

## Elena "Baby Doll" Reid Meets Kaliesha West in California

Written by David A. Avila

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Globetrotting Elena "Baby Doll" Reid has fought in arenas 10,000 miles away amid crowds of 5,000 and more, but she's never fought in Southern California.

"I'm looking forward to having my first fight in California," said Reid. "It's ironic that it's taken this long because I only live four hours away."

The WIBA flyweight champion Reid meets Moreno Valley's Kaliesha West in a non-title bout at the Florentine Gardens in El Monte on Friday Dec. 8. It figures to be an explosive encounter for both.

West (5-0) has risen quickly through the rankings as a bantamweight contender despite having only five professional bouts, but the speedy female prizefighter has awed the public with her style and aggressiveness.

"This is a great fight," said West, 18, who recently fought and won three weeks ago in Monterey. "She's a world champion and I want to be a world champion some day."

Reid (18-3-5, 5 KOs) says it's ironic that she's meeting someone younger than herself.

"I was always the younger fighter whoever I fought," said Reid, 25, who began her pro boxing career at the same age. "It's kind of exciting meeting someone who is young and as talented as Kaliesha West. I've heard great things about her."

Because of a dearth of female prizefighters, it's often difficult to find opponents if you're highly ranked like West and Reid. Currently the Filipina-American Reid is ranked number one in the world in the 112-pound division. West is ranked number seven in the world in the 118-pound division.

"It's rare to find someone like Kaliesha who has as much experience in the ring as I do," said Reid, alluding to West's extensive amateur career. "The fans are in for a treat."

Reid broke into the pro ranks in 2000 and quickly became a fan favorite with her aggressive style and strong punching. She was also featured on a popular boxing website where new photos of her were released daily. In a year's span she became one of the best known female fighters in the world.

"If you're a boxing fan you know who Elena Reid is," said Antonio Guevara, who owns a barbershop in San Bernardino. "She's a real good boxer and one of the prettiest."

Last year she fought for the second time against Germany's Regina Halmich for the world title and lost a close decision. A year earlier she fought to a draw and captured the hearts of the German fans with her good looks and fearless boxing style.

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"I never worry about my looks," said Reid. "I'm a boxer first. This is what I do."

Wherever she goes autograph hounds surround her. For a year European journalists called her daily to find out more about her background.

"They were so nice to me," said Reid, whose almond-shaped eyes and ready smile were seen regularly on European television. "It was a very nice experience."

The European exposure was welcome by Reid, but it was winning a world title that she sought the most. Last August, she met Mary Ortega for the WIBA flyweight world title and emerged triumphant after two close defeats to Halmich.

"Winning the world title is great, but now I want to defend it," said Reid, who lives in Las Vegas but originally grew up in Phoenix. "My goal is to fight the best."

Her opponent, West, has rocketed up the rankings despite only five professional fights. Last month she beat eight-time National amateur champion Stella Nijhof by unanimous decision. The Moreno Valley resident has lofty goals.

"When they asked me if I wanted to fight Elena Reid I said of course," said West, who is trained and managed by her father Juan West. "This is how you get better by fighting world champions like Elena Reid."

Both Reid and West have not spent time picking and choosing opponents. Whoever wanted to fight them suits them fine.

"I love to fight," said West.

Reid says it's an honor to fight the best.

"I can't understand other fighters who only want to fight somebody they know they can beat," said Reid. "I'm a boxer. This is the career I've chosen."

Other bouts on the card feature Cleotis Pendarvis meeting Leonel Madrigal in a welterweight contest; Miguel Angel Garcia and Baladan Treviso in a featherweight bout; and several other bouts, including a match for David Rodela.

For tickets and information call All Star Boxing (323) 781-4871.