LAS VEGAS – It only took one left hook Saturday for the world to discover what Floyd Mayweather Jr. already knew.

Mayweather vs. Oscar De La Hoya is the biggest fight in boxing.

The “Golden Boy” made a smashing return to the ring after a year-and-a-half layoff, crushing Ricardo Mayorga to take the WBC junior middleweight title. The fight was stopped in the sixth after De La Hoya unloaded a volley of punches to Mayorga’s head and body but, for all intents and purposes, the fight was over in the first round.

That’s when a screaming De La Hoya left hook put Mayorga down and almost out.

“Ricardo never recovered from that punch,” said Stacey McKinley, Mayorga’s trainer.

From there, the Californian De La Hoya dominated the wild, amateurish rushes of his opponent and controlled him with jabs, right hands, body work and that signature left hook.

And, afterwards, talk immediately turned to “Pretty Boy” Floyd.

A De La Hoya vs. Mayweather fight is tentatively scheduled for Sept. 16, provided the shoulder injury De La Hoya suffered during the Mayorga fight is not serious.

Mayweather, for one, certainly hopes things work out.

“Oscar looked tremendous,” Mayweather said. “He showed great speed, great power and had a great game plan.”

Besides the shoulder, one other possible snag is that De La Hoya has said he will not fight Mayweather Jr. without the approval of Junior’s father, Floyd Mayweather Sr. – who just happens to be Oscar’s trainer.

Golden Boy CEO Richard Schaefer, however, said the fight is “very make-able.” And, judging by his performance Saturday, De La Hoya still has the physical tools to make a Mayweather fight interesting.

Granted, Mayorga was tailor-made for the man who has won world titles in four weight divisions. De La Hoya easily avoided the Nicaraguan’s wild swings, and displayed a rock-solid chin on the one occasion that Mayorga popped him with a right uppercut.

It was easily De La Hoya’s most impressive victory since the last time he faced a hated rival, Fernando Vargas, on Sept. 14, 2002.

And it made the retirement talk seem rather premature. Fourteen years after turning pro, De La Hoya still commands unprecedented attention.

Once the first bell rang Saturday, the MGM Grand was rocking. It was hard to believe De La Hoya had won just two of his last three fights.

With the Golden Boy back, boxing is important again. And even former rivals are eager to see De La Hoya get it on with Mayweather.

“I was very impressed with the way Oscar put his punches together,” said Shane Mosley, a former De La Hoya conqueror and now a business partner. “I’ve always said he had the best left hook in the business.

“Both guys (Mayweather and De La Hoya) are fast. Oscar is bigger and stronger than Mayweather. It’s a fight you’d have to see. A great fight.”

Meanwhile, Mayorga and promoter Don King didn’t even bother showing up to the postfight press conference.

Mayorga issued a brief in-the-ring apology to De La Hoya for the prefight insults. Then he was gone.

“When someone starts talking about another guy’s wife and family, he’s a scumbag,” said former Los Angeles Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda, echoing the sentiments of many in the crowd of 13,000. “(Mayorga) got what he deserved.”