

Barrera-Juarez L.A. Showdown

Written by David A. Avila
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LOS ANGELES – Sitting on the sun deck of the Staples Center, Marco Antonio Barrera and Rocky Juarez met the press to formally announce their showdown for May 20. The WBC and IBF junior lightweight titles will be at stake.

“He’s a legendary fighter,” said Juarez (25-1), who was visiting downtown Los Angeles for the first time in his career. “It should be a great fight.”

Golden Boy Promotions and Main Events are co-promoting the event in conjunction with a fight card a week later at the Home Depot Center, home for the LA Galaxy. In that card WBO bantamweight champion Jhonny Gonzalez meets WBO junior bantamweight champ Fernando Montiel in a grudge match between two Mexican fighters.

“I know and respect Jhonny Gonzalez as a person and a fighter, but when we enter that ring and he’s in the other corner, it’s going to be on,” said Montiel (32-1-1) who is seeking a third world title in his third weight division.

Gonzalez, who is four inches taller than Montiel, said he expects major fireworks.

“Whoever thinks better inside the ring is going to be the winner,” said the lanky Gonzalez (32-4) from Mexico City.

Barrera, who began his career fighting at the Forum in Inglewood, requested his co-partners to get him a fight in Los Angeles. He also asked for a real competitive match that would motivate him to prepare for battle.

“We’ve never met before but I know you’re a great warrior,” Barrera (61-4) told Houston’s Juarez who attended the conference with his trainers.

Barrera had been set to fight IBF lightweight titleholder Jesus Chavez, but that fighter suffered an injury and the bout was canceled. Now he’s meeting the lighter Juarez.

“I can fight at this weight,” Juarez said. “This is what I needed, a fight that makes me train hard. It was getting more difficult to get motivated. Not now.”

Juarez, who last set foot in the Los Angeles area in 1994, when he won the Blue and Gold amateur tournament, said he needs to not only beat Barrera, but win in a convincing manner.

“This is like his hometown,” Juarez said. “But I can beat him. I know I can.”