Does the NFL run the NFC Championship Game and the AFC Championship Game at the same time?

Does the NBA run the Western Conference finals on the same night as they run the Eastern Conference finals?

Do even the idiots who run major league baseball put the American League Championship series on against the National League Championship series in the same time slot?

Does UFC put a show on cable TV and one on pay-per-view on the same day at the same time?

The answer is no and the reason is they are not nitwits.

And so I give you boxing.

Saturday night HBO wants to introduce hot young prospect Victor Ortiz to the world so they headline him on HBO's Boxing After Dark series against Marcos Maidana. Seldom seen but well respected Chris John was supposed to fight the very tough Rocky Juarez on the same card until John came up with a blood problem and Juarez refused to face a left-handed opponent with less than two weeks to get ready for him.

That would have been a strong card for a boxing fan to ignore but even with only Ortiz, a fighter upon whom Golden Boy Promotions is betting big-time, HBO still had a strong offering.

Many fight fans would love to watch Ortiz and judge his progress but then they'd also like to see exciting young knockout artist Juan Manuel Lopez, the undefeated junior featherweight champion with 23 KOs in 25 fights, defend his title against Olivier Lontchi. To do it they have to buy Bob Arum's pay-per-view show for $39.95 that begins an hour before HBO's card on free cable (if there is such a thing). Let's see? Tight budget? Little disposable income? Let's spend $39.95 or watch a fight on a cable channel we already pay for? For many folks this does not require consultation with Warren Buffet.

And then SHOWTIME weighs in to make matters worse with a tape delay showing of IBF middleweight champion Arthur Abraham's title defense against Mahir Oral beginning at 9 p.m., the same time Arums' pay-per-view show begins. Abraham may be the best middleweight in the world so to get a chance to watch him from Europe is a treat. Of course to do it you need to time it right if you also want to see Ortiz on HBO and Lopez on PPV.

Now some folks might say it can be done and it can, as long as you're not married or if you are have no interest in staying married much longer.

Weeks go by with no shows and then three appear on the same night, one asking you for forty bucks on pay-per-view, the other two doing battle on HBO and SHOWTIME. And you wonder why boxing has become a niche sport?

It's become a niche sport because it's run by short-sighted people who you might call idiots if you hadn't met them, talked with them and realized they are not idiots. That realization does not preclude them from doing idiotic things however and Saturday night was one of them.

You can't schedule things a little bit? You can't cooperate just a tad? You can't run your sport like you actually A) would like it to survive and B) care about your fans? That is too much to ask?

Promoter Bob Arum will argue his "Latin Fury 9'' pay-per-view show with Lopez headlining and popular Jorge Arce in the semi-main event vs. Fernando Lumacal catered to a Latin specific crowd. Who does he think Ortiz caters to, Russian immigrants?

And then there's SHOWTIME. Maybe they were stuck. Abraham fought when he fought and all they did was agree to show it on tape delay in the United States but that decision put them in direct competition with their hated rivals, HBO. If you think it was an accident the only accident was that Abraham happened to be fighting that night.

HBO and SHOWTIME have done this repeatedly over the years and all they do is hurt the sport that feeds many of them and the fans who feed all of them.

Every time they do it they think they're smart. "Look what we did to the competition.''

Maybe they might once want to look and see what they did to the sport and to its fans because the niche here in the U.S. grows smaller and a lot of their decisions are the reason why.