

HBO's Kery Davis On What's Next For HBO Boxing

Written by Michael Woods
Thursday, 07 March 2013 16:34



At first glance, you probably reacted to the news that Floyd Mayweather jumped ship from HBO to Showtime with a dropped jaw, and the thought that the departure would be received at HBO with as much joy as a kick in the groin.

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I tried to get a sense of how the suits at HBO were dealing with the news when I saw Ken Hershman, Kery Davis and Mark Taffet at a Feb. 21 press conference in NYC to hype the April 13 HBO face-off between Nonito Donaire and Guillermo Rigondeaux. I was busy trying to report on the PED kerfuffle, so I didn't try to get a deeper sense if the Mayweather news had left the HBO crew stunned or demoralized.

But from what I gathered, in a couple brief feel-em-out chats, the mood over there was along the lines of, We have done boxing at the highest of levels for four-plus decades, and that will continue.

On Wednesday, I sat down and chatted with Davis, the senior vice president of programming at HBO sports, to talk about their upcoming slate and also get a better sense of what the Floyd leap means down the line.

Down the line is a key phrase there.

"We made a very aggressive offer to retain Floyd," he told me after the presser to hype the Saturday Barclays Center card, topped by Bernard Hopkins-Tavoris Cloud, ended.

And, did any part of him take it personally that the man who debuted with HBO in 1997 didn't finish his career with that longterm partner?

"If Floyd were 30, I would have maybe looked for the relationship to mean more in negotiations, but he's 36, looking for a deal to end his career," Davis said. "And I don't begrudge him that. But I think you judge a contract like that at the end of the deal."

Fair point. Floyd and Al Haymon snagged a six fight deal, over 30 months, the terms of which were not released. But it is believed that "Money" could be guaranteed over \$220 million for this package. At that Donaire-Rigo presser, I asked Bob Arum what the ramification to the deal were, and he recommended we hold off till things play out. At the time, I pushed back lightly,

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asking Bob for at least a prediction. He didn't bite... but he and Davis have a point when counseling us to take the long view.

Yes, Showtime snagged the marquee guy in the game. But for how long will Floyd stay the marquee guy? Will he resist the inevitable decline at the cruel hands of the sands of time? Can he be like a Bernard Hopkins, and be close to the athlete he is now almost three years down the road? Or will he prove the rule, not the exception? We can't and won't know until 30 months have elapsed.

I started to see the deal in a slightly different way. What if Floyd jumped the shark--not that anyone is saying they've seen hints of that, by the way--but what if he started to become injury prone, and then the new deal puts HBO in a bind along the lines of what the MLB Yankees are dealing with? The Yanks are due to pay A-Rod \$114 million over the next five years. He signed a 10 year, \$275 million deal back in 2007, when he was 32 years old. And then came speedbumps...a 2009 admission that he used PEDs...injuries...a severe dropoff in production. I'm not and Davis didn't portray Mayweather and A-Rod as twins, by the way, but any negotiator has to consider how age could potentially impact terms which seem acceptable now, but might not be so favorable down the line.

Davis seems to be looking at the development along the lines of how part of me reacted to it, as a fan. Competition is a good thing. The Floyd move means HBO will be focusing more on live events, off PPV, like the Hopkins-Cloud event, like the Tim Bradley-Ruslan Provodnikov scrap (on March 16 in Cali), and the much anticipated Brandon Rios-Mike Alvarado rematch March 30, in Vegas. "Our job is to make sure the HBO schedule is the best it can be," Davis told me. "This will give us the opportunity to bring more big events live on HBO."

Anyone that has lived and had life kick their teeth in a couple times knows it is wisest, if possible, to view trying times, periods of transition, as an opportunity. It seems like HBO sports is in that mode. "Yes, we're still here, we still have 'A' level stars, and we're looking at fights like Pacquiao-Marquez, Martinez and Chavez Jr. , and we have Andre Ward, and Donaire, and Brandon Rios. And we're not going to be out of the pay per view business," Davis said.

Davis is keen to see Tim Bradley step it up on March 16, in his first outing since he was awarded a decision over The Congressman. "I think that's a very, very difficult fight," he said. "We'll see how Bradley is against Provodnikov, after almost a year off. He comes in with something to prove, and can use a win as a steppingstone to a huge fight."

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Arresting challenges, like the trek to Macau to put on the card topped by the Chinese two-time gold medallist Zou Shiming, Rocky Martinez, and Brian Viloria, will be helpful as the company enters this new phase. "That's opening up a brand new market, potentially a billion boxing fans," Davis said of the Asian event. "To be part of something like that is pretty historic." There will be no time to sulk, if that is ever a temptation, or lament. Work is there to be done, and there is a vacuum to fill. The task is to fill the vacuum with sturdier material than was present before.

Just a week later, after the Macau slate which runs on HBO2, HBO offers that face-off between the pound for pound ace Donaire and Rigo, who himself might be a top twenty pound for pounder, though he still has some catching up to do as pro to meet his amateur acclaim. "I think that's two of the best fighters in the sport of boxing, period," Davis said. "Add the element of Radio City Music Hall, and that crystallizes the fact that we're thinking outside the box, looking to expand the brand of boxing."

Expand indeed. Frequent flyer miles will be adding up when World Championship Boxing makes the long trek to Argentina for the April 27 face-off between WBC middleweight champ Sergio Martinez and Brit Martin Murray, who is 25-0 but hasn't been in with anyone near the class of Sergio.

Davis made the case that HBO's track record should be respected, that their cards averaged about 1.2 million viewers an event, versus around half a million plus for their main competitor. He ticked off the names of Ward, Donaire, Martinez, Marquez, Chavez Jr, Gennady Golovkin and Brandon Rios, and said, "We're proud of the lineup of stars we have."

I inquired whether rising star Adrien Broner would stay within the HBO fold, as we've seen him in the crowd at shows broadcast by Showtime recently. Davis said he didn't want to get deep into that subject, as Broner and the network are talking about a longterm HBO contract.

My takeaway: HBO could well emerge from this period in better shape than they were in last month. Yes, they incur a revenue hit from the Floyd-PPV exit, there's no spinning that. (Though I think sometimes we tend to forget that HBO doesn't make out like a bandit from Floyd PPV events; ample money flows to the boxers, the promoter, marketing costs a load and the platform providers, the cable and satellite companies, eat a big chunk of the pie.) But if the Floyd move forces them to get a bit more creative, use talents and brain-storming that they maybe haven't

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had to use while enjoying the services of "Money," if the Showtime grab means more energy and focus is expended on finding and refining next generation stars, then in 30 months, we all might be looking at the Floyd deal, and the state of boxing at HBO, in a totally different light.

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deepwater says:

good article. its about time some ask the ? did floyd jump the shark. he did. he wore the fonzi leather jacket also. showtime thinks it made a great investment. 6 fights in 3 years. right off the bat we all know floyd wont have more then 3/4 fights top over that period. hbo is smart and will survive. hbo is going to throw pauli m at broner so it will raise broners profile. broners 26-0 record has no one on it. its a con to the casual boxing fan= hey broner just jumped 2 weight classes and beat the champ! wow! broner is great! too bad paulie cant crack an egg and as long as broner last till the final bell he will win the belt. floyd getting this deal is just like the nasdac bubble followed by the tech bubble followed by the housing bubble followed by.... you get the idea. showtime might be happy right now but when the game changes and floyd doesnt look sharp or fight more then 3 fights showtime will lose money. the boom-bust cycle.

Radam G says:

Sometimes people cannot see because they are busy looking. For years I've been spittin' in this Universe about the takeover of bouts in Macau and Abu Dhabi. Salt Lover, who hasn't been here under that moniker in a minute, read me like a cheap book.

Money May did not jump ships. HBO threw him overboard off its luxury cruiser and Showtime picked him up onto it dinghy.

Open your eyes, my stanky -- I mean Yanky -- friends. HBO is now into two super-money-making-boxing markets. China/Asian market is trillion of covered-by-gold dollars and Abu Dhabi is a billion-dollar-plus market covered by oil, blood diamond and slave labor.

Money May is fighting in weak-arse Sin City which is covered by cheats, doing time in jail for whuppin' your babies' mommas punks, stealing yo' own syet, ie OJ Simpson wife-and-her b-friend killas, ripping off a legend's son for weed smoking city-law officials and hos turning tricks.

HBO is pimping and Showtime is Money May fronting and limping. Open your eyes, people. Don't be so slow to know. Holla.

SouthPaul says:

I don't agree with the real estate bubble bursting analogy. It's not like Showtime has wrote Floyd some ridiculously huge check of 280 million dollars ...deposited and cleared into his account

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and now they're trying to figure out how to pay the monthly mortgage in their investment. No matter how it's being spun the truth is it's a simple contract. Divide it up as they go along. May is right around the corner so realistically how much will Showtime have invested in him? The guy is fully established, he's already his own corporation, a fully functional well oiled money making enterprise. The May PPV card will do huge numbers Right off the bat.....Showtime is way ahead of their investment. Money in bank for all involved. Wash, rinse , repeat every time the bright PPV lights come on. That's wassssup.

deepwater says:

southpaul the real estate bubble is appropriate. any boom-bust cycle is revelent . spell check isnt working so forgive me. the showtime contract is overvalued. they are assuming floyd will fight 5/6 times in 3 years with an increasing interest from the boxing public. during the real estate bubble when a house was worth 120,000 people assumed the market would continue in a linear path and the house value would increase a certain % every year because..... just because.....(the real reason is the market was manipulated behind the scenes by the low interest rate money junkies.) the showtime clown espinoza is throwing the bank at floyd because of a past performances. will floyd reproduce those past performances? gatti,delahoya,hatton,.... any hattons left? no. who will floyd fight after guerrero? bradley,malignaggi,thurman,cotto 2, pac man,alexander. do any of those opponants besides pac bring in any money? not copmared to past performance it doesnt. floyd is gaming the system on the way out. just like alan greenspan did and bernake is doing now. the big question is what if floyd loses and/or gets in trouble and incarcerated again. there is alot of ifs with floyd right now. hbo kerry is right, if floyd was 30 right now and not 36 ,hbo would throw the bank at floyd. reality says floyd just got overpaid and showtime is taking a huge risk. short term gain for long term loss. lets see. the state also flipped it. a house is no longer an asset it is a liability. floyds big boy mansion is a perfect example. compare floyds purchase price+ addiational renovations with other comparable properties. lose lose situation.

deepwater says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;26688]Sometimes people cannot see because they are busy looking. For years I've been spittin' in this Universe about the takeover of bouts in Macau and Abu Dhabi. Salt Lover, who hasn't been here under that moniker in a minute, read me like a cheap book.

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the golden rule= those who own the gold rule. after nixon ruined us in 1971 and took us off the gold standard and opened china up to trade the republic has been in decline. check out all your barber shop and cash for gold stores. gold is real money and the rest of the world knows this. all our gold is being bought and shipped out of the country. china,sinapore,macau and the rest are in charge without even 1 nuke going off. dear tss readers trade whatever 401k nonsense or dollars under the mattress for hard assets now! gold silver food water alcohol and cigarettes. its time.

SouthPaul says:

Deepwater

Here's where you're losing me. Showtime hasn't given Floyd the 280 million dollars yet. They didn't take out a loan in order to acquire MAYweather Inc. There's no astronomical monthly payment to be paid on a regular basis. All they've really did was assume the responsibilities of promoting and airing his future fights whether that be 1 or all six. There's no pressure even to match past PPV numbers but as I've already pointed out they haven't taken much out of their pocket. He simply got them to agree to giving him a higher percentage of the overall PPV sales. I see it as impossible that Showtime can lose anything here. Even if they only make a million dollars per PPV event ...they win.

brownsugar says:

[QUOTE=deepwater;26685]good article. its about time some ask the ? did floyd jump the shark. he did. he wore the fonzi leather jacket also. showtime thinks it made a great investment. 6 fights in 3 years. right off the bat we all know floyd wont have more then 3/4 fights top over that period. hbo is smart and will survive. hbo is going to throw pauli m at broner so it will raise broners profile. broners 26-0 record has no one on it. its a con to the casual boxing fan= hey broner just jumped 2 weight classes and beat the champ! wow! broner is great! too bad paulie cant crack an egg and as long as broner last till the final bell he will win the belt. floyd getting this deal is just like the nasdac bubble followed by the tech bubble followed by the housing bubble followed by.... you get the idea. showtime might be happy right now but when the game changes and floyd doesnt look sharp or fight more then 3 fights showtime will lose money. the boom-bust cycle.[/QUOTE]

Tight analogy, awesome.

even the best fighters in the history of the sport weren't gettiing PPV income off everyfight.... it was the challenges they took that instantly made certain fights PPV worthy... being the greatest boxer on the planet doesn't grant anyone the automatic right to claim PPV privileges every time out the gate... I like Floyd but it'll be interesting to see how much the "old Man" is worth a year from today as far as being an attraction. (good article)..... The fans will demand challenges that

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defy the odds in order to keep customers paying their entertainment dollars in this tight economy, Can Floyd make it happen... FMJ vs Guerrero will be a good place to start making an appraisal,because Guerrero ain't no joke.

SouthPaul says:

That analogy reads good but it doesn't apply here. Showtime doesn't have anything invested in Floyd other than the All Access promo. All they'll have invested in him each time out is the usual televising of boxing events. They didn't spend money to overall Floyd's fight personality they aren't going to be airing his fights from some extraordinary place say like Mars or in middle of the Sahara desert ... It'll be business as usual with Floyd taking home more of the overall PPV revenue.

Radam G says:

HBO is slickin' and d¼ckin' da fanfaronades. That humbug network told Money May to step. And Showtime is picking up the pieces. Holla!

amayseng says:

i think where we are all in the dark is in the contract since it hasnt and wont be released..

is the gaurenteed or is it per bout...

i would guess it is per bout, i would hope, why would you gaurentee an inactive fighter at 36

such a high contract?

it all depends on how floyd performs...once he starts to slip and knows it he will bounce, he

wont risk that "0"

SouthPaul says:

I gotta believe they didn't waste much time on it because they knew he had no intention on sticking around. Makes all the sense in the world he's with Showtime. Golden Boy Promotions is doing the bulk of their business over there.. They've got their personal insider which is their ex house lawyer pushing all their deals thru .. Now they've got their marquee fighter on board.

If you believe Showtime loses in this deal then you have to be assuming they've given Floyd some astronomical signing bonus or cut him a check for the entire 280 million.

amayseng says:

like i mentioned when it came out,
there are only 2 ppv fighters worthy of making money..

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pacman and caneloim

im guessing this may event wont do as well as last may

the ghost is unknown to the common fan and canelo isnt on the card..

floyd needs a B side....

they are gonna run the ghosts wifes story into the damn ground..

good for her and god bless her for her health and her donor for such an unselfish act...

but they are gonna exploit the crap out of it...

floyd is not an action knockout fighter..

he needs a B side..

i rewatched the floyd dlh fight and it was honestly boring..

floyds biggest moment and he fought to just barely win, he didnt go for it.....he doesnt have that killer instinct that fires everyone up and has people buying ppvs like tyson

SouthPaul says:

Amayseng

I too believe it's per bout with it coming from a higher percentage per event. Showtime isn't financing anything here. The money will come from the PPV sales, regardless of they're record setting or not.

amayseng says:

definitely southpaul

i think arod ruined it for all athletes to an extent...look at the yankees they are stuck with that gaurenteed money to a guy who is now old, worn out, ped' out, and hits 260 with no power off the juice...

not saying floyd is juicing but the dude cant perform and he is making bank....

floyds deal is probably per bout with incentives like you said...

SouthPaul says:

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Right, this isn't a Ryan Leaf deal either where they've shelled out 12 million dollar signing bonus without ever seeing him perform on the professional level. And I'll bet the incentives are nothing more than letting Floyd be more of a mouthpiece for himself ...maybe produce a episode or 2 of the All Access show... And just play into the exaggeration of the WWE script. Make no mistake ...he's getting paid on the highest level but even then the numbers likely are exaggerated to spite, agitate, and play into his villain role.

Radam G says:

Showtime is officially the millionaire poverty network featuring fighters who will take not-covered-by-silver-or-gold loot. HBO has officially taken its highest big-money-making fights out of the U.S.A. and given Money May the boot. Showtime is the only place that he can now toot. Y'all better listen. I didn't poot! Don't be waiting for the smell. In China and Abu Dhabi, Money May's bulljive does not sell. Hehehe! Holla!

SouthPaul says:

It's business 101 at any community college to teach that the best investments are those you put little into and and yet still can reap some profit and rewards from. They don't need to be massive profits, just so as long as you are making a little something off the effort. Insert the PBF / Showtime relationship.

Bernie Campbell says:

What the fuch you guys plitting hairs about Floyds's future, Hes 36, How long his he gonna be relavent? We are talking about the inevitable demise of boxing, already people are pulling up there stakes and running! The name of the game is in Europe, In America you just have old a** Floyd, Broner, Russell, Rios, and a questionmarked surgery Ward! That leaves evreyone else shucking and jiving! The American game is dead, that should be evident!

Also Al Haymon better get a new poster boy rather than Sam Watson, You really cant take the institution serious like that!

amayseng says:

i wouldnt include rios, he just lost with a gift decision and whenever he steps up to the elite its lights out..

pacman beats him half to death

Radam G says:

B-Camp, you are a paradox. An amazing one. Hahahaha! And you got serious jokes. Holla!

SouthPaul says:

Would it be something if Bernie was really short for Bernadette and she being the old lady

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Hopkins mugged for her SSC back in the early Philly days? Lmfao.

Bernie Campbell says:

Dont be Ignorant! The executioner by first round Kayo!