East Los Angeles boxer Oscar De La Hoya returns to Southern California and he's got big Floyd Mayweather riding shotgun.

The $30 million dollar-a-fight man seeks to end this last year with a bang. He wants all the components locked and loaded for the grand finale and for his fight against Steve "Two Pounds" Forbes.

Forbes, the former junior lightweight champion, is chapter one at the Home Depot Center on May 3.

The fight will be shown on HBO.

De La Hoya plans to fight three times in 2008 and then call it a career inside the ring. The theme of his take off should be: "Beating Floyd Mayweather Jr."

It's no secret, De La Hoya wants to beat little Floyd then walk into the sunset and Forbes presents a slight version of Mayweather.

"Because he (Forbes) has that style and I'm looking for a Floyd Mayweather fight," De La Hoya (38-5, 30 KOs) said without hesitation. "It's a combination of a number of things why I took this fight."

Most boxing fans know De La Hoya is the "Golden Boy" of the sport and has raked in more than $400 million lacing up the gloves. But most do not know that with a mere shake of the finger or furrow of the brow he can make or break a fighter's career. But money is not the most important thing.

"Oscar is not in there for the money, although money is important, it's for the legacy of being able to beat Mayweather," said Sugar Shane Mosley a former antagonist, but now a friend and partner in Golden Boy Promotions. "The first fight that Oscar had with Mayweather, he might have had the edge on Mayweather."

De La Hoya realizes he came close a year ago, but wasn't fully prepared for a 12-round fight against the current Pound for Pound king Mayweather Jr. So he's reloading with poppa Mayweather.

"Had I trained Oscar for that fight he would have won. I guarantee you," said Mayweather Sr. who first began training De La Hoya after he lost in 2000 to Mosley.

Big fights are the motivating ingredients for De La Hoya and always have been.

Ever since De La Hoya captured the gold medal at the Olympics in Barcelona, Spain in 1992,

the slender Mexican-American with the non-boxing looks has thrived on big fights and big quests.

Forbes is a steppingstone, but a necessary half step when De La Hoya's planning to fight later in the year the man who perfected the Mayweather style of boxing. Forbes loves his role in the match that plays like a Shakespearean tragedy.

"They love each other more than people know," said Forbes about the Mayweather clan. "If you pick on Roger, Floyd (Senior) is going to jump in too."

For those not up to date with the other role players, Forbes was formerly trained by Floyd Mayweather Sr. and is now guided by Roger Mayweather who also trains Floyd Mayweather Jr.

"It's funny because it's a win-win situation for the Mayweather family anyway," said Forbes, who lived with the Mayweathers for a year in Las Vegas. "Roger told me if I beat him then Floyd Jr. will fight me."

Now living in Las Vegas, Forbes was discovered while fighting in Portland, Oregon and was sponsored by a person who knew the Mayweathers. During a Golden Gloves tournament the Mayweathers looked at him and told him to come to Las Vegas.

Weight has always been an issue for Forbes, who won his world title at 130 pounds.

"I fought at 130 pounds too," De La Hoya responds.

Back in 1994 De La Hoya captured the WBO junior lightweight title against Jimmi Bredahl at the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles. He defended it once against Italy's Giorgio Campanella and was floored, but recovered to knock out the 130-pound opponent. Immediately De La Hoya moved up to 135 pounds where he beat Jorge "Maromero" Paez for the vacant WBO lightweight title in the same year.

In 1995 the De La Hoya explosion began when he blew out fellow Los Angeles resident Rafael Ruelas who held the IBF lightweight title. He stopped the San Fernando boxer in two rounds with a monstrous left hook at Caesars Palace and his career exploded into a million dollar industry.

"One thing about Oscar, he's fought the best fighters of his era," said Forbes, who admits he's watched at least 25 of De La Hoya's fights. "I've always been a fan of his. I'm a huge fan. I thought he beat Tito Trinidad, even though I thought he lost to Pernell Whitaker."

Forbes uses the Mayweather style of boxing with a few added wrinkles. Whether it's at 130 pounds where he always struggled due to weight, or at 154 pounds where he still struggled to make weight. It's always been a problem for the Las Vegas fighter even against Grady Brewer in the Contender finale at the Staples Center in 2006.

"Honestly, I hardly trained for the fight against Grady Brewer," Forbes said. "I want to show

everybody that fight was not me."

Slick-fighting Forbes was not successful in his first world title bid against Alejandro "Cobrita" Gonzalez in March 2000 at the Fantasy Springs Casino in Indio. That night he fought toe-to-toe with the former Mexican featherweight champion but lost a close decision. In his next title bid he out-boxed tough John Brown for the vacant IBF junior lightweight title.

Weight problems forced him to forfeit the title at Pechanga Resort and Casino back in 2002 and have always been a concern. Ironically, his nickname "Two Pounds" comes from surviving at birth at that weight through an incubation machine. Forbes is comfortable fighting at a higher weight. He's also comfortable with the realization that he's a testing ground for the Mayweather style of fighting.

"I knew he was going to fight somebody that was similar to Floyd (Mayweather Jr.)," said Forbes, 31, whose last fight was a win over another East L.A. fighter, Panchito Bojado. "I'm not going to run around I'm going to use my skills."

De La Hoya promises he'll fight three times this year, including against Forbes, then call it a career.

"Fighting here in Los Angeles really gives me chills," said De La Hoya, 35, whose last fight in Southern California was in 2000 against his friend Mosley. "It's not that I have to prove anything but it's a plan. I'm at that stage in my career where I can't take it further."

If De La Hoya beats Forbes, then it's on to Mayweather probably in September 2008.

Forbes smiles because he knows that boxers can't overlook anyone, even if you're named De La Hoya.

"It's perfect for me because my goal is to make that not happen," said Forbes of De La Hoya's plans. "He's looking ahead. He says he's not, but he's looking ahead."

Tickets are still available but expect a sell out at the Home Depot Center that plans to seat 30,000 people.

"Oscar is the biggest name. I think anywhere we fight it would be like a homecoming for him," said Forbes while chuckling. "You know at my house most of the people will be cheering for Oscar including my family."

"This is exciting because opportunities like this don't come around," Forbes said, still smiling.

De La Hoya is not smiling because he knows there is no such thing as a tune up fight.

"I stressed right from the beginning I'm not falling into that trap," said De La Hoya who remembers nearly losing to Germany's Felix Sturm when preparing to fight Bernard Hopkins four years ago. "I just feel with Floyd Sr. in my corner he has the antidote to beat Stevie Forbes,

Floyd Mayweather Jr. and to beat whoever."

Chapter one begins next week.