

This Week's Movies

By Judith Crist

Saturday, NBC	Ring of Passion	Tuesday, CBS	Hustle
Sunday, NBC	Midway (Part 1)	Wednesday, CBS	Ruby and Oswald
Monday, ABC	The Initiation of Sarah	Friday, ABC	Freebie and the Bean
Monday, NBC	Midway (Conclusion)	Friday, CBS	The President's Mistress

Three fact-based movies provide the major interest—if not top quality—in this all-premiere network-movie week.

Ring of Passion, a made-for-television dramatization of Joe Louis's two heavyweight fights with Germany's Max Schmeling in the late '30s, is the freshest and most interesting. Written by Larry Forrester, the docudrama explores the ways in which politics affected professional sport. The first fight in 1936 between the European champion and Louis, the winner of which was to fight James J. Braddock for the world championship, was won by Schmeling and hailed by the Nazis as a victory for the Aryan race. Anti-Nazi sentiment, however, precluded Schmeling's meeting with Braddock; Louis fought him and won, but declared, "I ain't going to be the real champion until I beat Mr. Schmeling." That paved the way for "the fight of the century" in 1938. The actual fights are, however, the least of the story, artied-up as they are by slow-motion action and stream-of-consciousness comments from the boxers. What is interesting is Forrester's determined effort to show Schmeling as, if anything, an anti-Nazi, maligned by the press. Press and politicians did indeed take sides: Hitler entertained the Schmeling and President Roosevelt even visited Louis's training quarters to say, according to the script, "That's the kind of muscle we need to beat the Nazis." This kind of dialogue includes Schmeling saying, when Baron Gottfried von Cramm had "disappeared"

after his defeat by Don Budge at Wimbledon, "*Gott in himmel*, a country that gave the world Schubert, Beethoven and Goethe—we wouldn't arrest a man for losing a tennis match!" But even though Robert Michael Lewis's direction is as awkward as the dialogue, the subject matter retains its fascination and Bernie Casey and Stephen Macht make the "Brown Bomber" and the "Nazi Superman" believable characters.

In much the same way Michael Lerner and Frederic Forrest give credibility to **Ruby and Oswald**, also a docudrama, written by John and Michael McGreevey and directed by Mel Stuart, who produced and directed the 1965 documentary "Four Days in November." Stuart once again explores the four days, from the Thursday eve of President Kennedy's assassination to the Sunday-morning shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald by nightclub-owner Jack Ruby. This latest re-creation, giving an hour-to-hour account—"based on sworn testimony"—of the lives of the two men, seems to me singularly pointless. It sheds no new light on the terrible events and discloses nothing new about the two men. Or does it enrich your life to know that Jack Ruby started each day with a swim and enjoyed scrambled eggs and lox?

The third fact-based film is 1976's **Midway**, a long, detailed re-creation of the events preceding and during the June 4-5, 1942, battle of Midway Island. It's a muddle of fact and fiction,

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