Promoters are touting the November 3 super middleweight showdown between Joe “Pride of Wales” Calzaghe and Mikkel “Viking Warrior” Kessler in Cardiff, Wales, as “arguably the biggest world title unification fight between non-heavyweight world champions since the Sugar Ray Leonard-Tommy Hearns welterweight rumble of 1981.”

The New York press conference was held Tuesday at the Landmarc Hotel in the relatively new Time Warner Center at Columbus Circle in Manhattan.

The winner of this highly anticipated bout, which will be televised on “free” HBO, will emerge as a bonafide worldwide superstar.

Both fighters are undefeated, both look more like movie stars than boxers, each is extremely articulate and marketable and willing to put it all on the line in a fight with global ramifications.

The 35-year-old southpaw Calzaghe, 43-0 (32 KOS), hails from Newbridge, Wales, a stone’s throw from the fight venue at Millennium Stadium, where it is expected that more than 60,000 fans will be in attendance. The 28-year-old Kessler, 39-0 (29 KOS), is a native of Denmark.

What few people don’t know about the 6’1” Kessler is that his mother is from Salisbury, England. For that reason he will wear flags of both England and Denmark into the ring.

Whatever he’s wearing on his trunks won’t help Kessler defeat the 5’11 ½” Calzaghe, who has been a world champion since October 1997. He has made an astonishing 20 defenses of the WBO title.

Included among his victims are Jeff Lacy, who was then the undefeated IBF champion and heavily favored to beat him, Peter Manfredo Jr., who appeared on season one of “The Contender” reality television show, and former champions Robin Reid, Richie Woodhall, Charles Brewer and Byron Mitchell.

Kessler won the WBA title by stopping Manny Siaca of Puerto Rico in Copenhagen in November 2004. He defended that title four times, and also picked up the WBC crown with a third round stoppage of Markus Beyer in Germany in October 2006.

His promoter, Mogens Palle, who has been the dean of Danish boxing for over a half century, says that the circumstances surrounding Kessler’s first title defense, against Australian Anthony Mundine in Sydney in June 2005, tell you all you need to know about him.

In the weeks leading up to the fight, Kessler had a bad back that precluded him from doing any running or sparring. Palle hoped for a three month postponement, but Kessler insisted that he accept the fight with just one month convalescence.

“Mikkel couldn’t even run a meter, (a little over 39 inches),” said Palle. “But he insisted that we go to Australia because he didn’t want to lose the opportunity.”

In Australia Kessler acted like he was training at a local gym, just in case Mundine dispatched any spies there. Although far from 100 percent, he still waltzed through the local hero like Sherman through Georgia and won a lopsided unanimous decision. One judge scored the bout 120-108.

“He’s a got a big heart, big balls and he’s very smart,” Palle said of Kessler, with whom he has been associated since the fighter was a 16-year-old European Youth Champion

“He can be calm or smart, if necessary. Or he can be very aggressive. He is a complete fighter. Calzaghe has no idea what he has accepted.”

Moreover, said Palle, he has analyzed every one of Calzaghe’s opponents. One of them, Evans Ashira, Palle even brought to Germany to fight Calzaghe in the Welshman’s last bout before beating Lacy so handily.

“Ashira went 12 rounds and he is a blown up junior middleweight,” said Palle. “He had a bad shoulder and only took the fight for the money, and Calzaghe couldn’t put him away.”

It is easy for a promoter to talk up their man, so Palle is doing what he is supposed to do. But Kessler, who is not the least bit arrogant, seems equally confident.

“I would have rather fought him (Calzaghe) in my country, but I’m happy to go to Wales,” he said. “It doesn’t matter where we fight. I’m still going to win.”

When told that a victory over Calzaghe on HBO would transform him into an instant international star, Mike Marley, his United States publicist, piped right in.

“Good, then he can meet Jessica Alba,” said Marley, referring to the beautiful young Hollywood actress who, if Kessler’s blushing wasn’t an act, has quite a crush on the ingénue.

Then, commenting on HBO executive Ross Greenburg’s earlier comment that the “two best looking guys in boxing” would be fighting on his network, Marley added, “I have a feeling one of them won’t be as handsome after the fight. And it won’t be Mikkel.”

If Calzaghe has his way, it will be Kessler with the most black and blues. He seemed genuinely surprised that so many people are picking Kessler to win.

“Mikkel is a much bigger challenge than Jeff Lacy was,” said Calzaghe. “But I love big challenges. When I fight the best I get very excited. I have a lot to gain, especially those two other belts.”

Calzaghe said that he could have taken fights against numerous lesser challengers, but felt that a bout with Kessler would enhance his legacy more than any other.

After beating Kessler he plans on lacing them up a maximum of three more times, hopefully against Bernard Hopkins or Jermain Taylor, should the latter beat Kelly Pavlik on September 29.

When asked if Roy Jones Jr. was a third possibility, he scoffed. For several years he tried to get Jones's attention, but was ignored. The way Jones operates, he will probably call Calzaghe out after the Welshman's been retired for five years and on the flip side of 40.

"Roy is a shell of his former shelf," said Calzaghe. "Hopkins is still winning and if Taylor beats Pavlik it is likely he would move up in weight. That would be a great match."

Calzaghe also insists that even after all these years and all of his title defenses, he is still hungry.

"I wouldn't take this fight if I wasn't hungry," he asserted. "Too many fighters talk a lot at the press conference, but then they don't fight in the ring.

He then cited Hopkins and Winky Wright before adding, "Mikkel and I will fight. This won't be no tickling contest. Neither one of us wants to be denied, and we will both give 150 percent. This fight will be the icing on the cake for my career."

In October 2001, Palle brought Mike Tyson to Denmark to battle local heavyweight Brian Nielsen. Even though Nielsen, who was then 62-1 (43 KOS), was no match for Iron Mike, the fight was a major event in Europe.

As big as the Tyson-Nielsen affair was, however, it pales in comparison to how big the Calzaghe-Kessler fight already is across the pond. Palle says that he offered Calzaghe better terms than he's getting in Wales to come to Denmark. While the sums are undisclosed, you can be assured it is a significant amount of money.

"This is the biggest (boxing) event ever in Europe," Palle assailed. "The winner will be a major media star, in Europe and in the United States. This fight means everything to both of these fighters. If everything goes right and there is no [dirty] politics, the winner will be Mikkel."

Not so, says the equally confident Welshman. "I can't lose and I won't lose," he proclaimed. "I refuse to lose."

HBO will televise this sensational bout live at 5:00 p.m., with a rebroadcast at 10:30 p.m.