



KAREN VIBERT-KENNEDY/Examiner

Fighting shape: Robert Davis, a Gulf War vet, will be fighting Terrance Lewis tonight at Pier 32.

Pier 32 Punchout

Fight game's return a first step for City

BY ALEX BROWN
Special to The Examiner

Professional heavy-weight boxing returns to San Francisco. Sounds exciting, doesn't it?

Sure, if you cared about the guys on the card. Or if you'd even heard of them.

Which is the bind San Francisco finds itself in today. Should there

sense of excitement at the return of the big sluggers — following a substantial hiatus — to a city that once played host to such names as Jack Dempsey, Gene Tunney and "Gentleman Jim" Corbett?

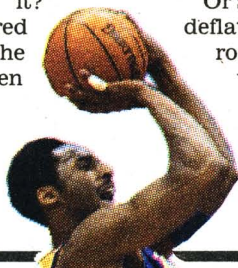
Or should there be a sense of deflation at the middle-of-the-road nature of the matchup: Robert Davis (24-1) vs Terrance "KO" Lewis (29-8)?

"Both these guys are coming off knockout victories, and both

have certainly knocked some guys out in their time," promoter Peter Howes said. "But bringing fighting back to San Francisco after an extended absence, and staging the event at Pier 32, this would have to be one of the more ambitious projects we've undertaken."

Howes' character reference for the bout reads this way: Hasim Rahman's recent upset defeat of Lennox Lewis makes the entire heavyweight field contenders, including these guys.

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Heavyweight boxing returns to The City with Davis-Lewis matchup

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The pessimists — the realists, some may argue — would tell you that a sport in which Rahman and John Ruiz are the reigning world champions relegates the entire field to pretender status.

Your call.

"When I heard Rahman won, it was almost like I won," Terrance Lewis said. "I received 40 phone calls right after telling me I could do it — I could go all the way. Straight away I went out for a six mile run with a big smile on my face the whole time.

Like me, no one gave him a chance. But he has shown us that anyone can win the title."

In this bout's defense, though, there is an element of intrigue in the conflicting nature of the fighters' approaches. Lewis, for example, has the out-of-ring hostility of an LPGA green keeper, belying his 20 KO record. He is a family man, a junior football coach, a champion of children's causes.

"I see guys in this sport not able to control themselves out of the ring," he said. "Not me. When I'm in the ring, I act like a

fighter. But when I'm out, I find it easy to turn that off."

But Davis, a Gulf War veteran, takes on a somewhat harsher overtone.

"I'm going out there hungry; I'm going out there to hurt somebody," he said. "I know I have to put in a good performance. I want to keep being on TV. What I've heard about this guy is good for me. He's a big hitter. So I've been working on my defense. I'm going to put on a show."

If you're expecting laser shows, marching bands and "let's get ready to rumble", go to Vegas. Pro heavyweight boxing San

Francisco-style — at least for now — is a poorer cousin, laced with decidedly fewer bells and whistles.

This is a contest of the street corner gyms, of fledgling careers, of fighters trying to raise their names from the small print in newspaper results columns to the neon lights of Nevada.

"We're cautiously optimistic about this," Howes said. "It's a first, important step."

Is that a good thing for Bay Area boxing?

Your call.