Leave it to the King of bombast to come up with a catchy name for a young fighter he hopes will one day catch on with the ticket buying, pay-per-view watching, T-shirt purchasing public.

To his family and fistic friends, Angelo Santana is sometimes known as “The Cobra.’’ To his promoter, Don King, he’s “The Swimmer.’’

Why, you wonder? Not because Michael Phelps has anything to worry about.

Angelo Santana is “The Swimmer’’ because Don King figures that might sell and these days, as always, that’s what boxing is about. It’s about selling. Selling yourself and selling tickets and young Santana has just gotten on the road toward trying to do both.

The 20-year-old Cuban defector who will appear on the under card of Saturday night’s Nate Campbell-Ali Funeka lightweight title fight on HBO literally floated into King’s arms not long after he’d floated onto the shores of Miami 2 1⁄2 years ago. Santana and 27 others built a makeshift boat out of a little wood and a lot of inner tubes and slid off into the Atlantic Ocean hoping to somehow find their way to America. Angelo Santana found more than that.

He found Don King.

For three days the former two-time Cuban national boxing champion floated and paddled in the Atlantic Ocean before he and his desperate comrades hit the Florida shoreline on Sept. 1, 2007. It was not the normal way of arriving unless you are a defector from the failed political dream Fidel Castro’s Cuba has become but for Santana it was a godsend.

That kind of instantaneous life change would be a shock for anyone but nothing like the shock Santana felt 10 days later when he found himself signing a promotional contract with King even though King had no idea who he was.

All he knew was all that he needed to know – which was that the kid could fight, the kid came cheap and the kid had a story. The way King figured it, compared to many of his dealings in boxing he was already well ahead of the game.

“Anybody willing to swim all the way to Miami in search of freedom is my kind of guy,’’ King rhapsodized. “I signed him sight unseen because I believe he earned an opportunity in the land of opportunity.’’

Barely four months later, Santana found himself standing in his under shorts in the ring at Madison Square Garden, making his pro debut on the under card of the Roy Jones, Jr.-Felix Trinidad match, which King promoted. Although he would need only 33 seconds to stop Kenny Keaton, Santana admits now that he felt as adrift that night as he’d been when he first left his home and family behind to slide into the sea under a dark Cuban sky.

What he sought – the chance to write a new chapter in a boxing career Cuban sporting officials had put on hold despite Santana's 180-3 amateur record because several of his relatives had already fled Cuba illegally – he now had. But who could have expected this?

"I felt like a complete hillbilly,'' Santana (4-0, 3 KO) said of his first professional victory. "I was just a 19-year-old kid from Cuba one minute and the next I'm fighting with my heroes on a big fight card in New York City. The idea of fighting at Madison Square Garden had never even crossed my mind but there I was. I was overwhelmed. It was like a dream.''

If so, it was a short dream, which is the way his next two fights also ended - quickly and concussively. By that time Santana had boxed a total of a minute and 19 seconds before finally being taken the distance in his last outing, a four round victory over someone named Anthony Woods, who will never be known as The Swimmer but may one day be a footnote in boxing history if King is right about his "Swimmer.''

Santana insisted that fight would have ended earlier as well had he not sustained a rib injury in training but in fairness he has yet to face any serious iron as he works to adjust to a new and far different life than the one he'd known while learning his trade, a trade Santana first adopted as a nine year old volunteer.

Growing up in San Cristobal, Cuba as one of three brothers in a family dominated by a love of baseball not boxing, Santana sought another road. He fancied a different sport, one with more action than he found in the boring monotony of baseball.

When officials from the Cuban Sports Authority visited his fourth grade class seeking anyone interested in becoming a boxer, Santana was the only child to raise his hand. Before the year was out he had his first knockout and had begun a trip that would lead him to a place he never would have imagined – inside the offices of Don King Productions in Deerfield Beach, Fla., an hour or so from his new home in the Little Havana section of Miami.

But while Santana may be fighting in different venues than he ever expected and for someone he never thought he'd meet, one thing remains unchanged. What first brought him to boxing continues to have a firm grip on him.

"I enjoyed the fact you have to be quick, tenacious and decisive in boxing,'' Santana said about what attraction him to boxing in the first place. "These are things that come naturally to me. Things I enjoy.''

And what he enjoys most, like most people who have to work with their hands for a living, is going home early.

"Truthfully, I've stopped almost everyone I ever faced,'' he said.

That included his high school sweetheart, who left Cuba legally for Miami before he followed her on his inner tubes a year later. He moved in with her family upon his arrival and is now fighting for her and, in a sense, for the family he left behind because he knows if he ever wants

to see them again he will have to do something special inside the harshest landscape in sports – the boxing ring.

“I’m living my dream boxing professionally but another dream is to keep winning and move up the rankings so I can bring my mother and father to America,’’ Santana said. “I believe it’s my destiny to fight for a world championship and I believe my mother and father will be in the arena when I get that chance.’’

It’s a dream he held firm to while he was fiercely holding onto those inner tubes. It’s a dream that remains alive today as he watches the success of Joel Casamayor, Juan Carlos Gomez and Yuriokas Gamboa, all Cuban defectors like himself who came to America with two fists, one dream and not much else.

If he lives his dream very likely standing not far away will be a man he never thought he’d be fighting for, the loud guy with the cigar calling him “The Swimmer’’ to anyone who will listen.