

Marco Antonio Barrera vs. Juan Manuel Marquez is on

Marco Antonio Barrera will defend his WBC junior lightweight title against fellow Mexico City warrior deluxe Juan Manuel Marquez in three months, said Golden Boy Promotions on Tuesday.

"It's finally signed," said Richard Schaeffer, CEO for Golden Boy Promotions. "It took a while but it's definitely going to happen."

Barrera (63-4, 42 KOs) will meet Marquez, 33, at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino on March 17, 2007.

Ironically, aside from the two hailing from Mexico City, Barrera and Marquez also fought for Forum Promotions based in Los Angeles and were main events for many fight cards at the Inglewood Forum. Now they battle for Golden Boy.

When Barrera, 32, first emerged on the boxing scene he was known as the "Baby-Faced Assassin" who willingly scrapped with anyone inside the ring. Then he slowly traded his toe-to-toe style for a more rounded boxer-puncher style that used his speed and brains. His victory over Prince Naseem Hamed and two subsequent victories over Erik Morales were his crowning achievements.

"I want to fight this year then retire," Barrera said after his last fight against Rocky Juarez.

Marquez (46-3-1, 35 KOs) arrived in California under the tutelage of Nacho Beristain, who is recognized as one of the finest boxing trainers in the world. His main pupils of classic Beristain are Ricardo "Finito" Lopez, who retired undefeated and will be inducted into the International Hall of Fame in June 2007, and Rafael Marquez, the current IBF bantamweight world titleholder and younger brother to Juan Manuel. The high guard with precision punching and excellent defense has propelled both brothers to world titles.

It was Marquez's battle against Manny Pacquiao that gave him his greatest moment. Though knocked down three times in the first round he proceeded to give Pacquiao a boxing lesson in winning all but three rounds on the judges scorecards. He needed every one of those rounds to gain a draw. Saw people felt he beat Pacquiao.

"It's going to be a HBO pay-per-view card," Schaeffer said. "It's a big enough card."

France's Mendy faces America's Hanshaw

Boxing is back on television this weekend after a short respite. One great match features France's Jean Paul Mendy, 33, an undefeated southpaw who has been Europe's most avoided

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fighter, against Hanshaw. On advice from his manager Gabriel Gaide, who lives in Las Vegas, Mendy signed up for the super middleweight tournament staged by Gary Shaw Productions and Showtime. It's proven to be an eye-opener for avid fight fans. The Frenchman can truly fight.

Hanshaw, 28, an exceptional amateur fighter, has been basically loitering in the professional ranks until this tournament let the country realize the Ohio native can really fight. He's beaten two fighters whose combined pro records were 35-2-1.

The fight takes place in Southaven, Mississippi at the Desoto Civic Center and can be seen Friday on Showtime beginning at 11 p.m.

Peterson brothers

Anthony Peterson and his brother Lamont Peterson will be featured in another fight card that takes place in Mississippi. What are the chances of that happening in the same southern state on the same day?

Anthony Peterson faces Mexico's Juan Humberto Garza in a 12-round bout for the WBO NABO lightweight title.

Lamont Peterson faces Juaquin Gallardo in an eight-round junior welterweight contest. Both brothers are pretty tall for their weight division and extremely fast. They are also managed by Shelly Finkel. The bouts will be aired on ESPN on Friday beginning at 6 p.m. It's a great opportunity to see the flashy and talented Peterson brothers in action.

Israel Vazquez seeks Rafael Marquez fight

WBC junior featherweight titleholder Israel Vazquez could be facing WBA bantamweight champion Rafael Marquez in the spring. Another fighter mentioned for Vazquez has been Jhonny Gonzalez who seeks a rematch after getting stopped by Vazquez last November. Frank Espinosa, who manages Vazquez and former junior bantamweight titleholder Martin Castillo, was looking for opponents for both of his fighters.

"We definitely want Rafael Marquez, we feel that would be the best fight for the most money," said Espinosa. "But Golden Boy Promotions wants us to fight Daniel Ponce De Leon for the minimum of money. We would rather fight Marquez for more. The fans want that fight, the media wants it and we want it."

Castillo, who recently lost his title on the scorecards after suffering a bad gash, sustained surgery and plastic surgery to the injury-prone eye. He won't fight until April 2007.

"They want him to go back to Japan to fight the same guy but I don't want a tough fight. We have to see if his injured eye holds up. We want a tune-up before going to Japan,"

Espinosa said. "We're also looking at fighting Jorge Arce in the summer."

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At one time Isidro "Chino" Garcia was seen as a possible opponent for Castillo. But the former WBO flyweight titleholder spewed some venom at his former. Bad idea. Now Espinosa won't give him the payday.

Fernando Vargas and Ricardo Mayorga

It's still in the rumor mill but Fernando Vargas may return to the ring to face Nicaragua's Ricardo Mayorga. Nothing is official and no official word has been released from Main Events who promote Vargas or Don King Productions who promote Mayorga. Stay tuned.