

## Former Foes Diaz and Jauregui-Allies?

Written by David A. Avila  
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COACHELLA, CALIF.-Ignoring the heat is not a problem for IBF lightweight titleholder Julio "The Kidd" Diaz. It's just another day in Coachella where desert temperatures are regularly 115 degree in the summer.

On this particular Tuesday a man who's vaguely familiar to Diaz awaits across the ring ready to resume battle in the ring. This time only a half dozen people will witness the blows exchanged instead of thousands.

That man waiting for Diaz is the same man he took the title away three years ago Javier Jauregui of Mexico.

Jauregui and Diaz are familiar with each other's strengths.

With pivotal bouts awaiting each of them, Diaz and Jauregui decided to help each other with sparring. It's not often that you see world champions serve as sparring partners but it's not often that huge crossroad fights await each: Jauregui fights in Sept. 18 against Adrian Mora for the IBA lightweight title and Diaz has a unification bout against WBA and WBO titleholder Juan Diaz of Texas on Oct. 13 in Chicago.

"It's a perfect fit," says Lee Espinosa who trains Diaz and runs the Coachella Boxing Club.

The last two weeks the two former foes have been using all of their craft and guile to pummel each other inside the small ring with blows few others can emulate or hope to achieve. But each day Jauregui arrives with bloodlust in his eyes ready to prove to Diaz that he's still a champion and each day Diaz attempts to prove he is a real and worthy world champion.

"Javier has been working with me for about several months," said Ruben Castanon, who trains Jauregui and drives more than 80 miles each day to see his charge at work. "We needed someone tall and fast. Nobody is faster than Julio Diaz."

Both Diaz and Jauregui both remember when they fought back in May 2004 in San Diego. At the time Jauregui was the titleholder and had just defeated the late Leavander Johnson to capture the title with a relentless performance at the Olympic Auditorium a few months earlier. Now he was facing one of the famous Diaz brothers of Coachella and perhaps the most dangerous and talented in Julio "The Kidd" Diaz, but untested against elite fighters.

Before more than 2,000 people in a dark Sports Arena, Diaz evaded the strong charges of Jauregui and offset the Mexican fighter's strength with his jab, leg movement and pinpoint counterpunching. It wasn't an easy fight for the Coachella fighter to avoid Jauregui's various traps and disallow the Mexican fighter to use his greater strength on the inside. That night Diaz stepped into the elite level with a splendid performance in winning by majority decision.

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That seems like another lifetime for both fighters who share no animosity toward each other and extol hearty greetings before sparring, but not during sparring.

“We’re professionals,” says Diaz, who abdicated the IBF title to fight then WBC lightweight titleholder Jose Luis Castillo. “It was my idea to call Jauregui.”

Espinosa said the decision to pick Jauregui came from Diaz’s own mind. Both he and his pupil know that WBO and WBA titleholder Juan Diaz is capable of being the greatest opponent they’ve ever faced. Diaz is undefeated after 32 pro fights and was last seen destroying Brazil’s legendary Acelino Freitas.

Juan Diaz goes forward and throws a million punches. He never stops.

“That’s what Jauregui does best,” says Espinosa, who has trained Diaz his entire pro career. “He likes to go to the body and he’s real strong.”

Jauregui has no easy match either. He’ll be fighting Colorado’s Mora at Table Mountain Casino and doesn’t expect an easy opponent. One thing he does expect is a taller opponent.

“I’ll do what I normally do and make him try to change to me,” said Jauregui, a native of Guadalajara, Mexico. “Mora cannot be faster than Julio Diaz.”

Sparring someone the caliber of Diaz and Jauregui is never easy. One punch too hard or too precise can lead to an all out war that results in cuts or injury. But those fires that burn inside a champion are not so easily muffled, even in sparring.

Neither fighter wants to give into the other but they temper their fire ever so slightly.

Diaz has the quick jab and quick feet while Jauregui has a killer uppercut that he can throw with surprising speed and accuracy.

“You can’t get better sparring that that,” Espinosa says.

Jauregui is closer to his fight and uses the sparring sessions to emulate his game plan for Mora. Diaz has more than a month to go before heading to Chicago to face the other Diaz who holds two lightweight titles.

Two years ago Julio Diaz was not impressed with Juan Diaz’s abilities, but slowly he’s seen the development from a wannabe to a full-fledged man-eating champion.

“Juan Diaz is getting better and better,” said Julio Diaz, who asked for a fight with the Houston-based fighter for more than a year. “He’s improved a lot. It’s going to be a great fight.”

And Juan Diaz is not the only Diaz with a lightweight title belt in his grasp. There’s also the matter of David Diaz, who holds the WBC lightweight title and lives in Chicago.

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"It's a battle of the Diazes," says Espinosa.

David Diaz just recently beat Mexican great Erik "El Terrible" Morales in defense of the WBC lightweight title and will be present at the fight between Julio and Juan Diaz.

"It's going to be a tough fight but if I win this fight then there's no reason to not fight David Diaz," said Julio Diaz. "Then when I have the titles I'll fight the number one contender Nate Campbell."

Diaz says he understands the feeling of having to wait for a title shot and wants to give the Floridian the opportunity for the titles.

"Money won't even matter," said Diaz. "Nate Campbell will get the first shot."

### Sparring wars

The sparring wars in Coachella are not the only battles taking place in Southern California gyms.

Middleweight contender Sergio Mora has been sparring with southpaws James Kirkland and Alfred Angulo who are both participating in a Showtime fight cards. Kirkland, a heavy-handed puncher from Texas faces Muhammad Said on Saturday in Washington.

Ann Wolfe is Kirkland's trainer and does a fine job in preparing the junior middleweight slugger.

Mora, the winner of the first season of the Contender reality television series, will be facing former junior middleweight champion Kassim Ouma on Sept. 15, in Las Vegas.

Another fighter sparring in Southern California is Victor Oganov who has been preparing at the Pound for Pound Boxing gym in West Los Angeles. Oganov will be facing super tough Fulgencio Zuniga in a 12-round contest for the vacant IBO super middleweight title on Sept. 1 on the same card as Kirkland.

Angulo is set to fight on Sept. 7 at Chumash Casino in Santa Ynez.

### Fights on television

Thurs. Versus, 6 p.m., Miguel Angel Huerta (24-8-1) vs. Efren Hinojosa (29-3-1).

Fri. Telefutera, 8 p.m., Yory Boy Campas (89-10) vs. Norberto Bravo (24-13-3).

Sat. Showtime, 10 p.m., Victor Oganov (26-0) vs. Fulgencio Zuniga (19-2-1).