

Promoter flap moves title fight from S.F. to Fresno

Fresno's gain is San Francisco's loss. Local promoter Peter Howes is pretty upset it has turned out that way, and he points to Bob Arum as the culprit.

WBC lightweight champion Floyd Mayweather will face Dominican contender Victoriano Sosa on April 19 at, of all places, Fresno's Selland Arena.

Howes and Arum had negotiated to bring Mayweather's defense of his title to the Cow Palace, after their successful co-promotion of Nov. 11, 2001, when Mayweather scored a technical knockout of Jesus Chavez in front of more than 7,100 fans at a sold-out Bill Graham Civic Auditorium.

Then, in February, Arum informed Howes he was taking the card to Fresno instead.

"Bob and I had an agreement," Howes said. "We were good to go in the Cow Palace and he pulled some last-minute shenanigans without telling me about it, and he made this move. I'm not pleased with that."

Howes believes a monetary guarantee from the tribal Pauite Palace Casino convinced Arum to ditch San Francisco for Fresno, which will be hosting its first world title fight.

Arum said the casino is a sponsor but not an underwriter of the card, adding that his motives were more altruistic. He argued that when he found out the championship fights of the Golden Gloves tournament were scheduled for the basement of the Cow Palace on April 19, he decided to look elsewhere to avoid harming the amateur show.

Sonny Marson, who runs the Golden Gloves, said he would have been willing to change the tournament's dates if he were remunerated for his troubles. Arum said that option never came up.

"Nobody suggested that," he said. "And what about the kids, who are working their asses off training for this amateur tournament? What's the guy going to tell them, 'Hey, Arum gave us some money, so we're moving the date for a month?'"

Howes let out a sardonic laugh when told of Arum's rationale, calling it "a preposterous and self-serving misrepresentation."

He pointed out the pro and ama-

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teur shows could have complemented, not necessarily conflicted with, each other. One option he suggested involved discounting the price of the amateur ticket to fans who wanted to see both.

"(The Golden Gloves) is absolutely not the reason it went away," Howe insisted of the Mayweather card. "Bob chose to use that as a nice, convenient way to disregard his obligations here."

And it means local fans have been deprived of a rare world-title fight, as well as an up-close look at super lightweight Miguel Cotto, the highly touted prospect who will be fighting Joel Perez of Houston in the undercard.

All eyes on Oscar: Add Mayweather to the growing list of fighters who want a shot at Oscar De La Hoya, the sport's top attraction among the nonheavyweights.

Mayweather, who fought at 130 pounds as recently as a year and a half ago, would be giving up weight against the 154-pound De La Hoya. Mayweather says his walkaround weight is 145 and he'd aim to climb the ring at 150.

Should that fight materialize — and it wouldn't until at least next year — an even more intriguing story line would take center stage. Mayweather's dad, Floyd Sr., trains De La Hoya, so it would mark the first time in memory that a fighter faces an opponent trained by his father for the world championship.

To add to the mix, Roger Mayweather — Floyd Sr.'s brother — trains junior.

De La Hoya is scheduled to put his WBC and WBA super welterweight belts on the line against fading veteran Yory Boy Campas on May 3 in Las Vegas, then face Shane Mosley in September rematch.

Uppercuts: Arturo Gatti and Micky Ward, whose memorable first bout last May was the easy choice for 2002 Fight of the Year, will go at it a third time June 7 in Atlantic City. They split the first two encounters last year.

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