

Buyer Beware

Written by Steve Kim
Tuesday, 29 April 2003 21:00

Just a week after HBO brought you the exciting give-and-take fight
that was James Toney-Vasilliy Jirov, HBO Pay-Per-View is making
you pay to watch the colossal mismatch that is Oscar De La Hoya
against Yory Boy Campas.

Gee, I didn't know that televised executions were allowed, much less
allowed to go the pay-per-view route. What's going on? How are
attractive fights like Toney-Jirov on regular HBO while fights like
Marco Antonio Barrera-Kevin Kelley and now, De La
Hoya-Campas on pay-per-view? Isn't there a bittersweet irony
to all this?

" Not really," says HBO Sports executive Xavier James." Sometimes
you have to put a fight someplace and that someplace is HBO
Pay-Per-View, for budgeting reasons or what have you. And so this
year it's shaking out that there's a few fights that are
relative mismatches but you have mismatches on HBO too.
It's just that it's not a science and we try to do our best."

Well, that's reassuring to know that HBO will give us blowouts on
their regular network without charging the fans extra. But the stark
reality is that with limited dates and a shrinking budget, the philosophy
is very simple: if a promoter like Forum Boxing(which has
Barrera) or Top Rank(which represents De La Hoya)
wants to sell a particular fight- no matter how it's percieved- and
there's no slot on HBO for it, it's their perogative to do so.

" Yeah," affirmed James." they always have an option to putting a
fight on pay-per-view if they feel that fight is a viable pay-per-view
fight. So it's really their money in that sense and they put their money
at risk. So if they feel it's a viable pay-per-view show,
then for the most part we say, ' God bless you and good luck'
Now, obviously we distribute it but it's really their money that they
have at risk."

About the only times that HBO will balk at a pay-per-view show is if
HBO is asked to put up a guaranteed minimum. But if they don't,
basically, it's all systems go. These shows differ from their regular
boxing shows in a sense that they are giving no
license fee out of their own money and the standards do change.

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Again, no matter what the match-up, if you think you can sell it, they'll let you try.

But remember, ultimately, the fans have the power. The power to not buy these events if they feel it's not worth their hard earned money. The fans made a statement in regards to the Barrera blowout of Kelley as only 75,000 buys were registered for that event.

And why is De La Hoya fighting Campas on pay-per-view?

For a couple of reasons, to get paid what he wants Oscar will have to fight on pay-per-view, HBO would not be able to come up with a liscensing fee that would be satisfactory to 'the Golden Boy'. But more importantly, it's because he can. De La Hoya, is the single biggest pay-per-view franchise below the heavyweight division in boxing. In fact, it's safe to say that he's a heavyweight when it comes to the pay-per-view market.

Remember how everyone made a big deal about Roy Jones doing over 500,000 buys for his win over John Ruiz? De La Hoya routinely does that number. Even his bout against the unknown Javier Castillejo did around 400,000- and that was done when his stock was at it's lowest. Now, coming off his career defining win over arch-rival Fernando Vargas, his marketability and popularity is back on the upswing.

But guess what? This fight will still be fairly successful. No, it wont reach anywhere near the 900,000-plus buys that his bout did with Vargas last September, but most industry insiders forecast that De La Hoya-Campas will do around 350,000 to 400,000 buys.

To put this into perspective, take away Lennox Lewis' bouts against Evander Holyfield and Mike Tyson, most of his other pay-per-view events have done right around that range. You can expect the more knowledgable and hard-core boxing fans to boycott this event- and who can blame them? But De La Hoya for years has proven that he delves into a different demographic: women. And these women don't care if he's fighting Yory Boy Campas or the Pillsbury Dough Boy. All they want to see is a performance by De La Hoya, not necessarily a good fight.

So remember if you don't decide to purchase this mismatch, good for you, it's your choice. But if you do- don't dare complain- you should've known what you were getting into.

Remember, it's buyer beware.

RESPECT

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James Toney took the IBF cruiserweight title from weekend, but Jirov did earn

Vasilliy Jirov last Toney's respect- not an easy thing to do.

" Jirov will beat any othe cruiserweight in the world, stated 'Lights Out', who won his third Braithwaite, Jean Marc a good fighter, I tip my hat off to him because he didn't have to fight me like he did. He could've ran for 12 which I did expect him to do. But Jirov is a you right now, anyone have trouble."

I guarantee" major world title." Wayne Morneck, Johnny Nelson- he'll kill'em all. He's helluva fighter, I'm tellin' else that get in there with him, there gonna

And he admits that Jirov's steady body attack did take certain degree.

it's toll to a

" Yeah, I'm gonna be serious, he hit me with a couple but y'know what. I'm a man, I admit when in. He got a couple of good

of body shots somebody gets a good shot shots in, when he did that, I fired back."

MOTIVATION

Ok, so what motivated Toney to get out of his doldrums been in post-Roy Jones and get back to talent?

that he had utilizing his God-given natural

" I got sick of seeing you so-called boxing writers, been in the ring before in your lives, Toney, in a good old-school,

who have never call fighters 'great'," barked natured way." When they really wasn't. I'm man. Don't you know that?"

Hey, glad to have been of service James.