Written by David A. Avila
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The ever-quiet Miguel Cotto defends his WBO junior welterweight title on Saturday June 10 against Brooklyn's brash challenger Paul Malignaggi at Madison Square Garden the night before the Puerto Rican Day parade in New York City.

In a fight that had to take place in New York, it's Puerto Rico's Cotto (26-0) facing the Italian quicksilver Malignaggi in a match that should have the stands filled with green, red and white Italian flags and red, white and blue Puerto Rican flags. The fight will be shown on pay-per-view.

Usually it's the Puerto Rican fighters making brash statements and predictions, but not this time. Malignaggi has his own style and is not bashful to remind you.

"Doing all the talking is what got me here," said Malignaggi (21-0) during a telephone press conference. "That's become my reputation so now that I'm on the big stage, I don't have to change."

With speed to spare Malignaggi has bashed his way to public consciousness with a style of flare and out-spoken dare that have caused opponents to rupture in anger. Even the mild-mannered Cotto does a double take.

"I don't know anything about him style-wise or anything. All I know is he's been talking a lot," said Cotto, 25, by telephone. "We're just going to meet in the ring and that's when I'll discover what he's all about."

Cotto, a slick boxer-puncher, has been matched carefully for six years against formidable but less-skilled opponents or skilled but less-powerful boxers. He's been tagged the next great Puerto Rican champion in the same fold as Felix Trinidad, Wilfredo Gomez or Carlos Ortiz. Now he fights in the same arena that housed some of those fighter's greatest wins.

"It's always a pleasure to fight in a legendary arena like that," said Cotto who was born and raised in Puerto Rico. "Only the great ones fight there."

Malignaggi, whose quick feet and even quicker hands has kept him undefeated, feels he's one of the great ones and not the product of hype.

"The only thing that is going to be exposed is the fact I'm a world class fighter and everybody is going to realize that on June 10," said Malignaggi, who lived in Italy for a number of years before returning to New York. "I'm ready to break his face."

The spike-haired boxer has been taunted and belittled by opponents before. He's always emerged victorious despite several hand injuries during the fights.

In his last match against Donald Camarena, a tough and durable Colorado boxer, he exchanged punches, moved out of harm and dished out speedy combinations that plain befuddled his opponent. After the fight Camarena shook his head in amazement and congratulated the young Italian willingly. He wasn't the only opponent to do so but skeptics remain.

Cotto says Malignaggi has yet to be tested.

"This guy has done nothing," Cotto said of Malignaggi. "Once the fight is over he'll be fighting back in the clubs of New York."

The Italian boxer bristles when told of Cotto's comments.

"He's playing with the wrong guy, believe me," Malignaggi says.

Unlike Cotto, the New York prizefighter has only been fighting a mere eight years including as an amateur. But despite Cotto's extensive amateur background, Malignaggi says he detects serious flaws in the Puerto Rican's style.

"He's a one dimensional fighter," Malignaggi says of Cotto. "He's like a mummy."

It's these kind of statements that irk the usually calm world champion.

"You know, it's the first time someone has had the guts to be saying stuff about me," Cotto says. "I just hope he has the guts to do that in the ring, to stand up and fight."

Other junior welterweights in line

After Jose Luis Castillo lost his place in line because of his failure to make weight (don't think for a second any television station like HBO or Showtime will touch him now), dozens of others will now hop over the Mexican boxer.

Several years ago the junior welterweights had one of the hottest divisions along with the lightweights. But in the past year a lot of questions have been answered on in the junior welters compliments of Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Ricky Hatton who cleaned out a lot of the top 140-pounders in the last 12 months or so. But Mayweather is gone now. He's a welterweight looking to move up to junior middleweight. Though I feel Pretty Boy reached his ceiling at 140 (beating Judah did not prove he could fight at welterweight, the New Yorker was a small welter), he's gone now and probably won't return. Hatton moved up but will scamper back down to 140 after taking that shellacking against Luis Collazo in a winning effort. It was a Phyrric victory if there ever was one. Sure, he may even beat the winner of Carlos Baldomir and Arturo Gatti, but let him try beating Paul Williams, Mark Suarez, Joel Julio and several others.

Here's a list of junior welterweights ready to make it hot:

Ricky Hatton – If he goes back to his comfort zone it will be at 140 pounds where he ruled like a

despot. Even Kostya Tszyu doesn't want the Hit Man again. Hatton blitzed the last four junior welters he faced before running into a bigger welterweight Collazo.

Junior Witter – There must be a reason few want to meet Witter inside the ropes. The speedy and awkward boxer has big time pop in both hands and makes opponents look bad. Not even Hatton will fight Witter. He must be a bad man.

Joel Casamayor – Sure the Cuban slickster has only two victories in his last five fights, but the quality of opposition was near Hall of Fame quality in losing to Diego Corrales and Jose Luis Castillo. He's still a dangerous foe for anybody in the division.

Juan Lazcano – He killed himself to make weight at 135, but once he moved to junior welterweight, he's looked deadly. People forget he's a tall fighter with good pop in both hands. Another big factor, he's got a little street crazy in him that makes him dangerous.

Demetrius Hopkins – In the last three years the nephew of Bernard Hopkins has made large strides in his ability and power. When he first turned pro he seemed to be a slapper. But now he's more likely to make people nap than give them a slap. Big improvements in his fighting skills but he need s little more aggression.

Vivian Harris – The former world titleholder looked pretty sharp against an awkward boxer in his last bout several months ago. Harris is tall, fast and can hit. In other words, he's still dangerous if he still wants it. Harris says he wants Hatton, Cotto or anybody with a title.

Ricardo Torres – In his big moment against Cotto, he proved he can get in the ring with anybody. He didn't have time to prepare against te Puerto Rican champ, I'd like to see him in there again. Talk about one-punch power. The Colombian has it in abundance.

Emmanuel Augustus – Ignore all of those L's in the loss column, the South Texan boxing stalwart has more skills than any other fighter outside of a handful of prizefighters. He deserves another opportunity or two to fight for a world title.

These fighters above, along with Cotto and Malignaggi, are the 10 best junior welterweights in the world. Hopefully in the next year or two they'll meet each other to decide the next great junior welterweight and give fans another does of excitement.