MONTEBELLO, CALIF.-Nothing's worse for Sergio "The Latin Snake" Mora than wracking a body through 11 weeks of intense preparation for what looks to be the baptism into the upper echelons of prizefighting. Unless it's finding out that an expected bout against former world champion Kassim Ouma has been scratched.

Following a summer full of mortal combat against some of the strongest southpaws west of the Mississippi, Mora had honed his weaponry and reloaded with a mental arsenal filled with knowledge that he could enter the ring against any middleweight in the world.

He was that ready.

I guess he'll have to reload.

The East Los Angeles boxer was told his bout against Uganda's Ouma was scuttled along with the others because of an injury to WBC junior lightweight titleholder Juan Manuel Marquez who was primed for the main event on Sept. 15.

"We're working to save that bout and all of the others," said Eric Gomez, the matchmaker for Golden Boy Promotions on Monday. "We really felt that was the best fight card we've ever done."

Many people agreed.

"That was going to be a great fight card," said Jack Mosley, father and trainer of Shane Mosley.

After finding out Ouma was his next opponent, Mora eagerly shut down all outside influences and began a strict boxing camp and recruited several of his friend Antonio Margarito's sparring partners. The former WBO welterweight titleholder had a date against big left-hander Paul Williams and recruited as many southpaws as possible. It worked for Mora too because Ouma fights from that side too.

Opening day for camp began a week before the Fourth of July for Mora who taxied some of the fighters to his gym located about five miles south of South El Monte. On some days Mora would move his camp to South El Monte, on others he would train in his own Montebello boxing gym.

One of Mora's first southpaws was Alfredo Angulo (10-0, 7 KOs), a tough-looking Mexican from the rough roads of Mexicali who dispels the myth that mean-looking guys can't fight. This guy hits as hard as he looks. They don't call him "El Perro" for nothing. He's like a junkyard dog who loves to scrap. Ask Margarito who's been using the southpaw for a couple of years now. He doesn't move back even against Margarito.

"He's just a tough dude," Mora (19-0, 4 KOs) said. "Man we had some wars."

Another southpaw engaged was undefeated James Kirkland (20-0, 17 KOs).

Mora's sparred many times against the likes of Fernando Vargas and Margarito. Both Kirkland and Angulo proved to be equally rugged and formidable.

"There were days were I went home woozy from the blows and I'm sure there were days they went home woozy too. It was that tough," said Mora, 26, who wanted non-stop fighters to help him prepare for Ouma's machinegun consistency. "Angulo may not be as skilled as a Margarito, but he makes up for it with his grit and power."

Angulo, who is trained by Clemente Medina, has a no nonsense approach inside of the ring and throws every punch with felonious intent. Even his jabs are meant to rattle the brains of opponents.

When Angulo couldn't make the sparring sessions another rock-hard left-handed fighter was brought in. Like a wrestling tag team in came middleweight strongman Kirkland who like Angulo is undefeated and unimpressed in sparring with Mora or any other fighter.

"He's like a smaller version of Mike Tyson," said Dean Campos, who co-trains Mora along with John Montelongo. "Every punch he throws he tries to kill you."

Both Angulo and Kirkland had incentive to spar with Mora. Both lefties had their own fights scheduled and were victorious in impressive fashion.

Mora said the two marauding southpaws never let him take a breath and took it personal the first few weeks.

"James Kirkland would come in with a scowl and never speak a word," said Mora, a very personable and well-spoken boxer. "It took a while but we soon became good friends. Outside the ring we talked and ate together and inside the ring we went to war. He's going to be a champion I promise you."

On Sept. 1 at the Emerald Queen Casino in Washington, the Texas junior middleweight burned right through veteran Mohammed Said and knocked him out in two rounds.

"I want to thank Sergio Mora for the great camp," said Kirkland after his one-sided blow out of Puerto Rico's Emmanuel Gonzalez in two rounds.

Campos said both Kirkland and Angulo were perfect because of their aggressive style and refusal to move backward.

"We know that Ouma always throws a lot of punches and likes to go forward," Campos said. "But it's hard to find someone who fights like Kassim Ouma. The only guy we can get to fight like Ouma is Ouma."

Like Mora, Ouma (25-3-1, 15 KOs) was prepared for an epic battle.

“Sergio Mora throws a lot of punches and I throw a lot of punches,” said Ouma, 28, by telephone from Philadelphia just moments before the entire fight card was canceled. “I set the record for punches in a round.”

About 30 minutes after speaking to Ouma, Golden Boy Promotions sent out a press release that the entire fight card at the MGM Grand was cut because of a cut and swelling of Marquez’s hand. The Mexico City boxer was scheduled to defend his title against Houston’s Rocky Juarez.

“The safety of our fighters comes first and it’s too bad that Juan Manuel got hurt after training so hard for this fight,” said Oscar De La Hoya, president of Golden Boy Promotions. “We are having him (Marquez) come to Los Angeles this weekend for further evaluation and treatment by a specialist.”

Also suffering cancellations were Robert “The Ghost” Guerrero’s IBF featherweight title defense against Martin Honorio, former junior lightweight titleholder Steve Forbes match against Francisco “Panchito” Bojado and several other bouts.

“Man, working with James Kirkland and Alfredo Angulo was the toughest preparation I ever had,” said Mora before the cancellation announcement. “This is the most prepared I’ve ever been for a fight. I can’t wait to get in there and fight.”

Golden Boy’s Gomez said they haven’t given up on salvaging the impressive fight card and should know by the end of this week.

Stay tuned.

Mares beats Garcia

Abner Mares (14-0, 9 KOs), who now fights at bantamweight after several years as a junior featherweight, accepted the challenge against veteran flyweight champion Isidro “Chino” Garcia (24-4-2) in a bout held at bantamweight. Mares used his speed, strength and defensive skills to out-fight the smaller Garcia with an impressive seventh round technical knockout in Tucson.

Mares, who lives in Montebello, California, was a former Mexican Olympian in 2004 and is promoted by Golden Boy Promotions. He had never faced an opponent like Garcia who’s a wizard in the ring with his boxing knowledge.

Though Garcia was never actually knocked down, his trainer Javier Capetillo wisely stopped the bout before his fighter endured more punishment.

“We took the fight against Mares because we were promised another fight,” said William Garcia who advises Chino Garcia. “But we felt Chino could out-smart him.”

The strong 118-pounder Mares has received training from a couple of master teachers in Floyd Mayweather and now with Nacho Beristain. He’s managed by Joe Hernandez who also has Daniel Ponce De Leon.

Witter keeps title

Britain's Junior "The Hitter" Witter, 33, stopped former titleholder Vivian Harris in the seventh round in defense of his WBC junior welterweight title last Friday in England.

Harris (28-3-1) had looked impressive in beating Juan "Hispanic Causing Panic" Lazcano and former lightweight titleholder Stevie Johnston, but couldn't figure out Witter's unique boxing style. He was dropped twice with left hooks.

Witter's last loss was by decision against Zab Judah seven years ago in Glasgow. Scotland. He hasn't lost since.

This fight was pivotal for Witter (36-1-2, 21 KOs) whose victories have come mostly against lesser-known European fighters. He's had problems against America-trained fighters like Harris and Lovemore N'Dou. Last weekend he proved the problems were no more.

Fights on television

Fri. Telefutura, 8 p.m., Fernando Trejo (29-12-4) vs. Juan Ramon Cruz (15-3-1).

Fri. Telemundo, 11:30 p.m., Jose Reyes (20-4) vs. Silverio Ortiz (19-10).