

## Joan Guzman Locked and Loaded for Soto

Written by David A. Avila

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When WBO titleholder Joan Guzman defends his junior lightweight title against Mexico's Humberto Soto, only the truly hardcore boxing fan will recognize this fight pits two of the best in the division in a reckless head-on collision path.

Others, if you're not acquainted with either fighter, get acquainted. Aside from Manny Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez, they make up the cream of the 130-pounders.

Guzman (27-0, 17 KOs), the Dominican boxing stylist, meets the feared Soto (43-5-2) at the Borgata Hotel Casino in Atlantic City on Saturday. The fight will be televised by HBO.

Don't miss it.

It's one of those battles that pits a pair of boxers that others ignore like door-to-door salesmen. They're both ornery, heavy-handed punchers who have chased most of the competition away. But they have each other.

It's like the days of old when only Jake LaMotta would step in the ring against Sugar Ray Robinson or Archie Moore could only fight Ezzard Charles. Nobody wanted to fight boxing wizards of this pedigree.

It's the same with Guzman and Soto. They scare the others away.

"This is a very important fight for the both of us," said Guzman, who trains in the same gym as WBC welterweight titleholder Floyd Mayweather Jr. in Las Vegas. "The winner of this fight moves on to much bigger things."

Both hope a win means fighting Manny Pacquiao.

Soto (43-5-2, 27 KOs), a tall and rugged featherweight, moved up to junior lightweight because of the same reasons that Guzman moved up: nobody wanted to fight him.

"Why I haven't gotten the opportunity before I don't know," said Soto. "Guzman is a great fighter, a lot of skills, as far as I'm concerned he maybe the best 130-pound fighter out there."

Two years ago Soto accepted a last-minute fight against Rocky Juarez then undefeated. That night Soto engaged Juarez in a brutal slugfest and emerged the winner.

"Humberto Soto is one of the best fighters nobody heard of," said Juarez recently. "I'd like to fight him again."

Right now Soto has quicksilver Guzman first.

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"I love a challenge, that's why I took this fight," said Soto who trains out of Tijuana and Mexicali. "Maybe Guzman is the favorite in this fight, but that doesn't mean much to me. I've been scratched off before and I've succeeded."

Guzman has said repeatedly that Soto is the best fighter he's faced yet.

"This is not going to be an easy fight," said Guzman. "He's very tall and he can take a punch. I expect this fight to be close."

The fight will be televised by HBO.

Also on the card will be Abner Mares (14-0, 9 KOs) facing Damian Marchiano (14-2-1, 5 KOs) in a bantamweight showdown of rising prospects. Marchiano fights out of Argentina and Mares fights out of Montebello, California.

Mares has been on a rapid rise, especially after stopping former flyweight world champion Chino Garcia in September. He dropped down from featherweight without a hitch and maintains the same speed and the same power.

Marchiano has never fought outside of Argentina but needs a good showing to stay in the upper tier of the division.

Boxing Chatter:

Contender final

If you missed it catch the replay of the Contender finale between Sakio Bika and Jaidon Codrington. Without a doubt that was one of the most electrifying battles from round one until the end.

It's definitely a candidate for Fight of the Year along with the two fights between Israel Vazquez and Rafael Marquez.

Bika and Codrington blasted each other for eight rounds before the referee stopped the fight at 2:18 of the eighth round of a 10-round bout. I won't tell you who won just in case you don't know. It was one great fight.

Glen Johnson fight

Florida's Glen Johnson, the former light heavyweight champion who knocked out Roy Jones, meets former middleweight champion Reggie Johnson (43-7-1, 25 KOs) at the Burton Coliseum in Lake Charles, Louisiana on Saturday Nov. 17.

Johnson (46-11-2, 31 KOs) is shooting for another title match against any of the current recognized champions including Bernard Hopkins, Roy Jones Jr. or Joe Calzaghe.

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Known as the "Road Warrior", he was close to fighting a rematch with Julio Gonzalez but the card fell apart.

Reggie Johnson, 41, hasn't fought in two years but is willing to step right back to face a dangerous light heavyweight. The bout will not be televised.

Baldomir Back next week

Former welterweight champion Carlos Baldomir meets Luciano Perez at Morongo Casino on Friday Nov. 23. The rugged fighter is attempting to stop a two-fight losing streak and now fights at junior middleweight.

Baldomir (43-11-6) is promoted by Sycuan Ringside Promotions and lost a title challenge to Vernon Forrest for the vacant WBC junior middleweight title. Like always, Baldomir gave a spirited effort and has become a rich man despite two consecutive losses.

Perez (15-6) fights out of Chicago and is fighting for survival as a prizefighter. The fight will be televised by Telefutera.

Also fighting on the same card will be Bobby Pacquiao, the younger brother of Manny Pacquiao. He'll be matched against Mexico's extremely rugged Fernando Trejo in a lightweight match.

Final week for Vargas-Mayorga

Fernando "El Feroz" Vargas, 29, returns for the final time against Nicaragua's Ricardo "El Matador" Mayorga, 34, at the Staples Center on Nov. 23. The fight will be televised on Showtime pay-per-view.

Vargas promised that this is absolutely his last fight.

"I want to go out a winner," said Vargas (26-4, 22 KOs), who is a two-time junior middleweight champion. "Win or lose this is the last fight. I'm doing it for my fans."

Former welterweight champion Mayorga promises that Vargas will go out a loser.

"I'll knock out fatty," said Mayorga (28-6-1, 23 KOs) citing Vargas inability to fight at 154 pounds any longer. "After Fernando I'll fight Vernon Forrest. I'm his daddy."

Desert Storm

Timothy "Desert Storm" Bradley will face Jose Luis Castillo (56-8-1, 48 KOs) in an elimination bout ordered the WBC.

The speedy Bradley (21-0, 11 KOs) remains undefeated and Castillo got back in the win column with a victory by stoppage over Adan Casillas last month in Mexicali.

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It's going to be very interesting to see if Bradley's youth wins this battle over experience.

### Fights on television

Thurs. Versus, 6 p.m., Jesus Soto Karass (17-3-3) vs. Juan Buendia (14-1-1).

Fri. Telefutura, 8 p.m., David Lopez (32-12) vs. Darryl Salmon (16-2).  
Ward (13-0) vs. Roger Cantrell (12-0).

Fri. Telemundo, 11:30 p.m., Francisco Figueroa (17-2) vs. Noel Rodriguez (13-1).

Sat. HBO, 9:45 p.m., Joan Guzman (27-0) vs. Humberto Soto (43-5-2).