Written by Ron Borges
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Chad Ocho Cinco knows what he wants next and it's not just a few more touchdown receptions. He wants welterweight champion Andre Berto.

"I want to fight Berto,'' the Cincinnati Bengals' Pro Bowl wide receiver said after a recent pre-season game against the New England Patriots. "I've been training for a while. We've been going at it on Twitter. I may even tweet him from the end zone.

"We can do it for charity. It would be just like tonight. I kick an extra point and people say 'I didn't know you could kick!' After I beat Berto people will say, 'I didn't know you could fight!' I'll knock him out. People would pay to see that.''

Indeed they would but the entertainer formerly known as Chad Johnson may be getting just a tad ahead of himself. Last off-season Johnson trained with former featherweight champion Kevin Kelly in Florida, Ricardo Williams, Sr., the father of the ex-Olympic boxer Ricardo Williams, Jr., in Cincinnati and even for a month in Los Angeles at Freddie Roach's legendary Wild Card Gym.

Roach, the future Hall of Fame trainer of Manny Pacquiao who recently trained Shaquille O'Neal for his upcoming reality television "fight'' with Oscar De La Hoya and is used to having celebrity athletes and entertainers at his Hollywood sweat shop, watched Ocho Cinco during some of his workouts and then gave him some wise counsel.

"I didn't work with him but I watched,'' Roach said. "Kevin was training him. He's obviously fast of course and a good athlete and all but he's not a boxer.

"He said he wanted to fight Manny and I told him 'Calm down. We'll fight you at heavyweight.' He's a great guy but he talks some s---.

"Boxing is one of those sports you have to grow up with like I did. Football is tough and all but someone has to get used to another guy just coming to hurt you. If you start at a young age you skip the fear factor. At six years old you send your Hot Wheels down the side of a mountain no problem. You're fearless. You get older and you begin to understand what can happen.

"But I'm sure the balance and coordination of it, especially for a wide receiver like him, would be helpful. The training part of it surely would help his hand-eye coordination.''

Roach said television executive Michael King, who once tried to take over the American Olympic program, has launched a search for the next great American heavyweight. He's signed 25 college football players who failed to make it to the NFL and is paying them to train. One recently won a Golden Gloves title in California and another has already turned professional.

To Roach, it's an interesting concept. Many have theorized that men who in the past would

have been heavyweight boxers now eschew the sport for football or basketball because it's an easier road to wealth. If true, King's experiment might change what has become a precipitous slide in American fortunes in heavyweight boxing.

But while Roach finds the idea intriguing he's not so sure it will produce the desired results, based on what he's learned over a lifetime spent in the sport.

"Twenty five year old guys who are college graduates going from football to boxing?'' Roach asked. "I don't know if it will work. We had a guy who was a big lineman from USC, Winston Justice, train here for a whole year after he got suspended for shooting some friend with a BB gun. He did pretty well and he told me he wanted to forget football and turn pro.

"I talked him out of it. He ended up a No. 1 draft choice. That was a better way for him to go.''

The same is true for Ocho Cinco's thoughts of one day giving up his weekend job in the NFL for the full-time grind of professional prize fighting. Yet Ocho Cinco insisted even if he never gets to square off with Berto "for three or four rounds or whatever it takes,'' he has benefited greatly from boxing in a way NFL defensive backs will pay for dearly this season.

"I use one of the moves I learned in boxing on defensive backs now,'' Ocho Cinco said. "I catch the ball and then flip the guy past me with one hand and I'm gone. I learned that in the boxing ring.

"My hand-eye coordination has improved, which I know is difficult for you all to believe possible. My footwork has always been there but it's even better and my cardio (fitness) is stupid (which means good).

"After last season (a troubled one for him and the Bengals) I wanted to challenge myself. Boxing is hands down the hardest sport. It's the hardest training. I'm in stupid shape this season (because of his off-season boxing workouts).

"Boxing is no joke. I've done it for almost a year straight. I like it. I'll fight for real after the season. I know I got a (NFL) contract (banning such dangerous hobbies) but I want to do it. Whatever I earn I'll just give it to Mike (Brown, the Bengals' owner who would very likely fine him).

"When I was in LA, I'd do boxing training at Freddie's in the morning, lift weights in the afternoon and do football training at night. I used to think soccer training was tough but all you do is run up and down. Boxing is so much harder than anything I ever did.

"It looks easy on TV but you try doing it for three rounds. And don't get in there with some pressure fighter.''

You mean like Andre Berto?

"Nah, I'll knock Berto out,'' Ocho Cinco said, his electric smile lighting up the room. "Don't you

think people would pay to watch that?''

Surely they would just like they pay to watch him dance in the end zone. The only difference is he just might not be the guy doing the dancing this time.