Female professional boxing took a dip this year with fewer bouts between champions and contenders than in the past several years.

A number of fighters captured world titles and a few older veterans made their last hurrahs, but one fighter stood out though she only had one fight in 2007, and her name is Elena Reid.

Reid, 26, who is better known as “Baby Doll” Reid, won the WIBA flyweight world title with a convincing victory over Mary Ortega in 2006. Then, unable to find an opponent, she eagerly took an offer to fight IFBA flyweight world titleholder Shin Hee-Choi of South Korea, she didn’t hesitate.

On July 2, at the Pechanga Resort and Casino in Temecula, California, Reid willingly put her WIBA world title at stake against the taller Choi who was supported by a large Korean contingent at the snazzy casino. Reid’s family and friends drove in from Phoenix and Las Vegas to witness the title fight show on Fox Sports Net.

Reid, 26, showed a national television audience and those in the crowd that her southpaw stance and ever-growing boxing skills had elevated her to the top of the computer rankings for good reason.

Using her right jab, quick foot movement and combination punching, Reid bewildered the confident Choi to the degree that by the second round, it was evident in the Korean’s eyes that she was lost for an antidote.

Round after round Reid battered Choi with little return fire. Each time Reid would land a combination the Korean fighter would open up with her own, but Reid would be out of range.

For 10 rounds Reid clubbed and smacked Choi with so many combinations that it seemed the Korean fighter was doomed to be knocked out. But Choi withstood the barrage and finished on her feet. Barely.

It was a complete wipeout with Reid taking every round on the three judges scorecards. It’s not supposed to be that easy on a unification bout but the Las Vegas fighter has learned her trade and taken fights overseas against top competition.

Reid can fool people with her exuberance and smiles, but she doesn’t fool potential opponents in her weight class. They avoid her at all cost. The Filipina-American boxer can’t find an opponent.

Reid’s next fight will be in a mixed martial arts cage this week in Las Vegas.

“I just couldn’t find anybody to box,” said Reid (19-3-5, 5 KOs), who recently signed an MMA

contract to fight under Randy Couture's company. "I love boxing, but I'm a fighter. This is what I do."

The world flyweight-boxing champion just wants to fight whether it's boxing or MMA.

"I've dedicated my career to being a fighter," says Reid who began fighting professionally in 2000. "As a professional fighter we only have so many years to do this so I'm making sure I do all I can."

Though many other female fighters had good year, only flyweight world champion Reid unified her weight division and for that, she is the Fighter of the Year for 2007.

Honorable mention

Layla McCarter (27-13-5), another Las Vegas boxer, fought the first 12-round fight that included three-minute rounds in more than 15 years.

McCarter, the WBA lightweight titleholder, fought seven times this year winning six in relatively easy fashion. She lost a rematch against Melinda Hernandez after beating her two months earlier. Then won four consecutive fights including a win over New Zealand's undefeated Daniella Smith.

New Mexico's Holly Holm (19-1-2), the junior welterweight champion, won three big fights this year against sterling competition. But winning in her home state gives her a big advantage. That state is notorious for bad decisions in favor of the home fighter.

The same is true for Germany's Regina Halmich (54-1-1) who announced her retirement in November. The German flyweight fought Elena Reid twice in Germany. Their first fight in 2004 ended in a draw and in 2005 she won by unanimous decision. Many felt Halmich lost both fights.

Northern California's Carina Moreno (15-1) won all five of her fights in 2007. But the tiny WBC minimum weight champion was the house fighter in each match. She's very exciting to watch and could easily be next year's choice for Fighter of the Year.

Germany's Ina Menzer (19-0) beat three good fighters in 2007, but only fought in her home country that is notorious for rendering bad decisions. It's difficult to surmise if she is truly gifted or if she was given gift wins over Laura Serrano, Jazmin Rivas and Maria Miranda.

Best fight of the year

Florida's Chevelle Hallback and Kentucky's Terri Blair (9-13-2) engaged in one heck of a slugfest in an eight round lightweight bout that had more action than five Holly Holm bouts.

"That was a great fight," said Sue Fox, a former fighter who is the editor-in-chief of www.Womenboxing.com web site. "Chevelle is always entertaining and Terri Blair is exciting

too.”

Hallback (26-5-1) used her quickness and power boxing to offset the Blair’s relentless pressure and wind them up bombs that didn’t always land, but when they did, it was raw power at its best. After the fight, the crowd had to take a deep breath just to recuperate.

Knockout of the year

Undefeated featherweight Jeannine Garside (7-0-1) of Canada faced knockout puncher Brooke Dierdorff (4-1) who was also undefeated in September. But it was Canada’s Garside who had more experience against top level fighters like Lisa Brown and Heather Percival, and that helped her whack Dierdorff out.

Garside dropped Dierdorff three times before a final knockdown closed the show in the sixth round.

Contender of the year

Moreno Valley’s Kaliesha “Wild Wild” West, 19, is an effervescent bantamweight who would rather fight than switch. In her brief two-year career, she’s accepted any fight offered, even against rising prospects like herself.

Last August she traveled to San Diego’s Carly Batey’s backyard and won a close battle by split-decision. The Southern California fighter has also traveled north twice where she’s won two victories. West is definitely a wild card to take someone’s world title in 2008.

Prospect of the year

When a fighter wins four US National titles as an amateur, expectations are high. So when Elizabeth Quevedo entered the ring last May in Irvine, California, the crowd had their microscope on the South Gate prodigy..and she delivered.

Using her well-sculpted skills and inner ferocity, Quevedo wowed the crowd with a scintillating performance in winning a four-round decision in her pro debut. Sadly, she hurt her hand in the fight, but expectations are high for the fighter some say is as good as Lucia Rijker. Her trainer Robert Luna believes she can win a world title in her next bout.