

Big Night of Fights In Works for Pier 32

ESPN WAS seeking an unusual venue for its new Tuesday night boxing show. Local promoter Peter Howes was searching for financial backing to put on a card. Bring them together and you have that rarest of spectacles — world-class boxing in San Francisco.

Pier 32 will be the setting for a fighting extravaganza on May 22 that will feature boxing, martial arts, live bands and what Howes calls “provocative beauty,” meaning models and hostesses wearing very little.

It’s all part of an effort Howes hopes will revive boxing in the city. If it takes a few extra wrinkles to draw a crowd, well, Howes has a laundry bag full of them.

“We are trying to appeal not only to traditional boxing fans, but to all the people who are interested in combative sports,” said Howes, who promoted the three Greg Haugen-Paul Nave fights in Marin, the first of which was televised by ESPN2 three years ago.

“As a businessman, I want to maximize. I want to appeal to as many people as possible. We can do OK with just the boxing fans, whom we love. But I’d like to broaden that.”

Howes is still lining up participants for the card of five or six bouts. There also will be three fights in the martial-arts discipline of Muay Thai, along with a boxing-gear fashion show.

He said the main event will include a light heavyweight ranked in the top 10 in the world, and the co-main would pit two featherweights. There’ll also be a women’s fight, probably showcasing San Leandro’s Gina “Boom Boom” Guidi.

ESPN2 will broadcast only the boxing fights on the card — billed as “On the Waterfront” — in the third installment of a Tuesday night series that’s to begin May 8. The two-hour program, to run through Aug. 8, is an offshoot of The Deuce’s hip and popular Friday Night Fights, with a twist.

“What we want to do with the Tuesday night series is bring it to offbeat locales,” said Bob Yalen, ESPN director of brand management. “On June 26 we’re going to do it from the deck of the Intrepid in New York Harbor. We may do Pearl Harbor. We’ve been offered something in Galveston (Texas), something in South Beach (Miami), something at the St. Louis Zoo, just different ideas.”

Pier 32 doesn’t exactly qualify as an offbeat setting except for the dearth of boxing cards in San Francisco. In fact, Yalen and Howes originally talked about broadcasting the show from Alca-

ON BOXING

Jorge L. Ortiz

traz before discarding the idea as unfeasible. But the spectacular views the Embarcadero affords, along with the network’s positive experience during the X Games and the localized production facilities made the area an easy sell.

Whether the live show itself sells — tickets will range from \$25-\$350 — may go a long way toward determining the immediate future of boxing in San Francisco. Howes is hoping for a crowd in the 4,000 range, which would provide the impetus to continue his plans for at least two more cards in the city this year.

JUST TALK: Oscar De La Hoya’s return to the ring March 24 against Arturo Gatti might not be televised by HBO, which yesterday lost its legal attempt to get exclusivity on the bout.

De La Hoya, by the way, remains steadfastly uninterested in facing Fernando Vargas, even though he plans to climb up to 154 pounds after the Gatti fight.

“I’m the biggest fight out there for De La Hoya at 154 pounds,” Vargas said. “Why would he not want to make the most money? Yeah, he can talk about me, but I fought like a warrior against (Felix) Trinidad.”

Speaking of Trinidad, Jack Mosley, Shane Mosley’s dad and trainer, has made some noise about pitting his son against the junior middleweight champ in a matchup of two of the best pound-for-pound fighters in the world. Don’t expect it to happen.

Mosley, who used to fight at 135 pounds, is a natural at his current 147, while Trinidad is planning to go up from 154 to 160.

UPPERCUTS: Following in the time-honored tradition of boxers who fire their trainers after an ugly loss, David Tua has replaced Ronnie Shields with Joe Goossen. Good luck convincing the Tuaman to drop the extra 25 pounds or so he carried when he bombed against Lennox Lewis. . . . Top Rank is touting lightweight Miguel Cotto as its brightest prospect in years. The Puerto Rican Olympian makes his pro debut on Friday. . . . Early contender for the year’s best fight: Last week’s light heavyweight barn burner in which Julio Gonzalez scored a unanimous decision over the leather-tough Julian Letterlough.

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