



5 PHASE RETURN TO THE RING

THE WORLD BOXING ASSOCIATION HEALTH AND SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RETURN TO TRAINING AND BOXING EVENTS IN A COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT

“These guidelines are advisory only. The application of rules and procedures for virus testing and avoidance are within the jurisdiction of the local commissions”.

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INTRODUCTION

The World Boxing Association, as a global governing body for boxing, offers this document to support the safe and managed return to Boxing amidst a global covid-19 environment.

Presented by the Medical Committee of the World Boxing Association, this guideline outlines a “5 Phase Return to the Ring”, and is structured to support National bodies, Commissions, Officials, Promoters, Athletes and Coaches, in navigating a safe return to competition through the careful planning, assessment and managed execution of each phase.

This sport specific document is intended to work in parallel with the phased lifting of restrictions by Governments, State Agencies, and direction by regional/ local Sport Commissions. This document will continue to evolve as we monitor the changes in the global environment, as we gain a better understanding of the potential health impact of the virus and as we collaborate with other sport organizations to identify best practices in this challenging Sport environment.

Safety measures should be a priority to everyone. Where applicable, this document will address each of the groups of the Boxing Community, according to the specific functions they perform within the sport: Boxers, Coaches, Officials, Event Organizers etc.

These recommendations are boxing specific and build upon the established Covid-19 framework by the World Health Organization (WHO), Centre for Disease Control (CDC), Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), Regional and Governmental Guidelines and Association of Ringside Physicians.

These guidelines are not intended to replace existing procedures, laws or regulations established by local government.

BACKGROUND

- COVID-19 is an acute respiratory illness caused by a new human coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2, frequently referred to as the novel coronavirus also known as COVID-19 virus)
- On 30th January 2020 after a delayed response, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a major public health emergency of international dimension
- A further delay in responsiveness allowed rapid community spread of the virus across International borders resulting in Covid-19 being declared a Pandemic by the WHO on March 11th, 2020.
- This pandemic impacted communities worldwide, resulting in significant restrictions affecting all sectors of society, including sport. The result included closure of Gyms, Sport and Recreational Facilities, Stadiums and Event venues, and the cancellation or indefinite postponement of competition.
- As Public Health systems transition from detection and treatment of the most serious cases to the detection and effective management of Covid-19 cases, and, communities show success in minimizing the risk of transmission, their readiness for “rolling back” lockdown orders will take place, resulting in the phased return to Sport and return to the Ring for training and competition.
- Public training and open sporting events, in the context of COVID-19, have the potential to produce serious public health consequences if not carefully planned and managed.
- Contact sports pose a greater risk of COVID-19 transmission because of the reality of close physical contact between Boxers and Referee.

WORKING GUIDELINE

- Boxing as a Sport is used widely in many communities to improve physical and mental health as well as offers a wider social and economic benefit.
- The return to Boxing should not place any individual or community at risk of exposure to the Covid-19 virus.
- The current situation requires sanctioning bodies and commissions to consider new measures in managing boxing events.
- An estimated 44% of all infections occur in people without any symptoms. They also serve to become “silent carriers,” meaning they spread the infection to others, unknowingly.
- Additionally, in those who do develop symptoms, it can take 2-14 days from the time they are infected to the time any symptoms occur (on average 5 days). They, too, serve as a vector to spread COVID-19, because they may not know they are infected.
 - Symptoms include:
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fever
 - Chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Sore throat
 - New loss of taste or smell
- Long term immunity and ongoing medical implications such as effects on multiple organs/systems are unknown.

CONSIDERATIONS

The environment in which this document is presented is EVOLVING. The recommendations presented in this document identify 5 phases for the return to Boxing. The return to boxing phase should not exceed the local community or regional phased community guidelines. Our calculations do not support a simple red light/green light approach.

The timelines for the proposed phases are unknown and will vary widely by location and other circumstances. These may include the viral/ antibody testing, future immunizations, and other unknowns.

- COVID-19 is a highly contagious, acute respiratory illness caused by a new human coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2, frequently referred to as the novel coronavirus also known as COVID-19 virus)
- Understanding how COVID-19 is spread improves preventive strategies and wise actions, including situations where guidance may not be immediately available.
 - It is spread mainly from person-to-person contact, through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, breaths, laughs, or sings.

- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses or eyes of people who are nearby. Generally, this is believed to occur between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- COVID-19 is also spread when respiratory droplets land on a surface (countertops, doorknobs, boxing gloves, boxing bag) and get picked up by our hands, and our hands then touch our eyes, nose, or mouth.
- COVID-19 and other viruses and bacteria generally enter our body through mucus membranes, a different type of skin seen on our eyes, nose, and mouth. They do not generally enter via our hands or other skin found on our body.
- It is possible that COVID-19 can survive on some surfaces for several hours, even days.

OUTLINE: THE 5 PHASE RETURN TO BOXING

1. Training in Isolation

2. Training with a Coach:

2.A: Non Contact Training

2.B: Managed Contact Training

2.C: Contact Training

3. Return to Training in Public Facilities/ Gyms

4. Closed Events / Competitions

5. Live Spectator Events/Competition

PHASE 1: TRAINING IN ISOLATION

Personal hygiene and personal protective measures should always be practiced.

Boxers should train at home or in isolation, following the National or State “Stay-at-Home” advisory.

PHASE 2: TRAINING WITH A COACH

Coaches can support their Boxers by planning training in 3 stages. At any time between Stage 1 (non-contact) to Stage 3 (contact), training may be permitted to return to Public Facilities or Gyms based on national/local guidelines.

The following are general guidelines to protect against Covid-19 in training:

Note: **Any individual who is ill or feels unwell should NOT attend training.** Further, because up to **44% of those infected do not have symptoms** and those who do develop symptoms can take up to 14 days for them to appear, it should NOT be assumed that a person does not have COVID-19. **Every person must always take protective measures even if they are symptom free.**

The Coach should always wear a (clean) protective facial mask when training others.

2.A NON-CONTACT TRAINING AND GENERAL PERSONAL GUIDELINES

- Boxers and Coach should maintain social distancing of 6 feet (2 M) focused on **any training that avoids physical contact.**
- Do not share personal equipment- Gloves, Towels, water bottles
- Hand washing for a minimum of 20 seconds with soap and water should be done pre, post, and during training.
 - **How to wash your hands**
 - **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
 - **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
 - **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
 - **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
 - **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.
- Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

How to use hand sanitizer

- Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds.

- Sanitizers do not get rid of all types of germs
- Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy

- Avoid drinking from public water coolers or refilling water bottles from these coolers.
- Wipe or spray public used/accessed equipment, objects, and surfaces before and after use such as door handles, gym bags, counters etc. *Cleaning with soap and water removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. It lowers the risk of spreading infection. Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces. By killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.*
- Take a full shower before and after training with soap and water.
- Do not spit or clear nasal secretions in publicly accessed or exposed settings.
- Before and after training, shower with soap and water.
- Limit time in communal facilities, bathrooms, showers etc.
- Place dirty clothing/used towels/ personal gear in plastic bag to avoid potential cross contamination with other clean items of clothing and sanitize.
- Use face mask when moving in public or outdoor facilities.
- Stay home if you are sick. Keep away from people who are sick.

2.B MANAGED NON-CONTACT TRAINING WITH A COACH

- **Individual** non-contact supervised technical skills training can include shared equipment such as bags, speedball, pads, paddles, focus mitts, shields. Social Distancing is enforced. **No contact or sparring. Shadow Boxing only.**
- Measures to maintain personal hygiene as stated in 2.A should be followed.
- The Coach should wear a protective facial mask.
- May include Team training (recommended less than 10 persons) with minimum personal space of 4 Meters / 12 feet. This distance is recommended because during heavy breathing as done during practice and training, the virus can travel further than just breathing, or talking by a person who may have the virus.

2.C CONTACT TRAINING WITH A COACH

Contact training should only resume if the Boxer/Team and Coach have been tested and show no symptoms of the virus or have self-isolated or quarantined for 14 days and do not show symptoms of the virus.

- Sparring resumes
- Limit access to the gym by non-essential personnel.
- If a Boxer is preparing for competition, then boxer should be prepared to self-quarantine for a minimum of 14 days with their corner / team in preparation for competition if so instructed.

PHASE 3: RETURN TO TRAINING IN PUBLIC FACILITIES/ GYMS

Once restrictions are lifted allowing the return to training facilities and gyms, these facilities must be able to comply with the public health guidelines of the Centre of Disease Control and any National and State governing health and safety recommendations. It is your personal responsibility to also protect yourself.

- Return to public training facilities may be associated with any of the stages 2.A -2.C identified in Phase 2 of training recommendations previously stated.

General Considerations For Training Facilities And Gyms:

MAINTAINING A HYGIENIC TRAINING ENVIRONMENT:

- Establish a daily schedule for the routine cleaning to maintain a healthy environment.
- Frequently used and high traffic areas should be cleaned with soap and water AND sanitized more regularly especially when facilities are in use. This includes equipment, floors, mats, bags, counters, door handles, handrails, bathroom surfaces including toilets, showers, and sinks and other communal areas.
- Hard, non-porous surfaces require more frequent cleaning and disinfection.
- Porous materials like carpets in high traffic areas should be removed as contamination can be spread through the soles of shoes.
- Have hand sanitizer available on entry / exit and all high traffic areas / public spaces and a sink with soap and water at the entry to wash hands.
- Facilities should not encourage socializing.
- Any symptomatic person or untested individual should not be at/using the facilities.

RETURN TO THE RING

Boxing competition must be re-structured to mitigate the risk of spread of Covid-19 and to minimize strain to the local Healthcare System. The WBA will work with Promoters, Regional Bodies and Local Commissions to restart competitive boxing by hosting Closed Door Events, and later to hold Live Venue Events. Any person who tests positive for Covid-19 within 14 days of competition is exempt from participation.

The Commission should also have every participant complete a pre-event risk screening questionnaire.

Since the reliability of testing protocols for Covid-19 is not conclusive presently, the Medical Committee does NOT endorse events at this time. The Guidelines presented below are intended to provide guidance, education and informational updates.

Promoters may view Geographic Risk Assessment by visiting:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html>

PHASE 4: CLOSED DOOR EVENTS (LIMITED PERSONNEL)

For the purpose of this document, a closed event is considered restricted access competition without a live audience. It is also featured by limited numbers of essential ring personnel. Promoters may also have live broadcast of event via close circuit television, live streaming or pay per view etc.

In a Covid-19 environment, the sanctioning body may temporarily redefine who is viewed as essential personnel to limit exposure in the immediate ring environment including limiting ring access. It is understood that in the least, anyone who will have access to the ring, must test negative for Covid-19, has been subject to daily temperature readings and remains symptom free.

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Event

- The number of working participants should be limited to improve the safety in managing the production of the event **and** minimize the numbers of persons exposed to potential risk. This should be approximately 15 people.
- From an operational and safety standpoint, the following may be considered essential personnel using social distancing guidelines: Commission Representative / sanctioning body Representative (Supervisor) if a Championship event, 2 Boxers, 2 Corners each, Referee, 3 Judges, Timekeeper, Ringside Physician and Promoter. Traditional distances to the ring may be modified.
- Respecting the social distancing environment, other onsite personnel will include Event Management staff (including Promoter team, venue, and security), Paramedic Ambulance

Services, 2 Inspectors, Ring Announcer, Camera crew, who should not have contact with any ring personnel.

- Additional persons may include a Doping Control Officer.
- Boxing card should be limited in the number of bouts to facilitate ease of management of production.
- Use of local Personnel /Officials should be encouraged to limit travel risk exposure.
- If National travel restrictions are still enforced, it also means that all Boxers on the card will also be local so amendments in sanction regulations may be required by approving bodies.
- Clean and disinfect the ring and ropes before, after and between fights.
- Referee will wear gloves and may wear facial mask and / facial splash protector.
- All working ringside Personnel should wear protective masks
- Computers should not be shared
- Main table for Officials should be set for: Local Commission taking scores, 1 Assistant or the Supervisor from sanctioning Body and Timekeeper, using social distancing guidelines.
- Anyone receiving the score cards should wear gloves
- Large disposable bags to be used at ringside to remove towels, gloves, wraps etc. after event.
- Commission should monitor and enforce the proper use of Protective masks at ringside.
- Nearest Health Care Facilities that is not treating Covid-19 patients should be notified by the Commission before the event, to plan ahead in the event that a Boxer needs to be taken for x-ray or stitching.
- Notice should also be given to the closest High Level Facility should a Boxer need to be transferred due to an extremely dangerous injury such as subdural hematomas - whether or not there are positive Covid-cases being treated.

Additionally, persons should NOT WORK AN EVENT if they are:

- A person with heart disease, chronic lung, or asthmatic condition
- Person with compromised health condition - diabetes, kidney disease or other comorbidity
- Pregnant
- A person who has been exposed to anyone who has tested positive for Covid-19
- A person who has had fever, cough, or flu-like symptoms in the past 14 days
- A person who has travelled abroad within 14 days of an event.

Other Considerations: Airport/Train and Hotel

- Masks should be worn in vehicles with other persons and public spaces
- Transport arrangements should be structured 1 car/ 2 persons or shuttle bus with 1 person every other seat or 1 person per row.
- Promoter should favor hotel conducting temperature screening of *all guests and facilities to conduct the medical and rules reading in order to minimize unnecessary movement and exposure.*
- Participants should be given a pre-event screening questionnaire which includes declaration of travel and symptoms, if any, in the past 14 days.
- All event Participants should have their temperature recorded upon check-in at hotel and daily up to the event.
- **All essential event Participants or persons who will have ring access should be tested for Covid-19 upon arrival**

Weigh-in – 24-36 hours before the event

- Only licensed and approved persons should attend the Weigh-in. (Attending Boxers would have tested negative for COVID-19 at the Medical)
- A temperature screening can be performed on everyone entering the weigh-in area
- Where the technology exists, the image of the scale may be projected onto a wall so as to minimize the huddling around the scale.
- Seating should be set up to adhere to social distancing rules.
- A protective facial mask should be worn by anyone who has access to the weigh-in.
- The Weigh-In should take place after all medicals have been completed.
- Only licensed and tested persons should be allowed in the staging area/platform for the weigh-in: As a guide this may include 2 Boxers and a Representative each, the local Commission Representative, Supervisor and Promoter.
- Only the Boxers will be allowed to break social-distancing rules following a negative test result. Their masks may be removed for the purpose of photo.

Rules Reading

- The Rules Reading /glove selection room should be a closed and restricted access space limited to the Commission, Supervisor (if a sanctioned Title event), Boxers and a coach each.
- Rules reading room seating will be set up for social distancing of 2 M/ 6 feet.
- Whoever is conducting the rules will wear a facial protective mask.
- The Commission / Supervisor should use technology efficiently. Documents requiring signing can be done using a tablet / ipad, so screen and pen can be cleaned after use.
- A Commission table and a Sanction Body table should be set with seating to facilitate a smooth flow for signing documents.

General Covid Testing Procedures : What to expect

Nasal Swab

The nasopharyngeal or Nasal Swab test is the most common test for COVID-19, and is recommended by the CDC to determine an active case of COVID-19. This test may be done upon arrival at the hotel or again as part of the Pre-Fight Medical Exam. It can be completed within 10 second and is best if you relax and tilt your head slightly back and allow your mouth to open.

The tester inserts a Q-tip like swab through your nose and gently pushes to the back of your throat. The swab is then rotated to collect any viral specimens that are usually found in that section. The process is described as being slightly uncomfortable but is not painful.

Antigen Screening

Some sport commissions may also require antigen screening which is a test to identify people with signs of past infection of Covid-19 virus.

At this time, science does NOT support the use of antibody testing to clear someone from the potential of future infection. A positive Antigen screening test is NOT conclusive, as science has not determined IF or how long a person could be immune. All boxers, coaches, and other officials must follow all guidelines, regardless of prior COVID-19 infection or positive antibody testing. **Until further is known, Boxers and the Referee must test negative for both tests to take part in an event.**

PHASE 5: LIVE SPECTATOR EVENTS/COMPETITION

Live spectator events should NOT take place in an environment of a pandemic threat. It is understood that different countries may elect to restart sport and public events even in the risk of Covid-19 exposure or spread. Guidelines listed in Phase 4 should be followed.

All Participants must be medically cleared and test negative for Covid-19 to take part in an event

- Travelling /Overseas Boxers and any representative/team should also be licensed and cleared for competition by their local commission through a negative Covid-19 test BEFORE they can travel internationally to compete.
- If required by the local Commission, Boxers with their working Camp/corner and Referee should be able to self-quarantine for a duration of 14 days before an event. *When borders open, some government regulations may still require Travelers to self-quarantine for 14 days upon arrival.*

- Event should be a highly coordinated and collaborated effort among Promoter, Commission, Sanctioning Body, Venue Management, Medical Personnel, Security, Participants and Spectators.
- All Participants should understand their risk of exposure when traveling and pay special attention to public places as hotels, restaurants, transportation and outside sparring partners.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR EVENT ORGANIZERS AND THEIR VENUE

- Guarantee the availability of hand washing facilities, alcohol-based hand gel at multiple locations in the gym/arena and lodging
- Ensure proper signage showing main hygiene measures in all areas of the gym/arena
- Signage should also discourage anyone who is symptomatic, or who has potential additional risks (comorbidities, medications, allergies, old age) to attend public events.
- Teams/ Participants should be able to use a different access/exit than public unscreened Spectators
- Guarantee the availability of rubber gloves and masks for staff and volunteers who handle clothing, towels, etc. (Recommended single use towels)
- Have special containers available in all areas of the gym, including locker rooms, with lids, for the disposal of tissues and other used disposables.
- Provide hand sanitizing towels and advise gym/sand cleaning staff to sanitize door handles, toilet handles, bathroom tap handles, etc. in all areas several times a day
- Designate seating for spectators to maintain a physical distance of approximately 2 meters/ 12 feet
- Crowd screening should be done.

Event Dressing Rooms

- Hand sanitizer available at entry/exit of room to be used
- Closed containers/ bins in dressing rooms for all disposable hygienic materials
- Conduct general cleaning and disinfection of the dressing room area. Special attention to disinfecting frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, bathroom surfaces, benches, chairs, and handrails, should be cleaned with soap and water and sanitized before and after the event.
- Provide shoe protectors for the Boxer to be worn to walk to the ring.

Risk Communication

- Ensure adequate public health advice and mitigation actions are available before and during the event to all participants, support staff and all relevant parties.
- Advise, through effective communication campaigns, groups at risk do not attend events.

General Guidelines For Participants (Boxers, Officials, Judges Etc)

Always demonstrate personal and social responsibility for health and safety. Any person who is licensed or commissioned to participate in a boxing event (boxers, referees, judges, multi-disciplinary team, officials, and spectators) should proactively and regularly check their health status.

Before the Event

- All Boxers / Team who are competing outside of their country must test negative for Covid-19 before travel.
- Any Official who is feeling ill should not accept an assignment.
- Participants should be familiar with all prevention and infection control measures, and where to find further information.

Immediately Prior and During the Event

- Know and cooperate with the local Commission / medical staff as required.
- Submit to a daily temperature recording from the date of arrival to competition (organized by Commission)
- Upon arrival /check-in at the designated event hotel, complete a declaration of travel and symptoms, if any, in the past 14 days.
- Any temperature above 38 ° C should be reported to the medical director and the event Organizer.
- Avoid hugs, handshakes and high fives.
- Regularly wash your hands with soap and water (20 seconds). Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer or sanitized wet wipes if soap and water are not available
- Practice respiratory etiquette (keep your distance: at least 1 m/ 6 feet, cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or a bent elbow, wash your hands).
- When working, Corner personnel should wear latex gloves.
- Towels should not be shared.
- Boxers shall not share clothing, soap or other personal items such as water bottles
- Boxers should use disposable shoe covers to walk to the ring. Sanitize soles of ring shoes before using the shoe covers. Shoe covers will be removed and disposed before entering ring.
- If a Title belt or Medal is involved, it should be handed to the Referee to be placed on the Boxer.
- Officials should wear clothing without hanging objects to minimize contact points (ie. no ties).

Post-event phase

- Support the authorities' response in the event of suspected transmission of the COVID-19 virus.
- Facilitate the exchange of information should any participant develop symptoms after an event (contact information, itineraries, hotel etc.)

REFERREE GUIDELINES

1. A Referee should undergo regular health checks and submit an annual medical report to their local commission so they can be cleared medically fit to work in the ring.
2. A Referee should not accept an assignment if they have any concerns whether the safety measures in place are adequate. Stress compromises the immune system.

DO NOT ACCEPT AN ASSIGNMENT if you are:

- A person with heart disease, chronic lung, or asthmatic condition
- Person with compromised health condition - diabetes, kidney disease or other comorbidity
- Pregnant
- A person who has been exposed to anyone who has tested positive for Covid-19
- A person who has had fever, cough, or flu-like symptoms in the past 14 days
- A person who has travelled abroad within 14 days of an event.

A Referee who accepts an assignment must be prepared to self- quarantine for 14 days before an assignment AND to be tested for Covid-19.

For either Closed Door or Live events, once international borders are open, a Referee accepting an assignment across State or International assignment should ideally

- Test negative for Covid-19 before travel
- Or self-quarantined for 14 days prior to an event.
- If using public transport, be able to arrive a minimum of 5 days before an event and be subject to testing upon arrival.
- Be prepared to restrict movement in public spaces.

At all times a Referee is expected to manage their risks of exposure at the hotel, restaurants, transportation, venue, weigh-in, medical and any other exposure with other outside persons maintaining social distancing, using protective mask and hand washing with soap and water etc.

Equipment /Gear

- All WBA appointed Referees will be given a “WBA Protective Kit” with all essential safety equipment to fulfill their duties.
- A Referee will keep his work clothes protected in a plastic bag
- A Referee will carry on his person hand sanitizer and hand wipes
- At the venue, a restricted access room should be available for Referees.
- Referee should consider wearing head cover, gloves, facial mask and goggles or facial splash protector in the ring. (Further research is required to determine the necessity and effectiveness).

END