

Kaliesha West Vs. Ava Knight Lead Inland Empire Parade

Written by David A. Avila
Friday, 10 June 2011 23:40



The region known as the Inland Empire is not only one of the fastest growing areas in Southern California, it's also one of the hottest areas for prizefighting whether it's boxing or mixed martial arts.

WBO bantamweight titleholder Kaliesha "Wild Wild" West leads a parade of Inland Empire fighters from the San Bernardino and Riverside County areas that have quickly become a fight factory whether it's boxing or MMA.

Last weekend two prizefighters from the Riverside area, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. and Mikey Garcia, were the main events at the Staples Center in downtown Los Angeles. Chavez won the WBC middleweight world title and Garcia maintained his number one spot at featherweight.

In the next few weeks numerous fight cards erupt all over the area with several fight cards competing with each other on the same night.

Coming up first will be Moreno Valley's West defending the WBO title against her rival Ava

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Knight on Saturday, June 18 in the Los Angeles area.

West and Knight fought each other in 2008 in what was described as one of the best female prize fights ever seen in California. Knight took that fight by decision.

Moreno Valley, where West lives, is a small city of about 100,000 residents that borders the city of Riverside. The mercurial 23-year-old West has become that city's most famous athlete and first and only world champion.

Knight, who fights out of Oakland, recently fought in the I.E. earlier this year and stopped Coachella's Gloria Salas in a bout held at the flyweight level. For this match they'll be fighting at the 118-pound limit.

Both West and Knight are about the same size and have quick hands and power at their disposal. Recently, West knocked out her last two opponents with some riveting combinations. Knight can crack too.

West won the world title last year in L.A. and Knight knocked out Gloria Salas in Indio earlier this year. They will be fighting at the Pico Rivera Sports Arena. For more information call (240) 498-1478.

A week later, on June 24, a boxing card at Pechanga Resort and Casino will feature Riverside's junior welterweight Mauricio "El Maestro" Herrera against Mike Dallas Jr. who suffered his first career loss against another Riverside prizefighter, Josesito Lopez.

It's getting to the point where boxers from other areas are wary of fighting anyone from the Inland areas.

Also, on June 24, at the Doubletree Hotel, Riverside's Jose "El Nino" Reynoso tangles with Esteban Almaraz in a junior welterweight clash. Ironically, Thompson Boxing Promotions is involved with both competing fight cards that take place on the same night in Temecula and Ontario.

Reynoso has been on a rampage the last couple of years and has found his niche as a junior welterweight slickster. Unbeaten in his last five fights, the lanky left-hander has built a following among boxing fans in the area with wins over Aris Ambriz, Hector Serrano and Santos Pakau.

On the same Doubletree fight card Efrain Esquivias tackles Felipe Cordova of Brownsville, Texas in a junior featherweight match. Esquivias is trained by Freddie Roach and has a very aggressive style that's kept him undefeated. Also on the card will be Artemio "King" Reyes Jr. a welterweight from San Bernardino. Reyes has 11 wins so far with 10 coming by knockout. Many compare him to a young Antonio Margarito with his ability to fight inside or out.

On Saturday June 25, at Pala Casino, Dashon Johnson fights Bernardo Guereca in the main event. Johnson is a familiar boxer in the Inland area. Sugar Ray Leonard will be appearing at the fight card.

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A mixed martial arts fight card takes place at San Manuel Casino on Thursday, June 30. Many of the fighters come from the Inland area and will be participating on the King of the Cage MMA card.

Speaking of MMA, Temecula's Dan Henderson has signed to fight Russia's feared Fedor Emelianenko in a heavyweight fight contracted at a 225-pound limit, announced Strikeforce last week. The match takes place on July 30 in the Sears Centre Arena in Chicago, Illinois. Henderson and Emelianenko are both considered among the greats in MMA today. It's too bad Henderson never fights in this area where he lives. The closest he's come to fighting near his hometown was in Las Vegas in 2009 when he knocked out England's Michael Bisping. Otherwise he's fought in Ohio, Georgia, Missouri and Ireland. He can't get a break.

More Inland fighter stuff

Last week Randy Caballero, Juan Sandoval and Sindy Amador won their bouts. Caballero, a top U.S. amateur star, has found the pros more to his liking and has reeled off 11 consecutive wins without a loss. Last Friday, in Indio, Caballero knocked out Chicago's Sergio Cristobal (3-2) in the fourth round with a nice right cross.

Amador encountered the much taller Jessica Pence in a flyweight bout and stopped her in the fourth round. Pence is an undefeated MMA fighter with eight wins trying out boxing. Riverside's Amador walked through Pence's jabs and pummeled her in every round.

Sandoval won his second consecutive fight. Though his pro career has started badly with some bad decisions and rugged opponents, Sandoval has found the formula to beating other junior lightweights.

Fights on television

Fri. ESPN2, 6 p.m., Kenny Galarza (14-1) vs. Irving Garcia (17-6-3).

Fri. Showtime, 10 p.m., Lateef Kayode (16-0) vs. Matt Godfrey (20-2).

Sat. Telefutura, 11:30 p.m., Holly Holm (29-1-3) vs. Victoria Cisneros (5-11-2).