



OFF THE ROPES: GUIDANCE TOWARDS A FULL RETURN TO AMATEUR BOXING 15 MAY 2020

England Boxing's number one priority is the safety and wellbeing of our clubs, members and staff, and as such, we will endeavour to communicate regularly and directly with our clubs and members, and will issue further guidance as and when more information becomes available.

Further to the Prime Minister's announcement on May 10, [Government guidance on the phased return of sport and recreation](#) and the [England Boxing COVID-19 Update issued on May 12](#), set out below is a further update, including considerations for amateur boxing clubs and members, as we move tentatively towards a full return to amateur boxing in England.

By its very nature, boxing poses a greater risk from COVID-19 than most other sporting activities. Unfortunately, it is therefore likely that the full return of amateur boxing will occur later than many other sports. It should also be noted that, as per Government guidance, professional boxing may be permissible sooner than amateur boxing for broadcast purposes.

Introduction

As with all communities globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on amateur boxing in England, leading to the closure of clubs, the postponement or cancellation of regional and national championships, box cups and club shows and a range of negative impacts on participants, volunteers and staff.

Above all, England Boxing recognises and pays tribute to those within the boxing community who have lost their lives and their loved ones.

Furthermore, there has been significant disruption both individually and collectively from a physical, mental and financial perspective, with many clubs experiencing immediate hardship as well as ongoing concern about whether – or when – they will be able to re-open.

England Boxing would like to thank the boxing community for coming together at this difficult time, whether you are a regional officer, a club officer, a boxer, coach or official, or any volunteer or staff member supporting our sport.

Our Medical Perspective

Professor Michael Loosemore is a Director of England Boxing. Additionally, he is:

- Lead Consultant in Sport and Exercise at the Institute of Sport, Exercise and Health
- The Chief Medical Officer “CMO” for GB Boxing and GB Snow sports
- Significant international multi games experience as a CMO or Deputy CMO including; Rio 2016, South Korea 2018 and for the England Commonwealth Games team in New Delhi 2010 and Glasgow 2014

“COVID-19 is a highly transmissible, from person to person, virus and easily spreads to those who come in close contact with infected individuals. The disease spreads through droplets from the nose or mouth when a person coughs, sneezes or exhales. These droplets can also land on surfaces or objects which other people can touch and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth.

There is currently no widespread immunity, vaccine or medication for this virus, or widely available antibody test.

It should be noted there is increasing research into the effects to multiple organs as a result of coronavirus infection – for example, potential damage to the heart and kidneys, abnormal blood clotting and damage to nerves and muscles. There is also uncertainty about long term implications.

For all these reasons, COVID-19 presents significant risks to our sport, to you, and to your family and friends. It should not be taken lightly. Whilst we all hope amateur boxing can return as quickly as possible as we know it, it is important we continue to follow Government guidance.”

Current Government Guidance

The latest Government guidance with regards to sporting activity can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation>.

As per current Government advice, you can exercise or train, as many times in a day, provided it is in a public space, either alone, with members of your household, or with 1 other person from outside your household, whilst keeping 2 metres apart at all times. Leisure facilities, including boxing clubs and indoor and outdoor gyms, are not allowed to open until further notice.

For example, a boxer could be joined by a coach or another boxer who is not a member of their household for outdoor running or drills, providing that they always keep 2 metres apart, hence, by way of example, pad work is not allowed unless within the household group.

Pad work outside of the household group, sparring or bouts of any kind are not to be undertaken at anytime (either indoors or outdoors) until the government restrictions allow and England Boxing has advised this is permissible.

The Government has set out a roadmap for potentially loosening the restrictions over the coming weeks. We are currently at Step 1 of the government's roadmap.

Government Step 2. No earlier than 1 June, the Government expects, subject to certain conditions being met, that certain non-essential shops and education centres may begin a phased reopening. Social distancing measures will continue to apply. It is highly unlikely that changes announced during this next phase will have any material impact on amateur boxing.

Government Step 3. No earlier than 4 July, the Government expects, subject to certain conditions being met, that some of the remaining businesses and premises, including leisure facilities such as cinemas, that have been required to close may begin a phased reopening.

Whilst there is a possibility that boxing clubs and indoor and outdoor gyms may be able to consider reopening at this stage, this will only be after the government confirms it is permissible and England Boxing has advised of the restrictions in order to do so. However social distancing measures are likely to continue to apply and, hence, these will restrict boxing activity. For the avoidance of doubt, it is highly likely that sparring and bouts may not be possible for some time after 4 July.

England Boxing's Guiding Principles and Four Phase Plan

As we navigate through this pandemic, decisions by England Boxing will be led by two guiding principles:

A. The safety and wellbeing of all its members, clubs and staff is paramount to England Boxing.

B. England Boxing will continue to be led by Government guidance, as it considers how and when amateur boxing can return.

With these principles in mind, England Boxing considers that there are four phases to a full return to amateur boxing:

Phase I. Being able to stay fit – current position as detailed on 12th May 2020.

Phase II. A return to non-contact training in a group whilst remaining socially distant, whether indoors or outdoors. Current guidance indicates this will not be before 4th July, at the earliest.

Phase III. Contact training permitted (whether indoors or outdoors) once venues reopen. This encompasses pad work (other than within the household) and sparring which cannot be undertaken in any form prior to phase three. There is currently no guidance as to when this is likely to be.

Phase IV. Return to competition. Again there is currently no guidance as to when this will be.

We are currently at Phase I, and even this has certain limitations, as per current Government guidance.

Preparing for a Return to Boxing Activity

As stated above, England Boxing will continue to be led by

A. The safety and wellbeing of all its members, clubs and staff is paramount to England Boxing.

B. England Boxing will continue to be led by Government guidance, as it considers how and when amateur boxing can return.

Over the coming weeks, as we approach 4 July, England Boxing will endeavour to set out issues to be considered in order to help with the return, clear guidance, e.g. risk assessments to support you in carrying out this exercise as the Government shares more about its plan to reopen sports clubs and gyms.

Although club re-opening cannot occur until the government advises, this time could be viewed as an opportunity for you to plan for safe, socially distanced and hygienic access to your venue, facilities, and equipment at that time; and what specific risks and challenges you may confront when doing so.

In the meantime, here are five questions for clubs and members to consider, in preparation of a return to more boxing activity.

If you are a boxer,

1. How might you train with your coach (outdoors if your coach is not a member of your household) whilst adhering to current Government measures?

If you are a coach,

2. How might you amend your training programmes to accommodate social distancing and other Government measures? Can you share videos online or provide online coaching?

How you might be developing yourself as well as your boxer during this time? - for example, refreshing your knowledge of the rules, or forming chat groups with other coaches to share experiences.

If you run a club,

3. When Government guidance allows, and recognising the likely requirement for social distancing for some time once your club reopens, how might you accommodate your members at your current premises? Do you have available outdoor space? Might you stagger club training to reduce usage at any one time?

4. When your club or gym is allowed to open, and if sparring and bouts remain prohibited, what new and existing activities might you undertake to best serve your members and support your club financially? What specific training can be undertaken? Can you run non-contact boxing competitions?

5. Alongside communications from England Boxing, how will you educate and inform your members about the changes and measures you are putting in place, to ensure that they are being followed?

Conclusion

There are, of course, likely to be many other issues, some foreseeable and others not, that will need to be overcome before amateur boxing can fully resume; in the meantime, England Boxing will do everything it can to provide as much information, guidance and support to you through these unprecedented times.

If you have any specific queries, please do not hesitate to contact England Boxing (email: enquiries@englandboxing.org).