
APPENDIX

CBSC Decision 07/08-0012 Fox Sports World Canada re IFL promotional spot

The Complaint

The CBSC received the following complaint dated September 6, 2007 via the CRTC:

As most of the TV channels I watch continually warn about scenes containing material that may offend some viewers, I cannot understand why Fox Sports Canada, (channel 415 Rogers) can show ads for the International Fight League in prime time and during non-related programs. These ads are completely tasteless, mindless violence, extolling the pleasures of inflicting pain. In my opinion they have no place on a sports channel watched by many young, impressionable people.

Since the complainant characterized the spot as an “advertisement”, the CBSC initially forwarded the complaint to Advertising Standards Canada (ASC). When ASC explained that it would require more specific information regarding date and time of broadcast, the complainant responded with the following:

Thank you for replying to my e-mail concerning this matter. In response to your request for details:

Date: Last viewed September 17, although the ad is shown nightly at approximately the same time during a break in an entirely unrelated programme.

Time: 7:13 pm

Description: The ad shows clips from fights, a combination of boxing/kick-boxing, concentrating on close-up shots of facial damage to losing participants. Samples of dialogue include: “I came to hurt somebody.” “There’s no better feeling than cracking a guy in the chin.” “... Waking him up and showing him on a 40-foot screen, you just got knocked out.”

I realize that there is a market for such programmes, which I readily accept, if they are screened at an appropriate time. My concern is that the content of this ad is not appropriate for the time slot it is shown in, or during a programme dedicated exclusively to U.K. soccer and cricket, which I know is watched by younger viewers.

At this point, ASC realized the spot was a promo and referred it back to CBSC.

Broadcaster Response

The station responded on November 2:

We are in receipt of your correspondence to the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) regarding on air promotion of the International Fight League on Fox Sports World Canada (FSWC) on September 17, 2007. We thank you for your interest in FSWC programming.

The International Fight League and IFL Battleground are two recently added new series exclusive to FSWC and another CanWest MediaWorks-owned network, Xtreme Sports. These shows are also broadcast on Fox Sports Network and MyNetworktv in the United States.

Mixed Martial Arts, or MMA, is a term used to refer to a combat sport that combines the elements of many fighting styles into one all-inclusive sport. MMA has been rapidly gaining in popularity in the U.S. and around the world, and is often referred to as "the world's fastest growing sport". The MMA is growing and the nature of the sport is to have one participant defeat the other in timed rounds with a referee in the ring.

Many legendary martial artists, such as Bruce Lee, have advocated the use of these hybridized, non-traditional forms to most closely resemble real world scenarios. Even legendary boxer Muhammed Ali took part in a cross-sport match-up when he agreed to face Japanese wrestler Antonio Inoki. These kinds of contests were the early foundation for the sport of MMA, which has grown tremendously in scope and practice since then.

The sport was almost outlawed completely in the U.S., but survived by altering its "no-holds-barred" strategy and embracing governmental regulation. Since then, MMA has incorporated a more stringent set of rules and weight classes, and has moved toward mainstream acceptance. Though specific rules vary depending on the organization, MMA usually refers to a sport that combines striking and grappling arts, while outlawing groin strikes, eye-gouging, small joint manipulation, biting, hair-pulling, and strikes to the spine or throat.

MMA has been vilified in the past by media and politicians, though there has never been a death or serious injury in a sanctioned MMA event. Early indications suggest that the sport is actually safer than boxing, thanks to the variety of techniques and the smaller gloves, which prohibit a fighter from absorbing repeated blows to the head, thus minimizing long-term damage.

Like boxing, hockey or football this is clearly a contact sport. When promoting hockey or football, bone-crunching hits and spills are regularly used and we have likely grown accustomed to this level of on-screen physical contact. Clearly, the same use of video clips holds true for boxing where the combatants are shown hitting each other.

The ad that you saw does feature hard hits from matches as well as athlete comments. We created the promo ad to showcase the action of these highly competitive athletes while demonstrating the athletic skills and focus required to be successful in this sport. We limited any video clips that had a bloody nose and consciously only had a couple of brief clips of an athlete with blood on his face. We did not show any punch, kick or hit that caused immediate bloodshed. The ads do run on Fox during other shows to cross-promote from one program to another.

In summary, we do not believe that the choice of video clips in this promo ad is "completely tasteless, mindless violence, extolling the pleasures of inflicting pain." The combat clips and athlete interview clips are an important part of establishing the nature of the program it is supporting. In terms of having young impressionable youth see the ad, the IFL features athletes as young as 19 years old competing in matches. These athletes visit hospitals and schools to meet with youth and identify the importance of believing in themselves and to

chase their dreams. Major corporate sponsors such as Warner Home Video, Vitamin Energy and CYTOSPORT's "MUSCLE MILK" are seeing the benefits of supporting this sport.

It is through the feedback of viewers such as yourself that we are able to build strong programming schedules, and as such, we appreciate your feedback and suggestions. If you have any additional requests or comments to make about Lonestar [*sic*] programming, please do not hesitate to contact us via e-mail (contactus@globaltv.com), by phone (toll free at 1-866-729-7140), or by mail at Fox Sports World Canada Viewer Relations, c/o 2100 One Lombard Place, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 0X3.

Additional Correspondence

The complainant submitted his Ruling Request on November 13 with the following note:

The response I received from Global Television Specialty Networks was largely a history of the development of the sport. My complaint was not about televising such fights but about showing advertising for it during a totally unrelated programme, *Sky Sports News*, dealing with news from the U.K. soccer leagues, tennis, cricket and rugby. My mention of this ad not being suitable for the young, and therefore impressionable, was met with a response about how some of the fighters were as young as 19 and visited schools and hospitals. I maintain that showing bloodied combatants and having one declare "I came here to hurt someone" is acceptable if you choose to watch that particular show but should not be inserted into unrelated programmes, thereby influencing a captive audience.