

# Boxing commissioner wants to give sport new image

By GREG ZOTT

With the rise of professional football, soccer and numerous non-mainstream sports in the last 20 years, boxing in this country has been relegated to a position of uncertainty.

The "golden years" of boxing—the 1930's—have vanished.

Even boxing's multi-million dollar heavyweight bouts, brought about by the sports self-acclaimed ambassador Muhammad Ali, rarely benefit lower-class, competitive boxing in the U. S. Amateur and professional boxing below heavyweight is still plagued by small purses and minimal media coverage.

The question for those who follow the sport is simple: Can boxing make a comeback? For Chuck Davey, president of the newly formed United States Boxing Association (USBA), the answer is a resounding yes.

"Interest in boxing has increased everywhere in the country," said Davey. "It's especially apparent in Michigan. We've had more profes-

sional fights here this year than in all of 1977."

The USBA was formed in December of 1977 at the request of state boxing commissioners around the country. Its main purpose is to enhance and protect the image of boxing in the U. S., where the sport has slumped miserably. Davey is the association's first president.

"Every country who participates in boxing throughout the world, except for the United States, has some kind of federation running its boxing program," said Davey. "The USBA will close that void and be able to work with international federations to promote the sport."

Since the world boxing scene was once dominated by Americans, an organization like the USBA logically should have existed years ago. But it was precisely U.S. dominance, says Davey, that kept the USBA from organizing.

"For many years the U.S. champ was the world champ," said Davey. "There was no need for a separate

U.S. champion since that fighter already held a superior title as 'World' Champ.

"The problem in recent years was that Americans were no longer holding world titles. Since the U.S. did not have a systematic way of working fighters up the ladder, as other countries do, our competition and interest dropped off. The USBA is trying to stimulate new interest in U.S. titles again, at every weight level."

The USBA also plays an important role in re-establishing boxing's credibility in America as well as the world. Davey admits improving the image of boxing is sorely needed after the recent problems with promoter Don King and the World Boxing Commission (WBC).

King was allegedly involved in illegal promoting and scheduling of fights for ABC in 1976, a fiasco that has made the major networks reticent to discuss TV contracts with the USBA.

"Boxing has always been the whipping boy of the sports world," said Davey. "But we do have some real problems in promoting bouts on television because of the way the system is set-up."

"The only way boxing can have a legitimate television tournament is to let a group like the USBA, which is not monetarily involved, sponsor and supervise the tournament. As it stands now, the networks pick what fighters they want with no regard as to the quality of the fighter. That's why Sugar Ray Leonard has been fighting nobodies on national television."

Davey fears that if scheduling of bouts is not taken away from the networks, the public will grow weary of the one-sided competition.

"The spectators are going to see that the matches are not very com-

petitive," said Davey. "If you don't have legitimate contenders boxing will lose its appeal."

A major television contract with one of the three networks is being negotiated by the USBA for as early as September of this year. Success in the contract negotiations may be the essential element that brings boxing all the way back to the status it once held in the 50's.

"There is no question that television is key for the revival of boxing," said Davey. "It's the ideal sport for TV. All the action is in one place in plain view of the camera and the viewer. You don't need to know all the rules, and the one-on-one competition is some of the best of any sport."

Davey knows the positive effects that television can have on his sport. The boxing hysteria of the 1950s was a direct result of having fights on TV seven days a week.

"The Pabst and Gillette sponsored tournaments of the 50s were great for boxing," said Davey. "A national tournament sponsored by the USBA with a national television audience could be just as exciting."

Davey himself was a part of those glory years in boxing. He was the golden boy of amateur and pro boxing in the late 1940's and early 50s, defeating such renowned champions as the Williams, Rocky Graziano, Carmen Basilio, and Johnny Saxton. Davey is also the only man to win four consecutive NCAA boxing titles—a feat he accomplished at Michigan State University.

"Boxing has been good to me," said Davey. "And the USBA is just one way to help improve a sport I enjoy very much."

Davey would like nothing better than to repay his old sport with a legacy of

a bright future. The current interest in boxing points to a successful fulfillment of that legacy.

"The excitement generated by the U.S. Olympic boxing team in 1976 was the biggest push for boxing in a long time," said Davey. "It's the first time in some time that people are beginning to recognize boxers that are not fighting at the heavyweight level."

If the interest increases, boxing may

finally escape the grip of grandiose heavyweight spectacles that have stolen the show from the lower weights for the last 15 years. And that can only help the amateur and pro ranks everywhere else.

"If we can make every weight level as important as it once was, including improving the purses, boxing will be very big once again in the United States," said Davey.

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**Swim results**

(Continued from page 1C)

On Thursday, Farmington Glen travelers to Rochester for their dual meet against Heart of the Hills Swim Club, while Beechview will be at Forest Hills Swim Club in Birmingham.

**Woodbrooke Hills vs. Beverly Hills**

Woodbrooke Hills swamped league rival Beverly Hills in a NSSL dual meet held last Thursday at Woodbrooke.

Woodbrooke Hills had 13 double winners and set seven team records. Winners of two individual events in 7.8 year old competition were Carrie Lee (girls' 25-meter back and breast), Jason Wolf (boys' 25-meter back and fly), and Jamie Hill (boys' 25-meter free and breast). In 9-10-year-old competition, double winners included Kathy Pierog (girls' 50-meter fly and 50-meter free), Scott Slinson (boys' 50-meter free and 50-meter back), and Pat Dunigan (boys' 50-meter breast and 50-meter fly).

Woodbrooke had four double winners in 11-12-year-old competition: Jill Andries (100-meter IM and 50-meter breast), Lori Arabian (50-meter fly and 50-meter free), John Rielly (50-meter free and 50-meter breast), and Chris Leslie (100-meter IM and 50-meter fly).

Leah Wolf won twice in the 13-14 competition (girls' 100-meter IM and 50-meter free), while Betsy Leahy (girls' 50-meter free and 50-meter back) and Clay Swockfort (boys' 50-meter back and 100-meter free) were double winners in the 15-17 age bracket.

Both Woodbrooke Hills and Beverly Hills have another NSSL dual meet scheduled for Thursday night.

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