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LAS VEGAS SENTINEL

Watch Us Grow

SPORTS BOARD



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SPORTS, GAMING, HORSERACING

DON KING INTERNATIONAL SALESMAN

By JOE CROSS
Sentinel Writer

They're already calling boxing promoter Don King the P.T. Barnum of this era where sports hoopla has replaced the sideshow and carnival.

King has become the unquestioned master of being able to put together fight deals that even the boxing experts claim are impossible.

The latest — and up to this point, greatest he's ever pulled off — was the recent Larry Holmes-Muhammad Ali promoter's dream, that bombed as a fight. No matter. The fact that not only did King bring it together in the parking lot at Caesars Palace, he also managed to pull enough strings to get it telecast to China and to the Soviet Union.

Now that's big time promoting. King's ability as a promoter and businessman borders on the genius. The fact that the man with what writers describe as the "electric hair," has a personality that matches the great Ali's, has helped turn that King ability into millions of dollars.

King is ready to pontificate at the drop of a press conference. He has learned big words and he's an extremely well read man who often quotes bits of philosophy from great writers.

It's all combined to make not only King's cards great copy, but he



can always generate a story or column on himself anyplace he goes in the world.

King has the stage and he isn't a bit shy about admitting he uses it to his advantage. Unfortunately, more often than not, a lot of the im-

portant things King talks about aren't picked up by the media.

Don King talks about humanity. About people and how they can work together. His message is to the people and about the people — though it's often inserted during the

middle of a boxing press conference.

He knows that, as a leading black spokesman in this country, his image is of vital importance to future generations — the kids of today who see and, he hopes, hears what he

has to say.

"A few guys are able to break through," he says of his rise from the ghettos of Cleveland, troubles with the law and trying to be a black man in a normally white-oriented field. "They are then used as criteria for

what can be done. It's hard to measure what the image means when someone does something to become successful."

King realizes that when he starts talking about bringing people together — as he often does during press conferences — he knows that it is only because of the "image" he has developed that allows him his opportunity to speak out.

"I try to bring democratic principles to boxing and in my dealings," said King, an unabashed follower of old-fashioned patriotism because he believes in the way life can be in the future through proper use of the freedoms in this country. "The Constitution says this is a land where all people are entitled to equal treatment. I apply that to my business and personal dealings."

King often seems a contradiction when he talks about bringing up a new "white hope" for the heavyweight title. His critics claim he's interested only in the money that could be made. He sees it differently.

"Certainly a new white contender would be an attraction," King has said many times when the subject comes up. "For one thing, though, it would serve as a model for other white youngsters to go into boxing."

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KING