Written by Ron Borges
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HBO got a super fix when they hired the man who thought up the Super Six, Ken Hershman. (Hershman pictured in between Andre Ward and Carl Froch, right.) (Hogan)

If you can't beat 'em, hire em.

In the end that seemed to be the decision made by HBO Sports today when they lured away Ken Hershman from SHOWTIME to replace departed HBO Sports president Ross Greenburg.

Greenburg resigned in July after 33 years with HBO, the last 12 spent in ever more

controversial fashion running the cable giant's boxing program and other sports ventures. His close associations with Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions and fight manager Al Haymon left him and, by extension HBO, open to charges by rival promoters that the network had become a closed shop in which it was now nearly impossible for other promoters to get their fighters on boxing's biggest network.

Hershman arrives with no such baggage but rather with a reputation for innovation and a string of successes that irked HBO executives despite operating with a far smaller budget.

It was Hershman who came up with the idea for the Super Six World Boxing Classic, a 168-pound tournament that despite many fits, starts and problems over the past two years has resulted in an interesting final between American Andre Ward and England's Carl Froch. Hershman also wisely signed a deal to televise Canadian Lucian Bute, who many believe is actually the best 168-pounder in the world but was not included in the tournament. The logical assumption was SHOWTIME would showcase Bute separately and then create an environment for a popular pay-per-view showdown between the Ward-Froch winner and Bute, which would make clear who the best 168-pound fighter in the world truly is.

Learning from the mistakes and problems inherent in the format used in the Super Six, Hershman then set up a similar tournament in the bantamweight division but limited it to four fighters and two sets of fights leading to one champion. It proved to be a format that worked well and gave the network some good fights for minimal cost.

A Showtime spokesperson released the following statement to *B&C* after the move became public: "Sports has been an important part of our content lineup at Showtime for many years. We have a great team and great programming in place and our commitment to sports remains strong. We have no announcement about a successor at this time, when we do we will let everyone know."

While HBO Sports has been hemorrhaging money by overpaying for a number of unpopular matches over the past few years, the final straw seemed to be losing the Manny Pacquiao-Shane Mosley pay-per-view event to SHOWTIME and Hershman in a one-off deal, although Greenburg denied it had anything to do with his decision to leave before the end of his contract.

Hershman has run SHOWTIME's sports efforts since 2003 and served as executive V.P. and general manager of SHOWTIME sports and event programming at the time of his decision to move across Manhattan to HBO.

"Under the circumstances it's the best move they could make,'' said boxing promoter and former HBO Sports executive Lou DiBella. "They don't have time to bring someone in to learn the business. He has credibility in the business.

"Ken knows the business and he knows who's evil. He comes in with a running start. He's a guy who takes chances and thinks out of the box a little bit.''

Rival promoter Bob Arum was publicly non-committal about the move but privately ripped the move according to several boxing sources. Why that might be the case was expressed by a third promoter who chose to remain anonymous to ensure he kept working relationship with both networks and his rivals.

"The fact Arum and Golden Boy both dislike him is a good thing for boxing,'' he said of the arrival of Hershman at HBO Sports. "They're the bullies in the business. Ken understands that.''

Under Hershman, SHOWTIME has done business with nearly every major promoter in the sport. He also has been exceedingly successful at landing entertaining fights for less money and scooped up "Inside the NFL'' after Greenburg ended HBO's long-time relationship with the show for less than half of what HBO had been paying to NFL Films and the league.

Still wondering why he's now in charge of HBO Sports?

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