

SPORTS

Iron Mike training for planned July 31 match-up

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Mike Tyson has a date, a trainer and an opponent of sorts for his first fight in more than a year.

Unlike his last comeback, he also has a wide-open heavyweight division in front of him.

Tyson's manager, Shelly Finkel, said that the former champion probably will return to the ring July 31 against journeyman Kevin McBride. Finkel said negotiations were continuing over a site and possible pay-per-view broadcast.

"We should have something definite by next week," Finkel said.

"There's a lot of anticipation for him to come back."

The fight would be the

first for Tyson since Feb. 22, 2003, when he knocked out Clifford Etienne in 49 seconds in Memphis, Tenn.

That was supposed to be the first of a series of comeback bouts for Tyson, who was stopped by Lennox Lewis in the eighth round of his previous fight. But Tyson hasn't been in the ring since and until recently said he wasn't sure if he wanted to fight again.

With the heavyweight division lacking a big-name champion following the retirement of Lewis, however, the 37-year-old Tyson apparently has the itch.

"I'm totally confident about that," Finkel said, referring to Tyson's desire to fight.

The bout could be televised by Showtime, which has carried most of Tyson's fights since he was released from prison in 1995 after serving time for rape. Finkel said the fight would be promoted by K-1.

"We're in the negotiating process now," Showtime boxing executive Jay Larkin said. "But this is by no means an announcement."

Tyson has been a fixture in recent months at boxing cards and drew more applause than the main event boxers when he showed up earlier this month at Madison Square Garden for heavyweight title fights involving Chris Byrd and John Ruiz.

Byrd, Ruiz, Vitali Klitschko and Lamon

Brewster all hold portions of the heavyweight title, though there is no dominant fighter in the division.

That increases the attractiveness of Tyson, who still has a huge fan base despite his mediocre performances in recent years.

Tyson seemed reluctant to come back when Lewis was still fighting, perhaps because he had a rematch clause with the former champion who gave him a beating in their June 2002 fight. With Lewis gone, though, the road to the top suddenly got a lot easier.

"I think he can beat any of the four guys out there that are champions," said Freddie Roach, who trained Tyson for the Etienne fight. "He just needs to have discipline and

get in shape."

Roach said he will train Tyson again, beginning next month in Phoenix. Tyson quit training a week before the Etienne fight because of a dispute with Showtime over the money he would be paid, though he said at the time he was ill.

Roach said he didn't think he would have any problems over whether Tyson wants to train.

"We had a good camp the last time before the last week," he said. "The division is not good, and he knows he can get in shape and beat any of these guys."

After beating Corrie Sanders to win the WBC title last week, Klitschko said he wanted to fight Tyson. But it

appears Tyson will take few chances in his latest comeback.

McBride is a journeyman at best, a fighter who has not fought any big names and has been knocked out four times. He's a step down from Etienne, and it remains to be seen if fans will pay money to see Tyson fight someone who is not considered competitive.

Finkel had planned to have Tyson fight twice, then meet unbeaten Joe Mesi in December at Madison Square Garden.

But Mesi's career is on hold because he might have a head injury from being knocked down in a victory over Vassiliy Jirov last month.

Sports Pace

Salaries for female pro athletes still come up short

By Huel Washington
Special to Sentinel-Voice

About 30 years ago, women tennis players decided to break with the United States Lawn Tennis Association and form their own association because tournament purses were not equal to purses men were receiving at each tournament stop.

So, Billie Jean King, her sidekick Rosie Casals, and a few other good players formed the Women's Tennis Association and began to hold their own tour around the world.

The tour faltered a little while but once the ladies proved they could match the men in play and King demolished Bobby Riggs in the Houston Astrodome in straight sets, the larger or Grand Slam tournaments welcomed the ladies back into the fold.

The administrators at Wimbledon and the French Open, however, have continued to give the female winners of their tournaments purses that are slightly smaller than the male winners.

Last year's male winner Roger Federer won \$914,250 for his singles championship while Serena Williams, the women's champion received \$850,650 for her victory over her sister Venus.

This year, the men's champion will get \$1,077,270 and the women's winner will get \$1,002,174.

The U.S. Open and the Australia Open pay equally

for the men and the women, while the English and the French pay less to the women.

At Wimbledon, the British claim they pay less to the women because the men play the best-of-five sets and the women play the best-of-three sets. The women players have stated over the years that they would play five sets if asked but they aren't asked. In fact, some of the women players are in the singles, doubles, and mixed doubles so there should not be any worry about their conditioning and stamina.

Tennis became open for professional and amateur players in the United States in 1968 and the late Arthur Ashe won both the amateur and the inaugural professional U.S. Open Tournament at Forest Hills. The original tournament prize money was \$100,000. Ashe received \$14,000 for his singles victory. The women's champion, Virginia Wade of Great Britain, who defeated Billie Jean Moffitt King, received \$6,000.

By 1996, with the overall purses escalating to more than \$11 million, the U.S. Open decided to give both genders the same amount for winning their respective championships.

Not to be outdone, Wimbledon also opened their tournament to amateurs and pros with an original purse of \$63,000. But the men's winner got \$4,800 and the women's champion made a remarkable \$1,800. That

same year, the French Open also offered prize money. The total purse was \$25,000, with the male winner going home with \$3,000 and the female winner taking \$1,000. The difference over the years has been more than \$50,000. For instance, in 1996, the men got \$690,400 to the women's champions', \$644,000.

The Australian Open was the last to become a pro haven in 1969. The purse of \$25,000 was distributed to the men's winner getting \$5,000 and the woman taking all of \$1,500. About seven years ago, the Australians joined the Americans in giving equal purses to the men and women's winners.

With most tournaments now adopting the tie-breaker, the women could very easily play the best-of-five sets just like their male counterparts if that is needed for Wimbledon and the French Open directors to give equal purses to both sexes.

Other women leagues are doing well and some are not faring well at all. The women's bowling tour folded because there was no sponsorship and that's too bad. There has been some talk about adding some of the women bowlers to the men's tour. But so far, that's just a rumor.

The Ladies Professional Golf Association is still afloat and seems to be attracting plenty of attention with the young Asian and the Swedish women getting plenty of coverage by the media. Some

of the women's golf tournaments only go 54 holes. Sponsors and tournament planners are responsible for length and distances.

The purses aren't the poverty-program, but still the \$240,000 Gloria Park took home when she won the Kraft Nabisco Championship several weeks ago was peanuts compared to Phil Mickelson's

\$1,170,000 when he won the Masters on April 11. Second place behind Mickelson was Ernie Els, who received \$702,000. Mickelson's score was 279. Park's score for her 72-hole tournament was 277. Park's win was a Grand Slam, too.

Tom Jenkins, winner of the Blue Angels Classic for men over 50, the Seniors

Tour, played only 54 holes and was given \$225,000.

And the same week, the PGA winner, Stewart Clink, with a 274 after 72 holes had a check of \$864,000 waiting at the 18th hole in the MCI Heritage Classic in Hilton Head Island, S.C.

The ladies in the Women's National Basketball Association (See Sports Pace, Page 15)

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