

# A PPV KNOCKOUT

## Tyson bout scores record \$103 mil

### DEMPSEY

— Lennox Lewis' of Mike Tyson in the eighth round has entered the TV history books: By racking up \$103 million from home viewers, fight became highest-grossing event in the history of pay per view. ek, nervousness es at HBO and sponsors of the ions that pre-buys were coming up

edented \$20 mil- ertising and pro- and Showtime .8-million paying ig to pony up s also a record re- V event, topping \$5 tariff.

The higher retail price allowed Tyson-Lewis to edge out the previous highest-grossing event, the June 1997 rematch between Tyson and Evander Holyfield, which generated \$99.6 million in PPV revenues. But Tyson-Holyfield II yielded 1.99 million buys, allowing it to keep its crown as No. 1 in total buyrates.

Donovan Gordon, senior VP of sales and affiliate marketing for Showtime Sports and Events, acknowledged that one of the reasons for the record-smashing grosses for Tyson-Lewis was the fact that 50 million homes, both cable and satellite, now have access to pay per view. That's about 40% more than the

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## Lewis-Tyson sets PPV record

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much more limited number — 35 million or so — that could call up Tyson-Holyfield in June 1997.

Another key factor in the success of Tyson-Lewis, Gordon said, was the gung-ho support of cable systems carrying the event, 95% of which signed on for what he calls "the top level of cross-channel spots," a total of 600 leading up to the fight.

### Enriching split

David Carter, a principal in the Sports Business Group, said the reason cable operators went out of their way to promote the fight is that "they got 45% of every subscriber dollar, which is a bigger percentage than they'd normally get" for an event of the Tyson-Lewis magnitude.

By contrast, cable operators who put forward only minimal marketing could end up with a split of as low as 25%, according to Gordon.

Gordon lauded the successful partnership of Showtime and HBO, which cooperated in a PPV event for the first time in their history.

What started as a shotgun marriage — HBO represented Lewis, and Showtime repped Tyson, so the only way to bring off the fight was through a joint venture — turned into a harmonious working relationship.

"We made it happen," Gordon said, "and we made history."

Carter added that the high quality of the fight — eight rounds of hard punching — leading to a "legitimate outcome," may "help to restore people's faith in the sport of boxing. In the long run, that could end up the most significant result of the bout."

"WE" KNOW WE CAN  
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 ATTENTION...  
 AND "PULL-IN" AT  
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 (A TOTAL OF  
 \$120 MILLION!)  
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 TOGETHER, A DEAL,  
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 INTO REALI