It just isn't the same, is it? Whether you loved him or hated him- or felt somewhere in between- Max Kellerman got your attention. But now that he's gone from his studio position in Bristol, Connecticut as the studio analyst for ESPN2's Friday Night Fights, he'll be missed. Whether you admit it or not.

The team of Max, Brian Kenny, Teddy Atlas and Joe Tessitore( and before him, Bob Papa) were the Tinkers-to-Evans-to-Chance of boxing. They had a certain chemistry that made their two-and-a-half hour weekly broadcast 'must-see TV' for boxing fans.

No, they didn't have the sports biggest events, that distinction belongs to HBO and their multi-million dollar budget. But what Friday Night Fights provided boxing fans was a broad look at what was going on in the game of boxing. And don't discount that for one minute.

While other sports like baseball, football and basketball all get daily coverage from all the various media outlets, from newspapers, to the internet, television and radio, boxing, for the past two decades boxing has been relegated to a few footnotes here and there on the newswire or a short note in small type on the 'Transactions' page of the newspaper. Outside the internet, boxing is treated on the same level as womens gymnastics and polo. Yes, it's fallen off that much.

But Friday Night Fights, gave the sport it's only real positive spotlight on a major network, on a regular basis. Think about it, when was the last time a fight that didn't involve Mike Tyson, the heavyweight championship of the world or Oscar De La Hoya, make the front page of the sports section? It's been awhile hasn't it? And the fact that Tyson barely fights anymore, Lennox Lewis fought only once or twice a year, as did 'the Golden Boy', that means that 'the sweet science' hasn't been getting a lot of ink lately.

But FNF, week after week, was boxing's version of '60 Minutes', 'This Week in Baseball', 'Inside the NFL', '20/20' and 'SportsCenter' rolled into one. They would provide highlights of recent fights( even ones that took place in Europe), news of the latest developments, commentary of current events, interviews and round table discussion/ arguments about boxing. No, they weren't shills or cheerleaders, they would give their honest critiques and opinions of the things going on within the sport. It wasn't that it was positive coverage of the sport, but more importantly it was balanced, accurate and knowledgeable coverage of it.

It wasn't the fights that kept you coming back week after week, because quite frankly, in recent years their fights have gotten worse and worse. But the studio segments featuring 'To the Max' and the arguments between Max and Teddy, were

not only informative but entertaining. It was good TV, and it just happened to be about boxing. The fights, unfortunately, became the thing you had to tolerate before you got to the studio segments.

But now that Max is gone, I'm afraid it'll never be the same. No, that's not a rip at anyone that still remains on that show or a guy like Antonio Tarver, who filled in for Max this past weekend- he did a very credible job- but the energy and enthusiasm he brought to the table each week simply can not be replaced by brining in a slew of big name fighters to pinch him for him.

Say whatever you want about Max, yes, he may have not been able to call a fight correctly to save his life. Hell, he probably tabbed Saddam Hussein over George Bush a few months back. And perhaps he didn't always have the best sources to back up his subject matter or maybe he was more than a tad biased for his boxers out of New York. But he brought a certain passion and enthusiasm for the sport that was undeniable.

Hey, think about it, how many smarmy, smart-alecky, know-nothing, sportscasters have you seen make one ignorant remark about boxing after another. I mean, isn't it refreshing to have a guy that does know something about boxing, respects and admiration for the game like Max, talking about it every single week. He didn't just cover boxing, he also helped promote it.

Say what you want, he was great for the game of boxing. In an era when so many others eschew the sport of boxing, it was refreshing to have a guy that was an advocate of the sport. He loved the game, he defended it, he stuck up for it and he watched it like any other fan. What was so wrong about that?

I'll say this about Max, he had passion and he wasn't afraid to voice a strong opinion. You'd be surprised just how many folks in that position are afraid to say something that might ruffle a few feathers. He did that every week, which made him a saint to some, a Judas to others. He understood it came with the territory and he did it week after week. No matter how wrong or misguided he may have been at times- and believe me, I've had my disagreements with him- you anxiously awaited what he had to say.

And now that he's gone, Friday Night Fights will never, ever be the same. It's now just another boxing show, with mediocre fights and not a lot of personality. And in this case, it's the sport of boxing that loses.