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After menacing the lightweight division for so many years Diego “Chico” Corrales has taken the leap to a welterweight match up against the feared Joshua “the Hitter” Clottey.

Armed with devastating knockout power in either hand, Corrales faces the muscular Clottey at the Shrine Mosque in Springfield, Missouri on Saturday April 7. The 12-round bout is co-promoted by Gary Shaw Productions and Top Rank Promotions and will be televised by Showtime.

One big question looms for Corrales: can he pack the same power in the welterweight division? Many in the boxing world feel that in this fight, the hunter Corrales has become the hunted.

Corrales doesn’t care.

“I chose a guy like Joshua Clottey because I only want to make the best fights,” said Corrales (40-4, 33 KOs). “I want the best fighters out there.”

From the very first day Corrales stepped into a professional prizefight it was evident that he could end a contest with one single punch. Despite a long and seemingly emaciated looking body frame, with thin sinewy arms, Corrales packs mind-shocking power.

But very few power-punching prizefighters in the history of the sport have been able to make the transition from lightweight to welterweight. It’s a rare fighter that can successfully make the move.

After suffering to make the 135-pound weight limit the last few years and 130 pounds before that, Corrales decided to skip over the 140-pound junior welterweight limit and proceed to 147 pounds.

“I almost died to make the weight,” said Corrales, 29, about his last fight against Joel Casamayor that he lost by split decision in October 2006. “The doctors were really concerned.”

Now he faces Clottey one of the most dangerous fighters in the welterweight division who can brag he survived 12 rounds with the division’s most punishing fighter Antonio Margarito the WBO champion.

Clottey must be salivating at the prospect of meeting a future Boxing Hall of Fame candidate who’s never faced a true 147-pounder.

“Diego is a two-time world champion,” says Clottey (30-2, 19 KOs) almost gushing with joy at the prospect of having a notch on his belt with someone the stature of Corrales. “After he fights and loses to me he can go back to lightweight.”

The Africa-born Clottey began as a junior welterweight and has even fought at junior middleweight. But most of his 33 professional fights have been in the welterweight division. And with a nickname “the Hitter” it’s a surprise that his last knockout came three years ago. But now he’s facing a smaller lightweight invading his own turf.

“He’s been fighting for a very long time. Even when I was back in Ghana,” said Clottey, 30, who arrived in the United States in November 2003. “I don’t know what exactly he is going to do until we get in the ring.”

Duran and Mosley

In recent times only two fighters in the last 30 years have captured lightweight world championships and skipped the junior welterweight division to win a world title in the welterweight division and their names are Roberto “Hands of Stone” Duran and Sugar Shane Mosley.

Duran happens to be one of the greatest boxers in the history of the sport who combined speed, skill, stamina and power to beat Ray Leonard for the welterweight title in 1980. But he lost it in the rematch. Though he remained a great fighter he couldn’t bring that same kind of knockout power with him once he left the lightweight division.

Mosley was like a steamroller in the lightweight division where he stopped 30 out 32 opponents. The Pomona speedster decided to skip the junior welterweight division and eagerly accepted a match against light-hitting welterweight Wilfredo Rivera. He nearly lost the 10 round match that took place outdoors in Temecula, California. But in his next fight, he hooked the welterweight championship with a riveting performance against the champion Oscar De La Hoya.

Armstrong and Langford

Before Mosley you have to go back to 1938 when Henry Armstrong held the featherweight world championship and skipped over the lightweight division to beat Barney Ross for the welterweight world title. No one has ever accomplished anything close to that.

“He was all arms and elbows,” said Leonard Castillon, 91, a Los Angeles resident who saw Armstrong fight many times in the Olympic Auditorium. “You could never hit him cleanly and he could smother your punches.”

Armstrong used his perpetual motion to stymie Chicago welterweight Ross in a 15-round fight that took place in Long Island, New York. Then, less than three months later, he met lightweight world champion Lou Ambers in Madison Square Garden and took that world title too. He held the featherweight, lightweight and welterweight titles simultaneously and knocked out 101 opponents.

It’s rare that a knockout puncher can carry his potency two divisions higher, but it has occurred even before Armstrong. Anybody ever hear of Sam Langford?

Langford, at five-feet six inches in height, began his boxing career in the lightweight division where he actually fought and beat the great Joe Gans in 1903. Then he moved up to the welterweight division and fought another great fighter Joe Walcott for that title in 1904. It ended in a draw. A few years later in 1906 he moved up to middleweights and fought Young Peter Jackson and Jack Blackburn. But in 1905, he fought heavyweight Joe Jeannette who had already fought the future heavyweight champion Jack Johnson four times and beat him once. Langford was stopped in their first bout by technical knockout, then beat Jeannette the second time by decision four months later in 1906. Three weeks later, Langford felt he was ready for the "colored" heavyweight champion Johnson who at six-feet two inches tall was more than eight inches taller. Johnson won by decision after 15 rounds and dropped Langford in the sixth round. But the diminutive heavyweight lasted another 20 years in the professional boxing business. However, he never was given a shot at the world heavyweight title. He did win the "colored" heavyweight title and amassed more than 200 wins in his career. About 130 of those came by knockout.

Unlike Langford, Corrales is almost six-feet tall. But the Las Vegas-based Corrales will soon find out if he can carry his power to the 147-pound level.

"I need to be as strong as these guys," said Corrales, who is one of the few one-punch knockout boxers today. "Especially against someone like Josh (Clottey). Josh is strong as heck."

Clottey seems to be somewhat quiet about the whole upcoming bout, as if he might scare Corrales away if he says the wrong word.

"Well, if he is coming forward and I am coming forward it's going to be a very exciting fight," says Clottey diplomatically. "At the end of the fight we're going to hug each other."

Corrales, who is now trained by Dickie Woods who worked with him early his career, has said it could be a critical fight that decides whether he continues boxing or retires.

"Whatever happens, happens," Corrales said. Then paused as he thought about his next opponent. "Damn he's strong. I know I'm in for a rough fight."