I'm in China right now, unable to access Youtube, so I'm going all the way back to December 2010 for this bout, the final of the inaugural Thai Fight Tournament.

The winner got a heap of prizes including an Isuzu (yes, this tournament is also funded by Isuzu Motors), a million baht (approx. 33k USD), sponsors, and a lot exposure.

Pinca fought his way through Sharos Huyer and Rafi Zouheir, and Petmankong went through Zhou Hong Zhang and Vitaly Gurkov to meet in the semi-finals. There were questions about whether Petmankong, previously a 126 lb and 135 lb fighter, could be successful in the 147 lb tournament, but he'd proved more than skillful enough to handle his first two opponents. Pinca had been making a name for himself facing high quality Thai opponents, but had come up short against elite fighters like Kem Sitsongpeenong, Saenchai Sor Kingstar, and Attachai Fairtex. He himself was not a a large fighter for 67 kg, having fought at 140 lb a number of times.

Pinca wears the blue in this bout, Petmankong the red.

(As I said, Youtube is blocked in China, so I'm actually viewing the bout here: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjI5NjM5NTc2.html
)

I have a bone to pick with this fight, so please excuse me if I get a little angry in this post.

Thanks to TungstenPalm for that video, though the end is a little hard to watch. I thinkit's safe to say that the organizers really wanted a Thai to win. "To hell with Petmankong's brain cells if

they could make it happen, right?"

Petmankong had KOed a vastly outmatched opponent in the first round and overcome his second opponent through superior clinch skills. The hands hadn't come into play because Zhou never opened up and Gurkov, though much larger, really didn't have much in that department, choosing to play into Petmankong's superior clinch game.

Fabio, as we can see, played an entirely different game. He did what most fighters would do if behind in the last round: go for the knockout. In the sense that both fighters fought well, this is a good match. However, watching the ref's refusal to stop the fight, even for an eight count, was sickening. I haven't seen anyone else express anger over this, but the more I think about it, the more I see the consequences in what can only be called bad officiating. There's a point where Petmankong collapses against the ropes and Pinca backs off, only for the ref to step in and say "Chok," as Petmankong sways on his feet. Petmankong would go on to get knocked out again on the same night against Soichiro Miyakoshi in the reserve fight.

I understand the pride in having a Thai win the first Thai Fight, but this discredits the sport in showing irresponsibility in caring for fighters as well as blatant favoritism.

When this happened in K-1, say when Masato got an extra round against Buakaw, fans (at least internationally) were outraged. In the UFC, Dan Miragliotta and Mario Yamasaki catch flak all the time for early stoppages or letting fighters take too much punishment. Judges, too, are lampooned for their more untenable decisions.

I suppose this kind of thing angers me for a number of reasons. I would like to see Muay Thai grow, and something like this is bad for the fighters and bad for the sport's image. And it's not like Pinca didn't exhibit good Muay Thai or didn't otherwise deserve the win. Fabio and Petmankong put on solid performances, and I could imagine, as a spectator, having my evening rather soured by this type of result. I think it would have been fine to have Pinca win a few seconds earlier. Giving an international fighter the victory in a Thai tournament would have been good advertising of a sort, too.

I am not used to seeing this happen. Thai referees and judges usually perform excellently, especially in large events. Even when they come to a controversial decision, the judges tend to

have a solid reason. Rematches are usually arranged in short order for close matches, anyway. The referees in large stadiums are impeccable, for the most part, looking very alert and as fit as the fighters.

Please, let me know what you think of this. Am I being oversensitive? If you have another perspective you can lend, I'd be happy to hear it.