Written by David A. Avila
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LOS ANGELES-Mexico's legendary Erik "El Terrible" Morales stood on top of the platform facing an audience of hundreds of followers looking like the warrior of a hundred battles on Wednesday. Battered but not beaten.

Behind Morales stood two present-day fighters who are taller, younger and less beaten, warriors ready to take his place should he fail.

It's the way of boxing.

Josesito Lopez (29-3, 17 KOs) of Riverside and Jesse Vargas (16-0, 9 KOs) of Las Vegas will finally meet after nearly meeting last year in the ring. The junior welterweight division will show up in force on September 17 at the MGM Grand. The fight card will also be available on HBO

pay-per-view.

“We do a lot of pay-per-views but this one is stacked,” said vice president Tony Walker of the HBO pay-per-view division.

Lopez, 27, holds the NABF junior welterweight title and has been one of several junior welterweight nuggets fighting out of the Inland Empire. His wins over Mike Dallas Jr., Marvin Cordova and Patrick Lopez put him on notice as a little known rising star, but a star nonetheless.

Standing just one inch under six feet tall Lopez is one of the new generation of 140-pounders who are lean, quick and can punch. One more vital ingredient is his ability to take a punch.

“My fighter Josesito Lopez is one of the slickest, fastest fighters in the world,” said Ken Thompson, who co-promotes Lopez along with Goossen-Tutor Promotions. “He’s the NABF champion.”

Lopez usually has a reach advantage but not against Vargas.

“When you put a fighter like Jesse Vargas and me together you’re going to get a great fight,” Lopez said. He’s trained by Henry Ramirez who also works with Chris Arreola.

Vargas, 22, was formerly trained by Roger Mayweather but ill health on the trainer’s part forced the Las Vegas prizefighter to change trainers. Now he’s working under Roberto Alcazar, who formerly trained Oscar De La Hoya for several years.

“Roberto Alcazar, he’s been part of our team a number of years,” said Leonard Ellerbe, who represents Mayweather Promotions, which is co-promoting the Sept. 17 fight card in Las Vegas, including the Floyd Mayweather versus WBC welterweight titleholder Victor Ortiz.

Vargas foresees no problem by the change of trainers and still predicts a victory.

“Josesito Lopez is a great fighter but I’m a better fighter,” Vargas said.

Morales

After the two youngsters spoke it was Mexican legend Morales time. The ageless warrior proved to the world that he could combat bigger and harder hitting warriors when he exchanged punches for 12 rounds in a brutal affair with Marcos Maidana earlier this year.

Now he faces yet another Argentine bomber in Lucas Matthysse (28-2, 26 KOs).

“Yes, I’m crazy but I’m crazy for what I do,” said Morales (51-7, 35 KOs) expounding on his love for the sport of pro boxing. “The fight with Maidana they said I was going to get killed.”

Instead Morales, 34, battled and nearly beat the strongman from Argentina that nearly beat

Amir Khan last year.

“He (Matthysse) may knock out everybody and hit very hard but this is boxing,” Morales said to the hundreds of supporters in the historic La Placita area in downtown L.A. “I fight with a lot of passion. I find this is what people want to see.”

Sept. 17 is going to be an historic night for boxing.