

Boxing News: Miguel Cotto Meets the Press

Written by News Article

Thursday, 01 June 2006 19:00

In anticipation of his showdown with Paulie Malignaggi at Madison Square Garden on June 10, Miguel Cotto and his promoter Bob Arum met with members of the boxing press via telephone conference call yesterday. This is what went down...

LEE SAMUELS, TOP RANK INCORPORATED: Thank you, Crystal. This is one of the most exciting times for Top Rank in a long, long time. Miguel Cotto, Madison Square Garden on the eve of the Puerto Rican Parade in New York City against a tough-talking, (inaudible); we can't wait. Miguel will be in town, in New York City, on Friday night and my boss and the Hall of Fame promoter, Bob Arum, will outline the fight card; heâ€™™ll talk about Miguel and Bob, take it away.

BOB ARUM, TOP RANK INCORPORATED: Thank you Lee, and welcome everybody to the call. We're really pleased to have Miguel Cotto here on the call and I want to tell everybody about our card on June 10th before I introduce Miguel.

On June 10th we're going to bring the fun back into boxing. The card in Madison Square Garden is going to be, I think, very, very exciting but more important there's going to be music between fights, between rounds. The crowd is going to be packing Madison Square Garden; it's going to be excited. Just you watch. People will be writing that this was the most fun evening with boxing and this is what boxing needs to bring back the hoards of fans to watch boxing live in an arena.

We're going to start the card, the television portion of the card is 9 o'clock. The card starts at 7:00 with a lot of preliminary fights but at 9 o'clock we have a Mexican Puerto Rican rivalry, a six round fight with two undefeated fighters, one Manuel Lopez of Puerto Rico against Sergio Mendez (ph) of Mexico City. Each guy undefeated. Then we go to a fight with some veterans. Bobby Pacquiao, the younger brother of Manny Pacquiao, will defend WBC Continental America's title against Kevin Kelley, a former champion and very, very popular in New York.

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. will then fight a six-round fight against ten-in-one Aaron Drake, a hard punching guy with eight knock-outs of his ten fights, from Kansas City. And that'll be followed by the favorite, a favorite fighter of New York, guy's been selling thousands of tickets, Irish John Duddy, 16 and 0 with 14 knock-outs from Derry, Ireland, and he'll be fighting Freddy Cuevas of Chicago, 25 wins, 8 defeats, 17 knock-outs. And then pro - right prior to the main event a preview of the National Football Collegiate Championship, Robert Bell of Akron, Ohio 2 and 2, will fight against the captain of the Notre Dame Football team making his pro debut, Tommy Zbikowski.

And finally, we get to the main event, a fight between two undefeated fighters, Paulie Malignaggi, 21 victories, no defeats, a superb boxer, against Miguel Cotto, the pride of Puerto Rico, 26 wins, no defeats, 22 knockouts. That's going to be an old, a real barn burner, a real great fight and that'll conclude the evening. We have a lot of surprises in store for the fans with

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music, entertainment, while this card is going on it's going to be a great, great night but the guy that made it all possible is the pride of Puerto Rico who will be fighting at Madison Square Garden on the eve of the Puerto Rican Day Parade, Miguel Cotto, the WBO Junior Welterweight champion. So, it's a pleasure for me to introduce now to you the pride of Puerto Rico from Caguas, Puerto Rico, Miguel Cotto.

MIGUEL COTTO: I've been working real hard. I know how important this fight is. I know that it's going to be a great fight. You know, it's pretty close now to the fight. (inaudible) putting the final touches on my training here but I think it'll be a great night for Puerto Rico, for all the Puerto Rican fans on June 10th.

LEE SAMUELS: And I want to add that this Pay per View is available on In Demand Direct TV and the Dish Network. Those carriers will be having this Pay per View on June 10th. Crystal, let's start with the calls.

DEAGO MARTINEZ, REFORMA NEWSPAPER: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken)

RICARDO JIMENEZ: The question was, I know you're getting ready for June 10th but there's been a lot of talk that you're going to face the winner of Corrales and Castillo probably at end of November. What do you think about the fighters? How do you see the fight?

MIGUEL COTTO: I think right now all I'm doing is concentrating on my fight, June 10th. I think both Corrales and Castillo are great fighters. They've shown what they can do and it would be a great to talk about them but once I'm done with June 10th, once I get the win on June 10th we can talk about anyone who would be next.

TRAE THOMPSON, FORT WORTH STAR TELEGRAM: Yes. I was wondering if you can ask Miguel what it means for him to be at the site, a venue like Madison Square Garden.

RICARDO JIMENEZ: (Spanish spoken)

MIGEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) Yes. It's always a pleasure, you know, to fight in a legendary arena like that and I know how important it is. Only the great ones fight there and I think I work just as hard as anybody, just like those great ones did to put on a great show and I think that's what will give of them on June 10th.

TRAE THOMPSON: All right. And this question is for Bob. Bob, you said earlier you were going to bring the fun back to boxing. Where did it go?

BOB ARUM: Well, Trae, what happened is it – I've been searching for the answer and I think I've found it and if I go back 40 years in boxing.

TRAE THOMPSON: Right.

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BOB ARUM: And what's happened is that the television people have taken over the events, and that's not just HBO, it's Showtime, it's ESPN, it's anybody who televises boxing. These producers and directors direct the event, control the crowd noise, control the music, it's the only sport where that happens. Do you imagine a television producer or director telling the head of the Notre Dame athletic department, Father, don't have the band play the Notre Dame fight song so often because it interferes with our announcers talking in the booth? They'd be thrown over the Golden Dome. I mean, but in boxing we've become so dependent on television that we allow the event to be turned into, in effect, a television studio and that's what's killing attendance at fights, because we've forgotten that the public wants to be entertained.

They don't want to sit around between fights on their hands. They want music, they want fun. Between rounds they want music, they want - the music and activity will stimulate, I think, interest in people coming to the fight. I remember an incident not so long ago where I asked Michael Buffer, "Mike, Michael, how come you didn't interview, you didn't announce Jack Nicholson and some other stars?" And he says, "well, the director told me that I wasn't allowed to talk anymore because they wanted to throw it to their announcements." Well, that's OK; they're, if they're paying money they're entitled to do that, etc., etc. But I think it's hurting, it's hurting the attendance at fights.

TRAE THOMPSON: Did that occur over time or did you see it change here just recently?

BOB ARUM: It occurred over time.

TRAE THOMPSON: OK. Thank you, Bob.

BOB ARUM: It never - promoters never would have allowed this in the past, including myself. But we all, you know, it's short (inaudible). And over time that's what happened, they've taken over the event.

ROBERT MORALES, LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS: Hey, Miguel, (Spanish). Ricardo, could you ask Miguel what he thinks about a guy like Malignaggi, I think is how you pronounce his name, I'm not sure, but what did you think about a guy like that who really is probably only known in one area compared to Cotto who is world renowned? What does he think about Paul Malignaggi talking all this trash that he's been talking? I mean, basically, I always kind of thought, you know, rookies should kind of keep their mouths shut.

RICARDO JIMENEZ: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) You know that's what I've been trying to tell people that, you know, this guy is, has done nothing, he's really nothing yet. He's obviously taking the, this opportunity that we're giving him to try to sell himself but once the fight is over he'll go right back where he comes from where he'll be fighting back in the clubs in New York.

EDDIE GOLDMAN, SECONDS OUT RADIO: Hi, Miguel. I want to ask you a little different question about Paulie Malignaggi. We know Paulie has been undefeated but does not have a lot of knock-outs. How are you going to approach him in this fight? And also, do you think that,

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what level of contender and challenger do you think he presents to you?

RICARDO JIMENEZ: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) You know I really don't know much about him, style-wise or anything. All I know is he's been talking a lot and I think when you do that is because you don't know whether you can back it. I don't know if he can back it up or not but I don't think he can.

EDDIE GOLDMAN: Has he watched many tapes or seen him fight live? Because Paulie's known for his speed. I mean you can look at his record; he doesn't have a lot of knock-outs. He's had some hand injuries but if you look at any of his fights you see that probably his speed and his overall boxing ability are his best attributes.

RICARDO JIMENEZ: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) You know, I never look at videos. I don't really know anything about his style, the way he fights. My uncle is the one that looks at those videos. He's the one that's given me the, you know, the plan, the plan we're going to install, the plan we're going to work. We're just going to meet up in the ring and that's when I'm going to find out what he's all about. But the guy who's better trained, the guy that did all his work and the guy that's more focused on that night is going to win that fight.

EDDIE GOLDMAN: And last thing, as everybody knows, the same evening there's another card going on pay-per-view also in Atlantic City. I'd just like Miguel to say in his own words why he thinks people should be at Madison Square Garden or watching this show on Pay per View if they can't get to the Garden.

RICARDO JIMENEZ: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) You know, I think the world of both of them. I think Tarver and Hopkins are great. You know, although famous probably on the way to the Hall of Fame but as we see with the last two Hopkins fights against Jermain Taylor he's just about done in my personal opinion. If you really want to see a great fight, you know which fight you want to see.

TRAE THOMPSON: This is just a follow-up for Miguel. His fights have gotten tougher, obviously, but I just wanted to ask him, does he enjoy those challenges that those tougher opponents bring with them?

RICARDO JIMENEZ: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) You know, as myself I always get ready to fight. It's not my job to pick the opponent. I have a great company in Top Rank and a great matchmaker in Bruce Trampler who's always putting up the guys out there that they think I need to be facing and I love that. I love the way they bring guys in to me, the guys that they know they're going to ask more of me and it's a great challenge and if you're a professional boxer and you want to get

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to the levels that you want to get to, you know you have to face this type of fighters.

TRAE THOMPSON: Bob, this is for you. What ways, you know, as his courage progressed, what ways have you seen him mature as his fights become more difficult?

BOB ARUM: Well Miguel is a hard, hard worker and he's faced very many guys with different styles, and Malignaggi is probably the quickest guy that he's faced and he needs to deal with that speed before we can say that he's complete. I believe that he will and once he does then he's ready for anybody out there, whether it's Jose Luis Castillo or Diego Corrales or Ricky Hatton or Arturo Gatti, anybody. So I think that this is a really important test for Miguel. If he passes this test, then I don't think Bruce will hesitate recommending anybody as an opponent and I think you'll see a string of very, very big fights that Miguel will be fighting.

ROBERTO COLON, PRIMERA HORA: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken)

RICARDO JIMENEZ: The question was that if you usually have opponents that don't really been talking about you or saying things about you like this guy has, every week there's always something different, talking about you, saying things he's going to do to you. How do you feel about, is that motivation for you?

MIGUEL COTTO: You know, is, it is the first time someone has been, had the guts to be saying stuff about me and what they're going to do to me in the ring. I just hope he has the guts to do that in the ring, to stand up and fight. If he doesn't, I'm ready to go at him for 12 rounds and, believe me, I'll find him. He's not going to have the stamina to run away from me for 12 months, for 12 rounds.

ROBERT MORALES: I have one question for you, Bob, and one for Miguel but I'll ask Miguel's first. Miguel, you know one of the things, you know, talking in boxing circles, some guys say, you know, one of these days because Miguel Cotto gets hit a lot, he's going to get knocked out. Does he recognize that he needs to shore up his defense?

RICARDO JIMENEZ: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) I think, you know, in boxing I can do like a baseball player. A baseball player's going to hit, you know, going to hit. Throughout his career he's always going to hit with the ball and you've got to go to, you know, take your base. I think in boxing guys are going to take punches; people are going to get hit. To me the question is what do you do when you get hit and how you respond. And I think I've shown how I can respond when I'm in trouble.

ROBERT MORALES: OK. And Bob, let me ask you real quick and on the Jim Rome radio show the other day our friend, Oscar De La Hoya was being interviewed and he just said, kind of threw something out there and said, one of the things that's wrong with boxing is promoters undermining each other and Rome asked him what he was talking about and he talked about

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these two pay-per-views on the same day, on June 10th and basically put all the blame for that happening, in his mind, on you. What do you think about that?

BOB ARUM: Well, everybody who knows anything knows that we had this date for one year. Right after the last fight of Miguel in Madison Square Garden, we reserved the Garden for June 10th of this year. Everybody at HBO knew it; everybody in boxing knew it and they put their pay-per-view show on in spite of the fact that we had reserved the date and were going on that date. So if there's any blame here, the blame is on them. I mean I am not happy with two Pay per View shows the same night but, as I said, I can't shift the Puerto Rican Day Parade. I mean, the June 10th date is not magical; it was not magical for them. The June 10th date was magical and essential for us because it's the night before the Puerto Rican Day Parade. It's as simple as that, Robert. I mean fair is fair.

ROBERT MORALES: And then, of course, there's, if I'm not mistaken, correct me if I'm wrong, when you reserved that date a year in advance, it was with the Puerto Rican Day Parade in mind wasn't it?

BOB ARUM: Oh, only, of course, of course. That's why we reserved the date, that's why the date was important. June 10th was important because the Puerto Rican Day Parade, we knew last year, was going to be held on June 11th this year.

KARL FREITAG, FIGHTNEWS.COM: Recently the latest comments from Malignaggi, he says he's going to break you down and he's even talking about knocking you out. Based on his previous fights, does that even make any sense?

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) I think here he doesn't have the power or nor the courage to really go try to knock me out. I think it is one of the many lies he's been saying.

KARL FREITAG: What do you think is his motivation for making these kind of statements?

RICARDO JIMENEZ: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) You know, I do have to commend him for selling himself as a viable opponent for me. He's been saying a lot of stuff; he's been making up all this stuff that he's going to do to me. I think a lot of people are expecting, they want to see if he can really do that to me and I think that's good for the fight. I think a lot of people are going to turn on the fight and by the fight gets to see if he has really any possibilities of doing anything like that to me. And I, you know, and I think that's good for the fight.

KARL FREITAG: Do you think the crowd's going to be rooting for him or rooting for you?

RICARDO JIMENEZ: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) All I can tell you is, it's the weekend of the Puerto Rican Parade.

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KARL FREITAG: OK. And Bob are you going to be reserving this the day before the parade again for next year?

BOB ARUM: Absolutely. We want to make this an annual thing. It's great for boxing; it's great for the Puerto Ricans. They come to New York, a lot of, we have plenty of Puerto Ricans in New York but we've got a lot of people from the island come to New York to celebrate this fantastic parade and the fight the night before is part of the weekend celebration. So it's great for boxing and it's great for the Puerto Rican fans.

KARL FREITAG: So as of now you are serving notice to all of the promoters to stay away from this date next year?

BOB ARUM: Well, you know, but certain people feel that they're being undermined if they can't push other people around so I'm not optimistic that the same thing won't happen again.

THOMAS GERBASI, MAX BOXING: Hey, guys, a couple of questions for Bob. Bob, Miguel is not a kid who talks a lot, he's not flashy, he just goes in and does his business. How would you explain his appeal to boxing fans?

BOB ARUM: Because he's a real fighter, he's a real man. It's the same type of appeal that Felix Trinidad had. I mean Felix wasn't the most loquacious guy but Felix had the job done in the ring. He was a real warrior and so the fans flocked to him; same thing with Miguel.

THOMAS GERBASI: Now, a big appeal of this match-up is that the Puerto Rican kid against an Italian kid, you also got Duddy on the card for the Irish fans, Cuevas for the Mexican fan. How come more people, more promoters aren't putting on shows like this which were, back in the 30s and 40s, you would always see these ethnic matches? How come more promoters aren't doing it?

BOB ARUM: Because this is different. This is a show that's being promoted and being staged as a promotion. It is not, as we have seen more and more promoters fronting for networks, where the network is only interested in what is on the tube and what one fight or two fight they happen to be showing.

THOMAS GERBASI: Right.

BOB ARUM: So when you're out there promoting, as you have to, an event like this, then you have to, in addition to drawing from the Puerto Ricans and the Italians, I want to draw from everybody in New York. The Irish; I mean John Duddy and his people have sold over 3,000 tickets. The Notre Dame football fans are going to come see Tommy Z fight in his pro debut. The Filipinos, there are a lot of Filipinos in New York, for Pacquiao. There are a lot of African-Americans who followed Kevin Kelly. We're drawing from every strata of New York City. It's the rainbow that's made New York New York and the United States great and that's why we're going to pack the Garden.

EDDIE GOLDMAN: I have a question for Bob, kind of following up this last one. And I was, I

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remember that this was announced right after Miguel's fight last year right after, on the Puerto Rican Day Parade weekend that you were going to be running again this, in the Garden and there was at the press conference and everybody was there when the boxing media and all the different people were there. Why don't you think HBO took this fight and then scheduled, you know the other one could have been scheduled at another time since you're sort of fixed for this day? Why didn't they take this, put this fight on their network?

BOB ARUM: Well, I think that question should be addressed to the executives at HBO rather than myself. I mean, with coming from me it would be just speculation, it might be unfair. Why don't you ask them that? Pick up the phone and ask them that question.

EDDIE GOLDMAN: Did you approach them to get this on HBO? I mean, was it turned down, or?

BOB ARUM: No, no, no. We wanted to do this either on HBO or on HBO Pay per View. We wanted to do it any which way on this date. And before we knew it, they had scheduled the Hopkins Tarver fight on the same date. Why they did that, what their justification is, you'd have to ask them.

EDDIE GOLDMAN: All right. I'm sure we'll run into them and we'll do that. Thanks.

JOHN ELIGON, NEW YORK TIMES: Hi, Bob. Just kind of following up on something you talked about earlier. I think, can you say what does it mean to the sport of boxing or what could it mean to the sport of boxing if you do kind of do an ethnic based kind of target audience thing? How much could that help the sport and what could it mean to the sport do you think?

BOB ARUM: I think it's a start. I think, look how successful boxing was in the past when we had all these great matches with Irish and Jews and Italians and then African-Americans. I mean that's always what propelled boxing because fans then had a rooting interest in the contestant and that's what I'm trying to bring back here. Now you go to Puerto Rico and Miguel Cotto is a star there. He is a tremendous, selling out arenas any time he fights there. Now, we have to, so that he has that kind of following. John Duddy sold out the theatre at Madison Square Garden on the eve of St. Patrick's Day so he, we know, has a tremendous following, essentially among Irish fans. Paulie has a great following with Italian fans.

But we want to bring the people back to boxing in any which way we can and we want to entertain them and we want to hold them there and bring them back time and time again. I mean promoters will tell you that they're having a tremendously hard time selling tickets to live boxing events. Thank God this event at Madison Square Garden we're already past the \$1 million mark and one of the reasons is because of the kind of fighters led by Miguel Cotto and Paulie that we have on this card.

JOHN ELIGON: Hey, Bob, you alluded to that (inaudible) is always the final boxing city. You think maybe the so-called popularity the (inaudible) boxing fan has been in, mainly it's because the promoters have gone away from this type of promotion and then, if so, why has it gone, have promoters gone away from this do you think?

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BOB ARUM: Because promoters are not promoters any more. Promoters are fronts for television networks. They put on certain fights that the suits of the television networks want, and that's it and they don't bother with anything else and I think that that's hurt, ended up hurting the sport. And I think if we can bring back the fun to boxing, bring back the competition, bring back the ethnic loyalties, I think it's going to go a long way to rejuvenate the sport. Just wait till you see what we're going to do in Madison Square Garden on June 10th. You won't recognize it and it's not unique and it's not rocket science but you won't recognize it from the usual boxing events that you've been going to.

TRAE THOMPSON: I was going to ask Miguel, has he always been such a tough fighter? I mean, as a young amateur was he as tough as he is now? And was that something that developed over time?

RICARDO JIMENEZ: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) I think, you know, as an amateur you're, you just want to get points. I think your boxing is a little different, you're trying to do other things but in, as my career has developed I've, it's just come along as a professional level, I recognized that people enjoy when people get hurt in the ring, when they feel the knock-out coming, when they see the great punches, I think all of that has been a development that is, as I mature I've been able to gather and to be able to do it. I mean everyone gets hit, I get hit, people get crazy and then whatever you do the next is what's the important thing. You know you get over it, you get, you win and you win your fights and I think that my career has gone that way and I'm getting tougher and better as those fights come along.

TRAE THOMPSON: So the professional style which just helped him unleash that toughness, I guess?

MIGUEL COTTO: Yes.

ROBERTO COLON: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken)

RICARDO JIMENEZ: The question was, do you think, are you concerned at all about his speed and what he is, of what he's going to bring to the ring?

MIGUEL COTTO: I think you really, if you think about it like Randy Johnson or Pedro Martinez, you know the speed is there in the beginning of the game, it's not always there at the end and any pitcher will tell you that speed doesn't last the whole night through.

ROBERTO COLON: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken)

RICARDO JIMENEZ: Are you concerned at all that this, he's not, nobody knows really about

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him, nobody knows him, is that a concern to you? Like he might be something you're not prepared for?

MIGUEL COTTO: I'm not even worried about that. You know, I, he's been trying to sell himself; he's been talking a lot of trash. You know, he's, we'll find out in the ring.

JOHN ELIGON: Hi. This question's for Miguel. Miguel, obviously the faster you want to obtain success in championships and popularity and whatnot, but how important is it to you that you do have the following of people from your home country, of Puerto Rico behind you? How important is it that those people are, especially (inaudible) among your people and where you're from?

RICARDO JIMENEZ: (Spanish spoken)

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) You know, I've been very fortunate to have the big following that I have in Puerto Rico and very fortunate to have it everywhere I fought in the United States. People have been very nice to me, they respect me a lot, a lot of people know me and I try to give them the same respect. When you start this career you don't think in those terms, of people following you or being even famous but as you go along you recognize that all these people are behind you and that's a great motivation for you to keep doing well.

JOHN ELIGON: And I, just one more (inaudible), do you, I mean, is it pleasurable to you that you do kind of (inaudible) in a way brings Puerto Ricans together and is a point, and you are a point of pride for Puerto Rico. Is it, is that something that you get pleasure out of?

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) Yes, you know, it's really, I'm just human. You know, we all make mistakes, we all, sometimes maybe people don't see us like that but, you know, sometimes you make mistakes and you know you just keep going but the thing about it is the people. They have been really nice to me; they've been showing me their support and it humbles you to be thought of so highly by so many people.

KARL FREITAG: Hi, Miguel, just one last question. I mean Paulie's probably going to be going into this fight looking to win a decision. Is, have you given any thought to the judges and/or the referee, just trying to get somebody that doesn't allow a lot of holding or trying to get somebody that the judges that prefer a puncher or as opposed to a stylist? Is that something that goes through your mind at all?

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) Yes, I'm not concerned at all. You know, as long as I do my job my uncle gives me the perfect plan. We know that it's going, it's going, we're sending him wherever he came from.

KARL FREITAG: And you think you're going to end it by a knockout or a decision?

MIGUEL COTTO: (Spanish spoken) You know, (Spanish spoken) You know, I really don't know. All I know is I'm going to win; how, I don't know. All I know is that you can hit a home run any time and if Paulie slows down he's going to go to sleep quick.

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BOB ARUM: I want to thank you all for being on this call. I suggest as many of you as possible make arrangements to listen to Paulie Malagnaggi and Lou DiBella and I hope to see everybody in New York. We had a great fight this weekend in Las Vegas on Showtime, Castillo, Corrales and we got an unbelievable card in New York on June 10th and we hope to see you all of you in Madison Square Garden then. Thank you very much.