

Castillo Promises PPV-Worthy Fight

Written by Ralph Gonzalez
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“Everything’s set to go. I’m just working on shaving off those last few pounds,” said Jose Luis “El Temible” (The feared one) Castillo (55-7, 47 KO’s) from The Wynn hotel in Las Vegas on Wednesday.

Castillo is in the process of final preparations to face off Saturday against Manchester, England’s Ricky “The Hitman” Hatton (42-0, 30 KO’s) at the Thomas and Mack Center in what should be one of the most attractive matches of the year. Even better, it’s free on HBO.

To say Castillo has had his share of weight problems is an under-statement. The cancellation of his third fight against Diego Corrales cost him credibility, his purse and it cost his promoters at Top Rank since they took a financial beating in the process.

He assures me that weight is no longer an issue.

“I’m in fantastic shape. This time I didn’t have to kill myself to make weight. I had one of the best training camps of my career,” said Castillo. “Moving up to 140 pounds has made a tremendous difference. It may seem like five pounds isn’t much but it’s huge for us at the lighter weights.”

In Hatton, Castillo is facing England’s stylistic version of Julio Cesar Chavez Sr. A tough, in your face, resilient brawler who attacks the body with fierce combinations. “This is a difficult fight because of Hatton’s style. He’s like a street fighter,” said Castillo. “I don’t plan to fight his fight. I’m going to fight like I always do. If it evolves into a brawl then so be it. I’m prepared to do whatever it takes to win.”

Just maybe the fact that Hatton fights like the legendary Chavez Sr. could be an advantage to Castillo since the 33 year old spent a lot of time as “El Gran Campeon’s” sparring partner.

“He does remind me of Julio. He’s a very relentless fighter,” said Castillo. “The first few rounds are going to be the toughest since I’m going to have to figure him out. Once I catch his rhythm then I can start adapting and adjusting my style.”

Another similarity with Hatton and Chavez Sr. is their ability to bring out the fans. Hatton is expecting over ten thousand of his countrymen and women to follow him into battle at The Thomas and Mack. Castillo also plans to see plenty of his fans in the stands.

“I’ve got a big fan base from Sonora and Baja California that’ll be supporting me. I know Hatton has his fans but mine will be well represented.”

Although planning to dim Hatton’s brightly lit star, he assures that he bears no ill will towards the Brit.

“No. I have no dislike for him at all. We are colleagues and this is our business. We’ll still be

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friends after the fight,” said Castillo. “I spent time in Manchester with him. We went out to eat and had a great time.”

Castillo’s always been friendly with his competition, especially Diego Corrales (RIP) with whom he shared a classic ring rivalry. The news of his recent death shook him up.

“I was working out in Tijuana when I was told of Diego’s death and I was in shock,” he remembers. “It was very sad. Inside the ring we were enemies but outside we were very friendly.”

For now he predicts that the fight with Hatton will be a fight of the year candidate.

“You have to remember that a good fight is made up of styles that complement each other. I think our respective styles will combine for some explosive action,” said Castillo. “I don’t know what kind of fight it’ll be. What I do know is I’m going to win.”

Castillo’s last fight against Herman Ngoudjo showed a listless and bored former WBC champion. It seems that “getting up” for certain fights is hard to do for Castillo. He scored an unimpressive split decision over the tough Cameroonian fighter. He admits he may have overlooked his opponent.

“I underestimated the guy,” he said. “I didn’t think it was going to be as difficult a fight as it turned out to be. He didn’t have many fights against anyone really notable so I thought I’d have my way with him.”

He’s making no such assumptions against Hatton who exploded onto the scene with an impressive drubbing over the seemingly invincible Kostya Tzyu.

“I know Hatton is going to try and take my head off and I know how good he is. He also knows that I’m going to be the toughest fight of his career,” said Castillo. “Hatton’s great but it’s over for him on Saturday. I’m coming to destroy him. It will be my biggest performance yet.”

In a year stacked with great fights like Margarito/Williams and Vazquez/Marquez 2, I consider this match more icing on the boxing cake. It’s great to not have to shell out 40-50 dollars for an inferior product which is usually the case with most pay per views.

And it’s always great to see a fight between two classy warriors that will most likely make boxing proud.