“It was difficult at first,” remembers 21 year-old Mercito Gesta when he first arrived in San Diego from Cebu City, Philippines. “I didn’t want to leave my home-town but those are the sacrifices boxers sometimes have to make to get good fights and good promoters to work with you.”

It seems that those sacrifices are beginning to pay off.

Gesta (14-0, 5 KOs) is set to headline at the Hard Rock Hotel in downtown San Diego against the very tough Alain “Konan” Hernandez (14-6, 7 KOs) out of Tijuana on Thursday night at Rogue Boxing Promotions’ first card billed as “Havoc at the Hard Rock”.

It was for these types of opportunities that Gesta, who campaigns as a lightweight (135 lbs.), left the fun and friends he enjoyed in his native country. “I’ve gotten used to living in San Diego now. Every once in a while I travel back to the Philippines to see my family and friends. We go to the beach and go fishing. It’s always a good time. I miss it,” says the smart and likeable kid who began boxing at the age of thirteen when his father started training and taking him to the gym.

His father, a truck driver and a huge boxing fan, encouraged his son by spending hours in the gym with him after a long and grueling day of work while his mother tended to their home. “My dad is my hero and someone I look up to,” Gesta said. “He put a lot of work into my boxing. He supported me all the way. He’s the one that inspired me to work hard and to try to be a world champion.”

Like every red blooded Filipino, Manny Pacquiao has also been a tremendous inspiration and source of pride to him. “It’s because of Manny that fighters from the Philippines think that we too can succeed and make our lives better. He’s a great example,” Gesta said. “He gives us hope. He makes us proud to be Filipinos.”

His opponent on Thursday night is a rugged Mexican who has a propensity for putting on competitive fights. “I haven’t seen him fight but I’ve heard about him. I know he’s a brawler and I’ll have to make the proper adjustments in the ring,” Gesta said. “I can be a puncher or a boxer. If I see the opening and I hurt my opponent, then I’ll finish him off. I don’t really have a plan at first. I’ll see what he brings to the table and then I’ll do what’s necessary to win.”

The speedy southpaw promises to give fans at the ritzy venue a real treat. “They’re going to have a good time. I know his reputation and it’s not going to be easy. I’m going to have to use all my skills to beat him. They’re in for a treat,” Gesta said. “Were both proud fighters so they’re going to see a war. I have a lot of friends that are going to be there and I don’t plan on letting them down.”

He wants fans to know that he’s in boxing for the right reasons. “I have a real commitment to this sport and to becoming a world champion,” Gesta proclaimed. “I know Hernandez is coming

to win and I can't let that happen. I can't let Hernandez get in the way of my dreams."

Also slated to be on the five bout card: undefeated prospects from the Espinoza Boxing Club, Carlos Molina (6-0) and Ronny Rios (4-0). Super-flyweight Sergio Espinoza (15-5) has also been scheduled.

Doors open at 6:30 p.m. First fight at 7:30 p.m.

Weights from the "Havoc at the Hard Rock" at the Hard Rock Hotel in San Diego:

Mercito Gesta 135.5 vs. Alain Hernandez 136

Anthony Martinez 139 vs. Carlos Molina 137

Alvaro Muro 124 vs. Ronny Rios 125

Benito Abraham 114 vs. Sergio Espinoza 115

Abraham Han 155 vs. Ibrahiem King 154

On the web: www.rogueboxing.com