CORRESPONDENCE

23rd April 1975

176 Galle Road,
Wellawatte,
COLOMBO 6,
Sri Lanka

To the Editor:

BOXING SHOULD BE MODIFIED

Dear Sir,

At one time, deviant behaviour in boxers was attributed to their aggressive personalities rather than to repetitive minor brain damage, but this view is changing, following work by such as H. S. Martland and N. Corsellis. I have reliable information of a Sri Lankan boxer who tried to murder his wife and is now certified insane. Floyd Patterson was admitted to hospital concussed after his defeat by Sonny Liston; Benny Kid Paraet died in coma after a knock-out by Emil Griffiths; Carmino Vingo had to retire with permanent brain damage after defeat by Rocky Marciano. Partly as a result of these severe injuries in PROFESSIONAL boxing, the very different AMATEUR sport is becoming much less popular all over the world, and is far less popular in Sri Lankan schools. Boxing, however, is still a most popular sport from the spectators' viewpoint, and is a sport that attracts a great deal of money throughout most of the world. It is one of the few ways open to boys from a poor background, especially in the U.S.A., Cuba and parts of Africa with a large population of African descent, to find a way of making a successful career. It would therefore be tragic if this type of activity were to cease.

The continuation of boxing as a sport can only be justified if the destructive effects of blows to the brain can be avoided, and it is time that the game be modified so that participants can benefit from a valuable form of physical activity without paying the price of cerebral contusion, with possible cell degeneration, tentorial and falx tears, and post-traumatic automatism that may sometimes be found in older professional fighters. The use of padded headguards, more padding in gloves, stricter refereeing and better medical supervision would all help. It is possible that future developments in electronics will enable automatic point counting (and foul counting!) devices to be produced, as in fencing, to reduce some of the subjective scoring that has to be made by the referee and judges. If some of these measures could be put into operation, it should reduce risk, and yet allow the continuance of this most popular and lucrative sport.

Yours faithfully,

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SCIENCES

9 June, 1975.

Dear Sir,

Having read with very great interest the Proceedings of the Symposium on the future of Sports Medicine in the United Kingdom (B.A.S.M. 1975, 9, 25-45) may we be permitted to make a contribution.

In the concept of Sports Medicine the emphasis has been placed upon the Medical aspect with little emphasis being attached to the aspect of Sport. The trend of thought appears to be directed towards the development of medical people who have a particular interest in sport. Whilst we agree that this channel should be explored fully, nevertheless we feel that possibly an equally important and, as yet, not adequately developed approach has to be made through recruitment of people who are sports orientated but who have a particular interest in medicine. Although this approach