Based on the boos from the sparsely filled Don Haskins Center you’d think Jose Luis Castillo would have found Diego Corrales a substantial favorite had they engaged Saturday night as originally scheduled.

Instead, Castillo faced frustrating substitute Rolando Reyes, a Corrales sparring partner, and the result definitely wasn’t classic. Call it one step backward, two steps up.

“Don’t blame me, tonight wasn’t my fault,” shrugged Castillo. “I was ready and I expected a tough fight but not a dangerous one. He didn’t come to fight, he just wanted to be able to say he went twelve rounds with me.”

Castillo had a relatively subdued performance against Reyes on Showtime’s Saturday night card in El Paso, but coming off a pair of intense confrontations with Corrales, almost any bout would come up short.

Castillo deserves a little slack if not every round he fights is thrilling. Enough of them are. He has one of the most impressive current resumes in the sport. The victory over Reyes was a solid, if uneventful, win over a solid, if uninspired opponent.

Reyes may have come in thinking he was ready to go down in flames, until a few Castillo combinations put him in a more defensive frame of mind.

Don’t tell that to the small, jeering assembly of around 2,000 inside the cavernously vacant red gut of the arena on UTEP’s campus. If Corrales hadn’t injured a rib in training and postponed the third Castillo fight, it would have been a different story, but as it was the attendance was scant. Those who did show up expected more of a fight than what they got.

You can’t fault Castillo if he didn’t want to add any further risk, besides getting in the ring in the first place, to the already postponed big money tiebreaker with Corrales, now tentatively penciled in for June 3rd.

Castillo, now 54-7-1 (47), did enough to win convincingly against Reyes, nothing more, nothing less. Add the victory to a long list of times he did enough to win against some very strong competition.

Castillo initially announced his presence to the global audience with a surprise, title winning victory against well-respected WBC lightweight champ Stave Johnston in Bell Gardens, outside Los Angeles, on the afternoon of the first Shane Mosley-Oscar De La Hoya fight.

Word spread among the media about Castillo’s impressive showing, and he’s been gathering steam ever since, without many shortcuts.

Castillo retained the belt via a twelve round draw in a rematch with Johnston in September of 2000, in Johnston's Denver backyard.

Next up was a January 2001 title meeting with a pre-faded Cesar Bazan. The result was one of the best fights of the year, a six round slugfest that Castillo persevered through for a TKO that changed Bazan, who probably should have stopped fighting by now.

Castillo engaged in a few non-title bouts at heavier weights, scaling all the way up to 150 in January of 2002 against Juan Macias ((TKO 8).

Castillo lost his belt to Floyd Mayweather Jr that April, in a close, rugged fight many ringsiders felt should have gone to Castillo. Mayweather took another close, disputed 12 round decision in a rematch that December. Once again the judges saw it for Mayweather at 116-111 and 115-111 twice, but in both cases there were many observers who felt Castillo won. In retrospect, Mayweather's subsequent performances make Castillo's efforts look even more impressive.

Castillo continued a considerable jump in weight during 2003, when he fought Gustavio Corral at 147 in June (TKO 5), and Saul Duran at 146 (TKO 8) in October. It looks like Castillo takes his power with him as he goes up in weight, which could also help explain the second Corrales fight.

In 2004 Castillo was at 145 for a February contest against Derrick Parks (TKO 2), then dropped 10 pounds that June when he met Juan Lazcano for the belt Mayweather vacated. Castillo came away with a brutal 12 round unanimous decision that stole the show on the Oscar De La Hoya-Felix Sturm/Bernard Hopkins-Robert Allen undercard.

The Lazcano fight was a give-and-take prelude to the Corrales trilogy, the kind of contest that both adds to and takes away from a fighter. In that fight Castillo had "Mercedes" stitched on his trunks to honor his fifteen year old sister who died of leukemia.

Next up was no easier task, as Castillo faced top contender Joel Casamayor in December and earned a split decision. Time for a vacation, right? Yeah, if you're crazy enough to consider another premier contender, Julio Diaz, any rest.

Another Castillo TKO victory led to the back-to-back encounters you may have already heard something about, the unification fights against Corrales. Which updates us to Reyes, and whether or not Castillo should be expected to be in a slugfest every eight weeks.

Mayweather stung Castillo. Johnston didn't. Lazcano stung him. Verdell Smith didn't. Corrales stung him, tons.

Reyes didn't, but what's so bad about that? Castillo got in the work he wanted, and afterward stated he'd like another stay-busy fight around April to keep him sharp for the proposed early June, rescheduled date with Corrales.

Castillo has been in tough since his pro debut at age 16, through five developmental years taking sparring shots from Julio Cesar Chavez, and more than another five against world-class opposition. It ain’t like a permanent vacation.

Castillo has been out of Chavez’s shadow for quite a while now, but that doesn’t mean he can’t succumb to the same temptations or tolls of time. Castillo has been on top for some years now, and seems to have kept his senses in a wealthy world of sweet distractions. Even if Castillo can focus and train most of the time, anybody can use a break from the regimen at some point. Maybe Castillo’s fight with Reyes was like a working vacation.

“I will be ready for Corrales,” vowed Castillo. “I was ready for him before.”

You can count on that being the case, and if Castillo takes a breather sometime along the way, give him a break.

Chico Corrales won’t.