The NBC Sports Network is starting a boxing series, which kicks off on Jan. 21, and I am rooting for the venture to succeed. Main Events, run by Kathy Duva, is the promoter in charge of putting together Fight Night Series, and I am hoping that the endeavor is a success for them as well.

This is not because I happen to think Kathy Duva is a decent soul who does business the right

way, and is a promoter who actually promotes the sport and the fighters the old school (read: correct) way. I do think that, but that is beside the point. I root for NBCSN and Main Events to make a splash with the four shows which are slated to run in 2012 because I want the sport as a whole to succeed, and the more avenues boxers have to show their stuff, the better off the sport will be.

Ideally, boxing gets back where it belongs, on terrestrial TV. That issue came up on a Monday conference call, featuring Jon Miller, President of NBC Sports and Versus (Versus is the cable net which will be re-named NBC Sports Network on Jan. 2), Duva and Russell Peltz, the Philly promoter-matchmaker who will find the fights, along with Duva, which will run on Fight Night.

“I’m excited to be getting our team back on boxing,” Miller said, recalling that NBC used to put on 20-30 shows a year in the early 90s. He said that the sport has been a bit underground in the last decade, and that his crew recognized an opportunity to get some compelling live programming for his company.

I am always hoping that fights get back on “free TV” as I think it’s a no brainer that it is in the best interest of the growth of the sweet science to have as many eyeballs as we can get on the athletes and the superior drama a scintillating prizefight can deliver. Miller didn’t promise that we’d be seeing fights or cards running on NBC on Saturday afternoon again, but I hold out hope. He did say that if things go well on Saturday night of Jan. 21, and March 24, the second pegged date, he would consider adding more shows to the mix. Shows will run in June and December of 2012, he said.

Miller said he was happy to be doing business with Duva, and he hooked up with her because he heard what he wanted from Main Events: that they will strive to show pick ‘em fights, and won’t be in the business of making showcase matches, to build up prospects’ records or give stars stay-busy opportunities. He did make clear that it would make sense to branch out into more marquee matchups, since NBC Sports Network is owned by Comcast, which is the largest cable network in the US.

Duva said she didn’t want to release monetary figures, reasoning that if she said that NBC paid her X amount, other promoters, who are encouraged to bring their fighters into the mix, and also manager, will be married to a set figure. She made it clear that the purses going to the fighters will exceed the fee paid by NBC. She also said they wouldn’t be focusing and overpaying for one fight, at the expense of the whole card.

That Main Events is a lean and mean company, and doesn't have 30 or 60 fighters in their stable, she said, will allow them more leeway in searching for the best quality bouts.

Peltz said he was psyched to be putting on the first show away from a casino, and the frequently sterile atmosphere which can often be found there. The Jan. 21 show, pitting heayweight Eddie Chambers against Sergei Liakhovich and Gabriel Rosado against Jesus Soto-Karass, in a junior middleweight scrap will take place at Philly's Asylum Arena. Rosado and Chambers are Pennsylvania guys, so we can presume their people will be a loud presence and help generate electricity in Asylum.

Fight fans have been curious to know if we will see one, two or more bouts in the new series. Duva said probably three bouts will air from each show.

Apart from this series being a potential entry onto free TV (read: NBC), I'm also hoping that it helps usher out the emphasis on the undefeated record in boxing. Rosado has five losses but is a fan fave, and Soto-Karass is coming off back-to-back losses to Mike Jones, but is a volume guy who comes to bang. Fans would rather see guys with losses in competitive bouts than coddled hitters with puffed up records staying busy against speedbumps, and it is time that UFC mentality, of not lionizing the loss-less, trickles down to us.

Peltz drew laughs when he recollected his involvement in fights on NBC in the early 80s. Every Frank "the Animal" Fletcher fight, he said, "was like Armageddon" and had Peltz popping Valium to stay sane.

He reiterated that this series won't be the place where we'll see a future star inch his way up the ladder, taking on progressively better foes, but each time entering a fight in which he is the far and away favorite. "We don't want to sacrifice the integrity of the series to have a guy 9, 10-0 and give them a free pass," he said. "There are more undefeated folks parading around than in the history of boxing."

Comment on this article

Radam G says:

I'm not convince. Boksing is banana crooked. And mismatches roar like a rushing sea. Matching on paper always gets a hard shock of actuality and reality. I'm reminded of the cat who had broke all takes of records by knocking out every opponent in less than three rounds. He stepped up to a C fighter on Showtime and got kayoed in less than two minutes.

Matching is not scientific. It is like the Big-screen character Forrest said about a box of cholocate: "...you never know what you are gettin!' And his momma told him dat. Forrest was wise. Heheheheheheheh! Holla!

dino da vinci says:

I don't know, Rad. At the club show level, some guys do a much better job than others. Jerry Bilderrain was the matchmaker for the Battle In The Ballroom at the Irvine Marriott. Made it look easy. With a modest budget. Using the same talent pool in Southern California the rest of us had access to. Always an entertaining evening of remarkably well matched guys. My matchmaker Ray Torres would say, site unseen, that he'd take 2-1 anybody on those shows.