A Day in L.A. for Juan Manuel Marquez and Marco Antonio Barrera

Juan Manuel Marquez spent a dizzying day that spanned from East Los Angeles to West Hollywood to Maywood then to LAX.

Now he's boarding a jet to Mexico City where he will then travel to the mountains of Toluca, in central Mexico, to continue training for the long-awaited meeting with WBC junior lightweight titleholder Marco Antonio Barrera.

Barrera and Marquez both met the media on Thursday before heading for the mountains to enter the serious phase of their boxing training before meeting on March 17 at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas.

"People here (in Los Angeles) have been waiting for this fight for so many years," said Oscar De la Hoya, who was in his promoter mode for the Golden Boy Promotions press conference.

Both Marquez and Barrera were big attractions during the 1990s when they fought under Forum Boxing Promotions. Though many fight fans in the Los Angeles area expected the two "chilangos" to meet early in their careers, it never happened. Most believed there was a secret covenant by the two fighters to avoid each other. Not so.

"When Oscar first asked if I wanted this fight I said: 'let's go.' We know who Juan Manuel Marquez is," said Barrera, 33, adding that he expects only one more fight before he retires. "I don't want any weak fighters I want the best."

Marquez, 33, said he relishes the encounter.

"It's the chance of a lifetime," said Marquez, who recently stopped Jimrex Jaca by technical knockout last November. "I'm treating this fight very seriously."

Also present was Marquez's trainer Nacho Beristain, who is one of the trainers mentioned as a possible replacement for Floyd Mayweather Sr.

De La Hoya's trainer

The new replacement for Mayweather was not revealed at the press conference held at the House Of Blues on Sunset Boulevard.

"I'm going to have a meeting tonight with some of our company and my family and try to decide what to do," said De La Hoya who turns 34 on Feb. 4. "I can't wait too long."

De La Hoya said that he's received offers from many boxing trainers including Teddy Atlas.

“Who hasn’t sent me an offer?” asked De La Hoya. “They’re all good trainers but it depends on who fits my style and theirs.”

De La Hoya said he might have the answer to the trainer lottery on Monday, but couldn’t promise.

“It’s not going to be easy. Believe me,” he said. “I’m already training. I’ve been doing a lot of running and other things. I’m in good shape.”

Barrera’s hideaway

Last autumn Barrera prepared for his second fight in Mexico City. But for this occasion he is returning to his comfort zone namely Big Bear Mountain.

“We’re going back,” said Robert Diaz, co-trainer for Barrera.

Sparring wars

Before jumping on a jet headed back to Mexico City, Marquez stopped at the Maywood Boxing Club for an encore sparring session with lightweight contender Urbano Antillon.

Local fighter Antillon wasn’t trying to make friends with Marquez in his three rounds of mayhem with “Dinamita.” Both landed liberally with Antillon forcing Marquez to give ground.

Marquez, who is still more than a month away from his big fight with Barrera, seemed in great condition. His pinpoint punching and slick movements allowed him to withstand Antillon’s assaults for three rounds.

The last round saw both fighters unleash some torrid punches. Marquez landed a pretty uppercut in the midst of a five-punch combination and Antillon connected with his rights.

Antillon had been on medical suspension for several months and was ordered by the doctor to refrain from all physical activity. Like Marquez, Antillon was ready for war with Marquez who is fighting at junior lightweight for only the second time in three years.

“I was getting lazy,” said Antillon about his long layoff. “I wasn’t used to taking a lot of time off. I like to work.”

After Antillon, Marquez then sparred with fellow stablemate Eduardo Escobar, a slick featherweight whose style resembles Barrera. It wasn’t as intense as the previous sparring war that had punches echoing off the walls.

Vitali Klitschko

The WBC stated that Vitali Klitschko, who retired briefly, can fight for the heavyweight title according to its rules. On his hit list is WBC titleholder Oleg Maskaev.

“I don’t think it’s fair that Klitschko can come right back and fight for the world title,” said Rudy Hernandez, who trains Jose Armando Santa Cruz. “What about all of the guys who are fighting to get a shot? They’ve been working hard to get to the top and this guy just comes back and gets the title shot. He should at least fight once to prove he deserves it.”

Klitschko quit boxing and pursued the mayor position of Kiev, the capitol of his native Ukraine. During the election campaign he was accused of not being serious by the opposition. He denied having any plans to return to boxing and that he was finished with the sport.

Well, he’s back. Hey, there’s no law that says he can’t make a comeback.

New venue for Julio Diaz title fight

Julio Diaz of Coachella is set to meet IBF lightweight titleholder Jesus “El Matador” Chavez on Feb. 3, but once again it seems Diaz has a bad luck bug on his back. The original location was supposed to be in Miami, Florida on a huge fight card. But the reservations were canceled when allegedly a check bounced and the Miami Arena took it off the schedule. After the promoters scoured the state they found a suitable venue at Kissemee, Florida near Orlando. The fight card will still take place on Feb. 3 but hundreds of miles north.

In previous scheduled fights Diaz had four cancellations including a prior meeting with Chavez who suffered an injury. Last year at this time a match with Brazil’s Acelino Freitas was shot down at the last minute as Diaz was about to go to the airport. Freitas claimed he was retiring. But two weeks ago he announced he is coming back to fight again.

Hopefully things go according to Hoyle and Diaz gets hit chance at winning back the IBF lightweight title.

South Africa is site for Laila Ali fight

Laila Ali left camp and will be traveling to South Africa to meet Gwen O’Neil in a rematch on Feb. 3. In their previous encounter Ali knocked out O’Neil two years ago. Maybe O’Neil learned a thing or two in that time.

“What can I do, I was supposed to fight someone else but they canceled out,” said Ali. “It always happens to me and it’s always about money. They want as much as I make and that’s not going to happen.”

San Manuel fight card on Feb. 1

Colton’s Freddie Barrera meets Jesus “Chuy” Rodriguez of Salinas in a junior welterweight contest at the San Manuel Casino on Feb. 1. Rodriguez has fought three times in the Inland area and is familiar with local fight fans. Barrera has not fought in almost a year and plans to return at a lighter weight class in the near future.

ESPN to show Chris Arreola fight

Riverside's Chris "The Nightmare" Arreola will be fighting Michael Carr of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in a heavyweight clash on Feb. 9. The bout will be shown live by ESPN.

Another heavyweight showdown on the same card will feature another Pittsburgh heavyweight "Fast" Eddie Chambers against New York's Derrick Rossy. The fight card will take place in Selden, New York.

Chino Garcia Wants Jorge Arce Next

Former WBO flyweight titleholder Chino Garcia is back in boxing after a hiatus of three and a half years. He wants Jorge "El Travieso" Arce next.

"All Arce fights is old men or fighters nobody heard of," said Garcia, who is trained by Javier Capetillo. "Fight me."

Garcia is famous for going to a world title fight as a fan and while eating a chili dog was asked if he could fill in for the original fighter. He said yes and promptly won the WBO flyweight title from Jose Lopez.

His last fight took place in 2003 against then champion Eric Morel. Garcia is only 30 years old.