Ricky "Hitman" Hatton sounds like a pretty good guy, even though he's from England and has an accent and everything. I mean, we don't get to pick where we were born, so we can't really hold that against him.

And just because he talks funny and probably likes soccer, drinks tea, wears tweeds and enjoys a jolly-good game of darts once in awhile, that's no reason to turn our backs on him. He's our guest and we need to show him there are no hard feelings about that Revolutionary War thing.

Sure, it was a big win for our side, but it's water under the bridge.

Besides, Hatton (40-0, 30 KOs) can fight. He beat Kostya Tszyu last June for the IBF junior-welterweight title - beat him good - so you've got to take your hat off to the guy. That win went a long way toward earning him "fighter of the year," honors by the Boxing Writers Association of America.

So when he shows up in Boston a few days from now for his WBA welterweight title fight against champion Luis Collazo (26-1, 12 KOs) on May 13 at the old Boston Garden (HBO), smile, shake his hand and welcome him to America.

Later, when you get a little time, show him the sights of Boston. Take him to Fenway, feed him some beans, show him where "Cheers" would be if it wasn't just a sitcom.

Finally, take him to Boston Harbor and show him where the actual Boston Tea Party took place.

Also, mention the name "Paul Revere" several times as a friendly reminder.

Along with the fight, he'll have some great stories to tell his friends when he gets back home.

All and all, Hatton sounded comfortable on a recent conference call. In fact, I think he likes to talk. Along with offering insight into who he is, he kept it clean and civil, never taking any cheap shots at Collazo, or pounding his chest or ducking a question.

What he did say was, he'd like to become as popular over here as he is back home in merry old England.

"The British fight fans have taken me to their heart," Hatton said. "And I hope American fight fans will do so."

Put on a good show and we'll see you on Letterman within a week.

But he's still got some catching up to do. He hasn't fought over here since he scored a second

round TKO over a guy named Gilbert Quiros in Detroit in June 2000, so it's not like he's here every holiday. They're not going to be swarming him for an autograph if he strolls down Newbury Street.

"(Americans) haven't really seen me fight live yet in the flesh, so to speak," he said. "With my next three fights (with HBO), I'd like to establish myself in America."

Though he's from Brooklyn, Collazo would also like to establish himself in America. And Hatton is aware of it.

"I was impressed with (Collazo's) performance when he won the title (stopping Miguel Angel Gonzalez)," Hatton said. "He's shown he can dig deep and he's tricky on the move. But he can also stand and fight. His style will make for a very good fight.

Give Hatton credit for putting it all on the line. Along with moving up to the welterweight class for the first time, he's coming over here to fight the defending champ in his own neighborhood, if not exactly his backyard.

"Like it was against Kostya Tszyu, the bigger the challenge, the better I am," he said. "I want big names and big challenges."

Collazo might not have the big name, but he could be a big challenge.

Still, you knew Floyd Mayweather's name had to pop up at some point in the conference call.

Hatton is too smart to look past Collazo, but he can't help but take a quick peek down the road. He knows a win over Mayweather would make him a household name in America.

"I'd like to be up there with some of the best names that British boxing has had," he said. "If I can beat Mayweather, who is at the top of the pound-for-pound class, then hopefully I'd go down in the United States history book.

"That's what makes good champions, the people you're in against. And the way you conduct yourself outside the ring as well. There's no point being the greatest fighter in the world if everyone thinks you're a (jerk)."

Hatton has nothing to worry about.