

BREAKING OUT OF THE BOX



IJ photos/Frankie Frost

HARD WORK: Novato boxer Susan Howard, trained by former welterweight championship contender Andy Nance from Marin, is preparing for a boxing match at Pier 32 in San Francisco on Tuesday night. She works out at a gym at the old Hamilton Air Force Base to train for her bout with Seattle's Bambi Bertoncello.

Howard ready for outdoor bout

By Dave Albee
IJ reporter

The first time Susan Howard remembers seeing former IBF world light welterweight championship contender Andy Nance from San Rafael was in the boxing ring and she wasn't into boxing.

"Who's that?" Howard said. "I was into being married. I was a housewife."

Fifteen years later, Howard can't get enough boxing. In fact, she's coming out of retirement for the fifth time Tuesday night in San Francisco to box on the undercard of "On The Waterfront" featuring a live televised (ESPN2) heavyweight fight between Robert Davis of Cleveland and Terrance "KO" Lewis of Philadelphia at Pier 32. Howard, from Novato, will box Bambi Bertoncello of Seattle in a lightweight bout.

Guess who'll be in Howard's corner? Andy Nance.

"She is as determined a boxer as I've ever seen," said Nance, who is Howard's trainer.

The union of Nance and Howard came by chance. Sort of. She bumped into him coming out a supermarket in Novato one day four years ago and in-



PUNCHING IN: Susan Howard works out on a speedbag at a gym at the old Hamilton Air Force Base. She has come out of retirement to compete on Tuesday night's card.

vited him to work out at the new Novato Boxing Club she opened at Hamilton Field through the Parks and Recreation Department.

Nance's role at the club gradually evolved from participant to volunteer to trainer/manager/promoter for Howard.

"I just casually said something because I had burned out with these

wanna-be (trainers)," the 37-year-old Howard said. "I said, 'Hey, why don't you train me?' I didn't want to overwhelm him."

Nance said yes and then made a fight for her. He was having dinner one day with fight promoter Peter Howes, a Redwood High graduate, who revealed his plans for "On The Waterfront" to Nance. However,

Howes mentioned he didn't have an opponent for Bertoncello.

That's when Nance pitched Howard. Howes wasn't convinced Howard could make weight.

"You make the fight and I'll make sure she's at the weight," Nance said. "I guarantee it."

Nance, who now lives in Marinwood, gave a George Zimmer-like promise and Howard gave her trainer a yeoman's like effort. She has been running 4-6 miles every day. She's doing wind sprints on the street in front of the gym. She has been sparring in the ring with former Bay Area Golden Gloves champion Brad Russell, now a 28-year-old musician from Novato, and George Uberti, a 16-year-old Novato High junior.

"You have to tell her when to stop," Nance said.

Last week, Howard had dropped from a starting weight of 154 pounds to 138, only three pounds from the required weight. She was in the best fighting shape of her life.

"I want to have this opportunity," Howard said. "What's the worst thing that could happen? I can lose weight before the summer? I'm in a win-win

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Howard

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situation."

Howard, 5-2 as a pro, hasn't fought in two years. But Nance has worked hard to get her in shape and he's tightened her defense.

"The only thing she hasn't done in two years is get in front of a crowd and box," Nance said. "But there's no rust."

Howard's trainer is so pleased with her progress that he's suggested to Howes that Howard is ready to knock the "bi" out of Bambi. Bam!

"Don't hurt my little Bambi," Howes said.

"We're going to put a beating on Bambi," Nance said.

That's all right by Howard. "I take confidence from Andy," Howard said.

"Do you see the way she looks (in the ring)?" Nance replied. "Who wouldn't have confidence

ON THE WATERFRONT

WHEN: Tuesday, 5 p.m.

WHERE: Pier 32 (between Pacific Bell Park and the Bay Bridge, where the X Games were held)

WHAT: 10-round heavyweight bout between Robert Davis (24-1, 16 KOs) of Cleveland and Terrance "KO" Lewis (29-8, 20 KOs) of Philadelphia; middleweight bout between Rodney Jones (24-3, 13 KOs) of Stockton and Rashid Matuhla (22-1-1, 18 KOs) of Tanzania. Susan Howard of Novato will fight Bambi Bertoncello of Seattle in a scheduled four-round bout on the undercard.

TICKETS: Call 392-4400 or 922-7391. Call the Novato Boxing Club at 883-9347 and they'll deliver tickets to you. Tickets are \$200, \$100, \$50, \$30 and \$25 for standing room only. For more info, log onto the fight's Web site at www.fighttribe.com.

in her?"

Howard is more committed to boxing than ever. She was widowed in 1987. Her late husband, Paul, was a boxer and a martial

artist.

"Nothing seems to faze you after that," she said.

When she's not at the gym and in the ring, Howard is a personal trainer for Nautilus of Marin and a water aerobics instructor at Rolling Hills Club in Novato. They see a much a different side of her.

"I'm the monster inside the ring," Howard said. "Outside I can't even kill bugs."

Now she's bent on beating up an opponent named "Bambi," a photograph model who has a pro record of 3-1. Their lightweight bout is scheduled for four rounds, but might be amended to six rounds to fill air time on ESPN2.

"I feel I have the skill," Howard said. "I just want to test it against who's out there. I just want to know. I haven't retired out of lack of skill, but for lack of good training and good management. Now that I have that, I'm ready to go."

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What's HAPPENING?

Blue Waters offers classes, tours

Blue Waters Kayaking has numerous classes and tours scheduled, including an introduction to sea kayaking on Saturday, June 2, Sunday, June 10, and Saturday, June 16. The class offers beginners the skills needed for kayaking in sheltered bodies of water. Paddle strokes and rescue techniques will be practiced. The cost is \$79. The location is Blue Waters Kayaking on Tomales Bay in Inverness. The hours are 8:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. On Saturday, May 26, there will be an intermediate class designed for advanced paddlers. Students will have the opportunity to strengthen basic strokes, fine tune braces and learn faster and more advanced rescues. The cost is \$79 and the class runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The upcoming tours include a trip on Saturday to Elkhorn Slough, followed by a trip on Sunday, June 2, to Estero Americano. Both tours cost \$85. For more information, call Blue Waters at 669-2600 or visit the company's Web site at www.bwkayak.com.

Escape from Alcatraz set for June 10

The Escape from Alcatraz is set for Sunday, June 10, starting off the coastline of the former prison. For the fourth straight year, the event is sold out. The race is expected to draw 1,000 competitors, including 50 pros. Olympic gold medalist Simon Whitfield is scheduled to compete along with Olympic silver medalists Chris McCormack and Michelle Jones. Peter Reid, the 1998 and 2000 Ironman World champion, is also entered. The race includes a 1.5-mile swim in San Francisco Bay, an 18-mile bike and an 8-mile run. There will also be a Fitness Festival with more than 40 exhibition booths on the Marina Green.

Tournament raises money for hospice

The sixth annual John Meyer Hospice of Marin Golf Tournament is Monday at Marin Country Club in Novato. The event raises money for Hospice of Marin, a nonprofit agency that provides a wide range of services and support for terminally ill patients and their families. The format of the golf tournament is best ball for handicap players and scramble for non-handicap players. Registration starts at 10 a.m. with tee times starting at noon. The cost is \$180 per golfer or \$145 for Marin Country Club members. Call 927-2237 for more information.

Bank of the West tickets on sale

Tickets are on sale for the Bank of the West Classic July 23-29 at the Taube Family Tennis Stadium on the Stanford campus. The semifinals are scheduled for Saturday, July 28, at 1:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. The final will be Sunday, July 29, at 1:30 p.m. Tickets may be purchased through Tickets.com at 478-2277.

Send information about upcoming local events to Marin Independent Journal Sports, 150 Alameda del Prado, Novato, CA 94948 or fax notices to 883-5458.