

Downtown L.A. Talk: Victor Ortiz vs. Andre Berto II..AVILA

Written by David A. Avila

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Three stories up the J.W. Marriott Hotel in downtown Los Angeles area known as LA Live, both former welterweight world champions Victor Ortiz and Andre Berto rumbled in with their entourages on Monday under some cold, gloomy skies.

Golden Boy Promotions, Lou DiBella Promotions and Showtime announced their intentions for a big 2012 with the rematch of the fight between Ortiz and Berto that many are tabbing the best Fight of 2011.

Count me among those who agree.

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Berto (28-1, 22 KOS) and Ortiz (29-3-2, 22 KOs) exploded on each other like mad kamikazes last year and when you look and listen to the pair speak, what other predictions can one make but that expectations are high.

“We’re starting this year with a bang,” said Golden Boy CEO Richard Schaefer without a hint of hyperbole. “It’s the biggest way to kick off 2012.”

The last time these two met, Berto was the holder of the WBC welterweight title and Ortiz was moving up from junior welterweight to the 147-pound division. Few expected the Southern Californian to survive the test.

Ortiz knocked down Berto a few times and it was reciprocated in the sixth round as both proved their durability and willingness to exchange like two Hammerhead sharks. The memory of their slugfest is still fresh in boxing fans’ minds, including the new head executive of Showtime.

“Their fight was the most compelling fight,” said Steven Espinosa, who formerly represented Golden Boy in numerous litigations and now heads Showtime’s sports division.

Berto walked in with his usual mild-mannered smile and banter but cranked up the intensity as he spoke about the rematch with Ortiz.

“This is the greatest fight happening,” said Berto to the press. “I’m a fight fan at the end of the day.”

Both stood toe-to-toe and nose to nose during the photography portion of the press conference and neither was inclined to back off before the other.

“People say I was juiced but I was only 50 percent of what I can do,” says Ortiz. “I apologized to

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my trainers after the first fight because I felt I could do much better than I did.”

Though a world title is not at stake neither prizefighter cares. Both know that their first clash sent shockwaves in the boxing world and is the reason that their rematch will take place at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

Ortiz expects his true strength to appear in the rematch.

“In the first fight I was at 140,” explains Ortiz. “I’m 147 now. I’ve put on seven pounds of muscle.” (Editor Note: Ortiz weighed 146 at the weigh-in for the first fight.)

Berto seems excited about the return fight.

“It’s the type of fight that made me fall in love with boxing in the first place,” said the Floridian. “I show my respect to Victor, his whole team. He’s a tremendous fighter.”

Don’t expect too much respect on Feb. 11 in Las Vegas.

Tickets are available beginning at \$50. Showtime will televise the fight event live on the East Coast and delayed in the West Coast.

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