Written by David A. Avila
Wednesday, 13 December 2006 19:00

It seems Mighty Mike Anchondo has been in the “hurting business,” as he says, for decades. But the Southern Californian hasn’t hit age 25 despite once holding the WBO junior lightweight title. So where has he been the last year?

“I needed a vacation,” said Anchondo. “I’ve been boxing since I was five years old.”

Anchondo faces Panama’s Armando Cordoba (23-29-2) today at the Irvine Marriott Hotel in a 12-round bout. The fight card staged by Roy Englebrecht Promotions is sold out and won’t be televised.

“This is our 12th consecutive sellout,” Englebrecht said.

The last time Anchondo stepped in the ring was December 2005 when he stopped veteran Antonio Ramirez in the ninth round in the Bronx, New York. The personable prizefighter had lost his WBO title eight months earlier to Argentina’s Jorge Barrios and wanted to get back in the ring to erase the taste of losing.

“I give all credit to Jorge Barrios. He was the better man that night,” Anchondo says of losing his title on April 2005.

Now he seeks a little bit of home cooking to get back on track.

“You know me, I’m a ham,” says Anchondo (26-1, 19 KOs). “I’m used to performing in front of crowds.”

Despite a preference for fighting in front of his fans, the native Californian who attended Bishop Amat High in La Puente has not fought in his home state in three years. That’s a long time for a fighter accustomed to the comforts of home.

“Florida was great,” said Anchondo, who moved to the Sunshine State once he changed promoters. “It was a lot different.”

But, once a Californian, always a Californian. Anchondo ran up his phone bills calling family and friends.

As a youngster, Anchondo was a sterling prospect who attracted large crowds to his amateur bouts at a young age. It’s where his nickname Mighty Mike first came to fruition and it stuck.

“People look at me and say ‘what does he know, he’s too young.’ But in reality I have so many years in boxing,” said Anchondo, who was always a target for ambitious opponents.

Fans who saw Anchondo as a youth remember a heavily muscled juvenile with fast hands and

an aggressive fighting style.

“In those days Mighty Mike didn’t pitty-pat like the other amateur fighters,” said Mario Perez, a boxing follower from Whittier. “He went for the knockouts and succeeded many times. That’s why I would go to his fights.”

Though Anchondo did not make the U.S. Olympic team in 2000, he managed to catch the eye of Oscar De La Hoya and his father Joel. He signed up with De La Hoya, who soon formed Golden Boy Promotions and took the La Puente native with them.

In his early days as a professional, he quickly surmised that he wasn’t the only fighter with power. Many of the professionals he faced in his first year were even stronger than he. Colombia’s Ever Beleno traded heavy blows for 10 rounds.

“My style changed from the amateur days,” said Anchondo. “If I run into a boxer I have to stop him. If I run into a puncher then I box.”

For three grueling years Anchondo fought on numerous Southern California fight cards against all kinds of styles. It was his ability to adapt and change that separated him from his other gym cohorts in the city of Vernon. In that same gym were Daniel Ponce De Leon, Edwin Valero and others.

Three times Anchondo met worthy opponents under the hallowed lights of the Grand Olympic Auditorium.

“It was something unbelievable,” Anchondo said of fighting in the boxing arena. “I’m glad I did it before they turned it into a Buddhist church.”

At the Olympic Auditorium he faced stiffer competition including Jose Soto Karass, Silverio Ortiz and former world champion Goyo Vargas. He beat them all.

The night he faced Vargas, few gave Anchondo a chance. But he boxed and moved for 10 rounds in a near-perfect performance that left many impressed.

“After what Vargas did to (Gary) Balleto, he tore him apart on national television,” said Anchondo. “I did what I had to do and got out of there. I played it smart.”

That victory proved he was championship caliber. Seven months later he captured the title against Chacon then signed with new promoters. Nine months later he lost the WBO title to Barrios. Now Anchondo has returned to train and fight on his home soil. His former stable mates are now both world champions.

“It motivates me that they’re world champions now,” said Anchondo who is now fighting at the lightweight level. “I haven’t left yet. My goal is to be a world champion. If you have a belt, then I’m coming after you.”

Colton Boxing Club amateur show

The Meadowbrook Boxing gym was crowded with fans to see the USA Boxing show for amateurs on Sunday. Boxers from throughout Southern California were at the gym located in San Bernardino.

The three best fights of the day featured Fontana's Raymond Muratailla, 9, against Hesperia's Ryan Garcia, 8. The pair of 63-pounders showed a lot of boxing form at such a young age. It was difficult to pick a winner but the judges chose Muratailla. In another close battle Cathedral City's Elias Moreno won his debut against Colton's Oscar Torres. A third exciting match involved San Bernardino's Lorenzo Vazquez against Jurupa's Anthony Aguilar. Both landed impressive punches and refused to quit.

Present at the amateur show was Nena Perez, 16, who captured a silver medal at the Junior Olympics this past summer. She attends Arroyo Valley High.

Fights on television

Fri. 8 p.m., Telefutura, Jesus Soto Karass (15-3-2) vs. Luciano Perez (14-4-1).

Sat. 9:45 p.m., HBO, Edison Miranda (26-1) vs. Willie Gibbs (20-1).