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## Evidence Of Nationalistic Bias In Muaythai

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### ABSTRACT

MuayThai is a combat sport with a growing international profile but limited research conducted into judging practices and processes. Problems with judging of other subjectively judged combat sports have caused controversy at major international tournaments that have resulted in changes to scoring methods. Nationalistic bias has been central to these problems and has been identified across a range of sports. The aim of this study was to examine nationalistic bias in MuayThai. Data were collected from the International Federation of MuayThai Amateur (IFMA) World Championships held in Almaty, Kazakhstan September 2003 and comprised of tournament results from 70 A-class MuayThai bouts each judged by between five and nine judges. Bouts examined featured 62 competitors from 21 countries and 25 judges from 11 countries. Results suggested that nationalistic bias was evident. The bias observed equated to approximately one round difference between opposing judges over the course of a bout (a mean of 1.09 (SE=0.50) points difference between judges with opposing affiliations). The number of neutral judges used meant that this level of bias generally did not influence the outcome of bouts. Future research should explore other ingroup biases, such as nearest neighbour bias and political bias as well as investigating the feasibility adopting an electronic scoring system.

**Key words:** MuayThai, judging, nationalistic bias

### Key Points

- Nationalistic bias is evident in international amateur MuayThai judging.
- The impact on the outcome of bouts is limited.
- The practice of using a large number of neutral judges appears to reduce the impact of nationalistic bias.

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