The Prince of Wales has been training for 9 1⁄2 weeks, and there are 2 1⁄2 weeks to go until Joe Calzaghe and Mikkel Kessler put their undefeated records on the line in Wales.

Calzaghe is sky-high confident that he will leave the ring that evening with both his WBO title, and Kessler's WBC and WBA 168 pound straps.

Not surprising, considering the last time the man lost, it was 1990, during the Euro junior championships, in Prague. Joe C was 17 at the time, and he fussed and moped for a solid week after the contest.

Now he’s 35. The desire to keep on keeping on with the broken hands, wrists, knuckles, and elbows, and adhering to a strict eating and fitness regimen, is on the wane.

Calzaghe is now in the midst of choosing the fights that will comprise the encore portion of a Hall of Fame-level career.

The primary reason Calzaghe (43-0, 32 KOs) is giving off such a confident vibe is very, very basic—his paws aren't paining him, and the rest of his limbs are also in tip-top condition…or what passes for that when you've engaged in 43 pro fights, around 120 amateur ones, and thousands of rounds of sparring.

When, you might be curious, was the last time Calzaghe’s mitts weren’t barking at him (“Ice me, you bastard!”) to cease and desist the destructive process of throwing them at another man’s hard head for 12 rounds?

The last time Joe’s instruments were in top working order was when he gloved up against the massively muscled American, Jeff Lacy, a hulk who seduced us with his physique, and then disappointed us when it came time to test the vehicle. That event took place on March 4, 2006, and we all can recall the masterpiece Joe C painted with ship-shape hands. It was a complete rubout, a Pros vs. Joes-level domimation.

Look out, Kessler (39-0, 28 KOs).

So maybe we won’t get a repeat of that erasure of an overhyped prospect, but to hear Joe and Enzo, his father/trainer say it, maybe we will.

“Kessler has no chance,” Enzo said, as best as I could tell as I hacked through his unfamiliar accent on a conference call. “Joe has boxed people like Kessler. Has Kessler boxed someone like Joe? I doubt it.”

Cast aside the doubt, dad, we can answer that. No way.

When your best win is Anthony Mundine, a serviceable but hardly legendary level hitter, and your second best victory is a tossup between your Eric Lucas and Markus Beyer wins..well, the step up to Joe C is like leaping from karaoke at the Dewdrop Inn, and taking lead vocalist duties for Van Halen.

Of course, there is a fight to hype, and tix to sell, and the PPV pump to be primed. So Joe C isn't going out of his way to diminish the 28-year-old Kessler's bonafides.

"He's a very good European style, upright, with good power in both hands," Calzaghe said in a scouting report on the Dane. "I've seen one tape, seen two tapes, and he looks the same way. He's not adaptable, and he's never faced anyone remotely in my league, my ability, my adaptibility."

Whoops, Joe at that moment departed from the salesman script. Back on message, he several times mentioned that Kessler may well be the best fighter he has faced…but said he would withhold judgment until Nov. 3 comes round.

Kessler's confidence level, or, at least, his proclamations to the press, have also been plucky.

"Joe is a great champion but I'm going to beat him," Kessler has stated. "I'm going to be 200 per cent better than my last fight and he's going to get a big surprise. I've seen some of his fights and he's never fought a guy like me before, that's why he's going to be in trouble. I hit straight, I hit hard, I hit directly. I'm going to show everyone I'm a bigger champion than he is."

"I'll knock the confidence out of him come November third," Calzaghe said. "Lacy was confident and I smashed that out of him. But Kessler is better than Lacy. Lacy was more one dimensional. Kessler is a more thinking fighter. I'm more confident coming in to this fight than the Lacy fight. Injuries before the Lacy fight affected me. Potentially this could be my most difficult opponent, but so was Lacy, and look what happened there."

Hey, there's still a few weeks left til Calzaghe/Kessler, and a man with such delicate limbs could still get into trouble peeling carrots, let alone sparring. But for now, Calzaghe is feelin' good, and his speech reflects that.

On the matter of respect, the Wales Whaler offered that he thinks he's been a top 10 pound for pounder for about 10 years, but only recently have pundits shared that view.

He gracefully fielded a query from a writer who wondered if the "slapper" label was misguided.

"Look at the Lacy fight, after the fight he was smashed up," he said. "If I can slap that hard I'm happy with it. Ali slapped, Roy Jones slapped…I'm gonna slap Kessler too. He thinks I can't punch...my hands have been strong. With two good hands, I can knock anybody out."

Calzaghe's confidence shone brightly once again when he chewed on post-Kessler matchup potentialities.

Kelly Pavlik, he said, was a possibility, if Pavlik wanted to leap up a class. Maybe Hopkins if Bernard is game. Maybe one biggie at light heavy. A fight at Madison Square Garden before he retires would be nice, but, he said, it better happen soon, because he sees the finish line in site, and it isn't far off.

But the Calzaghe of today, he thinks, would beat the Calzaghe from 5 or 10 years ago. That aging-like-fine-wine mindset will not, he said, have him gloving up at 44, "like Holyfield."

I have arrived late to the Calzaghe bandwagon, having been put off by the posturing that came as he and his team tried (tried hard enough?) to land BIG FIGHTS. But I'm on board, all the way now, and haven't seen enough of the Dane to make me think he's on Joe C's level. Could Calzaghe get old overnight, or re-re-re injure his dodgy left hand? Sure enough. But Calzaghe has much quicker hands than anyone the Dane has faced, and he will throw bunches of punches, which will impress judges much more than Kessler's 'one-and-done' workstyle. The Dane's footwork is better than advertised, so Joe will have to work harder than we might think to connect. But Kessler will drop his hands, and neglect to move his head as much as he should, and Calzaghe will take advantage in a fight of the year candidate.