

A classic card in the making?

Written by Robert Cassidy Jr.
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It could be the type of card that people once saw on the Madison Square Garden marquee. Three 10-round bouts, each with a world-class fighter. It remains to be seen how tough they are matched, but the bevy of promoters who are bringing boxing to the Lowes Paradise Theater in the Bronx certainly have the right idea.

For the record, Cedric Kushner, Joe DeGuardia, Luis DeCubas, R. Paniagua and Roberto Duran are the promoters putting on the show. Each piecing together the card with their own talent. On the surface, it would appear that they are all matched competitively. Which is something akin to a different kind of Paradise: that reserved for the fight fan.

There are also a pair of Bronx fighters in action – Maureen Shea, currently best known for sparring with Hillary Swank while the actress prepared for "Million Dollar Baby" and unbeaten lightweight Jorge Teron. There will also be live entertainment from Reggaeton OG Black and Master Joe.

But the meat of the card exists in the 10-rounders. The interesting element is that each fighter resides in the 135-pound to 140-pound range, meaning there are significant fights on the horizon for the winners.

Let's start with the main event, which features former WBO junior lightweight champion Mike Anchondo (25-1, 18) against Antonio Ramirez (24-9-6, 17).

Anchondo was on the fast track to stardom earlier this year before losing his title on the scales – and then unofficially in the ring. He failed to make weight in an April title bout against Jorge Rodrigo Barrios and was stripped of the belt. To make matters worse, he was then TKO'd in the fourth round.

But Anchondo, as charismatic as he is tough, vows to return even stronger.

"I saw that fight as a fork in the road," he said. "I've grown up. I can sit here and say all these sophisticated things but that's basically what happened. I have a job to do. I realized that everyone was doing their job and now I have to do mine. I want to be successful for a period of time, then seize that success and let it grow into something more."

Anchondo, formerly trained by Buddy McGirt, is now working with Roger Bloodworth and DeCubas and is training at the 4th Street Gym in St. Petersburg, Florida.

The former champ will weigh 137 in the Bronx and feels he can go either up or down, depending on where the best fight arises.

"I can go down to 130," he said. "In fact I want to go down to 130, even if it's just to beat Barrios. Then I'll fight anywhere else."

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Another man moving down is Victoriano Sosa (41-4-2, 30) who meets Jaime Rangel (30-8-1, 26). Rangel may be best known for a one-round shellacking at the hands of Zab Judah.

"I don't know anything about my opponent, but I feel confident," said Sosa. "I've been training very hard in Santo Domingo. I've been training for about 8 months because I had some fights fall out."

Sosa, who has campaigned at 140 pounds, feels that was too heavy and will now fight exclusively at lightweight.

"I'm going down to 135," he said. "It's my natural weight. When I was fighting at 140, by the time I stepped into the ring, my opponents were weighing 155 and I was weighing 145. At 135, I feel I can fight with anyone in that weight class."

Sosa has beaten the likes of Harold Warren, Freddy Cruz and drew with Lamar Murphy. He lost a lightweight title bout to Paul Spadafora and fought both Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Miguel Cotto, two of the biggest stars in the junior welterweight ranks. He dropped a decision to Mayweather Jr. and was stopped in four rounds by Cotto. He was asked what might happen if the two met in the ring.

"It's a tough fight," he said. "Mayweather is very good. He's very difficult to hit. That defense is hard to break. I think both fighters are very good. But Mayweather has more experience. Mayweather can do more things in the ring."

Then there is 18-year-old Mexican Julio Cesar Garcia, who is 33-2 with 26 knockouts. He meets Moises Pedroza (25-8-1, 22). Garcia has been fighting pro since he was 15 and DeCubas signed the fighter after hearing that it was Garcia who hurt Luis Castillo during training for the Diego Corrales rematch. That injury, from a Garcia bodyshot according to DeCubas, is what prevented Castillo from making weight.

"When I heard about the sparring incident with Castillo, I began to look into it," said DeCubas. "I took him to Miami to spar and Duran said to me, I get goose bumps just by the way he goes into the ring."

During that sparring session, Garcia backed up Duran protégé Richard Gutierrez, a natural junior middleweight, with body shots.

"I think this is a special kind of kid who comes along once every 20 years," said DeCubas. "There's no rush. He's a like a diamond. We still have to polish him up."

The polishing – and the positioning – begins Friday night at 7 p.m. in the Bronx, where these fighters hope to bring new meaning to the phrase, Bronx Bombers.