HBO adds afternoon boxing series

HBO will add yet another fight franchise to its boxing lineup, this one with dancing girls, a hot New York deejay, and the endorsement weight of Oscar De La Hoya. KO Nation, premiering Saturday, May 6 at around 5 p.m. ET, is intended to make boxing fans of 18-24 year-olds, since the majority of current followers are 55-plus, said Seth Abraham, president and CEO of Time Warner Sports. Most of the matches will take place on U.S. college campuses. It'll air on Saturday afternoons because young guys tend to be out of the home on weekend nights.

Expect hip music, true storylines (as opposed to the theatrical WWF versions) and whatever image the term "knockout" conjures up when applied to a group of dancing women, but KO Nation will not be the WWF of boxing, Abraham said. "We regard this journalistically as a sport," he said. "This is not a circus." HBO tapped four-time world champion De La Hoya to provide analysis. The rest of the team includes announcer Fran Charles, a NewsChannel 4 anchor; host Ed Lover, best known as co-host of Yo, MTV Raps; Max Glazer, a Gotham spin master who will be deejay for the program; and Julie Lederman, a licensed boxing judge who will serve as KO Nation's unofficial judge. HBO already carries around 40 fights a year, including pay-per-view, but Abraham stressed KO Nation will bring in new fighters. Six cards each are planned for 2000 and 2001.

—Deborah McAdams