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Finkel: Tyson could fight here again

Manager wants ex-champ to return

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Mike Tyson's manager, Shelly Finkel, said yesterday that if the fighter returns to the ring, it could well be in Louisville.

"I haven't spoken to Mike about it, and I haven't talked to Jonathan Blue," Finkel said. "But I would like for Mike to come back here."

Blue is director of **Cobalt Ventures** LLC, which invests in a company that helped provide financing for the Tyson-Danny Williams fight Friday night in Freedom Hall.

Tyson likely faces knee surgery before he could attempt another comeback, and Finkel has no timetable for such a decision.

He said he was impressed with the atmosphere at Freedom Hall and with the treatment Tyson received all week.

"It was a great show," Finkel said. "Louisville was the most gracious host Mike has probably ever had, except for the mayor and governor.

"The fans were great. I think everyone who walked out of that arena can't say anything but good things about it, except for Mike not winning."

Victory for Louisville

Blue has been listening to the argument for years: Louisville doesn't have the wealth to support expensive, big-time sporting events.

But as the local businessman looked over a crowd of 17,273 on Friday night, he smiled and said, "Pretty convincing."

Organizers sold 15,554 tickets, and the cheapest seat after the opening week was \$75. Even in areas that went for \$1,500 per seat, there were no noticeable empty spaces.

What does the turnout mean for the city?

"I think it can be a launching pad," Blue said yesterday. "I think it showed that people here will support big-time sports and entertainment events. The city stepped up in a big way for this fight, and the world got to see it."

Blue was quick to point out that in addition to the credibility the city could gain from successfully pulling off an event such as the Tyson fight, there are other more tangible benefits. One is exposure. Numbers from Showtime's pay-per-view audience likely won't be available until later this week, but a replay tonight on DirecTV pay-per-view is expected to do well. And with Williams, a native of London, having scored the upset, the fight got exposure overseas.

Blue said his company will continue to push for such events, be they in boxing or other sports.

"Both in the events we support and the buildings we build or renovate, we're working for what's best for the city," he said. "I think this is a good start. I think it shows that people here want big-time professional sports and will support them."

Blue said he wasn't sure what Louisville's next major sporting event might be , but he said, "There are some possibilities. People have taken notice ."

Webb has plans

The event also was s a major victory for Louisville-based StraightOut Promotions founder Chris Webb. He said he'll continue to pursue major boxing events for Louisville while working to rebuild the city's local boxing base. But he also has bigger plans.

"The first thing I want to do is get my man Danny Williams a title fight, " Webb said after the fight Friday. " I'll tell you, it was a great feeling to be out there tonight. We faced a lot of obstacles in this. We only had 30 days to promote this fight when you'd really like to have 90.

" When do you see a fight like this that doesn't have a major casino as a sponsor? There were a lot of details to work through. But I can't say enough about the way fans here responded, and I knew they would. Louisville proved itself tonight as a great boxing city. Louisville made a statement tonight, and we made it to the world."

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