

## **Riverside's Larkin Wins Title; Santana Wins Too**

Written by David A. Avila

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RIVERSIDE-Riverside's Lorenz Larkin and Brazil's Giva Santana skillfully outmaneuvered their opponents in winning MEZ titles on Friday in a mixed martial arts and pro boxing mixed card.

A big crowd numbering well over 2,000 at Riverside Convention Center saw a local MMA fighter Larkin win his first title and an older veteran Santana use his grappling skills to submit a defensively inclined opponent. A few boxers made big crashes too.

Larkin lost his opponent earlier in the week but promoter Craig Zimmerman was able to find someone in Hector Carillo of Orange County.

News of Zimmerman's speed and power standing up have made the rounds in Southern California so when Carillo opened up the first round of the light heavyweight title fight he went straight for the take down. It wasn't happening.

Larkin nimbly avoided Carillo's hard charges and kept the fight at a distance. Punching gingerly at Carillo for two minutes of the first round a sudden high leg kick to the head caught Carillo hard on right side of his head and down he went. Larkin piledrived a blow that landed and referee Jack Reiss stopped the fight at 2:57 of the first round to win the MEZ light heavyweight title.

"This is my first pro title," exclaimed Larkin. "It feels good to win it here in Riverside."

In the MEZ middleweight title fight it was Santana (15-1) utilizing his jujitsu skills to keep Fresno's Anthony Ruiz (25-15) on defense. Though known as the "arm collector," it was no secret that the Brazilian was hunting for yet another arm bar, but Ruiz guarded well against it but was manhandled on the ground. Finally, at 4:37 of the second round, Ruiz left an arm for Santana to grab while in a scramble and he took it to force a submission.

Long Beach's Saunders (8-1) ground and pound his way to victory over Palm Desert's Jorge Valdez (4-1) to win the MEZ Pandemonium lightweight title. For three rounds it was Saunders taking down Valdez who tried vainly for some holds to no avail. A cut from an elbow strike forced Valdez to submit at 3:21 of the fourth round.

Alta Loma's Brandon Bender (7-0) and Murrieta's Mike Palo (4-1) battled with kicks to open the title fight but a quick take down by Bender after a powerful kick changed things quickly. Bender caught Palo in a triangle choke and submitted him in 2:11 of the first round of a featherweight fight.

### **MMA prelims**

Dana Point's Ian McCall (8-2) used his sharp kicks to score early against Westminster's Jeff Willingham (16-14-1) then took him down in the first round. From there it was ground and pound

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until referee Jack Reiss stopped the bantamweight fight at 2:17 of the first round.

L.A.'s Jared Carleston was taken down by Moreno Valley's Chris Manzo but turned it around on the ground and grabbed him in a triangle choke at 2:08 of the first round to force a submission.

Monrovia's Daniel Hernandez and Santa Ana's Ozzy Avalos clashed immediately with both looking for take downs. Hernandez avoided a rush from Avalos and applied a guillotine choke to force a submission at 45 seconds of the first round.

### Boxing prelims

East L.A.'s Jaime Ocegueda won his pro debut with a knockout win over Mexico's debuting Sylvanio Reyes after two rounds. Ocegueda, who trains in at the very successful Commerce boxing gym, immediately exchanged left hooks with Reyes and landed his first. Down went Reyes who was battered but survived the first round. In the second round it was more of the same until a perfectly placed left hook caught Reyes bending down and out he went at 1:06 of the second round. Referee John McCarthy called the knock out.

Whittier's Alex Luna scored his fourth knockout in four wins by stopping Mexico's debuting Miguel Nava at 2:17 of the second round. Nava kept his guard up and tried to keep Luna from landing but it was a losing cause. A right hand by Luna (5-0, 5 KOs) pierced Nava's guard and down he went for another knockout win for the Whittier boxer.

L.A.'s Arron Robinson (6-2-2) caught Burbank's Johnny Suarez (6-5-2) early with a long right hand but was unable to follow up. In the second round Robinson kept a better distance and landed a long left hook and a right hand that dropped Suarez who beat the count and held. Robinson followed up with another long left and right that had Suarez teetering. Referee John McCarthy wisely stopped the fight at 59 seconds of the second round.

San Bernardino's Juan Sandoval (2-5) was probably not picked to win against Fontana's debuting Robert Figueroa (0-1) but proved it only takes one punch to turn things around. A left hook to the body and a right to the head followed by another left and right to the head dropped the Puerto Rican fighter for a knockout at 1:37 of the first round of a featherweight bout.