

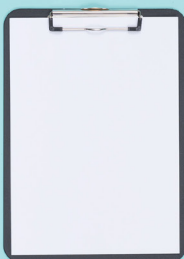
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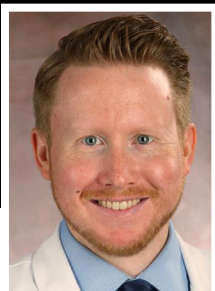
DOCTORS DIVERSIFY



The Rise of the Nontraditional Role

Bruises, Biceps and Bureaucracy:

A Doctor's Life on the Kentucky Boxing and Wrestling Commission



by Josh Christensen, MD

On the third Wednesday of every month, I attend the meeting of the Kentucky Boxing and Wrestling Commission (KBWC). This was not a role I envisioned myself having coming out of my orthopedic surgery training. My “dream” as a medical student was to be the team physician for a professional sports team (preferably my favorite football team, the San Francisco 49ers). But as I went through orthopedic surgery residency and then a sports medicine fellowship, I saw the time commitment necessary to have that position. One is essentially on call 24/7 and then often does not even perform needed surgeries on the athletes, as this is usually dictated by their agents. Being a team physician sometimes requires treating problems outside the scope of sports medicine as well. I remember hearing about one team physician I worked with having to write an antibiotic prescription for an athlete with

a raging STI. So, when I was presented with this opportunity in 2021, I thought it may be a good balance between time commitment and my interest in sports medicine. A staff member of Governor Andy Beshear contacted me and asked if I would have an interest in participating. I have been fortunate over the years of getting to know the Governor a little bit, so I was happy to accept the offer if he was asking. I have always enjoyed watching boxing, so there was already an inherent interest in one of the sports I would be involved with. Unfortunately, boxing has waned in popularity alongside its quality. Gone are the days of Ali vs. Frazier and even Tyson vs. Holyfield. I would love to see an exciting young talent or two come along and bring back the glory days!

The KBWC is also in charge of licensing and regulating professional wrestling and Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). My interest in these

two sports is minimal, but the popularity of MMA is certainly rising and our state hosting more and more events. I have been invited to multiple Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) parties by my friend Dr. Chet Mays but have only attended one or two! On June 8, 2024, Louisville hosted the UltimateFC Fight Night at the Yum! Center. This was only the second time that the UFC had come to Louisville and the first time in 13 years. We are hoping that it will not be another 13 years until they come back. The KBWC received great feedback from UFC staff regarding the event. WWE is often in the state of Kentucky, most recently again at the Yum! Center on May 12, 2025. There have been multiple WWE events in Lexington over the years, as well.

The KBWC employs a full-time executive director. Other members of the commission are mostly attorneys. As the only physician on the commission, I am often asked by the executive director to review medical records

appeal to the commission if they believe that the rules of the match were not properly followed and thus affected the outcome. At last month's meeting, there was a boxer who was contesting the outcome of a match where his opponent fell out of the ring and did not return to it in the required amount of time under state regulations. However, the referee did not start counting down the time to the boxer for him to know he needed to get back in the ring. We also discuss whether licenses should be granted to applicants whose lives have included adherence to court orders.

In closing, I believe my time with the KBWC has been well spent. I have enjoyed discussing matters of combat sports with my colleagues and have met some great people along the way. I plan on staying on the commission for as long as they will have me or until I get asked to participate in something else instead. If you have any questions or are interested in participating, do not hesitate to get in touch with me! 🌸

Dr. Christensen is an orthopedic surgeon, specializing in arthroscopic and replacement surgeries of the knee and shoulder at Norton Audubon Hospital.

of applicants to ensure that it is as safe as can be expected for them to participate in a combat sport. Occasionally, I feel as an orthopedic surgeon I am not the most qualified specialist for a particular issue and have reached out to my colleagues in other areas who have been gracious enough to provide me with their expertise. I am in the process of re-creating the Medical Advisory Panel, which has not existed for several years. It is supposed to consist of three to five physicians, one of whom must be a neurologist. Something that should have taken a few months has taken a few years. I now truly understand – when others have mentioned the slow process of government bureaucracy – what they were referring to. Our monthly meetings can range from standard and routine to quite interesting. On slower months, we go over the event report and small regulatory issues, but other months we have somewhat lengthy debates on whether the outcome of a match should be changed. A recent alteration to our responsibilities has allowed participants to