

Showtime Boxing Doubleheader

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NEW YORK (March 22, 2005) – In a highly anticipated match-up, two of the best 135-pound boxers in the world will square off when two-time WBC lightweight champion Jose Luis Castillo takes on WBO champion Diego “Chico” Corrales in a world title unification bout on Saturday, May 7, 2005, from the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, and broadcast on Showtime at 9 p.m. ET/PT (delayed on the west coast).

In an excellent co-feature, IBF/WBA featherweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez will defend his titles against WBA No. 5 contender Victor Polo.

The world championship doubleheader at Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino in Las Vegas will be co-promoted by Gary Shaw Productions, LLC, Top Rank, Inc. and Banner Promotions.

“Fights like this do not come about often or easily,” said Jay Larkin, Senior Vice President of Showtime Sports & Events Programming. “Castillo and Corrales are without a doubt the two best lightweights in the world and both have earned their reputations by fighting the best in the division. This fight has ‘Fight of the Year’ promise and is the last step in deciding who really is number one in the world.”

Castillo (52-6-1, 46 KOs), of Sonora, Mexico, will make the third title defense in his second stint as WBC lightweight champion. In his last start, the hard-hitting Mexican recorded his sixth consecutive win with an impressive 10th round TKO over former IBF 135-pound champion Julio Diaz on March 5, completing an impressive hat trick of consecutive wins over Joel Casamayor and Juan Lazcano.

“I am very excited that my wait is over and that I finally get a shot at Corrales,” said Castillo, who had hoped to face Corrales last December and in March. “He is a very strong fighter, but he stands right in front of you. Corrales cannot take a punch. It will be a knockout fight, and I will win.”

Castillo dominated the outclassed Diaz, who went down twice in the 10th round. The defending champion decked the game youngster the first time with a left hook at the 1:40 mark. Shortly after a left-right combination put Diaz down again, the bout was stopped at 2:23. Castillo was ahead 88-83 on each of the scorecards going into the 10th.

In a much tougher fight, Castillo rallied to retain his belt with a 12-round split decision over former 130-pound world champion Joel Casamayor Dec. 4, 2004. In a classic puncher versus boxer matchup that had the fans on their feet during the final nine minutes, Castillo took the last three rounds on the scorecards to triumph 117-111, 116-112 and 113-115.

Castillo won the WBC 135-pound belt the first time with a 12-round majority decision over Steve Johnston on June 17, 2000. Following three successful defenses, he lost the title and a subsequent rematch to unbeaten Floyd Mayweather in April and December of 2002. Castillo

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regained the WBC belt with a 12-round unanimous decision over Juan Lazcano on June 5, 2004.

Corrales (39-2, 32 KOs), of Sacramento, Calif., will make his first appearance since he captured the WBO 135-pound crown on Aug. 7, 2004, with a 10th round TKO over defending champion Acelino Freitas on Showtime. Corrales spotted the previously undefeated Freitas a huge early lead before rallying to register three knockdowns and win his third world title belt.

The California resident, who entered the ring against Freitas as the WBO 130-pound titleholder, scored one knockdown in the eighth, ninth and 10th rounds. Entering the 10th, Corrales had edged in front on two of the scorecards, 85-83 and 85-84, but was behind 83-85 on the third.

"I am not worried about the layoff," Corrales said. "I give Castillo a lot of respect. He is one of the best fighters in boxing and at the top of the game. But I am on a mission to prove that I am the best lightweight in the world. I do not care how he chooses to fight me. I am going to do whatever I want to him.

The lanky Corrales won the vacant WBO 130-pound belt with a 12-round split decision over Casamayor March 6, 2004, on SHOWTIME. Corrales outpointed his opponent 115-112 twice and 113-114. In their initial meeting on Oct. 4, 2003, Casamayor recorded a disputed sixth-round TKO.

Corrales won his first world title with a seventh round TKO over defending IBF 130-pound champion Robert Garcia Oct. 23, 1999. Corrales made three successful defenses before losing to fellow unbeaten and then-WBC titleholder Mayweather on Jan. 20, 2001.

Marquez (43-2-1, 33 KOs), of Mexico City, Mexico, captured the IBF 126-pound crown with a seventh round TKO over Manuel Medina on Feb. 1, 2003. He added the IBF belt nine months later by recording a seventh-round technical decision over Derrick Gainer. Marquez retained his titles in his last start when he took a 12-round decision over Orlando Salido on Sept. 18, 2004.

Unbeaten in his last 15 starts (14-0-1), Marquez rallied from three first round knockdowns and a broken nose to earn a disputed draw against Manny Pacquiao on May 8, 2004. At the end of the epic battle, one judge scored it for Marquez 115-110, one had it for Pacquiao 115-110 and the other had it 113-113.

"I was disoriented after the first round," Marquez said, "but you do not win the fight in one round. He did win that round big, but I thought I controlled the rest of the fight. The most important thing was avoiding his left hand. After I did that, I was able to counterpunch him. I feel good because I thought I won."

For years Marquez had been known as the world's most talented fighter without a title. When he finally got his shot, however, he lost a 12-round decision to then-WBA 126-pound champion Freddie Norwood on Sept. 11, 1999. Until getting the match against Medina, the popular boxer-puncher was avoided by the division's elite. Norwood refused a rematch and Naseem Hamed ducked him despite Marquez being his mandatory contender. Marco Antonio Barrera

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never considered him.

“I knew that as long as I kept winning the opportunity would come sooner or later,” said Marquez, who will make his Showtime debut. “I was ready for my second chance when it came.”

Polo (34-4-3, 24 KOs), of Bolivar, Colombia, will make his first Showtime appearance since losing a controversial 12-round split decision to then-WBO featherweight champion, Julio Pablo Chacon on Jan. 19, 2002. Polo dropped Chacon late in the second and cut him above his nose and right eye. The defending titleholder got credit for a disputed knockdown in the ninth, however, and that was the difference in a tight fight scored 114-113, 114-113 and 113-114.

The rangy, aggressive southpaw prefers to press forward and maintain a fast pace. Polo has a wealth of experience in a career that has seen him challenge unsuccessfully (0-3-1) for different versions of the world featherweight title on four occasions.

“I never get the benefit of the doubt,” Polo said. “I should have been a world champion years ago. I appreciate Marquez giving me this opportunity. Most of the champions are afraid of me.”

In his last outing, Polo boxed to a 12-round draw against WBO featherweight champion Scott Harrison on Jan. 28, 2005, in Glasgow, Scotland. As usual, Polo entered the ring as the underdog, but he gave the local favorite a huge scare. The judges scored it 115-113 for Polo, 116-113 for Harrison and 114-114.

Polo's previous attempts at world titles came against then-WBA champion Gainer on Feb. 24, 2001 and then-IBF titleholder Medina on April 16, 1999. Polo dropped a split 12-round decision to Gainer and lost on a ninth-round technical decision to Medina.

A perennial contender who has fought at or around 126 pounds during his 16-year career, Polo has won several minor titles, including the North American Boxing Association (NABA), the IBF International, the IBF and WBA Latin Americas and FECARBOX.

Tickets for this exciting evening of boxing are priced at \$400, \$250, \$125 and \$50 and can be purchased at the Mandalay Bay Box Office and all TicketMaster outlets beginning Friday, March 25. To order tickets by phone, call (702) 632-7580.