The fierce knockout specialist Daniel Ponce De Leon, who holds the WBO junior bantamweight title, greets Mexico's Reynaldo Lopez in the ring at Morongo Casino on Friday in a non-title fight.

Lopez is no easy touch.

Ponce De Leon, a Tarahumara Indian, took the fight on relatively short notice because the fight is located on Morongo Indian tribal land. The Mexican Indian is proud of his Indian bloodlines and was honored to fight on Indian soil.

The southpaw slugger Ponce De Leon heads a fight card that includes featherweight Eduardo Escobedo of Mexico City and Covina's lightweight prospect John "The Choirboy" Molina in interesting matches. It's Golden Boy Promotion's first foray with Morongo Casino. Telefutura will televise the action.

Doors open at 4:30 p.m.

Less than nine weeks ago Ponce De Leon defended his world title against rising Filipino star Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista, an outstanding fighter with speed, movement and power. The Mexican fighter was one of five other boxers from his country going head-to-head with six talented Filipino boxers. Only Ponce De Leon emerged with a victory for the green, white and red colors of Mexico. He salvaged national pride that night in Sacramento, California.

"I was going for a knockout in the first round." said Ponce De Leon. "I really wanted to win for Mexico,"

The heavy-hitting Ponce De Leon will receive another test. Though the title is not being defended, Mexico's Lopez has never been stopped in the ring and he's already fought against a world champion in Russia's Dimitri Kirilov. That fight in Moscow went the distance and ended in a majority draw for the Russian.

In other words, Lopez can fight.

But can the tough Mexican last 10 rounds with one of the hardest punchers in all of boxing. The fight is being held at a 126-pound limit and though Lopez has never been knocked out, he's never faced a murderous puncher like Ponce De Leon.

That's another reason the fight is being held above 122 pounds.

"I didn't want to have to fight at 122 pounds so quickly," said Ponce De Leon pointing to his stomach. "That's why this fight will be a little heavier."

In the semi-main event, the NABO featherweight title will be at stake when Escobedo and Colombia's Jose Mendoza tangle in a bout scheduled for 12 rounds.

Trained by master trainer Nacho Beristain, Escobedo gets a steady diet of quality sparring on a daily basis. Aside from WBC junior lightweight titleholder Juan Manuel Marquez and former bantamweight and junior featherweight champion Rafael Marquez, boxers in Beristain's camp can also work against young hell-raisers like Abner Mares and Vicente Escobedo.

Eduardo Escobedo trades leather with some of the best talent in the world.

But can he beat Colombia's go-for-broke Mendoza?

It's also possible that the winner of this fight will get a shot at Ponce De Leon in the near-future.

Team Ponce De Leon has stated they will fight anybody but intend to keep their word about another matter.

Joe Hernandez, who co-manages Ponce De Leon, says the Mexican destroyer intends to give new WBO bantamweight titleholder Gerry Penalosa another shot in the ring. Though Ponce De Leon captured a unanimous decision win over the Filipino champion when they met last March, Filipino fans felt their warrior won more rounds and stood his ground against the bigger and stronger Mexican titleholder.

"Ponce will go to the Philippines to fight Gerry Penalosa," said Hernandez.

Penalosa had barely beaten Jhonny Gonzalez by knockout to grab the title when Ponce De Leon did the same to Bautista. It was the Mexican's decision to tell the Filipino veteran that they could fight in the Philippines.

Penalosa accepted.

But first comes Ponce De Leon's non-title fight at Morongo. Some things are even more important than title fights. For the Tarahumara, it's his Indian roots.

For tickets and information call Morongo Casino at (800) 252-4499.

Julio Gonzalez in title fight

Huntington Beach's Julio Gonzalez is in England to vie for the IBF light heavyweight title against current titleholder Clinton Woods (40-3-1, 24 KOs) on Saturday Sept. 29.

It's a rematch against Woods. They fought each other two years ago in the same arena where the British boxer won by unanimous decision.

Gonzalez freely admitted he lost the fight.

“I could have done more,” said Gonzalez (41-3, 25 KOs).

Now the former WBO light heavyweight titleholder, who was the first to defeat Dariusz Michalczewski, returns to the British shores for another crack at Woods.

“He went earlier this time,” said David Martinez, who helped Dub Huntley prepare Gonzalez for this fight. “Julio went earlier so he could get better acclimated.”

Gonzalez said in the first encounter he tired quickly and wasn’t able to cope with Wood’s movement.

“I think Julio will do much better this time,” said Martinez, adding that former foe Jesus “Chuy” Ruiz , Shannon Miller, Librado Andrade and Ramiro Rubalcava helped him prepare at La Habra Boxing Club.

One fighter both have in common is Roy Jones Jr. Gonzalez fought Jones first in July 2001 at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. Though he lost nearly every round he proved his spirit was infallible in lasting the full 12 rounds after getting knocked down by the speedy former champion. Woods also fought Jones later in 2002 and was stopped in the sixth round in Portland, Ore. It’s famous for Jones’s rooster move.

The fight will not be televised in the U.S.

Bad Chad Dawson

WBC light heavyweight titleholder Chad Dawson defends his title against Colombia’s knockout specialist Epifanio Mendoza at the Arco Arena in Sacramento on Saturday Sept. 29. The title fight will be televised by Showtime.

Dawson recently dismissed Floyd Mayweather Sr. as his trainer and that could prove to be a hindrance. It’s difficult to move from one boxing style to another and Mayweather’s training exercises are unique.

The tall light heavyweight southpaw from Connecticut has fast hands and feet plus knockout power. He used those athletic attributes to stop Jesus “Chuy” Ruiz in the sixth round last June.

At six-feet, three inches in height, Dawson is usually the taller fighter and uses his reach advantage to near perfection.

One thing that could possibly happen is Dawson could meet the winner between Woods and Gonzalez.

After undisputed light heavyweight champion Roy Jones Jr. was beaten by Antonio Tarver and Glencofe Johnson, the light heavyweight titles were split up again. The 175-pound division needs to restore order once again and have a tournament to regain interest.

Former Contender wins again

Miguel Espino, who fought on the first season of the TV reality show “The Contender,” stopped Arturo Ortega in the fifth round on Saturday in Bakersfield and won the WBC Carribean Boxing Federation middleweight title. It was a rematch.

Espino was supposed to fight another former participant of the reality show in Juan De La Rosa, but that fighter suffered a hand injury and was forced to pull out. Ortega begged for the fight and got it. Espino won by technical knockout at the end of the fifth round.

It’s been a slightly difficult road for Espino gaining recognition but the rugged middleweight never has an easy fight. His last loss came against Peter Manfredo Jr. during the television show and that was by a close decision.

Fights on television

Fri. Telefutura, 8 p.m., Daniel Ponce De Leon (32-1) vs. Reynaldo Lopez (28-4-2).

Sat. HBO, 7:15 p.m., Jermain Taylor (27-0-1) vs. Kelly Pavlik (31-0).

Sat. Showtime, 10 p.m., Chad Dawson (24-0) vs. Epifanio Mendoza (28-4-1).