the head. To do so, he or she:

- slips to the front foot direction against the jab, sliding the front foot into punching range;
- tilts the shoulders sideways over the hip, and drives the hook with the lead hand into the opponent's solar plexus;
- keeping the rear guarding hand high, delivers the second hook with the lead hand to the head, and transfers the weight to the rear foot.

Picture 3.14- Slip to the Front Foot

Picture 3.15- First Hook with the Lead, to the Body

Picture 3.16- Second Hook with the Lead, to the Head

The Jab, Straight Power Punch and Lead Hand Hook to the Head

The Jab to the head, Straight Power Punch to the head and Lead Hand Hook to the head (Pictures 3.17, 3.18 and 3.19) is the first basic three-punch combination involving the Lead Hand Hook. This combination should become a conditioned reflex that the boxer uses when the opening presents itself. This move requires rhythm and timing.

To perform this combination, the boxer:

- steps in with a light jab to find his/her range;
- pivots at the hip and shoulder to drive a straight Power Punch to the head;
- staying in punching range with the front foot, pivots back with a Lead Hand Hook hand to the head;
- recovers to the guarding position.

Picture 3.17- Jab to the Head

Picture 3.18- Straight Power Punch to the Head

Picture 3.19- Lead Hand Hook to the Head

The Jab to the Head, Straight Power Punch to the Head, and Lead Hand Hook to the Body

The boxer delivers the jab to the head, straight right to the head and hook with the lead hand to the body (Pictures 3.20, 3.21, and 3.22) as he/she did the previous three-punch combination except that this time, he/she finishes with a Lead Hand Hook to the Body. The boxer must keep his/her guarding hand high as he/she delivers the hook.

Picture 3.20- Jab to the Head

Picture 3.21- Straight Power Punch to the Head

Picture 3.22- Hook with the Lead Hand to the Body

Other Combinations

Many combinations of punches are possible; the coach should encourage individual discovery as his/her boxers experiment on the punch bag. Boxers must, of course, experiment within guidelines laid down by the coach.

3.10- The Rear Hand Uppercut

The rear hand uppercut is a medium or short range punch. It is used in the main as a counter punch to either the chin or the body (Pictures 3.23 and 3.24).

This punch is particularly effective against an opponent who boxes from a crouched position. It also becomes an important punch in the short range repertoire. T o execute the Rear Hand Uppercut, the boxer:

- transfers the weight over the rear side;
- carries the dominant arm in a half bent position, forearm parallel to the floor, with the palm up;
- rotates the hip and shoulders explosively to the front foot direction, whipping the punch up to the opponent's chin or body;
- connects with the back knuckles on target, with the palm slightly flexed, and facing the puncher;
- carries the lead hand in a high guard position.

Picture 3.23- Uppercut to the Chin

Picture 3.24- Uppercut to the Body

The rear hand uppercut is a medium-range counter that should normally be delivered on the retreat. The boxer should never "telegraph" this punch to his or her opponent.

To practice the Rear Hand Uppercut in training, the coach or partner should advance, holding the glove or pad on the right hand, while the boxer retreats yet occasionally anchors his/her back foot, and snaps the uppercut at the advancing target. The boxer should also do this drill while retreating side to side.

3.11- Defence against the Rear Hand Uppercut to the Chin: Lead Hand Block

To defend against the Rear Hand Uppercut to the Chin, the boxer quickly lowers his or her lead hand, and catches the opponent's punch in a blocking move (Picture 3.25).

The defender's hand must be lowered sufficiently to catch the blow before it reaches his or her chin, but not too much as this would expose the upper body.

When performing this defence, the rear hand always remains high enough to protect the head.

Picture 3.25- Lead Hand Block

3.12- Defence against a Lead Hand Uppercut to the Body: Elbow Block

The boxer performs the elbow block by:

- pivoting at the waist to block the uppercut with the front elbow;
- turning the body to meet (intercept) the punch, *without* moving the arms;
- keeping the chin down throughout the movement.

See picture 3.11 in Section 3.8.

3.13- Combinations with the Rear Hand Uppercut

With the addition of the uppercut to his/her repertoire of punches, the boxer can use great variety in his/her punches. He/she should never forget that the first one or two punches in a combination serve to confuse the opponent, so that the final blow can find a clean opening. Combinations take advantage of the fact that even the best defender can block only a small proportion of the blows delivered by a skilled boxer.

The Rear Hand Uppercut to the Body and Lead Hand Hook to the Head

To deliver the Rear Hand Uppercut to the body and Lead Hand Hook to the Head (Pictures 3.26 and 3.27), the boxer:

- slips to the front foot direction against the opponent's jab;
- drives the Rear Hand Uppercut to the opponent's solar plexus, transferring the weight to the front foot;
- pivots at close to medium range with a Lead Hand Hook to the head;
- recovers to the guarding position.

Picture 3.26- Uppercut to the Body

Picture 3.27- Hook to the Head with the Lead Hand

The Hook with the Lead Hand to the Head, Rear Hand Uppercut to the Body and Hook with the Lead Hand to the Head

This three-punch combination (Pictures 3.28, 3.29, and 3.30) is an effective power combination against the opponent's Jab that the boxer can build upon at a later stage of his or her technical development. To deliver this three-punch combination, the boxer:

- slips to the front foot direction inside the opponent;
- delivers a Hook with the Lead Hand to the Head at medium range;
- pivots into the Rear Hand Uppercut to the Body, transferring the weight forward;
- transfers his/her weight to the back foot, and pivots with a Lead Hand Hook to the Head.

Picture 3.28- Hook with the Lead Hand

Picture 3.29- Rear Hand Uppercut to the Body

Picture 3.30- Hook with the Lead Hand to the Head

3.14- Variation of the Jab

General Considerations

The jab or basic lead, is the foundation on which a boxer's skill is based. The coach should therefore now try to develop variations of this punch. In boxing, it is fatal to be predictable, for it enables an opponent to block or slip the punch easily and gives him/her an opportunity to set up a counterattack. Consequently, the jab should be thrown at varying speeds and along different paths to make defensive moves difficult for the opposition.

The following variations should be practiced using the bag or the partner's guarding hand as the target. The coach may find that individual coaching using a punch pad will reinforce any points he/she has made in the session. The boxer should also add the skill to his/her shadow boxing repertoire, checking his/her technique in the mirror.

The Diversionary Jab or "Blind Jab"

The diversionary jab, or "blind jab" (Picture 3.31), is very much an arm punch. The punch is thrown with a loosely clenched fist to confuse and obscure the opponent's vision before scoring with a straight Power Punch or lead hand hook .The speed and path of the punch can be varied to confuse the opposition.

Picture 3.31- Blind Jab

To execute the "Blind Jab", the boxer:

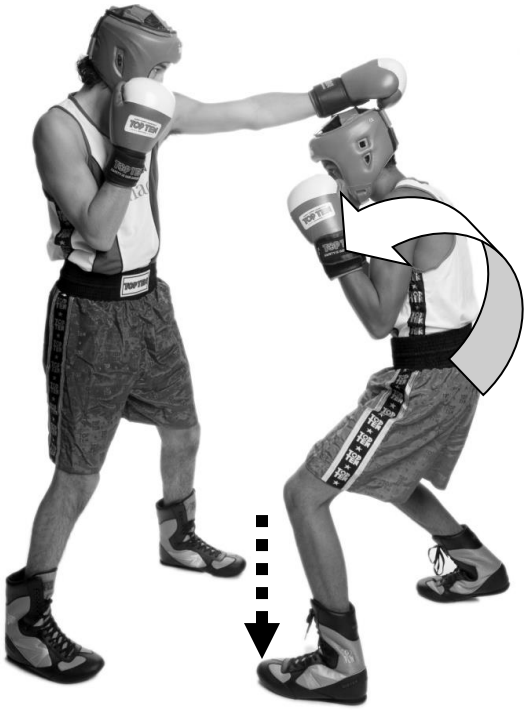
- leads the jab with a minimum of hip and shoulder pivot, making sure that the leading foot is in punching range;
- aims to strike the target, the loosely clenched knuckles obscuring the opponent's vision in the process;
- returns to the normal guarding position to avoid exposing himself to a countering with rear hand.

3.15- Advanced Defences against the Jab to the Head

Ducking

Carried out efficiently, ducking (Picture 3.32) opens the opponent's body to counterattack. The boxer can counterpunch most effectively with a jab or straight power punch.

This form of defence should be practiced by having the coach or group partner lead a light jab with a punch pad or a glove held in position.



The boxer ducks by:

- bending the body forward from the waist;
- flexing the knees, allowing the head to drop under the opposing lead hand;
- raising the arms with the gloves held against the cheekbones; the fore arms and elbows protect the body;
- making sure that the head is not lowered below the opponent's waist;
- watching the opponent throughout the move.

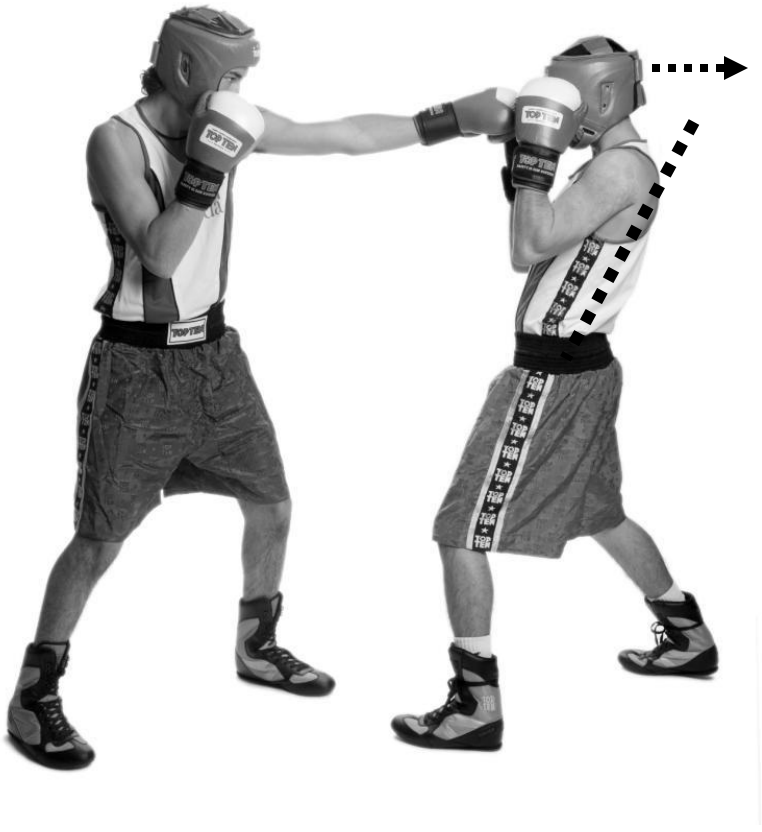
Picture 3.32- Ducking

Swaying Back

Swaying back (Picture 3.33) is an advanced defensive move that requires a wide, well-balanced base. Having committed the opponent to his/her lead by swaying back, the boxer can counter with any of the basic punches. For the relative newcomer, the jab following swaying back is the more natural counter.

The boxer sways back by:

- dropping the weight sharply onto the back foot as the opponent leads with his/her jab;
- ensuring that the front foot is stationary as the boxer leans back from the waist;
- swaying back into countering distance as the opposing jab falls short.



Picture 3.33- Swaying back

The Step Back

Although this move may appear simple, it requires balance and specific leg strength. Because the opponent is in a weak, stooped position, the boxer is ideally placed to counter with uppercuts from either hand. The boxer steps away as follows:

- as the opposing jab is led to the head or body, he/she applies pressure on the ball of the front foot and pushes away just out of range;
- the rear foot slides away backward and to the rear foot side;
- as the punch falls short, the boxer pushes back into range from the rear foot.

3.16- Various Counters

Counter against the Straight Power Punch: The Front to Rear Parry/Straight Power Punch

To counter a rear hand lead with a front to rear parry and straight Power Punch, the boxer does the following:

- as the opponent leads a Straight Power Punch to the head (Picture 3.34), the boxer parries the lead to the rear hand side with the lead hand;
- the boxer then counters immediately with a hard Straight Power Punch to the Head inside the path of the opposing rear hand (Picture 3.35).

Picture 3.34- Front to Rear Parry

Picture 3.35- Straight Power Punch Counter

Counter against the Lead Hand Hook: the Jab to the Head

Picture 3.36- Jab against a Hook

Because the hook with the lead hand is a short- or medium-range punch, the jab to the head (Picture 3.36) will land before the hook, throwing the opponent off balance.

As the opponent leads the hook, the boxer:

- steps forward to the front foot direction;
- drives a straight jab to the head;
- carries the rear hand (guard) high

It is critical to perform the whole movement quickly.

Counter against the Lead Hand Hook: The Straight Power Punch to the Head

Picture 3.37- Straight Power Punch Against a Hook

Although the lead hand hook can be a natural defence against a straight Power Punch, the Straight Power Punch (Picture 3.37) is also a natural counter against a lead hand hook.

To perform this move, the boxer:

- steps to the front foot direction and forward inside the path of the oncoming hook;
- pivots sharply at the hip and shoulder through the central axis and drives a hard straight Power Punch to the head inside the hook with the lead hand;
- drives a lead hand hook to the head if the opportunity is there.

Counter against the Jab: the Slip to the Front Foot Side and Hook

The boxer slips to the front foot direction (Picture 3.38) and delivers the Lead Hand Hook against a Jab (Picture 3.39) as follows:

- he or she pivots at the hip and shoulder to slip the head inside the oncoming jab;
- he or she pivots back around the central axis with a short lead hand hook to the head;
- he or she makes sure that the lead foot has moved into punching range, and carries the rear hand high in a guarding position.

Picture 3.38- Slip to the Front Foot

Picture 3.39- Lead Hand Hook Counter

Counter against the Jab: the Rear to Front Parry and Hook to the Body

To counter a jab with a Rear to Front Parry (Picture 3.40) followed by a Hook with the Lead Hand to the Body (Picture 3.41), the boxer:

- first parries the opposing jab to the front foot direction using the palm of the rear hand;
- delivers the lead hand hook steeply into the opponent's solar plexus, transferring the weight to the back foot;
- carries the rear hand high to guard or to deliver a Straight Power Punch to the opponent's chin.

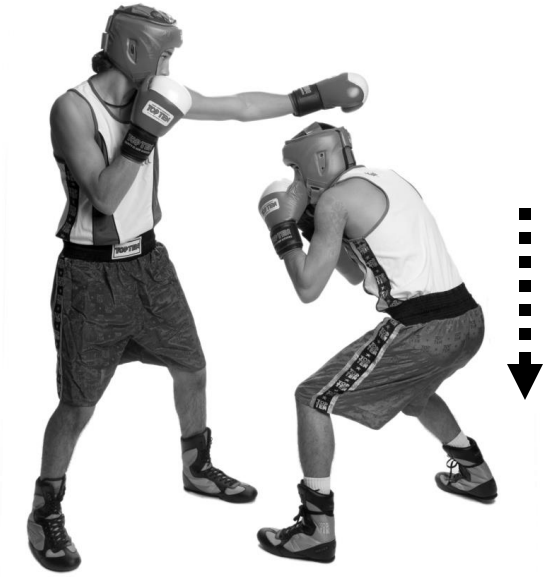
Picture 3.40- Parry

Picture 3.41- Hook after the Parry

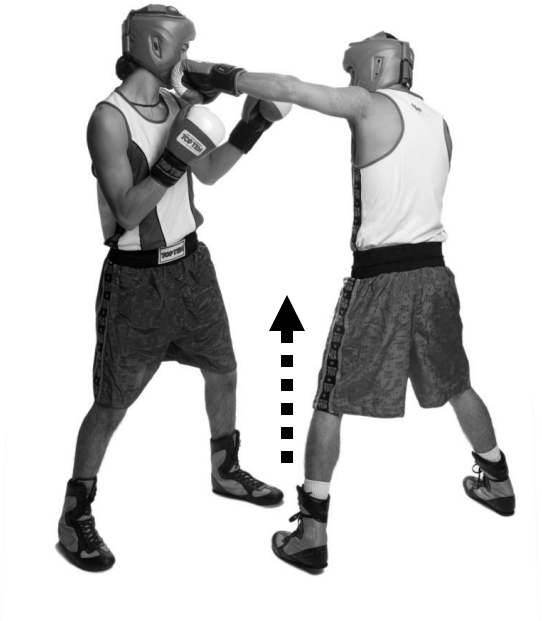
Counter against the Jab: Ducking and Delivering the Lead Hand Hook to the Head

To duck under the jab (Picture 3.42) and counter with a Lead Hand Hook to the Head (Picture 3.43), the boxer:

- flexes the knees to drop the body under the jab;
- drives from the legs upward and pivots with Lead Hand Hook to the head;
- carries the rear hand high in guard position, and watches the opponent throughout the movement.



Picture 3.42- Ducking



Picture 3.43- Lead Hand Hook Counter

Counter against the Jab: Straight Power Punch to the Body

To execute this counter against the jab, the boxer:

- Steps to the front foot direction and drops the body by flexing the knees in anticipation of the opponent's jab.

- With the shoulders in line with the opponent's body, drives a Straight Power Punch to his or her body (Picture 3.44).

- Exaggerates the guard with the front hand, to ensure a good protection against a possible counter by the opponent.

Picture 3.44- Straight Power Punch to the Body

Counter against the Hook to the Body: the Jab to the Head

To counter a Lead Hand Hook to the Body with the Jab to the Head (Picture 3.45), the boxer:

- must first detect the opponent's intent to deliver a hand hook to the body *while the oncoming lead is still at a reasonable distance from scoring*;
- counters with a quick jab to the head as soon as he/she sees the oncoming lead hand;
- leaves the front elbow in position to guard.

Picture 3.45- Jab against a Lead Hand Hook to the Body

Counter against the Hook to the Body: the Straight Power Punch to the Head

To counter a Lead Hand Hook to the Body with the Straight Power Punch to the Head (Picture 3.46), the boxer:

- must first detect the opponent's intent to deliver a hand hook to the body *while the oncoming lead is still at a reasonable distance from scoring*;
- counters with a hard straight power punch to the head as the opponent starts the hook.

Picture 3.46- Straight Power Punch to the Head

CHAPTER 4 – STRATEGY AND TACTICS IN BOXING

4.1- General Considerations

Boxing is a one-on-one combat-duel sport that forces each athlete to go to the limit of his or her capabilities. To win, the boxer must not only be fit and skilled; he or she must also *find the right way* to overcome the opponent's defence and to score. In other word, the successful boxer must outthink and outmanoeuvre the other while both are under a very high level of stress.

To do well in Amateur Boxing, athletes must therefore be able to adapt constantly to a variety of conditions and situations. Often, the boxer knows very little about his or her opponent (sometimes, nothing at all…). For that reason, and given the relatively short duration of a fight, he or she must be able to analyze quickly the moves of the other boxer, and adjust accordingly when attacking or defending. In addition, when competing in a tournament, the boxer may have to face a variety of opponents whose body size and fighting styles may differ greatly from one match to the other.

This reality poses particular challenges in the boxer's preparation process, as the situation is often completely different when the athlete trains in his or her own gym: the number of sparring partners may be fairly limited, and boxers may become so familiar with each other's moves and habits that a certain routine may set in. This, of course, can make things much more predictable compared to a real fight, and reduce the need for constant analyses, decision-making, and adjustments.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide coaches with a solid foundation in the area of strategy and tactics, and to suggest various ways through which a sound tactical sense can be instilled in developing boxers.

4.2- Strategy and Tactics: Definitions

By Alain Marion, M.Sc.

Strategy

Strategy is the overall plan of action the boxer has for a bout, and it is usually determined in advance. It is the "big picture" that the boxer and the coach have in mind for the fight.

For instance, a boxer's strategy may be to go all out at the opponent right from the beginning of each round in order to destabilize him or her, and score as many points as possible early in each engagement. Conversely, another strategy could be to slow down an opponent during the early stages of the fight, by adopting a more defensive style of boxing. Yet another strategy could be to capitalize on a high level of fitness, and force the opponent to keep moving around constantly in the ring in order to fatigue him or her, launching attacks when the other boxer is tired and therefore less effective at defending himself or herself.

It is important to stress that if boxers are to carry out a particular strategy successfully, they must be able to (1) correctly apply a variety of *tactics*, and (2) execute correctly the specific *skills* or *techniques* that support each tactic. They must also display a level of fitness that will make it possible for them to sustain the physical demands of the strategy or tactics employed.

Tactics

Tactics relate to the specific choices and the selection of moves by the boxer during the fight to gain an advantage over the opponent, or to prevent him or her from gaining an advantage. The tactics employed by a boxer are generally linked to the strategy established for the fight. As a result, there must be a clear intention behind each tactic used. Examples of tactics include: feints, drawing the opponent, circling around the opponent, etc.

To successfully implement a given tactic, the boxer must master thoroughly the various skills it may involve. There is no point in trying to teach or implement tactical elements, even simple ones, if the boxer cannot properly execute the basic techniques which are required.

As each competitor has different strengths and weaknesses, boxers must also employ tactics that take into account:

- their own skill level and experience
- their level of fitness
- the abilities, tactics, fitness, and experience level of the opponent

4.3- Tactical Principles

By Alain Marion, M.Sc.

In Boxing as in most sports, there are eight basic principles that should be respected in order to successfully apply tactical actions: intent and purpose, surprise and deception, effective use of space and time, consolidation, commitment, calculated risk, exploitation of the opponent's weaknesses, and economy of energy. Each will be described briefly in the following pages.

Principle 1: Intent and Purpose

Any tactical action undertaken by the boxer should be done with a particular *purpose* in mind. The purpose can be to test the opponent's reaction, to lure him or her in order to create an opening, to gain a specific position in the ring, etc. Without a clear purpose, the actions initiated by the boxer will likely not allow him or her to take full advantage of the situations that may have been created, because he or she often has only a very short time to capitalize on the resulting openings or on the effect of surprise produced.

Principle 2: Surprise and deception

This is a key principle in combative/duel sports. It implies that the boxer should seek to:

1. create situations whereby he or she will either catch the opponent unawares, and/or
2. confuse or mislead the opponent regarding his or her own intentions.

Ideally, the actions or moves by the boxer should be such that the opponent will either hesitate or initiate a response that will put him or her at a disadvantage. Feinting is an example of this tactical principle. Surprise and deception in boxing require the following: observation and analysis of the opponent; unpredictability of and variety in the moves employed; changes in patterns; adequate timing; recognition of opportunities; and speed of execution.

Principle 3: Effective use of space and time

This principle implies that the boxer must constantly seek to occupy the most advantageous position in the ring relative to the opponent, and that he or she must recognize opportunities in a timely fashion, and react accordingly

Examples of effective use of space include trying to manoeuvre the opponent into a corner where he or she will have less mobility and fewer defensive options and conversely, avoiding being trapped in a corner. It also means that the boxer should find the optimal distance between himself/herself and the opponent, in order to carry out particular attacking and defensive actions, and always seek to occupy the zone of the ring where most judges have a clear view of the blows he or she delivers to the opponent.

In most instances, the boxer only has a very short time to capitalize on opportunities that present themselves or that have been created, while against particular opponents, there are only a few opportunities to take a decisive advantage during a fight. The boxer must therefore make

the most of these openings. The effective use of time also relates to the type of actions the boxer should seek to undertake at certain stages of the fight – particularly towards the end - and to the risks he or she should take considering who is in the lead or how close the fight is.

Principle 4: Playing on strengths and weaknesses

The tactical actions chosen must be such that they will exploit any weaknesses of the opponent, and all the strengths of the boxer who is implementing them. Therefore, information must be gathered on the opponent whenever possible (previous performances; injuries; technical strengths and weaknesses; favorite tactical moves; etc.). When this type of information is not available, the boxer must be extremely vigilant right from the onset of the bout, and look for any cue that may reveal a weakness or a preference in the opponent.

The boxer must also be aware of his/her own strengths and weaknesses, and avoid being confronted to situations where he or she may be particularly vulnerable. As mentioned earlier, the boxer must also be capable of properly executing all the skills required to implement the chosen tactics, and must display a level of physical conditioning that is adequate for the effective implementation of the selected strategies or tactics.

Principle 5: Calculated risks

Boxing is never predicable. Though common sense may suggest that opponents will react in a particular way to a given situation, they may do just the opposite. This is especially true with more experienced opponents, who have seen many competitive situations and learned from them.

As much as possible, the boxer should have a general game plan for his or her fight, and the plan should be fully understood and applied (see strategy). However, the situation during a fight may evolve whereby an alternative must be brought into action, as the pre-set course of action is no longer appropriate. The boxer must therefore be able to adapt to new situations, analyze how the bout is actually developing and how relevant the original plan of action remains, and take the initiative of implementing a creative solution whenever appropriate. Often, this will involve taking some risks. Lowering the rear guard or exposing deliberately certain parts of the body to the opponent by feigning fatigue are examples of "calculated risks" a boxer may take during a match, in order to test or tempt the opponent, and create opportunities that he or she will exploit.

Principle 6: Commitment

Once a tactical opportunity has been created, it must be exploited, particularly if it has been designed to lead to a decisive result. Therefore, once initiated, the tactical action should be carried out entirely and at the appropriate intensity.

Many athletes lose their chance of winning by not bringing to an end the tactical moves they have initiated. They can recognize the correct moment and set off the appropriate action, but fail to make a 100% commitment as they are afraid they will not be able to go all the way.

Principle 7: Consolidation

This principle is closely related to the previous one, *Commitment*. Once the boxer has gained a tactical advantage over his/her opponent, it is important to maintain this superiority or control, to capitalize on it, and to defend against other tactics that could be used by the opponent. It is not sufficient to have the opponent react the way the boxer wanted him or her to: the advantage must be converted into scored points through appropriate attacking moves.

In certain situations (i.e. if the score is very close during a match, or when the opponent has a higher ranking or is more experienced) a temporary gain is not likely to be sufficient to secure victory; under such conditions, the boxer should seek to maintain or improve any advantage achieved over the opponent. In other words, the advantage must be consolidated to set up additional scoring opportunities, or even a winning move that will secure victory ultimately.

Principle 8: Economy of strength and energy

Unnecessary or excessive energy expenditure at the wrong moment in a bout may lead to premature fatigue, leaving the boxer increasingly vulnerable to attacks by the opponent.

Fatigue in the ring is usually characterized by a decrease in the boxer's mobility and power output, a reduced concentration, slower reaction times, and overall a less effective defense. Often, it is also associated with a feeling of pain or discomfort, which can negatively impact the intensity of the efforts the athlete can sustain. Therefore, tactical actions should be executed in such a way that (1) the athlete will not expand his or her energy needlessly during the match, and (2) at critical moments of the fight, the boxer should be stronger, more powerful and/or faster than the opponent in order to score points, or "deliver the winning blow".

A good technique will contribute to reducing the energy expenditure required to carry out specific moves during a boxing match.

4.4- Boxing-Specific Tactics – Key Points about Feinting

Feinting – *the art of feigning an attack at one point, and then attacking at another point* – is a sign of an expert boxer. Whenever two boxers of equal speed, strength and skill are matched, the one who is superior at feinting usually wins.

Feinting requires the use of eyes, hands, body and legs in a single effort to deceive the opponent. Such movements are decoys; therefore, if the opponent tries to adjust his/her defence, the boxer can take advantage of the openings created. Through feinting, a boxer can find out how his/her opponent will spontaneously react to a particular movement.

Feinting creates only momentary openings. Therefore, to be able to take advantage of the openings created, the boxer must know beforehand what openings specific feints will likely create, and react instantly. Such familiarity comes only from practicing many feints against all kinds of opposition, so that general reactions and trends can be determined.

In boxing, an opening should be set up on purpose. A good boxer knows what type of openings may result from a particular feint *before* he/she executes it. This knowledge must be used effectively, and his/her follow-up action must be initiated almost *before* the opening actually results.

The essential elements of feinting are speed of movement, deception, precision and a variety of sound follow-up punches. Feints used too often enable the opponent to read them and counter-attack, thus defeating the very purpose of the feint.

The boxer should practice feinting continually. He/she should use a mirror to check the effectiveness of his/her movements.

4.5- Body Feints

The Knee Feint

While advancing slowly, the boxer quickly bends the front knee. This action creates the impression that both the arms and legs are moving. In reality, the arms are entirely relaxed and ready to punch.

The Body Drop

The boxer quickly bends the upper body slightly forward, and simultaneously moves the lead hand forward to jab or hook.

4.6- Arm Feints

The Up-Down Feint

The boxer makes a sharp, jabbing movement to the head with the leading hand, and then delivers a punch to the body. The rear hand may also be used to make a positive move toward the opponent’s head and body.

The Draw-Back Feint

The Draw-Back feint is a rear-hand feint designed to induce the opponent to “shy away” to his or her rear foot direction.

Anticipating this reaction of the opponent after the threatening movement of the rear arm, the boxer should follow with a Lead Hand Hook to surprise the opponent as he/she leans to the rear foot direction.

4.7- Drawing

Drawing is closely related to feinting. Whereas feinting creates an opening, drawing leaves some part of the body unprotected so that the opponent will be tempted to lead a specific blow that the boxer can launch a counterattack against.

This tactic is essential against an opponent who refuses to lead. The boxer presses the attack while seeming open, yet remains ready to counter any lead with either hand. However, it should be noted that this tactic involves a fair amount of risk and, as such, should not be used by inexperienced boxers.

4.8- Exposing the Body and Head to Attack

To draw a Jab to the Head, the boxer carries the rear hand low, thus exposing his or her chin. Against the lead, he/she steps in or out, countering with either hand.

To draw a Jab to the Body, the boxer raises the rear elbow. He/she must be ready to (1) counter with a fast Straight Power Punch to the head, or (2) to step to the front foot direction against the expected Jab, and deliver a Straight Power Punch.

To draw a Straight Power Punch to the Body, the boxer lifts the rear elbow, and prepares to parry and counter quickly with a fast Straight Power Punch to the head.

To draw a Straight Power Punch to the Head, the boxer carries the lead hand low. He/she must be ready to slip to the front foot direction or to the rear foot direction, thus leaving both hands free to counter.

Here again, this tactic involves some risk, and it is not recommended unless the boxer is experienced.

4.9- Circling away from the Rear Hand

An effective basic defensive tactic for beginners is to circle away from the opponent's strongest blow, i.e. the Straight Power Punch. It is best to circle to the rear foot side, that is, to move in the same direction as the blow.

To execute this tactic, the boxer moves one step to the rear foot side with the rear foot; the front leg quickly follows into position. The boxer should carry the lead hand high, ready to block the opponent's attempted rear leads. The boxer should also carry his/her rear hand high so that he/she can guard against the opposing with the lead hand hook.

4.10- Infighting

General Considerations

Infighting is the art of boxing at close range. It takes skill to get in close, and skill to stay there.

To obtain the inside position, the boxer must slip, weave, duck, draw or feint. There is obviously more chance of gaining the vital inside position if the opponent can be trapped against the ropes or in a corner of the ring.

Once the inside position has been gained, the boxer drives both hands into the opponent's body but occasionally switches to the head.

Technique for Infighting

The technique for infighting is as follows:

- Having drawn the opponent's Jab, the boxer slips to the inside position, carrying the hands high.
- While at close range, the boxer remains careful not to contact the opponent with his or her head – on no account should the forehead push against or touch the opponent.
- The rear foot slides, so that the boxer directly faces his/her opponent.
- The boxer drives the punches – short hooks and uppercuts to the body, but occasionally to the head as well – in bursts that emphasize speed, not power.
- The boxer tries to look at his/her opponent "through his/her eyebrows".

If the rival is too close for such observation to be possible, the boxer should watch the opponent's feet. With experience, the boxer should be able to anticipate any countermoves while at close distance, based on the position of the opponent's feet.

Shifting With the Opponent

From the inside position, the boxer may be able to shift with the opponent. As the opponent leads a Jab to the Body, the boxer drives a Rear Hand Uppercut to the body.

He/she should continue punching to the body until the opponent lowers his/her hands; the boxer should then switch the attack to the head.

Defences against the Infighter

From the outset, the coach should accept that holding is an offence. Although unpunished in professional Boxing, holding is an offence under AIBA and Boxing Canada rules. In amateur Boxing, the referee must disqualify a boxer who continues to hold after the usual two warnings.

Against an opponent who has gained the inside position and holds the advantage, the boxer should side-step to the rear foot direction, and try to gain the center of the ring. When this has been achieved, he/she counterattacks immediately at long range.

If trapped in the corner with no means of escaping, the boxer should look for a chance to work to the inside position, where short uppercuts can break up the attack of the opponent.

Safety Precautions When Practicing Infighting in Training

Infighting should be practiced in training with a partner. Because of the danger of head clashes, headgears must always be worn. The mouth guard is also a must for all boxers practicing infighting.

The coach should supervise these practice sessions with care. Bad technique at close range can lead to many infringements – for example, leaning, pushing, using the head dangerously or punching carelessly – that must not be allowed to become habits.

Wall bags are ideal for practicing the short, sharp bursts of punching that are the trademark of the good boxer. The boxer should practice various combinations and patterns of punches on the wall bag *before* putting them into practice against a partner.

Having reached this relatively advanced stage of training, the boxer should be encouraged to wear bandages for his/her gymnasium work. Punching the bag can easily damage unsupported metacarpals; the coach should teach all boxers working under him/her the best method of bandaging the hands (see Annex 1 of the Instruction beginners Manual for the proper method of bandaging the hands).

4.11- Ring Tactics when Fighting Opponents of Different Physiques, Styles, and Techniques

It is difficult to generalize and to make tactical recommendations that would apply to all boxing styles and techniques, or opponents' physiques. However, the following tactics are generally considered as the most effective against particular types of boxers.

Against a tall opponent, the boxer should:

- Keep moving both ways.
- Draw the lead, and slip inside.
- Having gained the inside position, switch the attack from body to head with short hooks and uppercuts.

Against a crouching weaver, the boxer should:

- Avoid working on a straight line.
- Sidestep, and work to the sides.
- Punch straight, and use uppercuts.

Against a persistent jabber, the boxer should:

- Pressure the opponent.
- Weave to either side; keeping the body low, he or she should slip under the jab.
- Having forced his or her way under the jab, punch to the body.

Against a heavy puncher, the boxer should:

- Keep moving, thus preventing the opponent from getting set.
- Launch unexpected attacks.
- Avoid exchanging punches; rather, move away immediately.
- Circle the ring in both directions.

Against an effective counter puncher, the boxer should:

- Force him or her to lead by feinting and drawing.
- Concentrate on countering his or her counter.
- Keep him or her under pressure and off balance.

Against a left hander, the right handed boxer should:

- Force him or her to lead; make him or her come closer.
- Circle left onto the blind side, away from his or her left hook.
- Use the left hook cross over the opponent's lead.
- Use the right hand to the opponent's head or body.

4.12- Teaching Tactics

Coaches should never try to teach tactics whose demands are beyond the current skill level of the boxer.

Progressive approach to teaching tactics

It is critical to keep in mind that the effective use of any tactic is largely dependent on the boxer's repertoire of techniques and on his or her skill level. In other words, *technical abilities directly support tactical actions*.

Once the boxer has an adequate repertoire of techniques and has been exposed to the basic tactical principles, the coach should create training situations requiring that he or she demonstrates some tactical sense. The procedure below is proposed as one way of teaching tactic progressively to young, developing boxers. Using this approach, the coach may:

1. Introduce the concepts of strategy and tactics to the athlete, and discuss the tactical principles.

2. Select a tactic that is suitable given the number of boxing techniques mastered by the boxer, and his or her skill level.

3. Outline the main intentions behind the tactical action or move being taught (what is the boxer trying to accomplish, and why?); as this is done, linkages can be made with the skill(s) supporting the effective implementation of the tactic, and with the tactical principles that apply.

4. Have the athlete practice individually the technical elements/moves that support the tactic, while mentally creating an image of what he or she is trying to accomplish against the opponent.

5. At the same time as step 4, engage the athlete in a reflection where he or she can appreciate the circumstances and conditions in which this tactic could be used successfully, and those in which it may not be an effective choice. Have the athlete visualize these particular situations.

6. Create simple training conditions with a partner or during pad work during which the athlete can learn to (a) recognize and decide whether or not it would be appropriate to use this particular tactic, and (b) try to execute the move(s) in a no risk environment.

7. At the same time as step 6, engage the boxer into a critical reflection about his or her own tactical actions (intention + timing + execution + effectiveness of action), in order that he or she can learn to decide whether the resulting situation (a) should be exploited further by continuing the attack (in which case appropriate follow-up moves or actions should be executed), or (b) calls for a retreat.

8. Increase progressively the complexity of the conditions in which the tactic is being employed, e.g. the action takes place at a faster pace; there are more unknowns in the situation and therefore less predictable conditions for the learner (when, where, how certain cues are given); increased consequences of errors (i.e. opponent can counter attack). To do so in a realistic manner, progress from pad work to technique sparring to conditioned sparring. Continue to engage the boxer into a critical reflection about his or her own tactical actions.

9. Repeat steps #2 to 8 above with other tactics.

10. When the boxer has a sufficient range of skills and tactics, engage him or her into open sparring. Continue to engage the boxer into a critical reflection about his or her own tactical actions and decisions by discussing with him during or after each sparring session, and by promoting a dialogue between the sparring partners.

This way, the boxer will progressively develop confidence in his/her ability to execute specific tactical actions, and tactical learning can occur concurrently with the boxer's technical development.

Additional approaches that can be used when teaching tactics

Other ways of developing the tactical sense of the boxer during training include:

1- Work sessions on pads during which the coach gives some specific tactical instructions to the boxer, or draws his or her attention to certain points that may occur during a fight. This way, feedback can be provided to the boxer regarding how specific offensive or defensive tactics are being used and executed.

2- Putting the boxer into sparring situations with an experienced partner who will understand his or her role in the tactical teaching and learning process, and assume this role in a responsible manner. This requires that the partner is both mature and responsible, and will not seek to take undue advantage of the learning boxer. The partner should follow the coach's guidelines and ensure certain situations are created to provide attacking opportunities to the learning boxer, and test his or her defensive moves against certain types of attacks.

3- Varying frequently the training partners during sparring sessions. For instance, use a different partner during each round, or even involve a new partner during the same round. This will force the boxers to think quickly and learn to adapt to new situations, both in attack and in defense.

4- As mentioned in Section 6.4 of the Instruction beginners manual, when a computerized scoring system is in use the boxer and his or her coach must keep in mind that area near the red corner is a "blind zone", where punches cannot be seen by more than one or two judges. Consequently, it can serve as a "safe zone" for the defending boxer, and the

attacker can waste a lot of energy for nothing in this part of the ring. In training, the coach can place markers (e.g. tape) on the surface of the ring to indicate clearly the areas where the judges have the best view. During sparring sessions, the boxer should attempt to control these specific parts of the ring, and concentrate his or her attacks in these zones to increase the probability that each blow will score.

Analyzing the Boxer's Behaviour in Competition

Coaches should also analyze the behaviours and the tactics used by their boxers in competition, and encourage critical thinking on their part. Even though victory may be the end-result, the approach taken by a boxer might show some tactical weaknesses. Through quality feedback and ongoing dialogue and questioning, the coach can have the boxer critically review and analyze his or her tactical decisions and actions. As a result, the boxer may be brought to realize that a particular tactic was either incorrectly executed, not executed at the right moment, or that it might not have been successful under different conditions or against more experienced opponents.

The process the coach should put in place for the boxer's tactical development should promote learning and autonomy in:

- how to detect the proper information from the opponents or in specific boxing situations;
- how to process this information and determine the options likely to be successful;
- deciding of the proper action to take;
- execution of the action correctly and at the right time; and
- performing all the previous tasks under stress.

CHAPTER 5 – SPARRING

(by Kevin Hickey)

The purpose of this chapter is to outline how coaches can use the methods of sparring, conditioned sparring, and open sparring as part of their boxers' preparation.

5.1- Introduction and General Considerations

The relationship between sparring and the competitive bout is the vital link between gymnasium preparations and performance in the ring. Sparring is as near as the coach can get to simulating a contest situation. Ringcraft, judgment of distance, timing, tactical and perceptual development are all involved when this training method is used. That is not to say, however, that the coach should regard sparring as a contest. For no matter how one tries to simulate a spar as though it were a real contest, it can never be quite the same. The main difference lies in the psychological pressures of the competitive bout. Some boxers will fail to rise to the added pressure of competition, whilst others will be stimulated to produce performances far superior to what they accomplish in training, or even in sparring. From an educational standpoint, the key point to keep in mind is that, because of its high degree of specificity, sparring represents a crucial part of a boxer's technical and physical preparation program.

5.2- Purpose of Sparring

The main purpose of sparring is to elevate the training demands, and help the boxer make the transition from the training environment to a competition.

One of the major problems facing a coach is how he/she can encourage the boxer to use a new technique or skill during a contest situation. The gap between being shown and practicing the technique and using it in a bout is significant: unless the boxer has exceptional natural talent, it is unlikely that an "automatic transfer" will occur from the training to the competitive environment.

With sparring, the coach has a means of controlling the boxer's skill learning process in a progressive manner. His/her first task is to teach the technique; then a variety of skill-challenging situations using equipment can be created, with sparring coming later to assist the grooving process.

Gradually, the boxer will gain confidence in the use of new skills, and this is a very important step of the learning progression. The coach should then encourage him/her to develop his/her awareness of cues and stimuli – in other words, knowing "when" to use a particular skill. This development of the perceptual process should be accompanied by the coach's drive to encourage his/her boxer to self-analyze all aspects of his/her technical and psychological make-up. Ultimately, the boxer must be capable of making his/her own decisions, rather than relying on the coach.

5.3- Types of Sparring

Sparring can be categorized into three basic types, each being a natural progression.
In order of progression they are *technique sparring*, *conditioned sparring*, and *open sparring*.

Technique Sparring

Technique sparring is in the early skill learning stages, where the speed of action is reduced to prevent injury and one selected technique is practiced with each boxer in turn acting a semi-passive role.

Movement is restricted and the speed becomes more realistic as confidence is acquired in the "feel" of the new skill. Only one specific technique is practiced at a time, so that the predictability of the spar is closely controlled.

The same approach holds for defences. Here again, speed of attack has to be reduced in the early stages to remove the danger of being hurt.

Once the desired attitude is understood and the learner achieves a degree of success and confidence in the skill, speed should be increased progressively.

Conditioned Sparring

Description

In conditioned sparring, the coach sets a particular theme or focus for the boxers. Speed is realistic, but the skills used are determined by the conditions set by the coach. Strict observance of the conditions is critical for the boxers' safety. A theme could be, for instance, "defences against the jab to the head".

In this example, Boxer "A" is conditioned by having to lead with a jab to the head, not being able to use any other form of attack. His/her partner, Boxer "B", must use a variety of defences against the jab according to:

- His/her repertoire of defences.
- His/her style.
- His/her position in the ring.
- The type and quality of jab used.

During the activity, the coach must ensure that the conditions set at the beginning are carried out as they should, and observe thoroughly what each boxer is doing. For instance, the defending boxer should (1) focus on "reading" the attitude and the moves of the attacker in order to detect when and where the blows will be delivered, (2) react quickly and correctly to the offensive situation, and (3) use the full range of defences that are appropriate against the moves of the attacker. At the same time, the coach must assess the quality of the jab of the attacker, and provide feedback accordingly. The roles of defender and attacker can then be reversed.

Setting Appropriate Conditions

Conditions should be set according to the age, ability, skill level, and experience of the boxers.

Though markings on the floor are helpful, it can be more effective to divide the floor space into "rings" with bamboo canes, which are easily positioned and give immediate feedback if touched.

Interest can be further stimulated and the element of fun enhanced, especially for schoolboys, by the introduction of point scoring games. The target could be either the body or head. Point scores are kept by the boxers themselves, which encourages the development of their sense of fair play, self-control, and self-discipline. Conditions set should be simple and based upon techniques practiced in technique sparring. Examples of such "box games" could be:

- The first boxer to score five hits wins. Target area is restricted to the body. Attack is limited to the leading hand in the form of a straight jab.
- Each boxer is allowed ten attacks with the leading hand, the attack to be either by straight jab or hook. Target area is either the head or body. The winner is the boxer who lands the greater number of successful attacks.

The conditioned sparring approach encourages a boxer to develop his/her thinking process, and the out-thinking and out-manoeuvring of his/her opponent. As such, it has a vital part to play in every boxer's technical and tactical development.

In terms of time available to the Competition introduction, it should predominate over open sparring by a ratio of at least four to one. That is to say that four in every five sparring sessions should be a technique or conditioned spar. This ratio may change according to the proximity of a contest, and more regular open sparring sessions can then be planned.

Open Sparring

Description

The very term “open sparring” perhaps gives the wrong impression. Whilst this type of sparring is similar to a contest situation, it should still be approached on an educational footing. No predetermined conditions are imposed by the coach when this method is used, and therefore a much more realistic interpretation of the boxer’s reaction to the situations presented should follow. However, it must be emphasized that only the skills practiced in technique spar and conditioned spar should be used. Otherwise, a boxer will never acquire that vital confidence in a new move and although he or she can demonstrate its use quite beautifully in technique and conditioned sparring, he or she may never quite “chance his/her arm” when it is for real.

In an open spar, the boxer’s perceptual and decision-making abilities can be developed, and he or she can learn when and how to use the new technique. This necessitates constant supervision by the analytical coach, who should guide the boxers as to the opportunities missed, or occasions when the new skill was tried – but when the cue was misread.

Role of the Coach

The coach has a delicate role to play during an open spar session: he or she should disrupt the rhythm of the spar as little as possible, but yet should not let an opportunity go by for stopping the action, and showing the boxers how they wrongly interpreted a particular situation. It is also necessary to add that the coach should not always over-impose his/her own tactical and technical interpretation of the situation: rather, the boxer must be encouraged to be original – to develop their flair, and to be self-critical of their own actions.

Safety Considerations

The weight of gloves used in open sparring should vary from 10 to 16 oz for seniors. Factors influencing the coach’s choice of glove weight should include age, ability and any discrepancy between ability and weight of the boxers sparring. Headgear and cup protectors should always be used during sparring.

During open sparring, the coach should encourage boxers to use a full range of punches with either hand but without the “bite” of the “intent to hurt”.

5.4- Safety Recommendations for Sparring

(by Cam Strachan)

General Considerations

The impact of boxing in regards to safety has been extensively studied, and the inherent risks of head trauma are well documented. Research has been completed in the area of concussions, memory, acute traumatic brain injury (ATBI) and chronic traumatic brain injury (CTBI). CTBI, the most serious health effect of boxing, is also known as chronic encephalopathy, dementia pugilistic, or the "punch drunk syndrome".

Research indicates that amateur boxers are exposed to injury risks similar to those of their professional counterparts; however, the risk may be considerably less among amateur boxers since the safety measures in the rules governing amateur bouts are more stringent.

Safety Measures in Competition

The specifics of rules and safety procedures for amateur boxing are set out by the Boxing Canada, and reflect the rules of the International Amateur Boxing Association (AIBA). Both organizations have acknowledged and addressed the safety issues inherent to our sport.

Safety measures in amateur boxing competitions include: shorter bouts, carefully matched opponents, compulsory use of headgear, more padded gloves, the "standing 8 count" and the implementation of the electronic scoring system. All these measures contribute to decreasing the risks of head trauma in boxing competitions.

Safety Measures in Training

Although well implemented, most of the safety measures have been directed towards competition safety. With a proportionately higher percentage of time spent in sparring compared to competition, it ensues that the implementation of adequate training methods and safety measures is left largely to the coach's discretion at the club level. Not surprisingly, the competition regulations regarding safety are generally not as diligently enforced at club level during sparring practices. This may lead to increased risks of head trauma.

A study by Jordan, Matser, Zimmerman & Zazula (1996) clearly showed a relationship between head trauma and sparring practices. The reasons for this are that (1) the amount of time boxers spend in the ring in training is substantially greater than the time spent in competition, and (2) the intensity during sparring can be very close to the intensity of a real fight.

Neither the AIBA nor Boxing Canada have developed standardized guidelines for sparring at the club level. It is indeed very difficult to implement *identical* safety procedures in every club, because each operates within its own context. However, the same basic *concerns* about safety should apply everywhere. Consequently, to ensure that the risk of head trauma is as low as possible, Competition introduction coaches must provide adequate supervision during sparring.

Sparring and the Role of the coach

It is the responsibility of the coach to ensure sparring sessions are conducted properly. Intense, long, and frequent sparring sessions should be avoided because they may increase the risk of injury. Sparring should be designed to sharpen boxing skills, not to subject a boxer to unnecessary and excessive trauma.

When sparring takes place at the club level, the coach takes on the role of matchmaker, referee, and ringside physician, in addition to his or her primary coaching role.

With the absence of a referee, the coach must maintain control of the sparring session, and ensure the safety of the athletes. With the absence of a ringside physician, the coach must also take the responsibility of recognizing any head trauma, and decide whether interventions are needed during sparring. Coaches should refer to Annex 3 of the *Instruction beginners* manual for specific information regarding head injuries and concussions.

Injury Protocol

An Injury Protocol should be implemented, posted in the club and given to all new athletes and to their parents.

The protocol should require documentation of all injuries in the Athlete logbook (i.e. bells rung, dizziness, ringing in ears). It should give guidelines for the suspension of training and/or of sparring activities (i.e. the exclusion of such activities in the case of a suspected or confirmed injury), and outline the written medical documentation required before returning to training or to sparring after a suspension.

Athletes or their parents should also be required to sign a form indicating that they have received and read the Injury Protocol.

INJURY PROTOCOL

Any injury sustained by a boxer must be reported and documented.

Injuries include any physical injury, as well as symptoms such as ‘bell rung’, ringing in the ears, dizziness, vision disturbances, persisting headaches, etc.

In the event of an injury sustained during training (including sparring), or when a boxer becomes aware of an injury, the following procedure must be followed by the athlete:

1) Communicate the nature or the symptoms of the injury to the Head Coach or to his or her Assistants as soon as possible.

2) Document the injury in a training logbook. If the athlete is unable to do so, the Head Coach or his or her Assistants should be responsible to record the information.

If the Head Coach suspects that an injury to the head has occurred during training, the boxer must immediately be referred to a physician.

Training and sparring must also be stopped, and the return to training should be done gradually, as per the recommendations of the physician and the general guidelines described in Annex 3 of the *Instruction beginners* manual.

CHAPTER 6 – ASSESSING NOVICE BOXERS FOR PROFICIENCY

6.1- Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the Competition introduction with a sample assessment schemes that can be used to determine the proficiency of novice and junior boxers.

Boxing can bring out the best in an athlete. He/she can not only learn how to defend himself/herself in the ring, but also improve his/her character and attitude as a result of situations that occur during skill and sparring sessions. Self-control, self-reliance, compliance with the rules, fair play, respect for one's fellows – are all basic aspects that participants can improve through a sound Boxing program.

Every boxing club in Canada should offer to its members – regardless of physique and initial ability level – the opportunity to learn the art of boxing. This can be achieved without involving the boxers in outside competition, although participants must expect to train, practice, and partake in sparring sessions with a club mate.

This chapter outlines three levels of proficiency that coaches can refer to when assessing novice and young boxers: ***bronze***, ***silver*** and ***gold***. In such schemes, coaches can assess their boxers' ability in the following areas:

- warm-up routine
- skipping
- shadow boxing
- footwork
- punching technique
- basic defence moves
- sparring
- knowledge of the rules
- determination and self-discipline

Obtaining proficiency awards such as those outlined in this chapter requires effort and determination on a boxer's part. As part of their involvement in Boxing programs, it is hoped that participants will not only acquire the skills of self-defence, but will also use these skills properly.

Important:

It is recommended that, before participating to his or her first fight, the boxer should at least meet the standards corresponding to the Silver Level.

***Notes**:*

When conducting any of the assessments described in this chapter, the date of the boxer's evaluation and the name of the coach/assessor should be clearly indicated on the evaluation sheet.

The result of the assessment should be discussed with the boxer, and the information should be kept on file for future reference.

6.2- Assessment Level - Bronze

Specific Aspects Assessed: Shadow boxing; sparring; knowledge of the rules.

1- Shadow Boxing (1 – 1.5 min.)

The coach should look for proper execution of the following technical aspects:

- the boxing stance
- basic footwork (moving forward, backward, to the left, to the right)
- straight jab
- double jab
- defensive actions against the jab to the head (blocking and parrying)

Hints for the boxer's assessment: The coach should look for style and proper technique of straight punching. The boxer must use the proper boxing stance - guard up. All moves must be accurate, and boxer should demonstrate a variety of punches and change of directions, as well as "pendulum movement".

2- Sparring

The boxer spars for three one-minute rounds against appropriately selected opponent using the lead hand only. The rest between rounds lasts 30 seconds.

Hints for assessment: Attention should be paid to self-control, skills, appearance, behaviour and fitness. The coach should assess each move carefully until he/she feels confident that the skill has been evaluated properly.

3- Knowledge of the rules

Basic questions concerning the rules of amateur boxing should be asked. For instance:

1) What is the scoring zone, and when does a punch score?
2) How many rounds are there in your category, and how long is each round?
3) Tell me what you know about the "traditional" scoring system used in boxing.
4) What must you do when the Referee says "BREAK"?
5) What must you do when the Referee begins a count?
6) What happens if you or the other boxer gets a warning during a fight?

6.3- Assessment Level - Silver

Specific Aspects Assessed: Skipping, Bag Punching, Shadow Boxing, Sparring

(2 minutes at each activity followed by 1-minute rest intervals).

1- Skipping

The coach should check for coordination of the feet and variation of speed and direction in the boxer's skipping. For instance, coaches can verify that the boxer consistently lands on the same spot while jumping (e.g. there are no unnecessary forward, backwards, or lateral movements), or that he or she can maintain good form and coordination when he or she chooses to move around while skipping.

Hints for assessment

Skipping will probably progress more slowly than either bag punching or shadow boxing. Coach should let their boxers skip to music, and this will help them acquire the essential rhythm.

2- Bag Punching

In bag punching, the coach should look for sustained effort, variety of attacks, good style in the retention of defence, and good timing in delivering the blows.

Hints for assessment

The coach must assess each move carefully and conscientiously, using the referent models and technical guidelines provided in both the Instruction beginners and the Competition introduction manuals. Coaches should avoid being over critical, and focus on providing quality feedback to help their boxers progress.

3- Shadow Boxing

During the shadow boxing activity, the coach should assess the boxer's footwork, effort, variety, and realism.

Hints for assessment

See above.

4- Demonstration Contest and Sparring

This portion of the assessment should consist in 3 rounds of 1.5 min each, followed by a 1-min pause.

The first round should be for demonstration of technique. Four demonstrations should be performed by the boxer, and any of the following could be requested: swaying back, skipping, ducking, sidestepping, the one-two combination, the lead hand hook, and uppercuts.

Two defences against a straight power punch (for example, stopping or using the forearm block) should also be requested. The boxer must also be asked to execute counters: two against a jab, two against a straight power punch.

The other two rounds should be reserved for ordinary sparring. The coach will assess the boxer's use of the ring, footwork, defence, style, skills used, behaviour, and appearance.

Hints for assessment

During the both the technical demonstrations and the sparring session, the coach must assess each move carefully and conscientiously, using the referent models and technical guidelines provided in both the Instruction beginners and the Competition introduction manuals. Here again, coaches should avoid being over critical, and focus on providing quality feedback to help their boxers progress.

During the sparring, boxers must be matched according to age, weight, and ability. Style should also be an important element of the evaluation. The boxer must balance on both feet, and the hands must return the same path the punch was delivered. The jab is the most important punch in boxing, and speed and skill during the execution of this punch are essential.

6.4- Assessment Level - Gold

Specific Aspects Assessed: Boxers will be assessed on a full training session of 10 x 1 - 1.5 minute rounds, a warm-up routine, and a variety of boxing exercises and drills.

1- The Warm-Up Routine

Assessment will be based on movements and exercises aimed at thoroughly preparing the boxer physically and mentally for the work to come. Training evaluated in other parts of assessment (for example - skipping) cannot be part of the warm-up routine.

Hints for assessment

The boxer should demonstrate warm-up exercises of the right intensity in the correct order. The warm-up routine must gradually bring muscle groups to play.

2- Skipping

In two rounds of skipping, the coordination of the boxer's feet and the variation of speed and direction will be assessed. Style and ease of variation in particular will be looked for during assessment.

Hints for assessment

Practice should have made boxers quite proficient by now. The coach will look for finer points and a balanced and erect posture. Variety is essential.

3- Shadow Boxing

The boxer should perform two rounds of shadow boxing. Demonstration of any of the following skills may be requested:

- footwork - moving forward, backward, to the left, to the right, side- stepping
- the straight lead to the head and defences against this punch (blocking, parrying, skipping, ducking, swaying back)
- the jab to the body and defences against this punch (elbow blocks, forearm parrying, stepping away)
- double jab and combination punches of speed jabs
- the straight power punch to the head and defences against this punch (stopping, shoulder blocks, parrying)

- the left hook to the head and defences against this punch (forearm block, ducking, circling left)
- uppercuts to the body (left and right) and defences against these punches (stepping away, parrying, forearm block)
- counters - four against a straight lead, four against a right cross
- combination punching - four combination punches using the left lead, right cross, left hook, and left and right uppercuts.

In such theme work, the boxer might be asked to demonstrate skills throughout the entire round. For example, the coach may ask the boxer to constantly switch attacks or to change direction often during the round. The coach would then assess how well the boxer has adapted his/her skills during the entire round to the set theme. In addition, variations in methods of shadow boxing could be set. Some understanding of the reasons for the variations would be expected.

Hints for assessment

Fast, crisp punching and movements will be looked for. A variety of skills is essential.

4- Bag Punching

The boxer does punching for three rounds.

In the first round, the boxer may be asked to demonstrate any boxing skill while punching the bag.

In the second and third rounds, the boxer may be asked to demonstrate a variety of skills of his/her own choice.

Hints for assessment

All punches and moves will be assessed, but the straight lead is the most important. All-out effort will be looked for. The boxer must switch the attack, hit through the bag, change direction, and side-step. All movements and punches must be purposeful.

5- Demonstration Contest and Sparring

(3 x 1 - 1.5 minutes with 1-minute rests)

The boxer will be given set conditions by the coach. The conditions must be used in the bout. An example of such a condition is defence only, showing the use of a sidestep. Any boxing skill could be set as a condition. Assessment will be based on

- ringcraft - the use of the ring, footwork, and defence
- skill - the application of technique, the boxer's style, and attitude when attacking
- the extent to which the condition is fulfilled
- overall ring behaviour

Hints for assessment:

The coach should go over all the moves, one at a time, and use each as the theme of sparring session. Using a new move in sparring is very difficult; the more complicated the move, the more difficult it is to incorporate into sparring. Coaches must always be ready to discuss difficulties with their boxers. The importance of fitness cannot be overemphasized.

6- Boxing Exercises

A sequence of five exercises or movements with or without apparatus will be required of the boxer. The sequence will be the boxer's choice and may include work with a partner. Originality, effort, and flow will be assessed.

CHAPTER 7 – PREPARATION PROGRAMS FOR CLUB-LEVEL BOXERS

7.1- Introduction

This chapter outlines what the programs and activities offered to young boxers and Club-level competitors should focus on, depending on their age, experience, and athletic background.

Planning a program is not a simple task. To plan effectively, a coach must have considerable knowledge, expertise, and experience. A thorough understanding of the demands of Boxing is of course the foundation upon which Club-level programs should be designed. However, this knowledge alone is not sufficient, and it is critical to go beyond "what it takes to be a good boxer", and to be familiar with the specific aspects that should be emphasized in the training process as participants develop and "become" boxers. In other words, it is equally important to know "what to train – when" at different stages of the athletic development process. This type of information is featured in detail in Boxing Canada's *Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model*, which was introduced in the *Instruction beginners* manual.

For a successful program to be developed, all the above must also be supported by a good understanding of the *training principles*, and of the *methods* that are most effective to improve specific athletic abilities.

In addition, it must be realized that (1) each boxing club has its own context and reality, (2) each boxer may require different handling at some point in time, and (3) each coach has his/her own preferred ways of doing things. One should therefore expect some variations from program to program in areas such as technique, types of training and priorities. This being said, certain fundamental features *must* apply to *all* programs, and a logical and systematic approach should guide their design and implementation.

To frame the discussion about programming, general characteristics common to successful sport programs will first be presented. This overview will be followed by key information pertaining to Boxing Canada's LTAD model. Lastly, sample programs applicable to a variety of club-level boxers will be presented, and explained.

***Note**: Methods that can be used to improve motor athletic abilities (balance, agility, coordination) are outlined in Chapter 7 of the Instruction beginners manual. A separate document entitled "Physical Preparation Manual" also deals with specific methods to develop the physical athletic abilities that are important in Boxing.*

7.2- What is a Sport Program?

A *Sport Program* is a series of planned and purposeful activities that are organized, sequenced, and implemented over time in order to achieve particular training and performance goals.

Table 7.1 on the following page presents some key characteristics common to successful sport programs.

Programs can be designed either for (1) a group of athletes or (2) an individual boxer.

A program that applies to a group of athletes is, by definition, more general. It deals with the needs a majority of participants in a particular age group or ability level usually have. On the other hand, an individual program is aimed at addressing the specific needs of a single boxer, and to prepare him or her for optimal performance in competition.

For the overwhelming majority of Club-level boxers, a general program is adequate during their first few years of training and competition. For this reason, only *general programming guidelines* will be presented and discussed in this chapter.

This being said, Competition introduction coaches should always use their best judgment, and make adjustments to the general plans and suggestions that are outlined, in order to accommodate specific needs individual boxers may have. Such needs may, for instance, be identified following the type of assessments discussed previously in Chapter 6.

Table 7.1 - Some characteristics common to successful sport programs.

Time Dimension: A program…

- Usually has a well-defined beginning and end.
- Is of varying length (ranging from a few weeks to several months).
- Is part of the long-term development of the participants/athletes: their starting point, what they have done before, and what they should be able to do at the end of the program are all aspects taken into account.

Events: A program consists of different types of events…

- Sport-specific (training sessions, in-club competitions/sparring, inter-club competitions, tests, tournaments/boxing galas, championships, etc.).
- Social (suppers, parties, awards ceremonies, etc.).
- School related (holidays; exams; trips; etc.)
- Administrative (registration, equipments purchase, fund raising, parents meetings, meetings with club or federation administrators, etc.).

Intentions, Objectives, and Priorities: A program…

- Takes into account the participants, their interests and their particular needs.
- Reflects the technical and competitive demands of the sport.
- Outlines its purpose and philosophy (why it exists), its focus (what it will emphasize, i.e. participation, development, excellence), the desired outcomes (goals and objectives), and how it will be operated (e.g. Club rules, policies, procedures).
- Prioritizes particular aspects (objectives, events, time devoted to certain activities, etc.) given certain constraints that may apply.
- Makes its intentions, objectives, and priorities public, which helps justify choices and decisions.
- Has intentions, objectives, and priorities that are coherent with the values of the coach and the organization.

Structure: A program…

- Proposes activities that are organized and planned (level of detail and sophistication may vary).
- Proposes a framework for services to participants.
- Proposes a link and some consistency between its various components (vision and objectives, philosophy, priorities, participants' needs, activities, and events).

Progression: A program is characterized by…

- Intentions, objectives, and priorities that may change at various points of the season.
- An evolution in terms of training activities and content, so as to take into account the intentions, objectives, and priorities that apply at a given point in time.

Adjustment and Evaluation: Within a program…

- The participants progress from a given starting point; this progression may occur in different ways: group/team cohesion; technical/tactical mastery; physical condition and tolerance of fatigue; attitudes (work habits; participants behaviour; commitment; discipline); performance, etc.
- The coach must assess the participants' starting point so as to identify what can realistically be accomplished in the short-, mid- and long-term, and choose the appropriate methods for doing so: such decisions normally require some form of evaluation.
- It must be understood and acknowledged that adjustments will most likely have to be made en route, even if the initial plans were carefully laid out.

7.3- Boxing Canada's LTAD Model: Review and Key Points

Boxing Canada's LTAD model provides a general framework for the design and implementation of Boxing programs at Club level. As a reminder, it is based on a seven stage progression (see Table 7.2 on the next page), with each stage having a specific relationship to the important biological, psychological and social development periods in the participant's life.

The *Instruction beginners* manual focused primarily on basic technical information particularly suited to beginning boxers and to recreational participants at stages 3 and 7 of the LTAD model.

Given their higher level of responsibility within Boxing Clubs, *Competition introduction coaches* are likely to work with a wider range of participants, who may be at stages 3 (**Learn to Box)**, 4 (**Train to Box)**, 5 (**Train to Compete),** or 7 (**Active for Life)** of the model. They will therefore provide support to more experienced athletes, in particular to boxers who are at the critical Stage 4 of Boxing Canada's LTAD. Some athletes may even be transitioning towards Stage 5 of the model, which is characterized by a high degree of Boxing specialization, a greater emphasis on competitive preparation, and more intense training.

Tables 7.3 to 7.7 present key points pertaining to the technical, tactical, and physical preparation of developing boxers at various stages of the LTAD model. *This information represents a critical point of reference that coaches should use when developing their own programs.*

For additional information concerning Boxing Canada's LTAD model, and on the growth and development principles on which it is based, please consult the following documents:

- Boxing Canada's Long Term Athlete Development manual
- Boxing Canada's Long Term Athlete Development poster
- Boxing Canada's Instruction beginners manual (Chapter 2)

Boxing Coaches should always refer to Boxing Canada's LTAD guidelines when designing their own programs and when selecting training or learning activities.

This will help to ensure that participants will develop a sound athletic background at the same time as they learn and improve boxing skills and tactics.

Table 7.2: Boxing Canada's LTAD Stages and Key Points

LTAD Stages	Key Points
STAGE 1 – Active Start **Boys and girls, 0 to 6 years old**	Parents should ensure that their child has frequent opportunities to be physically active. The emphasis must always be on fun and on mastering new movements and skills. Although Boxing is not an activity children will be involved in at this stage of their development, it is important that our sport support the groups and organizations that promote physical activity in young children.
STAGE 2 - FUNdamentals **Boys: 6 to 9** **Girls: 6 to 8**	This stage is important for general athletic development. The focus must be on fundamental motor skills (agility, balance, coordination, quickness) as well as on developing basic sport skills (running, throwing, catching, gliding, and swimming) that can later be transferred to a variety of activities. Exposing the child to a wide range of sports, as well as ensuring he or she experiences success and enjoyment throughout these activities, are critical.
STAGE 3 – Learn to Box **Boys: 9 to 12** **Girls: 8 to 11**	In boys, this is usually the youngest age group involved in organized Boxing programmes. The emphasis should be on developing basic Boxing skills. Specialization must be avoided at this stage, and participants must be encouraged to get involved in a variety of sports to carry on with their general physical and motor development.
STAGE 4 – Train to Box **Boys: 12 to 16 or less** **Girls: 11 to 15 or less**	At this stage, the focus must be on introducing the participants to the various aspects of physical preparation for Boxing and on developing Boxing-specific skills. Increasingly challenging yet carefully selected competitive experiences must also be provided to the young athletes. The volume and the intensity of training should be increased progressively throughout this period, and it is the ideal time to instil a passion for the sport. For many athletes, this will also be the time when the growth spurt of the adolescence occurs. Some girls of this age group may show an interest towards Boxing. Talent identification and some form of specialization may be done at this stage.
STAGE 5 – Train to Compete **Boys and young men: 16 to ≈ 21** **Girls and young women: 15 to ≈ 22**	At this stage, the focus must be on optimizing physical preparation and Boxing-specific skills, while at the same time developing the competitive attitude and the mental skills that are required to perform at a higher level. For the athletes who have the necessary training background, training becomes highly specialized in order to support a progression towards the high-performance level. The volume and the intensity of training are high, and fluctuate according to the schedule and the importance of the matches. For many athletes, significant strength gains can be achieved during the first few years of this stage. The majority of young women who join a Boxing club for the first time belong to this age group.
STAGE 6 - Train for Peak Performance **Men and Women ≈ 22 or more**	At this stage, athletes have reached physical maturity. All the physical, technical, tactical, and psychological performance factors should be developed to an optimal level, highly specific to Boxing. The athletes who have the necessary training background and demonstrate the potential to perform at the highest level begin a transition from the national to the international scene. Career management, as well as the appropriate selection of matches throughout the preparation process, are key factors determining success.
STAGE 7 – Active for Life **Male and female participants of all ages**	At this stage, participants engage in a transition from competitive Boxing to a life-long participation in sport and physical activity, or join a Boxing Club for a variety of reasons (fitness, self-development, etc.). Boxing must retain these individuals within its system through programmes and activities that are rewarding and adapted to both their needs and interests. Experienced boxers may also share their passion for the sport, their knowledge, and their skills with the up and coming generation through coaching, officiating, or as leaders of clubs and Boxing organizations, thus contributing to the growth of the sport.

Table 7.3- LTAD Stage 2 - FUNdamentals Boys: 6 to 9 Girls: 6 to 8

Very few children of this age group actually get involved in Boxing programs. For those who do, the emphasis should be on the development of motor skills in a fun and non-competitive environment, and Boxing should be only one of many sports participants are involved in.

Physical aspects Fun fitness activities and games to enhance motor skills and speed. General training for aerobic endurance and flexibility can be initiated, as well as muscular strength and endurance using the participant's own body weight.	Well-structured programmes with proper progression are critical. The child should have the opportunity to be involved in a variety of physical activity sessions at least 4 times a week. No significant gender differences are apparent, and physical activity should still be done through games and sport play. Throughout this stage, the focus should be on enhancing basic movement abilities such as agility, balance, speed, and coordination, and on acquiring and improving fundamental sport skills such as running, jumping, throwing, punching, and swimming. The first "window of opportunity" for training speed (accelerated adaptation to training) occurs at the ages of 6-8 in girls and 7-9 in boys.
Technical and tactical aspects Initiation to some motor skills that will be useful in the sport of Boxing, i.e. coordination between the movements of the arms, hands, and legs; balance; awareness of body position; etc. At all times emphasize and reinforce good movement patterns.	**Technical –** Introduction to : • the three fundamental principles of Boxing: offence, defence, footwork • basic body position; basic straight punches; basic block technique against straight punches **Tactical** • Focus on fun games and exploration of spatial awareness. • Provide children with the opportunity to experience the outcomes of some competitions • Introduce basic rules of Boxing and ethical principles in sport • Introduce basic decision-making abilities
Role of the Coach Be a positive model at all times, and focus on the process (efforts) as opposed to the outcome (result, or winning).	With participants of this age group, coaches should: • Promote play and spontaneity. • Provide lots of positive reinforcement to build self-esteem in the participants. • Teach young athletes that mistakes or poor performance are not "bad", and provide learning opportunities. • Introduce Boxing etiquette, rules and concept of fair play. • Model fairplay and ethical behaviours, and encourage open communication
Recommendations pertaining to training and competition Participation to a variety of other sports and activities above and beyond Boxing. Focus on training as opposed to competition.	• Participation to 4 to 6 sport or general physical activities each week. • If possible, participation to 1 or 2 "introduction to Boxing" sessions of 45 to 75 minutes on a weekly basis. • No formal competitive structure.

Table 7.4 - LTAD Stage 3 – LEARN TO BOX « Building technique » Boys 9 to 12 Girls 8 to 11

In boys, this is usually the youngest age group involved in organized Boxing programmes. Very few girls get involved into Boxing at this stage. This stage is one of the most important periods for the development of young athletes because it coincides with the optimal window of trainability for skills.

Physical aspects Throughout this stage, the emphasis must be on (1) the acquisition of basic skills specific to Boxing, and (2) continuing to refine general motor abilities.	• The emphasis of the training process must be placed on learning Boxing-specific movements. This should contribute to improving the child's stamina, quickness, and strength endurance. • The development and refinement of basic motor abilities should be continued (agility, balance, coordination). • Strength training can be initiated, using the athlete's own body weight as well as equipment such as stability balls and medicine balls. The focus should be on: - General exercises, and some slight emphasis on the development of the shoulders and torso; - Correct lifting techniques with free weights; however, no maximal or near-maximal strength activities should be performed, in order to avoid injuries to the growth plates • Endurance and speed should be trained through fun games. • Some coach-lead training activities such as simulated bouts, condition sparring, or shadow boxing can be introduced progressively.
Technical and tactical aspects Since this stage is main window of opportunity for the acquisition and development of skills. The emphasis must be placed on the following fundamental aspects of Boxing: 1. Offensive actions 2. Defensive actions 3. Footwork Athletes should also be progressively exposed to competition.	**Techniques** • The focus should be on the same skills as those outlined in the FUNdamental stage, plus the following: - Develop straight punches - Introduction to hook and uppercut punches - Introduction to straight punches combination - Introduction to straight punches counter punch technique - Develop blocking technique against straight punches - Introduce blocking technique against hooks and uppercuts, as well as the parry technique - Develop sound body position • Technical perfection must be stressed at all times when the above skills are being taught. • All skills must be trained in both stationary and dynamic positions. • One-sided skills must be balanced with a variety of play activities that require opposite movement patterns. **Tactics** • Introduction to the knowledge of competition systems. • Knowledge and comprehension of Boxing-specific terminology. • Introduction to basic tactics to use against different style of opponents, and to *"thinking about of how to get an advantage"*.
Role of the Coach Coaches must consistently act as positive role models.	• Basic training principles should be applied, and explained to both the athletes and their parents. • Introduction of boxers to basic mental skills, and integration of these skills into the regular training and pre-competition activities. • Basic information about sport nutrition and the importance of hydration should be provided to both the athletes and their parents.
Recommendations pertaining to training and competition The emphasis must be on training, and competitions should provide a positive experience.	• Weekly participation in 3-4 general sport and physical activity sessions • Weekly participation in 2-3 boxing specific sessions which should last between 45 – 75 minutes • Athletes may start competing at the age of 11. At this stage, they should participate to no more than 2 to 4 Club events per year, against opponents of the same size and calibre and in well-structured events. The competitive experience should be positive and enjoyable, and represent an opportunity for learning, and for the expression of the various physical, motor, and technical abilities.

Table 7.5 - LTAD Stage 4 - TRAIN TO BOX « Building the engine » Boys: 12 to less than 16 Girls: 11 to less than 15

The main objective of this stage is to optimize fitness preparation, and Boxing-specific skills. Training volume should remain high, while intensity should increase with the importance of competitions. Some girls of this age group may start showing an interest for Boxing. If their sport background is limited, the emphasis must be placed on the basic aspects of Boxing and on general athletic development; consequently, some of the recommendations outlined in this table may not be relevant for them.

Physical aspects For many athletes, this stage coincides with the growth spurt of the adolescence. The latter part of this stage is also the time at witch peak strength velocity and peak weight velocity coincide with the period of opportunity for greatest strength gain.	During this stage, the focus must be on the following physical performance factors: • Development of aerobic endurance with the onset of the growth spurt. • Development of speed: the second window of optimal trainability for speed generally occurs between the ages of 11-15 in girls, and 13-16 in boys. • Introduction of specific training methods for maximum aerobic power and for the anaerobic energy systems towards the end of the stage. • Strength training: the use of exercises using the athlete's own body weight should be continued, and core strength should be emphasized; the systematic use of free weights for resistance training should be introduced during this stage, and proper movement execution must be emphasized at all times; for girls, the optimal strength development window during which free weights should be used occurs immediately after PHV or with the onset of menarche, and 12-18 month after PHV for boys. • Flexibility training should be emphasized throughout this stage. • Pre- and –post competition strategies should be developed to properly manage the athletes' efforts (i.e. no excessive fatigue leading to competitions, and adequate recovery following competitions).
Technical and tactical aspects The focus must be on consolidating and refining fundamental Boxing skills, developing more advanced techniques, and enhance the competitive experience.	**Techniques** • Basic Boxing skills should be consolidated. The boxer's strengths and weaknesses should be identified, and specifically addressed as part of the technical preparation process. • The focus should be on the following Boxing skills : - Optimizing straight punches technique - Developing hook and uppercut punches technique - Introducing and developing straight punches combination with hook and uppercut - Introducing and developing hook and uppercut combination - Optimizing straight punches combination - Developing counter punch technique against straight punches - Introducing and developing counter punch technique against hook and uppercut - Optimizing block technique against straight punches - Developing block technique against hook and uppercut - Developing parry technique and slip technique - Optimizing body position **Tactics** • The focus should be on the following Boxing tactics: - Understanding and application of the philosophy of Boxing relative to winning and losing. - Acquiring and developing appropriate tactical and strategic abilities against different styles of opponents. - Working on consistency of performance in a variety of situations, and on appropriate selection of skills in specific competitive situations. - Recognition of match situation and fostering of appropriate decision-making.

Table 7.6 - LTAD Stage 5 - TRAIN TO COMPETE Boys and young men: 16 to ≈ 21 Girls and young women: 15 to ≈ 22

At this stage, the focus must be on optimizing physical preparation and Boxing-specific skills, while at the same time refining and enhancing the competitive attitude and the mental skills that are required to perform at a higher level. For the athletes who have the necessary training background, training becomes highly specialized in order to support a progression towards the high-performance level. The volume and the intensity of training are high, and fluctuate according to the schedule and the importance of the matches. For many athletes, significant strength gains can be achieved during the first few years of this stage. The majority of young women who join a Boxing club for the first time belong to this age group; however, if their athletic background and experience in combative sports is limited, they should go through a progressive program that will focus on all the basic aspects of Boxing, and some of the recommendations outlined below may not apply to them.

Physical aspects All the athletic abilities are fully trainable towards the end of this stage. Fitness testing should be done to determine the priorities of physical preparation programs.	• For most male athletes, major strength gains can take place throughout this period due to the physical maturation process. • Given the specific demands of competitive Boxing, athletic abilities such as aerobic power and endurance, anaerobic power and endurance, speed, strength, strength-endurance, and speed-strength should all be trained. Athletes should also continue to improve their agility and their footwork. • Strength development must be optimally integrated to the overall fitness and conditioning program of the boxer. • Recovery and regeneration techniques should be refined, and individual nutrition needs should be assessed. • Injury prevention and care should be emphasized through adequate levels of core and upper body strength, as well as flexibility; all training activities must be carefully planned to allow appropriate recovery and avoid excessive fatigue and overtraining. • Single, double or triple periodization approaches can be used, depending on the athlete's competitive opportunities.
Technical and tactical aspects The boxer's technical and tactical skills must be tested, and performance capabilities must remain consistent under pressure and in a variety of situations.	**Optimization and refinement of the following Boxing-specific techniques:** • Straight punches • Hook and uppercut punches • Combination punches • Counter punch against straight punches, hooks and uppercuts • Block, parry and slip • Body position, footwork, and agility **Optimization and refinement of the following Boxing-specific tactics:** • Decision-making in boxing competition, i.e., focus on ability to read the opponent strategies. • Transition between attack and defence. • Defensive and offensive positioning in the ring. • Development of specific tactics against different styles of opponents • Originality and innovation when responding to the opponent's actions
Mental aspects The boxer must continue to develop a competitive attitude, and the mental skills needed to (1) manage anxiety and (2) perform consistently. Personal accountability for performance must also be emphasized.	**Optimization and refinement of the following aspects of mental preparation:** • Commitment to the demands of high-performance Boxing • Ability to manage activation/ arousal level • Goal-setting; knowledge and use of planning skills • Self-awareness - high level of awareness of factors that maximize and minimize performance • Critical evaluation of training and competition • Competitor's mindset – confidence, focus, determination; personal responsibility and involvement in decision-making • Sport-life balance skills • Independent attitude

Table 7.7 - LTAD Stage 7 – ACTIVE FOR LIFE « Enriched for life »

Male and female participants may enter at any age

At this stage, the participant moves from competitive sport to lifelong physical activity and sport participation. In Boxing, this can be achieved through age group competition, or simply recreational enjoyment of the sport.

Physical aspects To maintain or develop an adequate fitness level in order to enjoy life to the fullest.	• Maintain aerobic fitness by walking or jogging at least 3-4 times a week for a minimum of 30 minutes each time. • Maintain an adequate level of strength and strength-endurance through resistance training and other forms of conditioning exercises. • Maintain an adequate level of flexibility through various approaches, e.g. stretching, yoga or Pilates.
Technical and tactical aspects To continue to learn, and to share Boxing knowledge and experience with the others.	**Technical – Participants can:** • Perfect existing skills and learn new ones. • Engage in new aspects of the sport through volunteering of time (e.g., as a coach, referee, or club administrator). • Provide mentorship and developmental opportunities to young coaches and athletes. • Contribute to the ongoing development of Boxing through their involvement in community clubs. **Tactical – Participants can:** • Share their tactical knowledge and experience with others (athletes, coaches, parents) for incorporation into competitive situations or athlete development. • Provide knowledge, ideas and experience to promote the sport, or contribute to its continued growth.
Health and injury prevention To maintain a good health through a balanced and active lifestyle.	**Activities – Participants should:** • Do at least 60 minutes of activity per day (moderate and vigorous intensities). • Practice a variety of sports and recreational activities.

7.4- Designing an Preparation Program for the Boxer

Important note: The NCCP Multisport Module entitled *Designing a Sport Program* goes through a step by step approach to build a basic preparation and competition program. It also guides coaches through a series of critical reflections that should help them manage and prioritize the training activities based on the actual time athletes have available and can realistically commit to their preparation.

When attending the *Designing a Sport Program* Multisport Module, Boxing Coaches should bring this manual with them, and use it to complete some of the activities.

Key Steps in Designing a Boxer's Program

To design a program that will help boxers develop effectively, coaches must follow certain steps.

1. First, the **needs of the athletes** must be determined. For the purposes of a general Club-level boxing program, the overall training and competition guidelines provided in the LTAD model should apply. ***Note****: To position participants in the appropriate stage of the LTAD process, an assessment of their developmental and maturation process, as well as of their training and athletic background, should be made. To help in this process, some of the tools featured in Boxing Canada's LTAD posters can be used.*

2. Once this has been established, the **skills, tactics** and **other athletic abilities** that should be emphasized throughout the program must be singled out. These will represent the core elements of the program.

3. Third, **important events** that are scheduled to happen during the program or that must be taken into account at the planning stage, must be identified and positioned. The inclusion of events (e.g. competitions; tournaments; holidays; exams; etc.) may impact what should or can realistically be accomplished or emphasized at specific times within the program.

4. Fourth, given the events and the performance factors/athletic abilities featured in the program, the coach must determine what the training priorities and objectives should be at different times. In other words, the coach must **outline <u>what</u> will be emphasized <u>when</u> during the program, and for how long**. This is a critical step in order to allow the athlete to learn, progress, and perform optimally given (1) the time it generally takes to learn skills or to improve a particular ability, and (2) the amount of training the athlete can actually and realistically accomplish.

In the case of boxers who have progressed beyond the initial learning stages and who are competing on a regular basis, the program can be divided into different *Periods* and *Phases* that each emphasize particular aspects of the overall preparation. These periods generally consist in the following: Preparation, Competition, and Transition. More specific information about this will be provided in the following section.

5. Fifth, when all the above steps have been carefully taken care of, the coach can reflect about the specific types of **exercises, training methods,** and **workloads** that should be used. (Note: Chapter 8 deals with various methods that can be used to improve the athletic abilities that are important in Boxing.)

General Structure of the Competitive Boxer's Program

The program of a competitive boxer is usually divided into three (3) major segments, or *Periods*: *Preparation*, *Competition*, and *Transition*.

The *Preparation Period* is usually subdivided into *Phases*:

1. General preparation phase (GPP): a wide range of activities and forms of training are used in order to build a solid training foundation and address known weaknesses.
2. Specific preparation phase (SPP): training activities become more specific to Boxing; the intensity of workouts also increases progressively.
3. Pre-competition phases (PCP): this phase lasts a few weeks, and culminates with a fight; the training activities are very specific to Boxing and the demands replicate what will be encountered in competition. Contrary to many other sports, there can be several *Pre-Competition Phases* in Boxing, depending on the number of fights the athlete will be involved in during the season.

The *Competition Period* can also be divided into *Phases*:

1. Phase of "Regular Competitions" (RCP), i.e. several weeks of the program featuring a number of fights, each being preceded by its own *Pre-competition phase*.
2. The Major Competition Phase (MCP), which is usually a Championship or a high-profile tournament scheduled toward the end of the program, and in which competition is expected to be of a fairly high calibre.

The RCP must therefore be planned carefully, as it serves to prepare the boxer progressively for the demands and the performance objectives of the MCP.

Lastly, a *Transition Period* should be planned at the end of the program. The *Transition Period* begins after the last competition, and normally lasts a few weeks. It consists essentially of a few weeks of active rest, during which the athlete is involved in a variety of low to moderate intensity activities other than Boxing. The *Transition Period* ends when the athlete resumes his or her training, either for another sport or for Boxing.

Figures 7.1 and 7.2 show sample programs for young boxers, and reflect the general structure of *Periods* and *Phases* outlined above.

Important note: *Participants who are new to Boxing, or who are not involved in a formal competitive structure, do not need programs that are structured in Periods and Phases.*

For these participants, the focus should be on implementing a sound and progressive skill learning program, with a variety of activities that will help them improve motor athletic abilities, as well as aerobic endurance, flexibility, and strength-endurance.

7.5- Classification of Boxing Skills

To help coaches select the right types of activities for their program, Boxing skills and training exercises have been grouped into major categories. This classification is used to outline the specific content of the sample programs featured in Section 7.6.

Boxing skills have been grouped into three (3) main categories:

1. Fundamental skills (Table 7.8)
2. Basic skills (Table 7.9), and
3. Intermediate skills (Tables 7.10 to 7.12)

Because they are more complex, Intermediate boxing skills have been further divided into three groups, to ensure a proper progression when teaching them. Within each category, skills are listed in the order in which they should be taught to the boxer to ensure sound and effective learning.

Table 7.8- Fundamental Boxing Skills
1. Placement of the feet in the boxing stance (hands lowered or on the hips at this stage of learning).
2. Improved position of the feet in the boxing stance (bounding in place on the toes with exaggerated bending of the legs at the ankle and knee joints).
3. Boxing steps: • Forward • Backward • To the lead foot side • To the rear foot side
4. Boxing stance.
5. Mechanics of the straight punches from the boxing stance.
6. Footwork exercises in the boxing stance: • Advancing and retreating. • Doing exercises in pairs (moving to both sides using boxing steps and resting the arms on the partner's shoulders). • Doing exercises in pairs (footwork, moving either way, and keeping the appropriate distance from the partner). • Performing the known elements of footwork on a signal (oral, hand sign or whistle) from the coach.

Table 7.9- Basic Boxing Skills

Note: *The boxer must first learn the attacking move, and then the associated defence.*

Attacking moves	Defence
1- Jab to the head	2-Defence against the Jab to the head
3- Jab to the body	4- Defence against jab body
5- Straight Power Punch to the head	6- Defence against the Straight Power Punch to the head
7- Straight Power Punch to the body	8- Defence against the Straight Power Punch to the body
9- Straight punches combined with boxing steps: forward, backward, to the front foot side and to the rear foot direction (during actions, priority must be given to steps except in the case of the jab with a step forward; the step forward and jab are executed simultaneously).	10- Use of appropriate defences against an attacker performing forward or backward steps.
11- Straight punches delivered to a target (bag, partner, pads) while in place and in motion: *in place* • Jab to the head • Jab to the body • Straight power punch to the head • Straight power punch to the body *in motion* • Jab to the head with a step forward • Jab to the head after a step back • Jab to the head with a step forward, a step back, and a straight power punch to the head	
12- Combinations of straight punches to the target while in place and in motion: • Double jab to the head • Jab to the head and jab to the body • Jab to the body and jab to the head • Jab to the head and straight power punch to the head • Jab to the body and straight power punch to the body • Jab to the head and straight power punch to the body • Double jab and straight power punch to the head • Straight power punch to the body and jab to the head	13- Use of appropriate defences against an attacker performing various combinations of straight punches, including the following additional techniques: • Counter punching with the Straight power punch • Covering up
14- Shadow boxing of all the preceding techniques (presentation, demonstration and application in boxing training).	

Table 7.10- Intermediate Boxing Skills 1

Note: *The boxer must first learn the attacking move, and then the associated defence.*

Attacking moves	Defence
1- Diversionary or blind jab	2- Defence against the Jab to the head (as in basic skills).
	3- Advanced defences against straight punches while in place, and then while in motion: • Duck down, to the front foot side and to the rear foot side • Sway back • Step back
	4- Circling away from the rear hand
	5- Slipping to the rear foot direction against a straight power punch to the head
	6- Front to rear parry/straight power punch against rear hand lead
	7- Blocking an opponent's straight punch to the head with the forearm, and countering with a straight punch (jab or straight power punch) to the head or to the body, while in place and in motion.
	8- Blocking an opponent's straight punch to the body with the elbow, and countering with a straight punch (jab or straight power punch) to the head or to the body, while in place and in motion.
	9- Parrying a jab to the head or body and a straight Power Punch to the head or body while in place or in motion;
	10- Further elements of footwork – stepping aside from the opponent's line of attack: • Side-step to the front foot direction. • Side-step to the rear foot direction. • Step back with both feet. • Move both ways, using small forward and backward steps.
11- Feints: • Feint with a jab and straight Power Punch to the head. • Feint with a straight Power Punch to the body and jab to the head. • Feint with a jab to the body and straight Power Punch to the head.	

Table 7.11- Intermediate Boxing Skills 2

Note: *The boxer must first learn the attacking move, and then the associated defence.*

<table>
<tr><th>Attacking moves</th><th>Defence</th></tr>
<tr><td>1- Hook with the lead hand to the head and to the body (short and long range).</td><td rowspan="5">2- Defences against hooks:

• block against the lead hand hook to the head

• elbow block against the lead hand hook to the body

• rotary duck against the hook with the lead hand

4- Active defences against combinations with hooks:

• Blocking the lead hand hook hand and counter-punching with the jab.

• After the rotary duck, counterpunching with lead hand hook hand to the head or to the body.</td></tr>
<tr><td>3- Combinations of straight and hook punches:

• Jab to the head, straight Power Punch to the head and hook with the lead hand to the head.

• Jab to the head, straight Power Punch to the head and hook with the lead hand to the body.

• Jab to the head, straight Power Punch to the body and hook with the lead hand to the body.</td></tr>
<tr><td>5- Jab to the head immediately followed by:

• Hook with the lead hand to the head.

• Hook with the lead hand to the body.

• Hook with the lead hand to the body and to the head.</td></tr>
<tr><td>6- Jab to the head, hook with the lead hand to the head and short straight Power Punch to the head.</td></tr>
<tr><td>7- Jab to the head, hook with the lead hand to the body, hook with the lead hand to the head and straight Power Punch to the head.</td></tr>
</table>

Table 7.12- Intermediate Boxing Skills 3

Note: *The boxer must first learn the attacking move, and then the associated defence.*

Attacking moves	Defence
1- Rear hand uppercut to the head and to the body (individually and with a partner).	2- Defences against uppercuts: • Elbow block and forearm block • Step back • Counterpunch with a straight blows (taking a lead)
3- Lead hand uppercut to the head and to the body (individually and with a partner).	
4- Combinations of straight punches, hooks and uppercuts: • Jab to the head, hook with the lead hand to the head and rear hand uppercut. • Hook with the lead hand to the head, Power Punch right to the head, hook with the lead hand and rear hand uppercut. • After ducking, lead or rear hand uppercut followed by hooks to the head.	
5- Delivering punches from long range, medium range and short range.	
6- Infighting: getting into infighting range, positioning of the body, punching, getting out from infighting.	7- Defences against infighting.

Note*: The techniques listed under Intermediate boxing skills 3 should only be introduced when the boxer can meet the Gold Level of skill assessment (see Chapter 6).*

7.6- Classification of Exercises

When presenting and describing the examples of boxing programs, reference will be made to *general*, *specific*, and *competition* exercises or drills.

Each type of exercise or drill will be discussed briefly in this section, with an emphasis on its particular characteristics and the particular training effects in brings about.

General Exercises

General exercises have no elements that are directly related to Boxing at first sight, and they may be borrowed from various forms of physical activity or from other sports. General exercises are used primarily to support the boxer's motor development (balance, agility, coordination) and general fitness development (aerobic stamina, flexibility, strength). They can also be used when the athlete needs to do active physical or mental recovery, e.g., after a difficult competition or a series of particularly demanding practices.

For a boxer, examples of general exercises include participation in alternate forms of physical or sport activities such as swimming, cycling, tennis, etc. Push-ups, sit-ups, rope skipping, hopping and bounding, balance and coordination drills, etc. are also examples of general exercises.

Specific Exercises

Specific exercises contain elements of Boxing, as well as certain parts of movements performed in competition. Consequently, the muscle groups used in Boxing are recruited so as to reproduce some of the demands of competition. This would include, for example, learning of boxing skills, execution of offensive or defensive moves individually, on the bag, or with a partner, etc.

Specific exercises can be performed at a wide range of speeds and intensities, and in a variety of conditions. For instance, the duration of efforts can be shorter than during a fight, pauses can be longer or more frequent, particular objectives can be set for the exercises (e.g. precision, efficiency, speed, consistency, surprise, etc.). Also, specific exercises are not *always* carried out in conditions that are *perfectly identical* to those of a competition, particularly in regard to the intensity, duration, and level of uncertainty or risk of the boxing situations in which the athlete is involved. For example, a particular type of punch or combination of punches can be repeated several times on the bag at an intensity which is not as high as in competition, and/or be followed by breaks that are longer than those typically seen in competition; when practicing a defensive skill, the boxer may know in advance what punch the partner will deliver and which body part will be the target, etc.

All boxing exercises performed on the heavy bag, wall bags, or bean bag fall in the category of specific exercises. However, they can be considered as being "simple specific exercises", because they generally (1) focus on a precise technical element, or on a particular component of a movement, and (2) take place in conditions that have no element of uncertainty or risk for the boxer. Indeed, the bag cannot throw a punch back at the boxer!

On the other hand, boxing exercises that feature various combinations of movements or that are performed with a partner under "controlled conditions" can be considered as being "complex specific exercises", because (1) the athlete must often execute several different movements in the correct order; and or (2) there may be some elements of uncertainty featured, although often much less than in a real competition. Shadow boxing, pad work, and all forms of work with a partner that takes place at controlled speeds and in conditions where the level of uncertainty and risk is lower than in competition fall into this category.

Competition Exercises

Competition exercises (or simulated competition) are the most specific form of preparation there is for an athlete. They consist in executing movements or tasks in the same conditions as those that will be encountered in competition, and taking into account particular aspects such as rules, equipment used, speed of movements, level of uncertainty and risk, ring environment, etc. A boxer who is working on his or defence against a wide range of attacking moves and who does not which one will be used by the partner, or who is involved in sparring sessions are examples of competition exercises.

Competition exercises can also be used to evaluate the athletes' attitude in stressful situations, and to determine readiness for a real competition.

Competition exercises lead to complex adaptations because they simultaneously bring into play physical, motor, technical, mental, and decisional elements. They also force the boxer to “read and react”, and to adapt. To solve the problems encountered in exercises that simulate a competition, the athletes must: (1) quickly analyze the situation by taking in the relevant information about the intentions (behaviours) of the partners/opponents; (2) quickly identify the solutions to the problem; and (3) make a decision and carry out the appropriate motor response. This last aspect requires the correct technical execution, conducted with precision, and at the right time and at the right speed, all of this in a changing or dynamic situation. The objective of this type of exercise is to develop the athletes' self-reliance during the execution of various competition tasks.

For all these reasons, competition exercises are important to the development and maintenance of boxing-specific fitness and “readiness to perform” during the competition period. When the conditions created during training replicate the demands of competition, this type of exercise represents an effective way of maintaining and stabilizing the athlete’s skills, tactics, and fitness levels for actual competitions.

> ***Important note****: In the case of programs designed for young boxers or for beginners, it may not be appropriate to include competition exercises, as those may be too advanced and/or risky for the participants.*

Table 7.13 presents a summary of each type of exercise, and provides some examples.

Proportion of General, Specific, and Competition Exercises in a Boxer’s Program

In the program of a competitive boxer, the proportions of general, specific, and competition exercises should vary from one Phase to the next.

Table 7.14 provides some guidelines regarding how a progression can be applied in the choice of exercises within a program.

Table 7.13 - Types of Exercises and their Emphasis at Different Stages of the Boxer's Program

Type of Exercises	Characteristics	Examples	Mostly Used …
1- General exercises	Movements or exercises have little or no boxing-specific elements *per se*, yet they support the athletic development of the boxer. Exercises may be borrowed from various forms of physical activity or other sports	• Strength training exercises for different parts of the body • Team sports, cycling, running, rope skipping • Exercises for balance, agility, coordination	During the off-season when the boxer trains individually; at the beginning of the preparation period.
2- Specific Exercises	These exercises feature boxing-specific movements and/or certain technical or tactical elements performed in competition, but are not carried out in competition-specific conditions.		
Simple	Boxing-specific technical movement executed in a way that is consistent with the rules, proper technical form, and tactical intent. However, only one or two predetermined movements are usually performed, and the exercise conditions are characterized by a very low level of risk or uncertainty.	• Performing basic footwork individually in the boxing stance. • Practicing the mechanics of the straight punch. • Punching on the heavy or wall bags. • Practicing various attacking or defensive movements individually.	A few weeks after the beginning of the program, until approximately the middle of the preparation period.
Complex	Execution of a variety of boxing-specific movements or tasks in the right order, and at speeds and intensities that are progressively closer to those encountered in competition. However, the conditions are such that the level of intensity or risk is lower than in a competition.	• Shadow boxing • Some advanced forms of individual work on bags (e.g. interval workouts; work using a variety of punch combinations; etc.) • Working with a partner on specific offensive and defensive moves, and at progressively higher speeds. • Pad work at progressively higher speeds and intensities.	During the second half of the preparation period, and during the competition period
3- Competition Exercises	Execution of boxing-specific movements or tasks in competition-like conditions, taking into account particular aspects such as equipments, rules, the opponent, speed of execution, risk, uncertainty, etc.	• Technical sparring • Conditioned Sparring • Open Sparring	From the second half of the preparation period onwards; used extensively during the weeks leading to a competition.

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Table 7.14- General Progression Guidelines for a Competitive Sport Program

↓ : decrease ↑ : increase + : more # : number

Technical Aspects of the Sport Program	Recommended Progressions Throughout the Program			
	Early parts of the program	↔		**End of program**
General exercises	Large proportions	↓ proportions	Small proportions	Small proportions
Specific exercises	Small proportions	↑ proportions	Large proportions	Large proportions
Competition exercises	Small proportions	↑ proportions	Large proportions	Large proportions
Movement specificity	Low to moderate	Moderate to high	High	High
Athletic abilities that are important in Boxing	Development	Development	Maintenance	Maintenance
Athletic abilities that are moderately important in Boxing	Development; Maintenance	Maintenance	Maintenance	Maintenance
New technical elements	Introduction Acquisition	Consolidation; ↑ success rate during execution	Consolidation	Consolidation; maintenance; refinement; link with more advanced elements
Already acquired technical skills	Consolidation	Consolidation	Consolidation, refinement or maintenance; link with more advanced elements	Maintenance and ongoing refinement of skills
Tactical knowledge	Correct link between technical and tactical elements	Acquisition of basic tactics; athletes' specific roles in their execution	Variation in basic tactics; athletes' specific roles in their execution	Variation in basic tactics; athletes' specific roles in their execution
Tactical elements	Knowledge and recognition of certain tactical situations	Read and react quickly to a situation (conditions controlled by the coach)	Vary the responses according to the situation's demands; (conditions controlled by the coach and random conditions)	Vary the responses according to the situation's demands (random conditions)
Mental preparation	Self-knowledge Goal setting	Concentration Emotional control (anxiety)	Emotional control (anxiety) Emotional control (confidence)	Emotional control (confidence)
Practice conditions	Predictable Stable	↑ in unpredictability and consequence of errors	Unpredictability and consequence of errors almost competition-like	Unpredictability and consequence of errors similar to competition
Activity complexity	Simple to moderate	Moderate; progressive ↑	High	High
Activity intensity during practices	Moderate	Progressive ↑; approaches competition intensity	Close to competition intensity	Competition intensity
Amount of work during practices	Moderate; progressive ↑	Progressive ↑; high	Levelling-out and progressive ↓	Progressive ↑; moderate
Amount of work during practices: general progressions	↑ in # of reps, constant length of effort	Progressive ↑ in length of effort and # of reps	Progressive ↑ in length of effort, ↓ in # of reps and recovery	Maintenance of length of effort and recovery time, ↓ in # of reps

7.7- Sample Club-Level Boxing Programs

Types of Sample Programs Dealt With in this Section

This section outlines over six (6) typical programming scenarios that are likely to be encountered by Coaches at club level:

1. Young participant (11-12 years old) who has never boxed, and who is joining a Club for the first time. This participant will not be involved in any competition in the foreseeable future.

2. Teenager who is new to Boxing, and who will not be involved in any competition for several months.

3. Teenage boxer who has been training for approximately 6 months at club level; during this time, he or she has learned the fundamental boxing skills and has been doing some general physical conditioning. This boxer has the opportunity to participate in his or her first competition in an inter-club gala scheduled in 6 weeks.

4. Boxer who has 2 or 3 years of experience, and who takes part in 3 or 4 competitions per year, including a regional or a provincial championship.

5. Adult who joins a club for the first time and wishes to learn boxing skills and improve his or her fitness.

6. Recreational adult boxer who has been in a Club for 2 years.

Programming guidelines and recommendations will be presented and discussed for each of the above typical scenarios.

Scenario 1: Young participant (11-12 years old) who has never boxed, and who is joining a Club for the first time

The suggestions below should be considered when offering programs and activities for this type of participant:

- Regroup sessions for young participants of this age group on specific days of the week (e.g. Saturday morning; weekday after school; weekday early evening), so all kids can come together at the same time. If possible, make separate groups for boys and girls, but if there are not enough girls, they should be involved in the same group as the boys.

- Frequency: 1 or 2 sessions per week. Restrict duration of each session to 75-90 minutes or so.

- Meet with the parents at the beginning or prepare short flyer to provide an overview of the program, its objectives, and what will be emphasized during the program. Clearly outline the Code of Conduct expected to be respected and applied by all club boxers (see the Safety Chapter of the Instruction beginners manual).

- Establish an 8 to 12 week progression that will initiate the young participants to the sport of Boxing and promote the of the following, as outlined in stages 2 and 3 of the LTAD model:

    - learning the safety measures and the proper use of protective and gym equipment
    - focus on the fundamental skills, and learning of some basic skills
    - learning of appropriate gym behaviours, sportsmanship, and boxing etiquette
    - in the area of fitness and conditioning, focus on motor development (agility, coordination, balance), with some forms of training to improve flexibility; aerobic stamina, and speed.

- If necessary, make sub-groups based on sex, age, ability level when conducting certain activities.

- Emphasize fun, participation, respect of the rules and of others, and value hard work. Promote self-esteem and self confidence by ensuring that participants experience success and realize the progresses they are making as a result of their involvement in the program.

- These participants should not be involved in any for of competition.

- At the end of the 8 to 12 weeks of activity, assess the participants based on the expectations of the Bronze level outlined in Chapter 6.

- Provide a certificate to participant at the end of the 8 to 12 weeks of activity, and verify their interest and motivation to continue in Boxing. Organize a brief meeting with the parents and the participants at the conclusion of the last lesson to outline the next steps of involvement as a Club boxer. Outline the available options: (1) regular training at club level, with the option to do some controlled sparring; or (2) regular training at club level, with the option to do some controlled sparring and participate in selected competitions.

Scenario 2: Teenager who is new to Boxing, and who will not be involved in any competition for several months.

- Typically, participants involved in this type of program are boys aged 14-15 years.
- The program may last anywhere from 8 to 20 weeks, or more, at a frequency of 2 to 3 times a week, each session lasting between 90 – 120 minutes.
- Many of the general suggestions listed under Scenario 1 (*Young participants aged 11-12 years old who have never boxed, and who are joining a Club for the first time*) may still apply for these participants as well.
- Typically, the program should focus on:
    - Learning the safety measures and the proper use of protective and gym equipment.
    - Learning appropriate gym behaviours, sportsmanship, and boxing etiquette.
    - The acquisition and development of all the fundamentals skills and of most of the basic skills (see Tables 7.8 and 7.9).
    - Introducing the participants to the basic tactical principles and their application to Boxing.
    - Addressing potential weaknesses in the area of motor development (balance, agility, coordination).
    - Improving general fitness and conditioning, with emphasis on flexibility, aerobic endurance, strength-endurance, and speed of movement.
    - Providing an overview of competitive Boxing towards the end, through a variety of progressive exercises such as work with a partner, pad work, technical sparring and conditioned sparring; any form of sparring must be relatively short, and done in a highly controlled environment to ensure adequate learning and a positive experience for the participants.
- For these participants, the program should also:
    - Emphasize fun, participation, as well as respect of the rules and of others.
    - Value hard work.
    - Promote self-esteem and self confidence by ensuring that participants experience success and realize the progresses they are making as a result of their involvement.
- At the end of the program, assess the participants based on the expectations of the Bronze level outlined in Chapter 6. Depending on the length of the program and individual ability level, some participants may also be assessed based on the expectations of the Silver level.

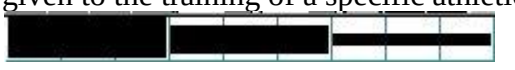
Scenario 3: Teenage boxer who has been training for approximately 4 months at club level, and who will be participating in his or her first competition in an inter-club gala scheduled 6 weeks from now.

- Typically, participants involved in this type of program are boys aged 15 years or so. However, some girls may also be involved.
- The participants have already been exposed to the fundamental and basic Boxing skills, and master most of them relatively well. They are also reasonably familiar with the use of Gym equipment, safety measures, and Boxing etiquette, although these aspects must continue to be emphasized and monitored closely at all times.
- Participants are involved on a regular basis in boxing-specific training activities at a frequency of 3 times a week, and up to 4 times a week in certain cases. Each session lasts between 90 to 120 minutes.
- Overall, the seasonal program lasts approximately 30 weeks.
- Because of their relatively serious involvement in the sport, these participants already have been exposed to certain controlled aspects of competitive Boxing through a variety of exercises such as work with a partner, pad work, technical sparring and conditioned sparring. They have also been assessed by their Competition introduction, and deemed to be sufficiently skilled to pass the "Silver Level". They are at a stage of their development where they are ready to participate in their first inter-club fight in order to expand their learning through the experience of a competition.

Figure 7.1 outlines how the training activities of this type of participant could be organized and sequenced. In this figure:

- The various athletic abilities dealt with in the programs are listed on the left.
- Each vertical line of the grid also represents one week of the program.
- A code is used to represent (1) the *importance* given to the training of each athletic ability, and (2) the training objective sought for a particular athletic ability at various stages of the program.

Importance Given to the Training of Athletic Abilities

For each week of the program, the importance given to the training of a specific athletic ability is indicated by the thickness of a band: 

- Thick band = very important
- Medium-thickness band = moderately important
- Thin band = not as important

Training Objectives

The intention and training objective for a specific athletic ability are indicated using the following colours: black, dark grey, and light grey.

For *Technical and Tactical* abilities, the following code is used:

- Black = introduction and acquisition (i.e. learn how to correctly perform new movements and skills).
- Dark Grey = consolidation (i.e. be able to perform the skill adequately in a variety of conditions, at various speeds, and under stress).
- Light grey = refinement (i.e. improve the style, consistency, or accuracy with which the movements are performed in a variety of conditions).

For *Physical and Motor* abilities, the following code is used:

- Black = development (i.e. work to *improve* the level of the ability).
- Light Grey = maintenance (i.e. keep the level of development of a particular ability from declining).

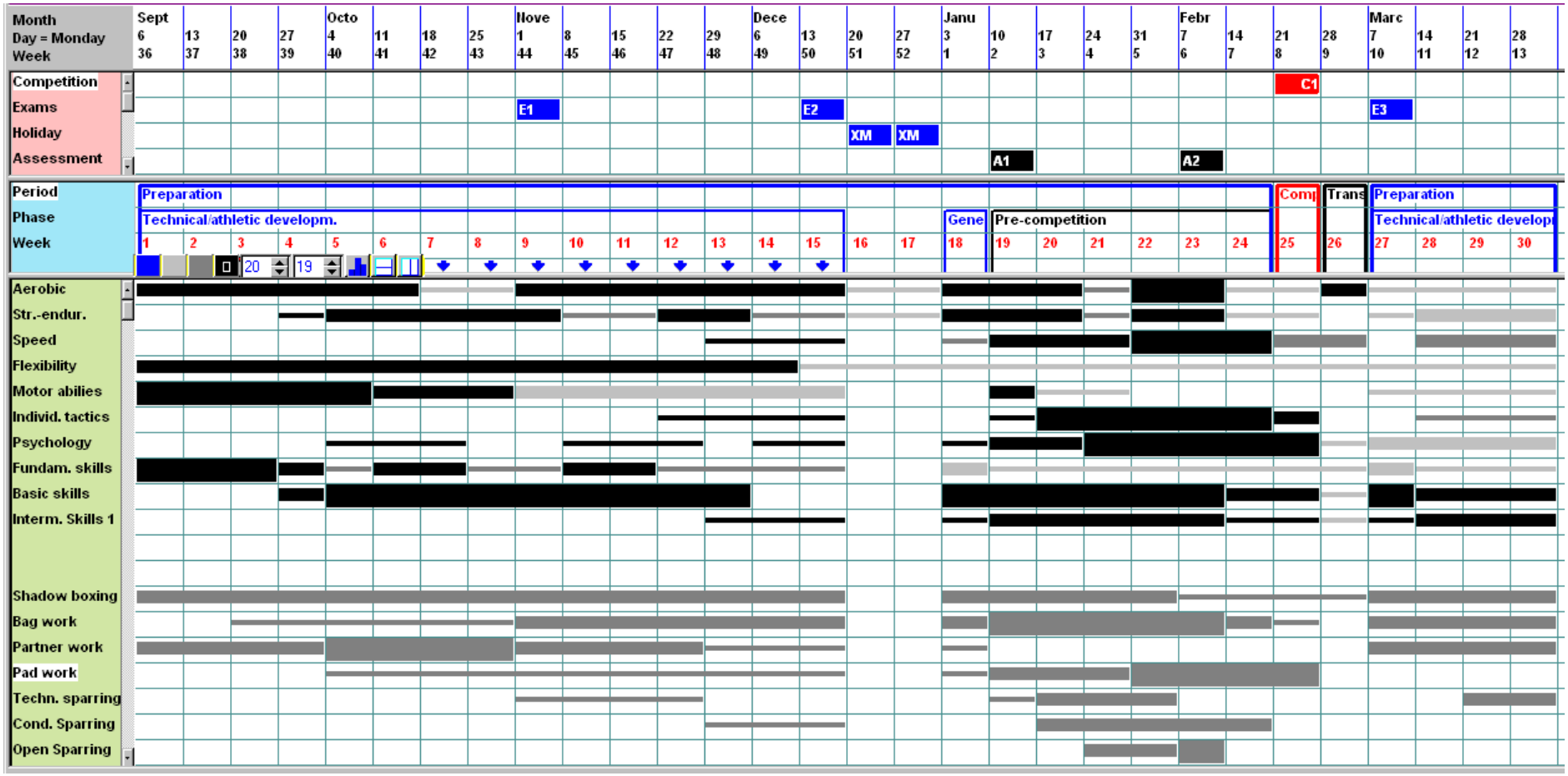
Examples

1. *A thick black band for "basic skills" means that activities and drills that support the learning of the skills listed in table 7.9 should be included, and that a large proportion of the available training time should be devoted to these skills during the week.*

2. *A thin, light grey band for "Fundamental skills" means that activities that contribute to refining the type of skills listed in Table 7.8 should be included, but that only a small proportion of the available time should be devoted to these specific skills during the week. It also means that these skills are expected to be executed properly at all times when they are used, for instance in the case of combination punches.*

3. *A thick black band for "aerobic end." means that activities that contribute to developing aerobic stamina should be included, and that a large proportion of the available time should be devoted to this type of training during the week.*

Figure 7.1- Sample Program, Teenage Boxer Involved in His or Her First Competition



Note: The bands associated with Shadow Boxing, Bag Work, etc. at the bottom of the figure serve to outline how much a particular form of training is used at specific stages of the boxer's program.

The **training emphasis given to a specific athletic ability** is shown by the thickness of the band:

The **training objective for a specific athletic ability** is shown by a colour code:

Scenario 4: Boxer with 2 years of experience who takes part in 3 or 4 competitions per year, including a regional or a provincial championship.

Typically, the boxers involved in this type of program:

- Are boys aged 16 years or so. However, some girls and young women may also be involved.
- Are involved on a regular basis in boxing-specific training activities at a frequency of 3 times a week, and up to 4 times a week in certain cases. Each session lasts between 90 to 120 minutes. Overall, their seasonal program lasts approximately 30 to 35 weeks.
- Have a good mastery of all the *fundamental* and *basic* Boxing skills. They have learned several intermediate skills, and are in the process of learning the more complex intermediate skills. They are very familiar with the use of Gym equipment, safety measures, Boxing etiquette, work on pads and with partners, and with the procedures of technical, conditioned, and open sparring; however, all these aspects must continue to be improved and monitored closely at all times.
- Should have met, or be very close to meeting, the "Gold Level" of technical assessment (see Chapter 6).
- Have already been involved in a few club-level competitions, and are now involved in a regular competition structure that culminates with a major event at the end of their program, such as a provincial championship or a major tournament.

Figure 7.2 outlines how the training activities of this type of participant could be organized and sequenced. The code used is the same as in Figure 7.1.

Table 7.15 presents detailed information about the objectives and the methods used throughout the various Periods and Phases of the program.

Figure 7.2- Sample program - Teenage Competitive Boxer involved in 4 competitions per year, including a Provincial Championship.

Note: The bands associated with Shadow Boxing, Bag Work, etc. at the bottom of the figure serve to outline how much a particular form of training is used at specific stages of the boxer's program.

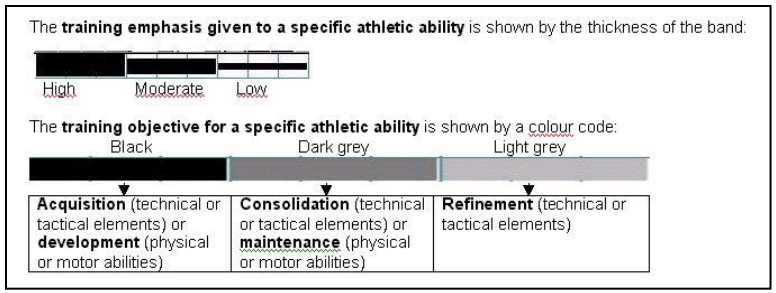


Table 7.15- Main Characteristics of Periods and Phases of Seasonal Competitive Programs for Teenage Competitive Boxers.

	Phases	Objectives And Priorities	Training Methods
Preparation Period	**General preparation phase (GPP).** Begins when the boxer resumes training, either individually or with the club, after a few weeks of active recovery. Recommended length: 6 to 8 weeks, or more	When training individually: • General development of physical and motor athletic abilities. • Progressive increase in the quantity of work done during training. • Improvement of the athletes' weak points (physical, motor abilities). When training with the Club: • Establishment of general objectives related to athletic development. • Improvement of the athletes' known weak points (motor; physical; technical). • Consolidation of already acquired technical and tactical abilities. • Acquisition of new technical abilities and skills. • General development of physical, motor, and mental athletic abilities. • Development of interpersonal bonds within the other members of the training group.	• Large proportion of general activities and exercises; small proportion of specific and competition activities and exercises. • Training and practice conditions fairly stable and predictable, or controlled by the coach. • Lots of repetitions. • Average intensity lower than what will be done later in the program. • Use of Continuous Training predominates over Interval Training.
	Specific preparation phase (SPP) Commences when the coach determines that the athlete is ready to begin more specialized forms of training. Recommended length: 5 to 8 weeks, or more	• Progressive development of physical conditioning adapted to the Boxing. • Specific development of the primary physical, motor, and mental athletic abilities required in Boxing. • Improvement of the Boxer's weak points (focus on technical and tactical aspects). • Consolidation of already acquired technical and tactical abilities. • Acquisition of new tactical abilities and knowledge. • Progressive increase in the amount of work done during training. • Progressive increase in intensity, so as to get closer to competition intensity toward the end of this phase.	• Progressive increase in the proportions of specific training exercises (bag work; shadow boxing; pad work; work with a partner), and decrease in the proportion of general exercises. • More specific and less predictable training and practice conditions; large proportion of training done in conditions that are controlled or determined by the coach. • Increase in the proportions of Interval Training.
	Pre-competition phase (PCP) Preparation of the boxer for a fight. Begins several weeks before a scheduled fight. Recommended length: 6 to 8 weeks, or more	• Identification of specific performance objectives, including the key aspects that will be emphasized in the boxer's preparation. • Maintenance of physical and motor athletic abilities developed during the GPP and SPP such as balance, coordination, agility, flexibility, strength-endurance, aerobic endurance. • Specific development of the primary physical, motor, and mental athletic abilities required in competition: maximal aerobic power, speed of movement, speed-endurance, focusing and control of distraction, self-confidence; stress management and emotional control. • Consolidation of already acquired technical and tactical abilities, with emphasis on speed of execution and accuracy; adjustments in tactics to reflect the opponent. • Increase in activity intensity so as to be at competition-level intensity toward the end. • Progressive decrease in the overall amount of work done during practices as the date of the fight gets closer, due to increased intensity of workouts, and to avoid excessive fatigue .	• Large proportion of specific or competition exercises done using Interval Training, virtually no general exercises. • Specific training and practice conditions. • Decrease in the proportion of exercises whose conditions are controlled by the coach; increased degree of uncertainty during training to promote adaptability and effective decision-making. • Frequent pad work sessions and sessions with a partner; inclusion of sparring sessions during training.

Table 7. 15- Main Characteristics of Periods and Phases of Seasonal Competitive Programs for Teenage Competitive Boxers. **(Cont.)**

	Phase	Objectives And Priorities	Training Methods
Competition Period	**Recovery** Recommended length: 1 to 2 weeks.	• To recover from the demands of the first fight. • To analyze/review the outcome of the fight in order to plan adequately for the remainder of the competitive season.	• Return to more general and less intensive forms of training to ensure active recovery. • Progressive increase in the duration and intensity of workouts.
	Competition phase Length: variable There should be at least 8 to 10 weeks between each fight in the case of beginning Club Boxers.	• Validation and confirmation of learning and progress made by the Boxer. Adjustment of performance goals if necessary based on outcome of the first fight. • Maintenance of the primary physical, motor, and mental athletic abilities required in Boxing. • Consolidation of already acquired technical and tactical abilities; maintenance of recently acquired ones. • Improvement of the weaknesses identified during the fight. • Continued skill and tactical learning, reflecting a progressive approach for long-term athletic development. Increase in speed and accuracy of skill execution. • Plateauing or slight decrease in the amount of work done during practices, and maintenance of an adequate level of intensity to ensure the continued progression of the boxer. • Work on improving mental abilities such as confidence, stress management and emotional control in preparation for next fight..	• Very large proportion of specific or competition exercises, and very small proportion of general activities and exercises, unless the latter are required to correct certain persistent shortcomings. • Regular use of training conditions that aim at replicating competition demands (pad work; conditioned sparring; open sparring); training conditions controlled by the coach less frequent, although still used on an as-needed basis. • Simulation of tactical situations likely to be encountered in competition to promote adaptation and quick decision-making, as well as proper selection and execution of skills at high speed in a variety of situations.
	PCP Phase	• Refer to the information under *Pre Competition Phase* for the objectives and methods used during the weeks leading to a fight	
	Leading to a major competition phase	• Implementation of combat plan with the aim of achieving a performance in competition. Stress management and emotional control when the outcome is very important. • Decrease in the length of sessions, while maintaining both frequency and intensity of training high. • Recovery from fatigue and stress between workouts. • Seek a high success rate when performing a variety of technical and tactical moves at high speed in training.	• Very large proportion of competition exercises (sparring) and specific work with partners or on pads. The focus is on exercises and drills performed at high speed, and intended to refine preparation. • Inclusion of frequent breaks during training sessions to avoid fatigue and maintain a high degree of intensity.
Transition	**Length: variable (2 to 8 weeks)**	• Recovery from several months of training and competition. • Complete healing of injuries sustained during the program. • Decrease in the length, frequency, and intensity of all training activities; no competition.	• Active rest. Participation in a variety of general activities. • Participation in sports with different physical and motor requirements than Boxing, with or without competition, and exclusive of excessive stress.

Scenario 5: Adult who joins a club for the first time and wishes to learn boxing skills and improve his or her fitness.

The suggestions below should be considered when offering programs and activities for this type of participant:

- Regroup sessions for these participants on specific days of the week, taking into account that they may have work or family obligations. If possible, create specific groups for female participants.

- Frequency: 1 or 2 sessions per week. Restrict duration of each session to 75-90 minutes or so.

- Meet with the participants at the beginning of the program or prepare short flyer to provide an overview of the program, its objectives, and what will be emphasized during the program. Clearly outline the Code of Conduct expected to be respected and applied by all club boxers (see the Safety Chapter of the Instruction beginners manual).

- Design an 8 to 12 week progression that will initiate the participants to the sport of Boxing and promote the following:

    - learning the safety measures and the proper use of protective and gym equipment
    - focus on the fundamental skills, and learning of some basic skills
    - learning of appropriate gym behaviours, sportsmanship, and boxing etiquette
    - in the area of fitness and conditioning, focus on flexibility and aerobic stamina, with some forms of training to improve strength-endurance and motor abilities (agility, coordination, balance),

- Keep in mind that the level of fitness of these participants and their motivation for joining a Boxing Club may vary greatly from one person to the other; however, being adults, they have an extensive life experience, their critical sense is well-developed, and their expectations and goals are likely very clear.

- Emphasize fun through serious and well-structured work, participation, respect of the rules and of others, and value their efforts. Promote self-esteem and self confidence by ensuring that participants realize the progresses they are making as a result of their involvement in the program.

- If necessary, make sub-groups based on sex, age, ability level when conducting certain activities.

- Use the experience and expertise of some participants certain activities, e.g. people with some background in Boxing may assist during teaching certain skills, others with a background in the health professions may be invited to share their expertise in areas such as balanced nutrition and lifestyle, etc.

- At the end of the program, assess the participants based on the expectations of the Bronze level outlined in Chapter 6.

Scenario 6: Recreational adult boxer who has been in a Club for 2 years.

Most of the suggestions listed under Scenario 5 on the previous page still apply for these participants.

However, because of their greater level of knowledge and experience in Boxing, their program should include challenges that are adapted to their skill level and to their interest. For instance, some individuals may want to get involved in sparring, while others will prefer to focus on individual skill development and training.

The suggestions below should therefore be considered when offering programs and activities for this type of participant:

- The frequency of their training may be increased to 2 or 3 sessions per week, each session lasting between 75 and 90 minutes, sometimes even longer.

- Some participants may wish to train individually in the gym outside the structured sessions for their group, and should be allowed to do pending availability of time and space in the facility.

- These participants may not need a lot of supervision when doing individual exercises on bags, shadow boxing, etc., although they will continue to expect some individual attention by the Coach to correct certain aspects of their technique.

- When fundamental and basic skills are well sufficiently mastered, a variety of intermediate skills should be taught. These participants will likely want to be exposed to new things on a fairly regular basis, so the coach must exercise judgment, and balance the desire for novelty with the need to ensure safety and sound progressions at all times. In particular, the pairing of partners is critical both during the learning of specific attacking and defensive moves and during sparring.

- The coach should not hesitate to ask participants who are more skilled, fit, or experienced to “take it easy” with some partners that they may have to work with. However, some form of individual attention should be paid to these “skilled recreational participants”, as they may lose interest if they feel they are not sufficiently challenged. A little bit of extra time with them on the pads, or some individual attention to refine particular skills may help to keep them motivated and satisfied with their involvement in the program.

- The participants should be assessed periodically during the program, and specific improvement goals and strategies should be established on an individual basis. The expectations of the Silver or Gold levels outlined in Chapter 6 may be good points of reference to use with them.

- Some of these participants may be encouraged to play a more active role within the Club, for instance by helping organize inter-club competitions, or in becoming involved as Instruction beginners coaches.

CHAPTER 8 – PROVIDING SUPPORT TO THE BOXER IN COMPETITION

8.1- Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the steps and the procedures that should be followed by the coach to provide support to his/her boxers before, during and after a bout.

8.2- Before the Bout

Warm-Up

Approximately thirty minutes before the bout, the coach should have his/her boxer do a good warm-up and repeat particular boxing skills.

A typical warm-up consists in the following activities:

- Rope skipping for approximately for 5 to 10 minutes
- Light shadow boxing at medium intensity for 5 minutes, including frequent pauses; here the boxer should visualize his or her opponent, and perform specific attacking and defensive moves and tactics
- Pad work for about 10 minutes with the coach, including frequent pauses

The coach should then towel the boxer off and, if the boxer likes a massage, give him/her one, but it should be gentle.

The Preparation of the Boxer's Hands for a Bout

The coach should then put on the boxer's bandages, making sure that they conform to the rules in dimensions, and that they are dry.

The human hand was made for grasping, not punching. Bandaging the hand is the method of providing support and therefore protection to the hand and wrist. The purpose of bandaging is to prevent the bones of the hand from spreading, to protect the thumb and to support the wrist. Refer to Annex 1 of the *Instruction beginners* manual for the step-by-step procedure that should be used when bandaging the boxer's hands.

The thumb should always be completely encircled in wrapping, and the pull on the thumb should be inward, toward the hand. The pull on the bandage should be steady, but the hand must not be bandaged too tightly, for circulation will be hindered.

The Final Preparation for a Bout

At this stage, the coach should make sure the boxer remains warm (for instance, by placing a towel on his or her shoulders) and then take him or her to be gloved. The gloves should be neither too loose nor too tight and the boxer's sash should be comfortable.

Before the fight begins, the coach and the second must also know precisely the specific needs and preferences of the boxer during breaks, e.g. if he or she wishes to sit or remain standing, if the boxer likes to get some water on the neck, etc.

In the final warm-up activities, the boxer should mobilize the hip and shoulder joints. The coach should ensure that the boxer is as neat as possible and take him/her to the ring.

The coach and his/her assistant (or second) will be more effective if they know what their respective duties are and have some sort of system for communicating quickly with each other. When the boxer reaches the ring, the second should make sure that the water bottles are full and that all the material needed (spittoon, stool) is at hand. Refer to Chapter 8 of the Instruction beginners manual for specific information regarding the general role and duties of the second.

When the referee is ready to examine the gloves, the second should rinse out the mouth guard with fresh, cold water. The boxer should then take a few deep breaths and the mouth guard should be inserted.

The boxer should then advance to the center of the ring to shake hands with the opponent; the coach gives a few last words of clear, concise advice and the bell signals the start of the first round.

On "Seconds out", the second should leave the ring and hand down any of the boxer's clothing. All impediments must be removed from the ring at that time. The coach should ensure that everything he/she might need is at hand.

8.3- During the Bout

During Each Round

At the beginning of each round, the coach should settle down to watch attentively the progress of the bout. The second must not shout encouragement or advice to the boxer, for the boxer may be disqualified and the referee can order the second away from the ring.

While watching the first round, the coach should study the opponent and try to discover any weaknesses in either attack or defence. The coach should also determine whether his/her boxer is carrying out the correct strategy and tactics and exploiting his/her opponent's weaknesses.

The coach should keep track of the time so that he/she knows precisely when the round will end. Generally speaking, the boxer should try to dominate his/her rival at the start, depending of course on his/her knowledge of the opponent. The boxer should also try to be on the attack when the round ends.

The coach must make a mental note of what he/she plans to tell his/her boxer as soon as the round ends; the messages should focus primarily on aspects such as things to focus on, changes of tactics, or the opponent's weaknesses.

During the Break

The Boxer Goes to his or Her Corner

Some boxers like to sit down between rounds, but others prefer to remain standing.

If the boxer wishes to sit down between rounds, the stool must be brought into the ring as soon as the round ends, and positioned at the correct distance from the corner. The boxer should know the position on the stool that gives him/her maximum rest and relaxation.

When seated, the athlete should relax all his/her muscles completely. The best position when sitting is probably leaning slightly backward, shoulders against the corner post padding, feet flat on the canvas, legs slightly flexed at the knees. The boxer's arms should be on the thighs with the gloves resting lightly just above the knees. The boxer should not place his/her arms on the rope, for this position places the arms above the heart, hindering circulation.

The Mouth Guard is removed

As soon as the boxer returns to the corner, his/her mouth guard should be taken out and he/she should be encouraged to breathe naturally through the open mouth. If the boxer is panting, he/she should be allowed to continue (breathing is self-regulating).

When the boxer has stopped panting, he/she should take slower and deeper breaths. The second should ease the waistband of the boxer's shorts away from the stomach to give the boxer a chance to breathe more easily.

When the boxer has got his/her breath – not before – he/she should rinse his/her mouth with fresh, clean water and spit into the spittoon.

The Boxer's Face is Dried Lightly

The coach should dry the boxer's face lightly with a clean towel.

When drying the boxer, the coach should take care to gently dab the boxer's face with the towel and to not wipe vigorously, for the face may be sore from blows received.

If the boxer wishes so, the coach should then pour some water behind the boxer's neck. There is no need to use a great deal of water. Care should be taken to not spill water on the canvas, for water may make the canvas slippery.

All these activities should be carried out quickly and competently.

Procedures When Suspecting an Injury

If a boxer is rather dazed from a hard punch, water splashed in his/her face may help him/her refocus. But if the coach believes that his/her boxer has a concussion, or is suffering from any serious injury, he or she should ask the referee to call the medical officer.

Under no circumstances should the coach slap the boxer's face.

Providing Advice to the Boxer

When the above has been done, the coach should give the boxer advice.

Whenever advice is given, it must be simple, practical and concise. The mental condition of the boxer must be taken into account. If the boxer is excited, he/she will be incapable of understanding any advice not given in an impressive, confident manner.

The advice may be given for approximately fifteen seconds, but it may have to be repeated so that the boxer grasps the meaning. The more experienced the boxer, the calmer he/she will probably be. The coach should always verify that the boxer understands his/her advice.

The coach should never give too much advice on style and tactics but should continually point out and repeat the essentials. It is best to stick to the most important points and make sure that they are understood, remembered and dealt with.

If his/her boxer has committed infringements of the rules, the coach must warn him/her. Most judges like to see a clean, good style and can penalize a boxer who commits any infringements or fouls. The referee is constantly on the alert for any infringements or fouls.

It is important for the coach to know what the boxer can and cannot do. Good seconding and good advice can help win a bout; bad seconding and the wrong advice can lose a bout. Asking a boxer to perform skills that are beyond him or less is pointless. The coach cannot turn an unskilled boxer into a competent one in one bout, but the coach should note the boxer's weak points so that they can later be addressed in the gym. However, good advice on style and tactics may help the boxer win.

A boxer getting the worst of a bout will need all the coach's encouragement and inspiration. The boxer can still win, for no contest is lost before it is over and advice on tactics and style can help him/her improve. If the boxer has plenty of fight left, the coach should encourage him/her to keep on working as hard as possible. However, if the boxer has taken rather a beating and has lost his /her spirit, it is better to retire him/her and seek to improve his/her skills in the gym than to allow him/her to take an unnecessary beating. If the boxer is not discouraged after a very difficult round, the coach should try to put him/her on the right track and encourage him/her to try harder.

Before the Next Round Begins

It is always important for a coach to tidy up his/her boxer before the next round starts. A bedraggled appearance only encourages the opponent and referees and judges are impressed by boxers who look neat and tidy and show no ill effects from the bout.

The second should have the mouth guard freshly washed with cold, clean water. Just before "Seconds out", the second inserts the mouth guard – fresh and moist – in the boxer's mouth. On "Seconds out", the second and the coach should leave the ring.

The boxer should remain in his or her corner until time is signalled.

During the Following Rounds

During the following rounds, the coach should determine whether his/her boxer is following his/her advice, whether the opponent is getting more confident or has changed his/her tactics or style, and whether any such changes are successful. All advice on tactics will depend on the ability of both boxers, their styles, and – sometimes – their physiques.

When the bell signals the end of a round, the procedure for the end of the first round should be repeated.

If the boxer is doing well and is ahead, the coach should warn him/her that his/her opponent will probably attack hard right from the beginning of the third round. The coach should advise the boxer to be prepared for this attack and to try to catch the opponent with counterpunches – and then to attack in the second half of the round when the opponent has tired.

If the boxer is losing but still has plenty of stamina, the coach should advise him/her to attack constantly during the up coming round.

The coach should note and remember what weaknesses must be corrected, and what changes in tactics and style might benefit the boxer in the future.

8.4- After the Bout

Immediately After the Bout

When the bell signals the end of the bout, the coach should attend to his/her boxer, treating any minor injury, sponging him/her down to cool him/her off and drying him/her with a towel.

The boxer's mouth guard, gloves and head gear should then be removed. The coach should also tidy the boxer up, put a towel on his or her shoulders, and hand the mouth guard to the second.

When the referee calls the boxers, the coach should send his/her boxer smartly to the center of the ring to await the announcement of the verdict. If the coach has taught the boxer well, he/she will take victory modestly and defeat generously, and will give his/her opponent a genuine handshake in both cases.

The coach then should then help his/her boxer out of the ring and the assistant should see that all the equipment is collected.

Next, the boxer should be escorted to the dressing room or taken to receive his/her prize.

If the boxer has no injuries, he/she should warm down for approximately five minutes, then be allowed to sweat out for several minutes. The coach should then wipe the boxer down with a towel before letting him/her take a shower.

Any injury that has occurred during the fight should be attended to. If the coach wants the medical officer's advice on an issue, he/she should request it as soon as possible after the fight.

If the boxer has to box the next day, the second takes care of the boxer while the coach watches the future opponent.

Managing the Emotions after the Bout

Whether the boxer has won or lost, the coach must always try to handle the situation calmly and with dignity, and the boxer should follow the coach's example. Regardless of the outcome, the coach should also praise the boxer, encourage him/her for the next time, and try to inspire him/her to fresh efforts.

Immediately after the bout, it is preferable not to go deeply into analyzing why the boxer lost or – if he/she won – how he/she might have done better. It is best to wait until the next gym session and then go into everything thoroughly.

If the boxer has lost and the coach agrees with the verdict, he/she should not tell the boxer that he/she has won. However, if the boxer has lost and the coach thinks that the boxer should have won, he/she should say so to the boxer, but at the same time re-emphasize the fact that judges cannot always see everything, and that perhaps a little more effort or cleaner form would have given him/her the verdict. Likewise, if the boxer won and the coach thinks that the boxer was rather lucky, he or she should say so, explaining a few reasons why.

If the boxer has lost a championship or an important bout, the coach should console the boxer, because he or she will likely be very disappointed. The boxer is often better left alone for a while when this happens, but the coach should never discourage the boxer with any abusive remarks.

If the boxer has won a championship or an important bout, the coach should certainly praise or congratulate the boxer, but he or she should never let the boxer become conceited.

The Return Home

The journey home should be as comfortable as possible and the boxer should be given advice about treatment for any injury.

The boxer should apply the recovery plan developed by the coach, and training should resume progressively in the days following the fight, according to the condition of the boxer.

Debriefing the Bout

In the days that follow the fight, the athlete should be encouraged to critically reflect on his or her performance. He or she should identify the positive moves done during the fight, as well as the aspects that should have been done differently. The specific reasons should be identified in each case, and a plan of action for future development and improvement should be developed with the coach.

If the boxer is to improve his/her boxing ability, any weak spots in attack and defence must be remedied in gym sessions before the next bout.

Any lack of stamina, endurance, speed or strength should also be addressed by an adequate physical preparation program.

Any major infringements of the rules must be corrected. If the will to win is weak, it must be fostered.

The coach should also reflect critically about (1) the quality of advice and support he or she offered to the boxer during the bout, and (2) the effectiveness of the program designed for the boxer before the competition.

8.5- Basic post-fight recovery plan

***Note**: If injuries were sustained during the fight, the boxer should be treated as soon as possible after the competition. The plan below does not include any medical treatment.*

	Recovery modality	Important because …
Immediately after the fight	**Initiate re-hydration**: The boxer should drink 1 to 1,5 litre of fluid for each kg of body weight lost.	Boxers are often dehydrated after a fight as a result of their efforts and the weight loss that may have occurred prior to the official weighing in.
	Cool down and stretching: The boxer should perform low impact aerobic exercise for 10 to 15 minutes (e.g. stationary bicycle; rope skipping) at low intensity; the main muscle groups should also be stretched lightly using the "passive" method (see the Physical Preparation Manual for details).	The recovery processes will be initiated sooner and more effectively; muscle stiffness and/or soreness that boxers often feel during the days following a fight will also likely be less severe.
	Nutrition: Soon after the fight, and preferably within 30 minutes, the boxer should consume simple carbohydrate (CHO) in the amount of 1 g per kg body weight. Examples of foods containing 50 g of CHO include: 700 ml of sport drink; 500 ml of fruit juice; 3 medium pieces of fruit; 1 large Mars chocolate bar; 3 muesli bars; 2 pancakes with maple syrup.	This approach will promote faster re-synthesis of muscle glycogen, which is the main fuel used by muscles when working at high intensity. This strategy is particularly important if another fight is scheduled within a short period, as may be the case during a tournament.

	Recovery modality	Important because …
Within the hour following the fight	**Shower**: After the post fight cool down and hydration/nutrition the boxer should take s shower. Water temperature should be warm and comfortable; the athlete can also take a "contrast shower" whereby key muscle groups are exposed to hot and cold water in alternation.	It is important for the athlete to take care of his or her body hygiene after any form of strenuous exercise. A contrast shower may help to increase blood flow to key muscle groups, therefore promoting an earlier response of the various processes involved in the recovery.
	After the shower, light stretching; if done, the focus should be on stretching the muscle groups that are still stiff or sore.	Muscles should still be fairly warm, and therefore can be stretched lightly without any issue; see "Cool down and Stretching" above.
During the hours following the fight	**Continue the re-hydration process**.	A significant portion of the fluids consumed post-exercise will not be absorbed, and will be lost through urine.
	Nutrition: The athlete should eat a meal high in complex CHO (e.g. pasta) and protein (e.g. red meat; poultry; eggs).	The boxer must replenish his or her energy stores; the athlete's body must also be supplied with the nutrients that will "repair" tissues that may have been damaged during the fight.
	If the athlete has many bruises or feels muscle pain, he or she may take 1 or 2 anti-inflammatory caplets such as Advil.	The athlete must be able to sleep well in order to recover quickly from the fight; such medication may reduce muscle pain and help to relax and get to sleep.
Relaxation and sleep	**Relaxation**: Some boxers may have trouble sleeping the night of a fight. Before going to bed, the athlete may do some relaxation exercises or another form of soothing activity that will help him or her sleep well (e.g. reading a book, listening to music, etc. **Sleep**: 8 to 10 hours or more, as needed.	Sleep is critical to promote recovery from the physical and psychological stress experienced during the fight.
The day after the fight	**Nutrition**: If the boxer is still feeling stiff or sore, he or she should eat a high CHO and protein breakfast, e.g. eggs, toast, lean ham, cereals, milk, yogurt, etc.	The body must continue "rebuilding" the tissues that may have been damaged during the fight.
	Light exercise: Following a thorough warm-up featuring low to moderate intensity aerobic exercise, the boxer should perform a good stretching session. **Intense efforts should be avoided**.	
During the week that follows the fight	**Training should resume progressively:** During the days following the fight, the training emphasis should be on aerobic and flexibility training, and on boxing-specific technical work performed at moderate intensity. Any form of sparring should be avoided during this period. On suggère d'éviter les combats d'entraînement durant cette période.	The boxer must have fully recovered from the fight before resuming high-intensity training.

CHAPTER 9 – BASIC SPORT PSYCHOLOGY FOR BOXERS

(by Robert Schinke)

9.1- Introduction

Boxing is an amazing sport from a sport psychologist's perspective. When boxers achieve stellar performances in competition, they do so for a wide number of reasons. Success, however, can only be a direct result of strong technical training. You can easily pick out the athletes with a very strong technical foundation: they have good balance, good footwork, are able to land good clean punches, and can put together beautiful combinations during technical sparring.

The best coaches also teach their athletes the tactical aspect of boxing. For instance, the "smart boxer" will have excellent ring awareness, or ring smarts. They will know exactly where the ropes are and where the judges are. Smart boxers not only know where to throw punches, but also when. These boxers know where to position themselves to prevent the opponent from scoring. The best trained boxers are not only graced with athletic skill, but are also taught important tactical skills that pay dividends to successes and effort expenditure.

A great boxer will have progressed through a technical and tactical training system. However, even the best technical and tactical training does not always produce the best competitor. Despite having potential, certain boxers seem to lack something. That something is often found within the challenging domain of sport psychology.

Within this section of your Manual, we will consider some of the many aspects required in order to best produce the aspiring boxer. More importantly, this section will provide you with some useful techniques and suggestions you can integrate into your training on a day-to-day basis.

As a final note before we begin this initial exploration: sport psychology skills need to be practiced and monitored on the day-to-day in order to ensure optimal success. Good mental skills in the ring during performances are the result of daily practice and daily monitoring on your part.

9.2- The Question of Coaching and Confidence

The best technical athletes are not necessarily the strongest competitors. There are some athletes who just don't produce the necessary skills when placed under pressure. Others, despite lacking technical goods, shine as they step into the ring. You can identify these mentally ready boxers easily: their posture is dominant before the bout, and they become increasingly dominant after the sound of the bell. Often, these athletes move through the amateur ranks to the international level.

Sometime later, you might find yourself be faced with another type of athlete: one who is equally talented but visibly less courageous. Such athletes are normally described as good gym boxers rather than competitors.

The best developmental coaches reflect on their own coaching practice and consider it in relation to each boxer they train. The reflective boxing coach will ask: "why is this athlete more courageous than that one?" The coach might even wonder whether s/he had any role in the amount of confidence each of his/her boxers has acquired. Rest assured that boxers gain their confidence from a wide number of sources, including themselves.

Confidence is a skill you can teach your boxers, providing you are systematic and consistent in your attempts to do so. Athletes gain their confidence early on, so this skill should also be introduced early on. Everything we cover in terms of skill sets during this section of your manual will return to the theme of confidence.

The specific topics to be discussed in this section are the following:

- Building confidence through first-hand boxing experiences.
- Building skills and confidence with the use of observational learning.
- Building confidence through coaching feedback techniques.
- Building confidence through sources of social support.
- Building confidence through optimal mental training skill selection.

9.3- Building Confidence through First Hand Boxing Experiences

There is no substitute for successful experiences when producing confident boxers.
The best way to build first-hand confidence in boxers is by ensuring that they experience challenges that are small steps in progression. In terms of training, it takes boxers a lot of practice to integrate each new punch, footwork, positioning in the ring and so on, At best, the foundational skills that your boxer will rely on during progressive bouts need to be based upon smaller successes.

When the boxer feels comfortable with a new skill during shadow boxing, he/she is ready to move on to its integration during pad work. Afterwards, the skill needs to be integrated during simple technical sparring. When improvements are required, they should be pointed out immediately allowing the boxer to re-attempt the moves. When necessary, technical sparring ought also to include spur-of-the-moment briefings and re-attempts. Once the athlete is confident with this new skill, s/he is ready to integrate it in bouts of progressive difficulty.

It is likely that all of this makes intuitive sense to you. Keep in mind, however, that when athletes misplace their confidence it is because this skill is not automatic to them. The ultimate goal of each new skill is proficiency. When a skill is fully learned and assimilated, it reveals itself during performance. When an athlete is overwhelmed with challenge, the successful emergence of the skill is less likely. So, ensure that you are patient with your athletes as they learn to integrate their skills. They will need time to fine-tune what they have learned. If you move along too quickly, chances are that your athlete will encounter a setback.

One of the keys to confidence is successful past experiences. It is from the athlete's memory of past successes that he/she will often gain the confidence needed for future success. On the other hand, if earlier memories are that of setbacks, future hopes of success will be limited. It is a good idea to keep a file your athlete and document the progress of his/her skill acquisition. This way you will be able to make specific lesson plans, sparring selection and bout selection.

9.4- Building Skills and Confidence through Observational Teaching and Learning

Confidence can be developed and eliminated in a number of different ways. Often, the outstanding success of one team member starts an entire string of successes for the entire boxing team. The opposite phenomenon, however, also happens. When one athlete experiences a devastating setback, teammates on the team seem to lose their positive energy, and they become intimidated. In this sub-section we are going to consider the influence of observational learning when it comes to maintaining and building confidence.

Athletes can gain a significant amount of confidence by observing others during training and competition. During training, novice boxers are bound to self-question as they try to learn new skills. Sometimes, developmental athletes become overwhelmed. You can see it in their posture: their bodies close off, their shoulders drop, they avert from your eye contact, and they decrease their efforts. When this happens, you probably ask them to watch another boxer.

Chances are that the boxer they watch is having absolutely no difficulty with the desired skill, but why? Is the athlete being observed of the same experience, same physical development, and same mental maturity? If you are hoping to build confidence in the struggling athlete, the most effective model is someone of the same gender, same age, same physique, same experience, and similar style. The more identifiable the model is to the struggling athlete, the more he or she can draw personal parallels, and thus improve personal confidence.

However, at times it is effective for the aspiring developmental boxer to choose a high level performance model. Watching video footage of highly successful amateur athletes is an effective means for personal goal-setting. The key is that the aspiring athlete needs to identify their model. The developmental athlete should view the footage often, sometimes with different goals in mind. For instance, one viewing might target the theme of posture.

Much can be learned by observing the physical posture and demeanour of the successful high-performance amateur boxer. This includes the athlete's posture from the moment the athlete touches gloves with the opponent to the end of the match. It is even worthwhile to observe how the athlete is sitting while taking in corner information.

Other aspects to consider are: style, punch selection in relation to the opponent, the use of the ring for scoring and defending, and the adaptation of tactics in relation to each opponent.

Although modeling builds confidence, this kind of exercise is often not integrated as often as it should be. Work with your athlete and choose your models wisely. Models of a similar performance level are effective when your athletes are learning to integrate new skills during training. High performance models are also good confidence builders, although for a different reason. High performance models provide the aspiring athlete with future goals. The key when selecting learning models for your athletes is considering whether the objective of the exercise is short-term or long-term.

9.5- Building Confidence through Coaching Feedback

The feedback that you provide to your athletes also plays a role in building their confidence. Some coaches choose to bestow praise on their persistent athletes, while other coaches provide useful technical suggestions. The question worth considering, then, is when to use each of these general sources of feedback, and to what extent. This sub-section will consider the effective use of coaching feedback for training and competition circumstances.

Praise can be an effective means of inspiration. When athletes are working on new skills during training, emotional encouragement ensures high intensity. Athletes are often self-motivated, but their intensity can diminish as a result of boredom. When athletes are encouraged in the spur of the moment, they tend to increase their efforts in response, creating a high intensity output. An important part of high intensity training is the athlete's confidence in personal conditioning. Intensity is a factor that needs to be integrated into training for athletes to gain confidence in their fitness and their stamina. This is precisely when praise becomes effective.

You may be asking yourself: how much praise is effective? For the novice boxer, you will need to use a lot of praise. New skills feel awkward, and it is often easier to revert back to what is more familiar. The use of encouraging words, such as: “you can do it,” and “keep going,” ensure increased persistence during trying moments. For the more experienced athlete, however, praise ought to be used more sparingly. Experienced boxers know how to persist. The best time to integrate praise for such athletes is during those crucial seconds when their stamina is in question, and the fast approaching outcome from a performance will add or take away from long-term success stories.

When the boxer misplaces personal strategy and feels out of control, however, the most effective type of feedback is constructive technical feedback. When providing technical feedback, you should be specific. The confidence-depleted boxer needs to know exactly what to do, and not what they are doing incorrectly. Only positive feedback can re-direct the athlete back to self-control and confidence building experiences.

Effective constructive feedback includes: “your move to the left was a good choice in this situation, because …”. Technical suggestions also need to be paired with the positive praise that builds momentum. Remember: athletes lose their way from time to time, without exception. Be there with the appropriate type of persuasion and you will facilitate confidence.

As a useful exercise, have an assistant coach videotape you on occasion during both training and competition. You will learn a lot about your own tendencies, and how best to optimize them to ensure readiness for crucial moments. As an additional suggestion: seek out another coach who you trust, and exchange feedback with them on a monthly basis.

9.6- Building Confidence through Sources of Social Support

Most coaching literature emphasizes athlete and coach interaction. However, there is an additional source of human interaction worth considering: the web of social support in which the boxer finds himself/herself. When considering social support there are two key subsets: the boxer’s parents or primary caregivers and his/her peers. Each of these groups can provide support to a boxer in pursuit of excellence.

Parents or primary caregivers are an essential part of each boxer’s team. When they encourage the boxer positively, they can be a coach’s best friend. At times, however, coaches and parents are in conflict, despite the fact that both groups have the boxer’s best interest in mind. The question is, then: how can parents support their boxers’ pursuits while working harmoniously with you, the coach?

The key is not to exclude parents from the coaching process. Parents have valuable information that can inform your coaching approach. Your boxers are likely to share their training challenges and successes with family members. They will describe all of their outcomes, either in a solution-oriented or problem-oriented way. When parents and other primary caregivers encourage solution-oriented thinking in your boxers, the result is hope and persistence.

There is such thing as ‘negative’ parental influence. ‘Negative’ influences are often just misdirected influences. As the coach, part of your responsibility is to maintain open communication with parents. The key to harmony is defining roles. The coach is a primary factor in training, whereas parents are a primary factor the boxer’s personal development. When coach and primary caregivers work in alignment, boxers are more likely to maintain their enjoyment of boxing, remain persistent, perform well, and gain increasing confidence.

Peers are an additional source of social support that contributes to an athlete’s development and confidence. Peers can encourage athlete persistence in two very important ways. On one level, peers can challenge each other through competition and comparison. When the norm among your athletes is to push the boundaries during training, this group philosophy will become part of each athlete. Better athletes can inspire less experienced ones in the pursuit of excellence. Developmental athletes can inspire experienced athletes to stay sharp, and a beginner’s high level of enthusiasm.

On another level, teammate support encourages athlete confidence in a way that is similar to that of parents. When teammates encourage the athlete to interpret performances in a solution-oriented way, your boxers will gain a clear and realistic indication of what they did well, and what still needs improvement. When athletes support each other positively, the level of your group’s overall performance will increase after each day’s training. Ensure that your athletes are supportive of each other in the correct way. After all, the interpretation of events is more important than the outcome itself.

9.7- Building Confidence through Mental Training

There is a wide repertoire of mental training skills that you can find in any applied sport psychology handbook. You will be taught some skills as part of the NCCP multisport workshops. These skills include: relaxation, arousal, visualization, goal-setting, and focusing. Since it is impossible to address all of these skills within this small section of this Manual, we will discuss a more general concept: athlete perceived control.

Often, athletes develop all requisite technical and tactical skills without fully understanding what drives them during training and competition. Many lack all of the self-awareness required for success at the highest of amateur performance levels. The following list includes important concepts that athletes should grasp fully to be successful:

1. An optimal emotional approach for training and bout performance.
2. Last minute emotional mind clearing strategies.
3. The list of elements needed when packing for a bout.
4. A specific day-plan geared towards optimal performance for an upcoming bout.
5. An optimal nutritional schedule for great training and bout performance.
6. Nuances in performance planning for afternoon and evening bouts.
7. A performance plan optimizing bout starts and developing tactics for the maintenance of appropriate intensity

8. Determining what is the best kind of encouragement from coaching staff, parents, and peers.
9. The most effective key words to say after both successes and disappointments
10. The best time to evaluate bouts, and what to evaluate after performance is completed.

The key to remember is lack of confidence often comes from a fear of the unknown. As boxers learn more about themselves, and what works for them, they are more likely to demonstrate confidence. You should to encourage your athletes to identify what they need to know in order for them to perform at their best. The best coaching methods look beyond instructional needs and encourage the athlete to self-reflect. A good idea is to keep a journal and/or logbook to keep track of progress.

There are many different types of logbooks at your disposal. The general requirements ought to include consideration of:

1. equipment
2. mood
3. coaching assistance
4. level of personal attention
5. daily events
6. key words
7. level of intensity

This list is not definitive. However, if you were to encourage your athletes to complete at least a few of these criteria after each bout you would both have a significant amount of information to draw upon when confidence is really needed. After all, self-awareness is a crucial source that builds self-confidence, and it requires diligent monitoring.

CHAPTER 10 – PLANNING A BOXING EVENT

(by Gordon Apolloni)

10.1- Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the steps involved in organizing a boxing event.

Many boxing clubs organize tournaments or galas in order to provide competitive opportunities to their athletes, and generate funds to support their programs. As key technical leaders within their Club, coaches are likely to be actively involved in such activities.

Planning a boxing event is made easier once you have a plan of attack in order. Specific items need to be taken care of in a particular order. The following is a task master which can be used as a model when organizing any boxing event.

10.2- Leading Up to the Event

- Identify categories of expenditures, and develop a budget for the event based on expected costs (e.g., sanction fees, room and facility rental, ring rental, insurance, publicity, honoraria) and revenues (attendance fees, registration fees, sponsorships, sales of 50/50 tickets, concessions, etc.)

- Select a date and a venue for the event. In the venue contract, make sure to stipulate the times you require to be in the hall for setup and for removing the ring and the other equipment.

- Apply for your Provincial or Territorial sanction, with the appropriate payment. If the Sanction does not automatically provide insurance coverage, or if it does but you feel a more comprehensive coverage would be necessary, contact your P/TABA to obtain additional information and advice on how to get adequate insurance coverage.

- If alcohol will be served, obtain the necessary permit and make arrangements with qualified personnel.

- Set up committees to help with the event. Committees may be needed in the following areas: Ring set-up and Ring-take down, Finances & Sponsors, Admissions & Raffle, Medical & First Aid, Officials, Transportation & Logistics, Door, Hall set up, Gloving Table, Promotion & Publicity, Protocol, Prizes & Awards, and Security. Tasks for each of these committees should be spelled out in detail. For example: who will pick up the cheque for the floats, who will pick up the trophies, etc. There will be no confusion this way and the chances of all tasks being completed are greater.

- Recruit a Doctor for that date, giving him or her details such as weigh ins/medicals and start time of event. If the Dr. has not performed duties at a boxing event before, then he/she should be given a Canadian Amateur Boxing rule book. The tasks for the Doctor are spelled out in the appropriate chapter. Notify the doctor a few days before and remind him or her again the day before the event.

- Contact selected clubs on a regular basis to ensure boxers availability and preparedness. This will maximize your efforts to have an appropriate number of quality bouts for your event.

- Select the boxers to be matched up using the Canadian Amateur Boxing rule book. In it one will find a section on matching boxers regarding differences in age, weights and experience.

- Select a hotel/motel for accommodation if required. The hotel or the boxing venue is ideal for Medicals and Weigh Ins.

- Ensure that the manager of the boxing venue is fully aware of the dates and times you require to be in the facility; this is best done by communicating in writing, and obtaining all the necessary authorisations.

- Recruit an individual as an announcer. This person could be a radio/ television announcer, or someone who speaks clearly and can keep the interest of the crowd at down times at the event.

- Get the list of the officials and referees who will be involved in the event, as well as their coordinates.

- Recruit a Time Keeper, ensuring the individual has knowledge of the rules governing timekeeping for Olympic Style Boxing. This can also be found in the Canadian Amateur Boxing Rule Book.

- Ensuring an appropriate sound system is available for the event. The venue may have one on site, but if it does not one may have to be rented.

- Production of tickets/posters for the event should be available for sale at least one month in advance. Any other media, radio television advertisement is up to the organizer. Interviews, in all media, are an excellent method of getting your event noted in the public.

- Select a committee or an individual to attain sponsors for the event. This will assist in making the event more lucrative for the host club.

- Select an individual to develop a program for the event, listing sponsors, the bout list etc. Make sure programs are printed in sufficient quantities.

- Ensure Thank-You notes are sent out to all sponsors and helpers. A little thank-you goes a long way.

10.3- Day of the Event

- Have the Sanction, from your provincial boxing body, available and visible at ringside.

- Ensure that the Doctor is present, and is reminded of start times, venues and medicals.

- Ensure suitable scales are at the appropriate place, and calibrated.

- Ensure ring crew will have access to the venue; a trailer may be needed to transport the ring to and from its permanent home.

- Ensure Gloving Table has one or more glover(s) with all the required equipment. For example, rubber/latex gloves, approved cleaning solvent and towel to wipe/clean the gloves.

- Ensure that the 50/50 sellers are appointed with tickets to sell. Establish an area for the controller of the sales to be set-up with a table.

- Ensure the officials have a separate room to prepare themselves.

- Ensure change rooms are set up for male and female athletes, as well as blue and red corners, if possible.

- Test the sound system.

- Ensure all awards and presentations are picked up, and individuals are selected to present them to the appropriate individuals. For example, winner, runner-up, best female boxer, best male boxer, best bout-male, best bout-female

- Ensure that trust- worthy individual(s) will work the gate where spectators will enter to purchase tickets for the event. Three to four individuals may be sufficient as well as one security person, but more may be needed depending on the size of the event.

- Should you have corporate tables at your event, an individual(s) should be directed to take care of the corporate tables needs. An area should be selected for the corporate tables, the tables set up, with the corporate name card on each table.

- Ensure that host/hostesses are available to welcome corporate guests and escort them to their table, and to guide the general public to their appropriate areas.

- Ensure that appropriate and qualified servers are working the bar if the event is selling alcohol.

- Ensure security personnel or agents know their limitations and their responsibilities.

- Ensure to have the necessary cash on hand to provide change to spectators where necessary.

10.4- After the Event

- Thank all volunteers and officials who were involved in the organization. If possible, organize a party or a get together to acknowledge their contribution.

- Contact the local media and provide them with the results in each category, as well as key statistics pertaining to the event (location, number of competitors, number of categories, number of spectators, etc.).

- Manage the financial aspects of the event (deposit of revenues; cheques to officials; prize money; payment of specific bills), and produce a short financial report.

- Return all rented equipment within the agreed-to deadlines.

- Write thank you letters to all sponsors, including statistics pertaining to the number of competitors, number of categories, number of spectators, winners in each category, etc.

- Invite the volunteers in charge of each committee to provide a short report as well as recommendations for improvement if necessary.

- Survey the competitors, Club representatives, members of the medical staff, Coaches and Officials to get their feedback about the specific aspects they liked about the organizations, and the things that may be improved in the future.

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