

Business Heavyweights Bob Arum And Jerry Jones Band Together

Written by Rick Folstad

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They're saying this fight is good for Las Vegas.

It's good for the fight game, the state of Texas, Manny Pacquiao, the NFL, beer vendors, parking lot attendants and Jerry Jones, the guy who built what promoter Bob Arum calls, "the most phenomenal building I've ever been in."

Approximately 45,000 fight fans will be visiting it soon.

That's how many are expected to shuffle into Cowboys Stadium on Saturday night to see Pacquiao show off his skills against Joshua Clottey, an under-gunned, under-appreciated long shot from Ghana, who could become the biggest name in boxing if he can only pull off a miracle upset.

But there are bigger things going on here than just a prize fight. There's a bigger reward here than a welterweight title. Ask Arum. He'll tell you how this kind of fight in this kind of place with this kind of visibility can help get boxing back on its feet. And that's good news, even for Vegas, where Arum calls home.

"You get stale doing the same thing over and over again, going back to casinos to put on these big events," Arum said on a conference call with Jones, owner of the Dallas Cowboys. "With this event coming to a fabulous stadium like Cowboys Stadium - bringing the fights to the people - I think boxing can once again establish its place as one of the major sports in this country as it is in so many other places in the world."

Arum has done this kind of thing before. He promoted the Muhammad Ali - Cleveland Williams fight in the Houston Astrodome in 1966. He remembers seeing the Astrodome for the first time, saying how it "blew me away." Now, 45 years later, he's still getting blown away, still bringing it to another Texas football stadium, this one in Dallas.

But it's not only Texas. In June, Arum will be promoting a fight in the newly built Yankee Stadium, a 154-pound match between Yuri Foreman and Miguel Cotto.

Arum says moving fights around the country and into some of the more spacious venues will help bring boxing back to its former high status in this country.

Asked if Saturday's fight was being overshadowed by the venue, Arum kind of shrugged it off.

"I think I'll experience the same thing in June (with the Cotto-Foreman)," he said.

As for Jones, he says he's always been a fight fan and if he was going to open up his new 1.3 billion playhouse to the fight game, he was going to make sure he got the best fight out there, presented by the best promoter.

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“We don’t want to deal with anything but the top,” Jones said. “I’m only going to be working and associating with the best. When you put this much money into a stadium, you want visibility. And this is going to be big time. We need to give boxing more exposure.”

A big-time fight in Cowboys Stadium will sure help. According to Arum, there were just over 4,000 tickets left to be sold as of Tuesday.

“As far as a Las Vegas fight, this is much more exciting,” Arum said. “I love Las Vegas. I live in Las Vegas. But in a Las Vegas fight, the tickets are limited by the size of the arena, and they generally go to high rollers. Here, the sales pitch is for the public. It’s completely different from a casino setting. Here, the venue plays as big a role as the fighters in selling the event.

Arum says going to the larger venues and moving the big fights around the country will help the sport. He said the Super Bowl wouldn’t be as big as it is if it was held in the same city every year.

Jones became involved in the fight by simply calling Arum and putting in a bid to hold the fight in his stadium. Arum calls him the best promoter he’s ever worked with.

“He’s unbelievable,” he said. “He never gets tired. We did a two-day trip to Mexico and he was able to drink everyone under the table, and he just kept going. He never stopped, doing dozens of interviews with the Mexican media.”

Jones said he and his wife used to travel all over the country to watch guys like Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray Leonard and Marvellous Marvin Hagler fight. When he bought the Cowboys, he cut down on his road trips.

Like Arum, Jones said a stadium fight with 45,000 people can only help the fight game.

“I made my mind up in building this stadium and making the commitment I made, that I was not going to get out here and not be associated with the best,” he said. “I’m working with only the best and dealing with only the best. This is going to be big time. I’m going to over deliver. I’m really aligned here with boxing. I have all the respect in the world for boxing. But I always thought it needed more exposure.”

As for holding future fights in Cowboys Stadium, the two men are going to wait until after Saturday night.

“We want to get this fight over first,” Arum said. “Once this one is over, Jerry and I will sit down and plot the future.”

From here, it looks pretty bright.