

Elena Reid Wins MMA Debut

Written by David A. Avila

Wednesday, 02 January 2008 19:00

Many boxing world champions have talked about testing the MMA waters but it took female boxing world champion Elena “Baby Doll” Reid to actually do it.

In the past year or two we’ve heard Floyd Mayweather drop the word MMA and others have dabbled in exhibitions, but it was the current IFBA and WIBA flyweight titleholder to become the first boxing world champion to battle inside an MMA cage.

And she won.

For the estimated 2,000 fans or more who arrived at the Riviera Hotel and Casino on Friday, Dec. 28, it was a curiosity factor that drew the large crowd to see Reid become the first world champion boxer to clash in an official MMA bout when she fought Tammie Schneider at 115 pounds.

“It was exciting,” Reid, 26, said after winning by technical knockout.

The popular Reid entered the cage with a huge applause. She waved and pirouetted blowing kisses and smiling the entire jog to the fighting area. For those who have never seen Reid fight, it’s a typical entrance from a person who looks more cheerleader than prizefighter.

But that’s how she beats people: they’re surprised at her 180-degree change once the fight starts.

She’s a regular Jeckyl and Hyde.

Reid had decided more than a year ago to try MMA after repeated attempts to receive a boxing fights went down the drain. It’s a common dilemma for female boxers to find promoters willing to make female bouts.

After fighting only once in 2007, Reid decided to give MMA a chance.

Her trainer Chris Benn works with Randy Couture so it was easy to bring Reid to Xtreme Couture Gym where the perky Filipina-American 26-year-old can prepare for takedowns, wrestling holds, kicks and all that entails in a basic MMA rumble.

“She’s real dedicated,” said Dennis Davis, an MMA fighter who assists Reid with takedown defense.

During the last month Reid knew that she was going to be appearing on Steelecage Promotions card in Las Vegas. She just didn’t know whom she would be fighting.

“I had five opponents drop out,” said Reid.

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Ironically, for a brief two days, there was a chance that fellow boxing world champion Wendy Rodriguez, the former IFBA, IBA junior flyweight titleholder, was going to be opposite Reid in the cage. Rodriguez has been training for MMA the past year too.

“It just wasn’t enough time,” said Rodriguez who captured world titles in the junior flyweight level and last fought against Germany’s Regina Halmich last July.

Eventually, Schneider accepted the fight.

Schneider, a former boxer herself, came into the fight with two MMA fights in her resume and about six pro boxing matches too. The Kansas City fighter knew what to expect from Reid.

When the lights turned low it was clear that Schneider had a specific plan and was trying to lure Reid into her ground game. Immediately the Kansas City fighter fired kicks that annoyingly landed to Reid’s legs. Then a quick dive for Reid’s legs unfolded but she couldn’t bring the boxing champion down.

Schneider repeatedly tried to trip Reid and turn the fight into a grappling match, but Reid’s strength was evident as she simply pushed her opponent’s head down or pushed her opponent to the fence.

Reid is strong.

“Her takedown defense is really good,” said Chris Benn, who trains Reid in both boxing and MMA. “She pushes me around like nothing during our drills.”

But the first round also displayed a bit of confusion from Reid whose normal boxing footwork doesn’t apply in MMA. Her stance is different and her normal business-as-usual attitude in boxing is not present in MMA.

“There are so many variables to worry about; there’s kicking, holding, elbows and takedowns,” said Benn who yelled instructions to Reid. “There’s more to worry about than in boxing and Elena wasn’t used to that, but she adjusted.”

The second round saw Reid immediately find the proper distance to maintain the fight as Schneider once again attempted unsuccessfully to land kicks and reverse backhand punches.

“I saw those punches a mile away,” said Reid, who landed a few of her own kicks with thudding results. “Once I let my hands go it was all over.”

A left to the body of Schneider made her wince and knees buckle, a succession of six rapid punches by Reid forced the referee to stop the fight at 2:05 of the second round.

“I was trying to make her fight my kind of fight,” said Reid. “Once I did that, then it became easier.”

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Reid says she learned some key things during the fight that she can take to her next battle in an MMA cage:

“I have to have confidence in what I’m doing,” said Reid. “And do what I do best, that’s punch.”

Post fight reaction

Wendy Rodriguez, who has been training in jujitsu and kickboxing for the past year, said the lack of kicking by Reid in her fight with Schneider was surprising.

“She only did a few kicks and those she tried landed real good,” said Rodriguez of Reid’s work in the cage. “Of course when she did her punching that’s where she did the best.”

Watching Reid was also nerve-wracking for fellow boxing champion Rodriguez.

“I was really nervous watching Elena,” said Rodriguez who like Reid simply enjoys combat sports and its challenges. “It was the same way I feel whenever I step into the ring for one of my own fights.”

Reid, content that she won her first MMA fight by knockout, doesn’t intend to rest for a minute. She’s looking to fight as soon as Jan. 19.

“I could be fighting on a boxing card in New York,” said Reid, while munching on Japanese food in a fine dining restaurant in Las Vegas. “Boxing is what I love, but I just love to fight so I’ll fight in MMA too.”

Other boxers in MMA

Rumors of boxing’s Floyd Mayweather, who’s considered the best boxer pound for pound, have surfaced that he’s in talks with Mark Cuban the billionaire to jump into MMA.

Cuban has an interest in MMA and recently started his own organization called HDNet Fights and is said to be involved with M-1Global that signed Russia’s superstar fighter Fedor Emelianenko.

Both Cuban and Mayweather participated in the television reality show Dancing With the Stars. Can the billionaire convince Mayweather to enter a cage?

Other boxers have tried MMA such as Jeremy Williams. But it’s the women who have more zeal for the sport because of the lack of promoters willing to stage female boxing cards.

One male fighter KJ Noons recently captured an MMA title in EliteXC as a lightweight and is looking to add a world title in boxing.

“Look out Oscar De La Hoya,” said Noons who crosses into both fighting sports easily with his quickness and one-punch knockout power.

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“Noons is further ahead in MMA than he is in boxing,” said Don Leonard, a writer for a MMA magazine in Southern California. “He’s not bad in boxing, but far from being a world champion right now.”

Photo by Raymond Spencer

Other Boxing Chatter:

Downtown LA fight card

Mexico’s Michel Rosales faces Cuba’s Antonio Izquierdo in a 10-round lightweight bout at the Alameda Swap Meet near downtown Los Angeles on Friday Jan. 4, 2008.

Rosales (13-1, 11 KOs) is remembered for his back and forth battle in a losing cause against Jesus Karass Soto a year ago. Izquierdo (16-1-1, 13 KOs) handed Nick Casals his first defeat but lost to former champion Cesar Soto.

Also on the fight card that begins at 4:30 p.m. is former junior flyweight world champion Brian Vilorio and former U.S. Olympian Vanes Martirosyan. For tickets and information call (323) 603-9005.

Mora at Morongo Casino

Sergio “The Latin Snake” Mora makes his first appearance in the Inland area when he faces Mexico’s Rito Ruvalcaba (32-8, 28 KOs) in a 10-round middleweight bout at the Morongo Casino on Friday Jan. 11, 2008.

Mora (19-0-1, 4 KOs) took a draw against light tapping Elvin Ayala in his last fight, but that may have been a good thing. He was in line to meet Kelly Pavlik. Now that the Youngstown fighter has the middleweight crown, Mora can draw interest for a match with the slender sledgehammer punching Pavlik who meets Jermain Taylor in a rematch next month. The fight card begins at 4:30 p.m. For information call (951) 755-5391.

Navarro vs. Mijares

Former U.S. Olympian Jose Navarro (26-3, 12 KOs) makes his fourth attempt at capturing a junior bantamweight world title when he meets Mexico’s dazzling Cristian Mijares (33-3-2, 14 KOs) at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas on Feb. 16.

Navarro lost close decisions against Japan’s Katsushige Kawashima, Masamori Tokuyama and Russia’s Dimitri Kirilov all in those fighter’s countries. Now he faces Mijares on home turf, but it won’t be easy. Mijares embarrassed fellow Mexican Jorge Arce when they met last year.

Both Navarro, 26, and Mijares, 26, are slick boxing southpaws. It should prove an interesting match.

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De La Hoya

Oscar De La Hoya and his wife Millie Corretjer welcomed their second baby, this time a girl, on Saturday Dec. 29, 2008 at 4:36 p.m. The baby girl's name is Nina Lauren Nenitte De La Hoya. She weighed nearly eight pounds and is 20 and a one-half inches long.