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## Two Japanese Boxers Die from Brain Injuries on Same Fight Card, Prompting Rule Change

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The boxing community is reeling after two Japanese fighters, Shigetoshi Kotari and Hiromasa Urakawa, died from brain injuries sustained on the same fight card earlier this

month. Their tragic deaths have prompted immediate safety changes within the sport in Japan.

Urakawa, 28, collapsed after suffering a brain injury during an eighth-round defeat to Yoji Saito on August 2. He was rushed to the hospital and underwent a craniotomy following a knockout. Despite surgery, he passed away days later. His death came just 24 hours after fellow competitor Kotari, also 28, succumbed to injuries sustained in his bout on the same night.

Kotari had fought Yamato Hata in a 12-round contest for the Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation (OPBF) super featherweight title. After the match, Kotari lost consciousness and was taken to the hospital, where doctors performed emergency surgery for a subdural hematoma—a form of brain hemorrhage. The World Boxing Organization (WBO) confirmed his death on August 8, six days after the fight.

In response to the tragedies, the Japanese Boxing Commission announced that all OPBF title fights will now be limited to 10 rounds instead of 12, citing the need for greater safety measures.

Tributes poured in from across the sport. Former world champion George Kambosos Jr. expressed his sorrow online after Kotari's passing: "RIP champion. Respect the real fighters always that put it all on the line. Sad news, 28 years of age." Upon learning of Urakawa's death, he added, "Another one on the same card! This is so sad. RIP to both of them. Condolences to their family. Fallen warriors."

Former Irish boxer Gary O'Sullivan described the news as "absolutely heartbreaking." The WBO honored Kotari on social media, calling him "a warrior in the ring" and "a fighter in spirit," while the World Boxing Council (WBC) and its president, Mauricio Sulaimán, issued a statement mourning his loss and offering condolences to his loved ones.

Urakawa's passing marks the third boxing-related fatality in the past year. In February, Irish fighter John Cooney, also 28, died after suffering an intracranial hemorrhage during a fight against Nathan Howells.

These back-to-back losses have intensified conversations about fighter safety, with many in the sport urging continued reforms to protect boxers from the risks inherent in the ring.