Early in his pro career Edwin Valero was a muttered-under-the-breath gym legend in Southern California.

Those that saw him spar in various gyms or read about his exploits in various web sites became curious about the Venezuelan boxer with shocking black hair.

The legend expanded after each fight ended in a first round knockout.

Now Valero defends his WBC junior lightweight title against Zaid Zavaleta (16-2-2, 11 KOs) on Saturday Dec. 15, at Plaza del Toros in Cancun, Mexico. The fight card will be televised on pay-per-view.

For once most of the world gets an opportunity to see with its own eyes the power and speed of Valero.

But let's not jump ahead too quickly.

It was four years ago that Valero arrived in New York to take part in a Golden Boy Promotions fight card. Eager to display his heavy hands the Venezuelan fighter and his promoter were quicksand by the New York Athletic Commission that deemed the left-handed fighter medically unfit to fight. An early injury to the head was found and he was suspended forever in the entire country.

Golden Boy tried to fight it but despite sending Valero to top specialists in California the New York Commission refused to accept any new findings.

"No doctor has ever confirmed I have any kind of injury that prohibits me from fighting in the United States," said Valero, 26.

Forbidden to fight in this country the part Inca Indian was forced to fight in other countries and looked destined to quit. But he did not waver.

It could have been the end for Valero.

"He has this kind of defiance," says Fischer. "Anybody else would have quit."

Though visibly upset by his inability to get back in the ring, Valero dropped his trainer, manager and promoters and roamed the outer portions of Los Angeles looking for gyms to keep fit and sharp. It became kind of a joke to hear that Valero was training here or there.

He was a virtual boxing gypsy.

“There were Valero sightings everywhere,” said Fischer.

In one instance Valero walked into a Montebello boxing gym and began working out on various bags with a speed and intensity never seen. At the time Sergio “The Latin Snake” Mora frequented that gym but nobody knew the guy in the black garb firing punches as if shooting a pump-action shotgun.

“I’ve never seen anybody do those things,” said Dean Campos then a boxing trainer at that gym called Solid Rock. “After I found out it was Edwin Valero I realized why people talked so good about him.”

Eventually a Japanese boxing promotion company Teiken signed him and moved him to the middle of Tokyo, Japan. He’s been there for two years dropping opponents like a mean-spirited bouncer.

“He’s an exceptional puncher and a very exciting fighter,” said Nobu Ikushima, coordinator for Teiken, a Japanese boxing promotion company.

With Teiken the Venezuelan bomber - who looks like soccer player not a feared knockout puncher - captured the WBA title 16 months ago with a 10th round stoppage of former champion Vicente Mosquera’s home country Panama. It was notable not because Valero won the world title, but it was the first time any opponent had lasted more than three-minutes.

“After I finally went into the second round it was kind of a relief after knocking out all of those guys in the first round,” said Valero who stopped 18 consecutive opponents in the initial round of boxing matches. “I swear for the first 30 seconds whatever strategy those guys have are out the window. The moment I feel a guy’s hurt I’m going to take him out.”

Since banned from fighting in the U.S. the southpaw bomber has knocked out 10 successive opponents.

Early Valero

Despite the eye-popping knockouts and animalistic fury Valero still can’t get back into an American arena.

But it was in the American arenas in Maywood and Irvine where most boxing fans first witnessed his kill-or-be-killed style.

It was through word of mouth that Valero was discovered early by Internet boxing reporters.

Joe Hernandez, who manages world champion Daniel Ponce De Leon, had signed Valero and invited several journalists to see his newest prospect.

“I had come to watch Ponce (De Leon) and I thought he was a pretty good hitter, but Hernandez said he’s just heavy-handed but I got another guy,” said Doug Fischer, managing editor of

Maxboxing.com. “I expected to see power but when I went to watch Valero it was his balance, a certain fluidity and synchronicity that was almost machine-like.”

On the three rare occasions Valero boxed in front of Southern California crowds and he did not fail to impress in winning twice at the Irvine Marriott and once at the Maywood Activities Center with first round knockouts.

But that was only part of his growing legend.

“I heard they put him in with Mighty Mike Anchondo and they said he got the better of him,” said Fischer. “Every time I saw him sparring, nobody go the better of him, whether it was Armando Santa Cruz, Urbano Antillon, Jesus Soto Karass, it didn’t matter of their weight or experience. He always got the better of them.”

Now Valero returns to the North American continent eager to show his fans on live television that the legend is still fighting. For several years only the Internet provided boxing fans with information of his whereabouts.

“Without guys writing about me on the Internet nobody would know about me,” said Valero who will be fighting Mexico’s Zaid Zavaleta at Plaza del Toros in the tropical resort of Cancun. He expects the Mexican fighter to come right to him because of his record.

“Zavaleta has 11 knockouts in 16 wins,” says Valero who fights left-handed. “I have 22 knockouts in 22 wins. I always go for the knockout.”

Though the Venezuelan fighter has speed, agility and other intangible skills, he prefers to “Chloroform” his opponents.

“The crowd loves knockouts. It’s like in baseball when a guy hits a homerun or in soccer when a guy scores a goal. The knockout is like that,” explains Valero. “I just hope he’s not the little stone I trip over.”

Valero is eager to impress all those fans that have kept a vigil on his career.

“I will one day return to the United States,” he said. “My dream is to fight a big name in a Las Vegas arena.”

The legend continues.