

**LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

**STATE ATHLETIC CONTROL BOARD**

**Mixed Martial Arts Unified Rules of Conduct  
Additional Mixed Martial Arts Rules**

Proposed New Rules: N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A and 24B

Proposed Amendment: N.J.A.C. 13:46-4.25

Authorized By: State Athletic Control Board, Gerard Gormley, Chairman; Larry Hazzard, Sr.,  
Commissioner

Authority: N.J.S.A. 5:2A-4, 7, and 8(b)

Calendar Reference: See Summary below for explanation of exception to calendar requirement.

Proposal Number: PRN 2002-314

**Submit comments by November 2, 2002 to:**

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State Athletic Control Board

140 East Front Street

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The agency proposal follows:

**Summary**

The sport known as mixed martial arts features competitors from various martial arts and Olympic sports, such as karate, jiu-jitsu, muay thai, tae kwon do, boxing, kick-boxing, wrestling and judo. The competitors are highly skilled in multiple martial arts disciplines and compete against each other in a combative sporting event. There is no predetermined outcome as to the victor of the bout. In that sense, mixed martial arts competitions are similar to boxing and kick-boxing matches. The contests are not scripted like most professional wrestling events.

Unlike professional boxing and kick-boxing, mixed martial artists are allowed to tap out. The contestants can tap the floor or their opponent or verbally notify the referee that they do not wish to continue. Upon notice of a tap out, the referee will immediately terminate the contest. The mixed martial artist who tapped out will be declared the loser of the bout via submission.

Mixed martial arts techniques can be broken down into two categories, striking and grappling. The types of strikes permitted include blows with hands, feet, knees or elbows. Grappling involves submissions, choke holds, throws and take downs. The goal of a mixed martial artist is to knock out his or her opponent, force the opponent to tap out or win the contest by scoring more points than their opponent.

In past years, the State Athletic Control Board ( SACB) had been hesitant to sanction mixed martial arts events due to the lack of formal rules in the sport which created health and safety concerns. For example, the sport generally did not divide contestants into weight classes, had contestants participate in several matches on the same evening and did not provide time limits on either round or bout length. However, in the last year or so, promoters of mixed martial arts events began to develop formal rules and regulations which included procedures to minimize the risk of injury to the contestant.

After becoming aware that detailed regulations were now in place for most mixed martial arts events, the SACB then began a course of communications with the California State Athletic Commission with regard to the subject of regulating mixed martial arts events. California has been the host state for several mixed martial arts events and has established rules and regulations for the conduct of the sport in their state.

As of September 2000, the SACB began to allow mixed martial arts promoters to conduct events in New Jersey upon submission and review of their established rules and regulations. In addition, the promoters had to agree to incorporate the SACB's medical testing and safety requirements. The intent was to allow the SACB to observe actual events and gather information needed to determine what would be necessary to establish a comprehensive set of rules to effectively regulate the sport.

On April 3, 2001, the SACB held a meeting in Trenton to discuss the regulation of mixed martial arts events. This meeting was set up by SACB Commissioner Larry Hazzard, Sr. in an attempt to unify the myriad of rules and regulations which have been utilized by the different mixed martial arts organizations. At this meeting, the proposed uniform rules were agreed upon by the SACB, several other regulatory bodies, numerous promoters of mixed martial arts events and other interested parties in attendance. The meeting was quite comprehensive and lasted over three hours. At the conclusion of the meeting, all parties in attendance were able to agree upon a uniform set of rules to govern the sport of mixed martial arts. In recent months, other states, including Nevada, have begun to sanction mixed martial arts events based upon the SACB's regulatory framework which arose at the conclusion of the April meeting.

The SACB anticipates that this proposal will result in uniform rules for mixed martial arts events held throughout the United States. In a similar sense, in March of 1998, the SACB proposed uniform rules for the conduct of championship professional boxing matches. Since the proposal, these rules for championship rules have become the norm throughout the country.

The proposed new rules in subchapter 24A contain the rules that were universally agreed upon at the aforementioned April 2001 meeting held at the SACB offices in Trenton.

The proposed new rules in subchapter 24B include additional rules that the SACB deems necessary, but that may vary from state to state. This subchapter incorporates existing rules applicable to professional boxers and boxing matches and makes them applicable to mixed martial arts events.

The following list summarizes the proposed new rules which the SACB believes are necessary to achieve effective regulation of mixed martial arts events.

N.J.A.C 13:46-24A.1 lists the different weight classes for mixed martial artists.

N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.2 details requirements for the construction of the fighting area.

N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.3 provides that stools or chairs are required outside the fighting area for the contestant and his or her seconds.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.4 states that a water bucket and a water bottle must be provided.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.5 explains the specifications for bandaging a mixed martial artist's hands.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.6 provides that the use of a mouthpiece by a mixed martial artist is mandatory.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.7 provides requirements for the use of a groin protector and a chest protector.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.8 states that the use of gloves is mandatory.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.9 specifies the types of apparel that are either mandatory or prohibited.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.10 states requirements for the physical appearance of a mixed martial artist.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.11 states the duration of the round length in a mixed martial arts event.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.12 provides that the referee and ringside physician are both authorized to stop a contest.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.13 states the factors for a judge to consider when scoring a mixed martial arts event.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.14 states what warnings a mixed martial artist may receive from the referee.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.15 lists the various fouls which if committed will result in penalties.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.16 states the consequences of injuries sustained during competition.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24A.17 states the different possible outcomes of a contest.

N.J.A.C. 13:46-24B.1 provides that mixed martial arts events are subject to the same requirements of N.J.A.C. 13:46-4 applicable to professional boxing.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24B.2 subjects mixed martial arts events to the same bond procedure of N.J.A.C. 13:46-4.8 applicable to professional boxing.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24B.3 subjects mixed martial arts events to the inspector requirements of N.J.A.C. 13:46-9 applicable to professional boxing.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24B.4 subjects mixed martial arts events to the health and safety requirements of N.J.A.C. 13:46-12A and 12B applicable to professional boxing.  
N.J.A.C. 13:46-24B.5 subjects mixed martial arts events to the weigh in timing requirements of N.J.A.C. 13:46-1A.3 applicable to professional boxing.

The proposal includes an amendment to N.J.A.C. 13:46-4.25(b). N.J.A.C. 13:46-4.25(b) currently states that the fee for a boxer's license shall be \$5.00. The amendment would require that mixed martial artists pay \$5.00 to obtain a license. Therefore, the proposed amendment would require that the fee for a boxer or a mixed martial artist license be \$5.00. This notice of proposed new rules and amendment is not required to be referenced in a rulemaking calendar since a public comment period of 60 days is being provided. See N.J.A.C. 1:30-3.3(a)5.

### Social Impact

The proposed new rules and amendment implement the strict regulation of mixed martial arts events in New Jersey. The proposed new rules will increase the public trust and confidence in the integrity of the sport as it exists in New Jersey. The health and safety of mixed martial arts competitors will be improved due to required medical testing, medical insurance and the presence of physicians, emergency medical technicians and an ambulance at each event.

### Economic Impact

The proposed new rules and amendment will have an economic impact on mixed martial arts promoters, co-promoters, mixed martial arts contestants and mixed martial arts seconds who are required to be licensed by the SACB.

Promoters and co-promoters will be required to carry medical insurance, and incur costs for the presence of SACB inspectors, SACB physicians, emergency medical technicians and an ambulance at each event.

The promoter or mixed martial arts competitor would be required to pay for medical testing prior to licensing and events.

However, prior to the SACB's recent sanctioning of professional combative mixed martial arts events, no such events were held in New Jersey. Therefore, the above named parties should be able to overcome the additional economic costs as noted because the Atlantic City casinos, Continental Airlines Arena and other New Jersey venues are now deemed attractive market options.

#### Federal Standards Statement

A Federal standards analysis is not required because the proposed new rules and amendment are not subject to any Federal requirements or standards at the current time.

#### Jobs Impact

The proposed new rules and amendment should result in the generation of jobs. The regulation and approval of mixed martial arts events in New Jersey should result in events being held in New Jersey. Therefore, all individuals associated with an event, such as promoters, contestants and staff will have the opportunity to work at events held in the State.

#### Agriculture Industry Impact

The proposed new rules and amendment will have no impact on the agriculture industry.

#### Regulatory Flexibility Analysis

Some mixed martial arts promoters and managers may qualify as small businesses as defined under the Regulatory Flexibility Act, N.J.S.A. 52:14B-16 et seq. The proposed new rules impose reporting and compliance requirements on promoters and others involved in the business of staging mixed martial arts events, as discussed in the Summary above. The costs of compliance are discussed in the Economic Impact above. It is not anticipated that there will be a need for professional services or outside consultants. These proposed new rules are intended to improve the safety of participants. It is paramount that the health and safety of the mixed martial arts contestant take priority over economic considerations. Accordingly, no exemption or lesser measure was granted based on the business size of the promoter or manager.

#### Smart Growth Impact

The proposed new rules and amendment shall have no impact on the achievement of smart growth and the implementation of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

Full text of the proposal follows (additions indicated in boldface thus.):

13:46-4.25 License fees

(a) (No change.)

(b) The fee for a boxer's license or a mixed martial artist's license shall be \$5.00.

## SUBCHAPTER 24A; MIXED MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORM RULES

### 13:46-24A.1 Weight classes of mixed martial artists

(a) Mixed martial artists shall be divided into the following classes:

1. Flyweight under 125.9 pounds;
2. Bantamweight 126 lbs. - 134.9 pounds;
3. Featherweight 135 lbs. - 144.9 pounds;
4. Lightweight 145 lbs. - 154.9 pounds;
5. Welterweight 155 lbs. - 169.9 pounds;
6. Middleweight 170 lbs. - 184.9 pounds;
7. Light Heavyweight 185 lbs. - 204.9 pounds;
8. Heavyweight 204 lbs. - 264.9 pounds; and
9. Super Heavyweight over 265 pounds.

### 13:46-24A.2 Fighting area

(a) The fighting area canvas shall be no smaller than 18 feet by 18 feet and no larger than 32 feet by 32 feet. The fighting area canvas shall be padded in a manner as approved by the Commissioner, with at least one inch layer of foam padding. Padding shall extend beyond the fighting area and over the edge of the platform. No vinyl or other plastic rubberized covering shall be permitted.

(b) The fighting area canvas shall not be more than four feet above the floor of the building and shall have suitable steps or ramp for use by the participants. Posts shall be made of metal not more than six inches in diameter, extending from the floor of the building to a minimum height of 58 inches above the fighting area canvas and shall be properly padded in a manner approved by the Commissioner.

(c) The fighting area canvas area shall be enclosed by a fence made of such material as will not allow a fighter to fall out or break through it onto the floor or spectators, including, but not limited to, vinyl coated chain link fencing. All metal parts shall be covered and padded in a manner approved by the Commissioner and shall not be abrasive to the contestants.

(d) The fence shall provide two separate entries onto the fighting area canvas.

### 13:46-24A.3 Stools

(a) A ring stool of a type approved by the Commissioner shall be available for each contestant.

(b) An appropriate number of stools or chairs, of a type approved by the Commissioner, shall be available for each contestant's seconds. Such stools or chairs shall be located near each contestant's corner.

(c) All stools and chairs used must be thoroughly cleaned or replaced after the conclusion of each bout.

### 13:46-24A.4 Equipment

For each bout, the promoter shall provide a clean water bucket and a clean plastic water bottle in each corner.

#### 13:46-24A.5 Specifications for bandages on mixed martial artist's hands

(a) In all weight classes, the bandages on each contestant's hand shall be restricted to soft gauze cloth not more than 13 yards in length and two inches in width, held in place by not more than 10 feet of surgeon's tape, one inch in width, for each hand.

(b) Surgeon's adhesive tape shall be placed directly on each hand for protection near the wrist. The tape may cross the back of the hand twice and extend to cover and protect the knuckles when the hand is clenched to make a fist.

(c) The bandages shall be evenly distributed across the hand.

(d) Bandages and tape shall be placed on the contestant's hands in the dressing room in the presence of the inspector and in the presence of the manager or chief second of his or her opponent.

(e) Under no circumstances are gloves to be placed on the hands of a contestant until the approval of the inspector is received.

#### 13:46-24A.6 Mouth pieces

(a) All contestants are required to wear a mouthpiece during competition. The mouthpiece shall be subject to examination and approval by the attending physician.

(b) The round cannot begin without the mouthpiece in place.

(c) If the mouthpiece is involuntarily dislodged during competition, the referee shall call time, clean the mouthpiece and reinsert the mouthpiece at the first opportune moment, without interfering with the immediate action.

#### 13:46-24A.7 Protective equipment

(a) Male mixed martial artists shall wear a groin protector of their own selection, of a type approved by the Commissioner.

(b) Female mixed martial artists are prohibited from wearing groin protectors.

(c) Female mixed martial artists shall wear a chest protector during competition. The chest protector shall be subject to approval of the Commissioner.

#### 13:46-24A.8 Gloves

(a) The gloves shall be new for all main events and in good condition or they must be replaced.

(b) All contestants shall wear either four, five or six ounce gloves, supplied by the promoter and approved by the commission. No contestant shall supply their own gloves for participation.

#### 13:46-24A.9 Apparel

- (a) Each contestant shall wear mixed martial arts shorts, biking shorts, or kick-boxing shorts.
- (b) Gi's or shirts are prohibited during competition.
- (c) Shoes are prohibited during competition.

#### 13:46-24A.10 Appearance

- (a) All contestants shall be cleanly shaven immediately prior to competition, except that a contestant may wear a closely cropped mustache.
- (b) Hair shall be trimmed or tied back in such a manner as not to interfere with the vision of either contestant or cover any part of a contestant's face.
- (c) Jewelry or piercing accessories are prohibited during competition.

#### 13:46-24A.11 Round length

- (a) Each non-championship mixed martial arts contest shall be three rounds, of five minutes duration, with a one minute rest period between each round.
- (b) Each championship mixed martial arts contest shall be five rounds, of five minutes duration, with a one minute rest period between each round.

#### 13:46-24A.12 Stopping a contest

The referee and ringside physician are the sole arbiters of a bout and are the only individuals authorized to enter the fighting area at any time during competition and authorized to stop a contest.

#### 13:46-24A.13 Judging

- (a) All bouts will be evaluated and scored by three judges.
- (b) The 10-Point Must System will be the standard system of scoring a bout. Under the 10-Point Must Scoring System, 10 points must be awarded to the winner of the round and nine points or less must be awarded to the loser, except for a rare even round, which is scored (10-10).
- (c) Judges shall evaluate mixed martial arts techniques, such as effective striking, effective grappling, control of the fighting area, effective aggressiveness and defense.
- (d) Evaluations shall be made in the order in which the techniques appear in (c) above, giving the most weight in scoring to effective striking, effective grappling, control of the fighting area and effective aggressiveness and defense.
- (e) Effective striking is judged by determining the total number of legal heavy strikes landed by a contestant.

(f) Effective grappling is judged by considering the amount of successful executions of a legal takedown and reversals. Examples of factors to consider are take downs from standing position to mount position, passing the guard to mount position, and bottom position fighters using an active, threatening guard.

(g) Fighting area control is judged by determining who is dictating the pace, location and position of the bout. Examples of factors to consider are countering a grappler's attempt at takedown by remaining standing and legally striking ; taking down an opponent to force a ground fight; creating threatening submission attempts, passing the guard to achieve mount, and creating striking opportunities.

(h) Effective aggressiveness means moving forward and landing a legal strike.

(i) Effective defense means avoiding being struck, taken down or reversed while countering with offensive attacks.

(j) The following objective scoring criteria shall be utilized by the judges when scoring a round;

1. A round is to be scored as a 10-10 Round when both contestants appear to be fighting evenly and neither contestant shows clear dominance in a round;

2. A round is to be scored as a 10-9 Round when a contestant wins by a close margin, landing the greater number of effective legal strikes, grappling and other maneuvers;

3. A round is to be scored as a 10-8 Round when a contestant overwhelmingly dominates by striking or grappling in a round.

4. A round is to be scored as a 10-7 Round when a contestant totally dominates by striking or grappling in a round.

(k) Judges shall use a sliding scale and recognize the length of time the fighters are either standing or on the ground, as follows:

1. If the mixed martial artists spent a majority of a round on the canvas, then:

- i. Effective grappling is weighed first; and
- ii. Effective striking is then weighed

2. If the mixed martial artists spent a majority of a round standing, then:

1. Effective striking is weighed first; and
2. Effective grappling is then weighed

3. If a round ends with a relatively even amount of standing and canvas fighting, striking and grappling are weighed equally.

#### 13:46-24A.14 Warnings

(a) The referee shall issue a single warning for the following infractions. After the initial warning, if the prohibited conduct persists, a penalty will be issued. The penalty may result in a deduction of points or disqualification.

1. Holding or grabbing the fence;
2. Holding opponent's shorts or gloves; or
3. The presence of more than one second on the fighting area perimeter.

#### 13:46-24A.15 Fouls

(a) The following are fouls and will result in penalties if committed:

1. Butting with the head;
2. Eye gouging of any kind;
3. Biting or spitting at an opponent;
4. Hair pulling;
5. Fish hooking;
6. Groin attacks of any kind;
7. Intentionally placing a finger in any opponent's orifice;
8. Downward pointing of elbow strikes;
9. Small joint manipulation;
10. Strikes to the spine or back of the head;
11. Heel kicks to the kidney;
12. Throat strikes of any kind;
13. Clawing, pinching, twisting the flesh or grabbing the clavicle;
14. Kicking the head of a grounded fighter;
15. Kneeing the head of a grounded fighter;
16. Stomping of a grounded fighter;
17. The use of abusive language in fighting area;
18. Any unsportsmanlike conduct that causes an injury to opponent;
19. Attacking an opponent on or during the break;
20. Attacking an opponent who is under the referee's care at the time;
21. Timidity (avoiding contact, or consistent dropping of mouthpiece, or faking an injury);
22. Interference from a mixed martial artists seconds;
23. Throwing an opponent out of the fighting area;
24. Flagrant disregard of the referee's instructions;
25. Spiking an opponent to the canvas on his or her head or neck.

(b) Disqualification occurs after any combination of three or the fouls listed in (a) above or after a referee determines that a foul was intentional and flagrant.

(c) Fouls will result in a point being deducted by the official scorekeeper from the offending mixed martial artist's score.

(d) Only a referee can assess a foul. If the referee does not call the foul, judges shall not make that assessment on their own and cannot factor such into their scoring calculations.

(e) A fouled fighter has up to five minutes to recuperate.

(f) If a foul is committed, the referee shall:

1. call time;
2. check the fouled mixed martial artist's condition and safety; and

3. assess the foul to the offending contestant, deduct points, and notify each corner's seconds, judges and the official scorekeeper.

g) If a bottom contestant commits a foul, unless the top contestant is injured, the fight shall continue, so as not to jeopardize the top contestant's superior positioning at the time.

1. The referee shall verbally notify the bottom contestant of the foul.

2. When the round is over, the referee shall assess the foul and notify both corners' seconds, the judges and the official scorekeeper.

3. The referee may terminate a bout based on the severity of a foul. For such a flagrant foul, a contestant shall lose by disqualification.

#### 13:46-24A.16 Injuries sustained during competition

(a) If an injury sustained during competition as a result of a legal maneuver is severe enough to terminate a bout, the injured contestant loses by technical knockout.

(b) If an injury sustained during competition as a result of an intentional foul is severe enough to terminate a bout, the contestant causing the injury loses by disqualification.

(c) If an injury is sustained during competition as a result of an intentional foul and the bout is allowed to continue, the referee shall notify the scorekeeper to automatically deduct two points from the contestant who committed the foul.

(d) If an injury sustained during competition as a result of an intentional foul causes the injured contestant to be unable to continue at a subsequent point in the contest, the injured contestant shall win by technical decision, if he or she is ahead on the score cards. If the injured contestant is even or behind on the score cards at the time of stoppage, the outcome of the bout shall be declared a technical draw.

(e) If a contestant injures himself or herself while attempting to foul his or her opponent, the referee shall not take any action in his or her favor, and the injury shall be treated in the same manner as an injury produced by a fair blow.

(f) If an injury sustained during competition as a result of an accidental foul is severe enough for the referee to stop the bout immediately, the bout shall result in a no contest if stopped before two rounds have been completed in a three round bout or if stopped before three rounds have been completed in a five round bout.

(g) If an injury sustained during competition as a result of an accidental foul is severe enough for the referee to stop the bout immediately, the bout shall result in a technical decision awarded to the contestant who is ahead on the score cards at the time the bout is stopped only when the bout is stopped after two rounds of a three round bout, or three rounds of a five round bout have been completed.

(h) There will be no scoring of an incomplete round. However, if the referee penalizes either contestant, then the appropriate points shall be deducted when the scorekeeper calculates the final score.

#### 13:46-24A.17 Types of Bout Results

(a) The following are the types of bout results:

1. Submission by:

- i. Tap Out: When a contestant physically uses his hand to indicate that he or she no longer wishes to continue; or
- ii. Verbal tap out: When a contestant verbally announces to the referee that he or she does not wish to continue;

2. Technical knockout by:

- i. Referee stops bout;
- ii. Ringside physician stops bout; or
- iii. When an injury as a result of a legal maneuver is severe enough to terminate a bout;

3. Knockout by failure to rise from the canvas;

4. Decision via score cards:

- i. Unanimous: When all three judges score the bout for the same contestant;
- ii. Split Decision: When two judges score the bout for one contestant and one judge scores for the opponent; or
- iii. Majority Decision: When two judges score the bout for the same contestant and one judge scores a draw;

5. Draws:

- i. Unanimous - When all three judges score the bout a draw; ii. Majority - When two judges score the bout a draw; or
- iii. Split - When all three judges score differently and the score total results in a draw;

6. Disqualification: When an injury sustained during competition as a result of an intentional foul is severe enough to terminate the contest;

7. Forfeit: When a contestant fails to begin competition or prematurely ends the contest for reasons other than injury or by indicating a tap out;

8. Technical Draw: When an injury sustained during competition as a result of an intentional foul causes the injured contestant to be unable to continue and the injured contestant is even or behind on the score cards at the time of stoppage;

9. Technical Decision: When the bout is prematurely stopped due to injury and a contestant is leading on the score cards; and

10. No Contest: When a contest is prematurely stopped due to accidental injury and a sufficient number of rounds have not been completed to render a decision via the score cards.

## SUBCHAPTER 24B ADDITIONAL MIXED MARTIAL ARTS RULES

### 13:46-24B.1 Licensing

(a) All mixed martial arts events shall be subject to the licensing requirements of N.J.A.C. 13:46-4.

(b) The fee for a mixed martial artist license shall be as set forth in N.J.A.C. 13:46-4.25(b). Other license fees shall be as set forth in N.J.A.C. 13:46-4.25(a).

#### 13:46-24B.2 Bond procedure

All mixed martial arts events shall be subject to the bond procedure requirements of N.J.A.C.13:46-4.8.

#### 13:46-24B.3 Inspectors

All mixed martial arts events shall be subject to the presence, duties and compensation of inspectors as required by N.J.A.C. 13:46-9.

#### 13:46-24B.4 Health and safety rules

(a) All mixed martial arts events shall be subject to the uniform medical requirements of N.J.A.C. 13:46-12A.

(b) All mixed martial arts events shall be subject to the additional health and safety requirements of N.J.A.C. 13:46-12B.

(c) All mixed martial arts events shall be subject to the emergency medical facilities and equipment requirements of N.J.A.C. 13:46-2.8.

(d) All mixed martial arts events shall be subject to the insurance requirements of N.J.A.C. 13:46-14.

#### 13:46-24B.5 Weighing of mixed martial artists

(a) Weighing of all mixed martial artists shall be conducted in accordance with the requirements for professional boxers of N.J.A.C. 13:46-1A.3.