So sad to see it go.

Telefutura's excellent boxing series, "Solo Boxeo," will be broadcasting their final show this Friday night after an eight year run of 410 shows that showcased many of the sport's contenders and future champions. Fighters like Israel Vazquez, Fernando Vargas, Martin "Gallito" Castillo, Kermit Cintron, Antonio Margarito, Kelly Pavlik, Miguel Cotto, Juan Ma Lopez and the Marquez brothers, Juan Manuel and Rafael, plied their pugilistic profession on the program which aired their first sixty shows on Univision before continuing with Telefutura.

"Solo Boxeo was where fans got to see some of the brightest prospects in the business. It was where many fighters began their careers," said Frank Espinoza who held several shows in 2001 in conjunction with Top Rank Promotions at the Soboba Casino. "The fights were so exciting. Most of the time they were more exciting than the ones on Pay Per view. The show will definitely be missed."

Many of Espinoza's fighters appeared on Solo Boxeo including Castillo, Vazquez, Enrique Sanchez, Mike Anchondo, Alex Valdez and Nick Martinez as well as some of his newest crop of well regarded prospects like Carlos Molina and Abraham Lopez.

Espinoza's and Top Rank's shows were a real challenge to produce since the series initially aired at noon. The shows took place in an outdoor venue in the desert hot spot of San Jacinto, California where temperatures reached into the triple digits on a regular basis. Without a shade or tarp to cover the area at that time, the June, July and August sun beat down on you mercilessly and keeping properly hydrated became a necessity. It didn't matter, people still showed up to see Anchondo's knockout power and Castillo's slick boxing. As a true boxing junkie, I covered all the cards at the venue which was about an hour and half inland and usually twenty degrees hotter. The program eventually changed to a Friday night telecast.

Espinoza's fighter, Miguel Angel Huerta, (27-9, 19 KO's) will be headlining the last episode of the series against Mike Alvarado (23-0, 16 KO's) in what should be a fan friendly shoot out. Huerta, a 135 pounder, is a gutsy brawler known for involving himself in dramatic fights. Alvarado, the hometown boy from Denver, is undefeated and looking to get past the Mexico City native who's currently ranked number 10 by the World Boxing Council.

The world title winning effort of Martin Castillo against power punching phenom, Alexander Munoz, remains as one of Solo Boxeo's many classic confrontations. It was a battle between a boxer and brawler which Castillo won with an unforgettable performance at the peak of his career. "That was a great fight and a brilliant showing from Martin," Espinoza remembered. "The fact that such a high level fight was broadcast on Solo Boxeo shows you the kind of commitment to excellence that Telefutura employed."

Solo Boxeo not only introduced future champions to its audience but it also introduced great

broadcasters like Bernardo Osuna and Ricardo Celis. Ring announcer Lupe Contreras also became a staple of the program and is now considered one of the top announcers in the country. Wherever he announces, his familiar tagline before the main event is always heard begging the question. “Quien es mas macho?”

Reportedly, the lackluster economy affected the Telefutura network to the point where footing the 60,000 to 70,000 dollar bill for the license fee every week became less feasible. At this point, the TELEMUNDO network will be the only Spanish language channel still broadcasting boxing. They do it on a monthly basis and work exclusively with promoter Felix Zabala Jr. out of Miami.

So where will the up and coming prospects from companies like Golden Boy and Top Rank promotions be showcased? “That’s a good question. We don’t know yet. It’s definitely going to have a temporary ripple effect on the business,” Espinoza said. “It’s a blow to boxing but the business will continue to survive. I think eventually we’ll see another network step up.”

For true boxing fans, it’s the end of an important boxing era. “It’s sad that the show won’t be around anymore. It benefitted a lot of fighters and gave its audience plenty to cheer about,” Espinoza said. “We’re grateful to have been part of its history and happy to be on the last card. I think Huerta and Alvarado are going to deliver a great show. What else would you expect from Solo Boxeo?”

Nothing less.

Adios amigos.