One of the most fascinating aspects of covering fights live from ringside is being privy to the happenings on the untelevised portions of the undercard. It may very well be the best thing about being a boxing writer.Sure, boxing writers get access to promoters, fighters and ringside seats for the main events, but in reality all that is to serve our function.While being up close for the big fight of the night is great, it's not the same as being there as a fan just to enjoy the fight or kicking back from the comfort of your living room couch with your pals to watch it on TV.

No, boxing writers are there to report what happens that night and to try and give those who can't be there some semblance of what it was like.It's a job – a cool job, but a job.

Undercard fighters are the unsung heroes of the promotion. These guys and gals do their work in front of no (or a very limited) television/streaming audience and even fewer actual live bodies, as people who actually bought tickets that night to the arena often inexplicably choose to skip the undercard.

But the night is incomplete without them and, better yet, it's one of the best places to find young up-and-coming talent – guys like Ivan Najera.

Promoters often sign fighters they believe can be something special when they're young, then hide them on undercards to let them cut their teeth.There, it's sink or swim time. If they sink, very few people ever notice, but if they swim they graduate to the larger viewing audience.

Last November, during fight week of the Julio Cesar Chavez Jr-Peter Manfredo Jr card in Houston, Bob Arum introduced lightweight prospect Ivan Najera to the press as someone worth watching out for. He went on and on about what a great young fighter the kid was and how he believed the nineteen-year-old had such a bright future in the sport. In short, he proclaimed Najera to be the next world champion out of the kid's hometown of San Antonio.

Honestly, it's a promoter's job to do just that – promote. So fight writers, like me, seldom really take heed of such praise.After all, isn't Bob Arum famous for once telling reporters "yesterday I was lying but today I'm telling the truth"?

Najera didn't fight that night, but he was on the card at the next big Top Rank show in Texas in February in San Antonio where he ran roughshod over David Castillo in just two rounds.That night he really did look like a fighter you could see really growing into a world champion someday. He was aggressive but not reckless, and he showed the ability to fight both going forwards and backwards. He threw combinations but accurately and with menace, and seemed to do so enthused but under control – that is to say he didn't look like it was only his sixth professional fight.

Maybe Bob Arum was telling the truth that day, or maybe Najera was just born to fight. Or maybe it was a little of both.

"I picked it up pretty quick," he told me when I asked why he started boxing when he was thirteen. "I started sparring and I just loved it. I loved getting in the ring and fighting."

In his next fight, just a month later, Najera was the bout preceding the main event of the Azteca

America/Top Rank Live Frankie Leal vs. Evgeny Dragovich showcase. His obliteration and highlight-reel-style knockout of James Lester at the very end of round number one was yet more evidence of Najera being the real deal.In just three minutes, Najera displayed skill, poise and education. He threw hard shots but took none, and the knockout blow was a well-placed uppercut thrown perfectly.

Najera's style didn't breed much success in the amateur game, but he said he did benefit from the experience he garnered from taking on the wide variety of styles found there. Moreover, he said he learned that Olympic-style point-based boxing wasn't his cup of tea. Najera comes to get people, and amateur boxing he found to be more about "1-2-3, run."

Najera remained undeterred.

"I was sparring pros at the time, and I was doing as well as them so I knew boxing would take me somewhere," he said."So I just stuck with it."

Like another famous Top Rank fighter from Texas, Najera comes to the ring with the nickname "Bam Bam" embroidered on his robe, but he reminds me more of his longtime boxing idol Miguel Cotto than Brandon Rios. He's even talked about working in the gym on the devastating hook to the body Cotto helped make famous.

"I've always looked up to Miguel Cotto," Najera told me. "Even before I started boxing, I liked Miguel Cotto. He's my idol, basically – the fighter I want to be like."

Next up for Najera will be a May 5 showcase fight in front of his hometown fans in San Antonio.In just their second show, the San Antonio promotional team of former world champion Jesse James Leija and businessman Mike Battah are taking an innovative approach to reviving the Alamo city boxing scene: the Cinco de Mayo fight card will be filled with up-and-coming local prospects and headlined by perhaps the best of them in Najera. After the live main event, the promoters will show that evening's PPV main event attractions of Alvarez-Mosley and Mayweather-Cotto on the big screen.

Najera is excited to say the least, and takes a particular amount of pleasure in helping revive the local boxing scene.

"It's my first fight that I'll be headlining," said Najera. "Boxing kind of slowed down here [in San Antonio] but it's coming back…more and more people are getting interested."

Fighters like Najera can only bolster that interest, which seems to be ever expanding in not just San Antonio, but the entire state of Texas.Indeed, should he win as expected in May, he'll be set to fight again in Texas on the Chavez Jr-Lee card June 16 and again on the Juan Manual Marquez date set for July. His busy schedule should help build his resume as well as keep him active while he trains for his march down to the featherweight division which he hopes to be fighting at by the end of next year.

Those are big stages, but Najera has big plans.

"I want to be the next world champion out of San Antonio," he told me, and while I'm sure Bob Arum told me the very same thing about the kid back in November, this time I think I believe it.

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