

# WOMEN'S FIGHT NEWS

January | 2023

Alrie Meleisea

Cecilia Braekhus

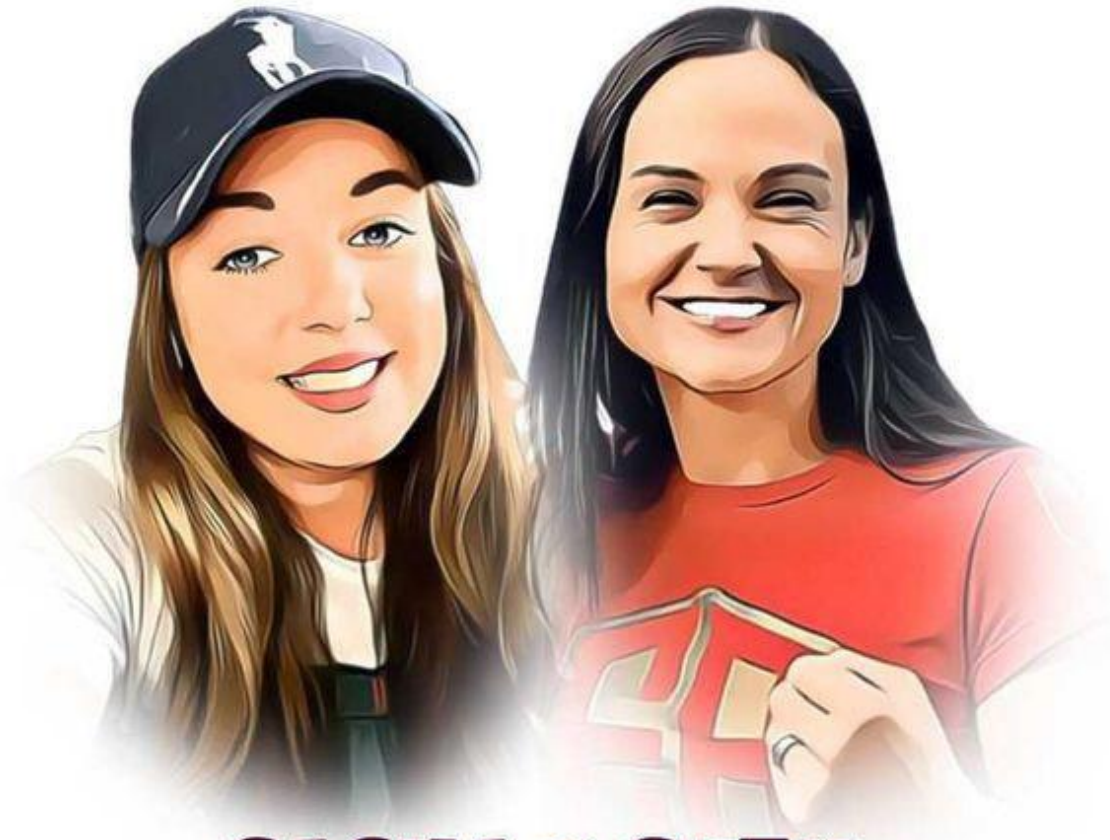
# UNDISPUTED



Bree Wright Q&A

Shadasia Green

NZ Boxing Awards



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Amanda Serrano will face Erika Cruz in a Puerto Rico vs. Mexican battle for the Undisputed World Featherweight championship and Alycia Baumgardner takes on Elhem Mekhalel for the Undisputed World Super-Featherweight championship at Hulu Theater at Madison Square Garden in New York on Saturday February 4, exclusively live worldwide on DAZN.

Seven-weight World champion Amanda “Real Deal” Serrano (43-2-1 30 KOs) looks to become the first Puerto Rican born fighter to take home the title of undisputed, as she finally gets the opportunity at Featherweight where she has ruled since 2019, after her history-making Lightweight clash with Katie Taylor at Madison Square Garden last April. Serrano faces off against Cruz in her hometown of New York City after a convincing win over Sarah Mahfoud in Manchester, England to add the Dane’s IBF title to her WBO and WBC belts at 126lbs.

The missing piece of the jigsaw is the WBA crown that belongs to Cruz (15-1 3 KOs). The Mexican became WBA champion in April 2021, ending the long reign of Canadian Jelena Mrdjenovich in West Point, New York. Cruz defended the title in Mexico in November 2021 and then met Mrdjenovich in a rematch in September in Mexico and won via shutout on points. The 32 year old, nicknamed ‘Dinamita’ will pose a big threat to Serrano’s hopes of becoming undisputed and put a spanner in the works of the Taylor rematch.

## UNDISPUTED DOUBLE-HEADER

Baumgardner (13-1 7 KOs) had a brilliant 2022, capped by her victorious trip to London where she unified the 130lbs division against bitter American rival and IBF, WBO and Ring Magazine champion Mikaela Mayer in October via split decision. Baumgardner made it three wins on the bounce in the UK having ripped the WBC and IBO World titles from Terri Harper in Sheffield in November 2021 with a stunning KO and defending the belt for the first time in April in Manchester, shutting out Edith Matthyse over ten rounds.

Like Serrano, the Detroit star just needs the WBA belt to complete the full set, and that belt is vacant with #3 ranked Mekhalel (15-1 3 KOs), and the French former interim WBC champion comes into the bout on the back of a slender reversal in a bruising encounter with Belgium’s former World ruler Delfine Persoon in May in Abu Dhabi.

There are two more female title fights on the card, as Australian star Skye Nicolson looks to take a big step towards World title action against fellow unbeaten fighter Tania Alvarez for the WBC Silver Featherweight title and there’s another all-undefeated belt battle as Ramla Ali faces title action for the first time in the paid ranks as she meets Avril Mathie for the IBF Intercontinental Super-Bantamweight strap.

# SERRANO VS CRUZ

## CROWNING THE TRUE FEATHERWEIGHT CHAMPION

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On February 4th, Puerto Rico's Amanda Serrano will battle Mexican, Erika Cruz Hernandez, for all four major sanctioning body titles at featherweight, and on the same card, Alycia Baumgardner will fight Elhem Mekhaled, for all four major belts at junior lightweight. An "undisputed" tag is a promoter's dream as it helps ticket sales and attracts viewers, but don't let the glitter of all these belts detract from the fact that Baumgardner is already the true ruler at 130lbs; she is the reigning Lineal Champion, having beaten Mikaela Mayer last September in what was a fight between the best two women in the weight class. If Baumgardner beats Mekhaled – a good fighter, but one who is coming off a loss to Delfine Persoon and is not considered a top-four fighter at the weight – it should not be viewed as the crowning moment for Alycia; she already is the queen at 130lb. Serrano/Cruz is for also for all the belts, but for boxing purists, its significance goes deeper than that; these two women have established themselves as the best featherweights in the world, so the winner will be regarded as the true world champion of the division; the Lineal Champion.

Although "The Real Deal," Amanda Serrano, had won a string of belts across seven weight classes (including, winning a featherweight title in 2016), she didn't fully focus on the 126lb featherweight division until September 2019, when she challenged Heather Hardy for the New Yorker's WBO title. At this time, it was Hardy and Canadian, Jelena Mrdjenovich, who were the top two women in the division. Hardy was unbeaten in 22 fights and had picked up good wins over the likes of Edina Kiss and Shelly Vincent, and for most of the last decade, WBA/WBC titlist, Mrdjenovich, a veteran of over 50 bouts, had been a permanent fixture among the world's best featherweights.

Erika Cruz and Serrano were ready to shake things up. Serrano stamped her mark on the weight class with a dominant 10-round decision over Hardy; a clash with Mrdjenovich now seemed the biggest bout to be made, but then, in February 2021, a WBC-ordered

negotiation period between Serrano and Mrdjenovich was on the verge of going to a purse bid, when it got cancelled. Serrano was upgraded from "interim" to "full" WBC titlist and the Canadian was declared "WBC Champion Emeritus." The WBC stated that "her (Mrdjenovich's) mentor, fatherly friend and long-time trainer Milan Lubovac suffered a cardiac arrest in 2020" and had "been in coma since, making it impossible for Mrdjenovich to focus on her career the way she had done it for the previous [eighteen] years."

Just two months later, Mrdjenovich (now without her WBC title), put her WBA strap on the line against Erika Cruz. The Mexican won every round before a cut caused by a head-butt, meant Mrdjenovich was unable to continue in round seven; it was the most one-sided loss of Jelena's career. Cruz defeated Melissa Esquivel seven months later and then proved the cut played no part in assisting in her upset win over Mrdjenovich when she repeated the victory on September 3, 2022, winning all ten rounds on all three official scorecards.

Serrano kept busy, knocking out Daniela Bermudez in March 2021, then outpointed Yamileth Mercado five months later, before turning her attention to the lightweight division in preparation for her showdown with Katie Taylor. On September 24th, 2022, Serrano returned to 126lb, picking up the IBF strap by outpointing 11-0, Sarah Mahfoud. In the two years before this bout, Mahfoud had fought just once; a close points win over 12-2, Nina Meinke - yet in the midst of this inactivity, Mahfoud was upgraded from Interim titlist to full IBF titlist by the IBF. Defeating Mahfoud allowed Serrano to unify another title, but nobody considered her to have been Serrano's main divisional threat: Lineal Boxing Champion had Mahfoud ranked at No.3, as did The Ring Magazine – both organisations had Cruz at No.2, with Serrano at No.1. Despite this, The Ring put their vacant belt on the line for Serrano/Mahfoud; this decision seemed premature, especially when you consider a Ring belt is normally reserved for crowning the real champion

of weight class. When announcing that Serrano/Mahfoud would be for The Ring belt, moderator of The Ring's Women's Ratings Panel, Diego Morilla, explained that Serrano and Cruz were the division's top-two-ranked fighters and that a clash between them would have been for the Ring belt, however, Morilla explained that as negotiations between Serrano/Cruz had failed in 2021, Serrano/Mahfoud was now taking its place, adding: "If that's (Serrano/Mahfoud) not Ring-worthy, then it will have to do until the real thing comes along."

It's worth noting that although negotiations had stalled between Serrano and Cruz in 2021, both boxers remained active, each fighting three times; Mahfoud on the other hand, didn't fight at all that year.

Nevertheless, the real thing was just around the corner.

In the run up to the Serrano/Mahfoud and Cruz/Mrdjenovich fights, Serrano was calling Cruz out, saying in a pre-fight conference call with Seconds Out's Danny Flexen:

"I'm hoping that they Cruz/Mrdjenovich) want to become undisputed as well, and they want to fight me, so I just hope both of them put on a helluva show, they both come out healthy in that fight, and maybe by the end of the year we can fight; I'll fight the winner."

Erika Cruz responded, posting a photo of herself on her social media account on the day of Serrano/Mahfoud, with the message, "Happy to see who will be the next opponent to give me my belts to unify the 126lb division."

In the first week of January 2023, Serrano V Cruz was officially announced.

Lineal Boxing Champion, ESPN, The Ring and BoxRec all have Serrano (#1) and Cruz (#2) rated as the best two featherweights in the world. In an interview with Ring IQ on January 6, Serrano gave her thoughts on why the fight was now happening: "I think the WBA mandated her so she had no choice but to fight me. It was either (that or) give up her title

like many of these fighters have done in the past to me. And she's a warrior, she's a Mexican, a champion. She's a Mexican, so it's not gonna be easy for me or anyone to take the title from her."

Later that day, Serrano Tweeted: "I can't wait to become the Lineal Champ."



Erika Cruz faces a daunting task. Her Puerto Rican southpaw rival is a vastly experienced boxer-puncher who has notched up 30 KOs in her 46-fight career. She has only lost once in the last ten years and that was against a bigger, equally experienced fighter, who is viewed by many to be the pound-for-pound No.1 in the world, and to get that split-decision win, Katie Taylor had to survive long periods of hellacious fire from "The Real deal." Physically, Cruz, who like Serrano is a natural featherweight, matches up well with her rival; both are similar in height (approximately 5'6") and have similar reach. If Cruz utilises her familiar, aggressive, pressure-fighting style, will she be able to unsettle and outscore Serrano over the course of the fight? To succeed with such tactics against the heavy-handed Serrano, she will not only require tight defensive skills on the inside, but a rock-solid chin too; if lacking in either of these two attributes, it could be an early night. Cruz is tough, has never been stopped and her punch-resistance held firm against solid-puncher, Mrdjenovich, but Serrano's power is another level up. Twenty-three of Serrano's KOs have come in three rounds or less. Can Cruz steer clear of Serrano's power in the opening rounds? If she can, her chances of prevailing could drastically improve.

Ultimately, whether it goes short or long, Serrano Vs Cruz is a fight that boxing needs: the best versus the best in a weight class, to crown a true world champion.



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All Glory to the Man upstairs! Proud to announce that I have sign with @mostvaluablepromotions I am so grateful to be apart of such a magnificent team. Honored to be chosen and excited about the future. Truly want to thank my team @ladyveronicasoto and @zizuboxing for being behind me all of my career. My trainers @coachterrific and Barry Porter for continuing to push me! It gets greater later. I also wanna especially thank @jakepaul and @serranosisters so appreciative to be selected to continue my career along side such Great Fighters ✓

Shadasia Green Instagram

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MVP welcomes our newest athlete Shadasia “The Sweet Terminator” to the family. Shadasia is a super-MW & ranked #1 by the WBC and IBO, and #2 by the WBA. She will be making her MVP debut as a part of the #SerranoCruz card & will face former IBF/WBA world champion Elin Cederroos.

Shadasia “The Sweet Terminator” Green (11-0, 10 KOs) to face Sweden’s Elin Cederroos (8-1, 4 KOs) in a 10-round, 168-lbs championship elimination match. The winner will become the WBC & WBA mandatory for titles held by unified champion Franchon Crews (8-1, 2 KOs).



# Lydia Bayardo, the 70s Slugger They Called Squeaky

by Christopher Benedict

By the time she turned eighteen, Lydia Bayardo had earned the hard-won reputation as a slugger on the softball field as well as in the boxing ring.

Growing up in the coastal Los Angeles neighborhood of San Pedro, Lydia wielded one of the hottest bats on the Pirates, routinely responsible for hitting clutch homers and driving in go-ahead or game-winning runs throughout the regular season and, more importantly, the playoffs when it counted the most. The athletically gifted Bayardo was also recognized for her proficiency on San Pedro High School's basketball squad.

But two years prior to leading the defending champion Pirates to their repeat City title in 1977, Lydia had already committed herself to boxing. She couldn't possibly have known it then, except for maybe as a recurring vision in her wildest dreams, but Bayardo's youthful passion for the sweet science would manifest itself into a lifechanging, history making endeavor.

A five-story building of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture near the port of Los Angeles, the Harbor View House was once an Army/Navy YMCA but had been repurposed as a temporary dwelling place for wayward youths. San Pedro being a tough town, there were more than a few who qualified. Sixteen year-old Lydia was one of approximately a dozen misfit pupils, females one and all, who would gather in the dank, roach infested basement of the Harbor View House every Wednesday evening to skip rope, whale away on the heavy bag, and pound out a rat-a-tat-tat

staccato rhythm on the speed bag barely illuminated by the dim glow of five 60-watt bulbs, not to mention sharpen up on boxing fundamentals during sparring sessions wherein footwork was especially tricky thanks to the ring's well-worn, spongy canvas.

The gym's boxing program, called the San Pedro Locker Club, was run by the matronly and aptly named Dee Knuckles. "Eventually, I'd like to see a professional boxing circuit for women, or at least some organized amateur competition," professed Knuckles (which, believe it or not, was indeed her real last name). "I have no intention of ever letting my girls get involved in some stunt promotions where they'd have to get in the ring with a man. That's not the kind of boxing I want to see."

At nineteen, Pat Pineda was not only the program's elder, but Dee's standout performer and head trainer. In March 1976, she would become the first woman to be granted a professional boxing license by the state of California with Knuckles as manager and promoter for her abbreviated, two-fight career. Pineda and Bayardo sparred frequently at the San Pedro Locker Club, and Lydia's determination was hard to ignore. So too was her improvement.

Dee Knuckles would organize exhibitions and smokers for her girls to participate in, the proceeds from which would go toward buying uniforms and upgrading the gym's equipment. Bayardo was featured on one such show held on the grounds of the Long Beach VA Hospital, attended by 300 spectators

consisting mostly of patients and their families. Lydia was matched opposite Irma Torres, who was just one year younger. They were kitted out in red gloves and matching headgear which were donated by the Los Angeles Police Department's Harbor Division, otherwise Bayardo and Torres made do with Locker Club t-shirts and denim cutoffs for ring attire. Declared a draw by the sheepish referee, both girls were awarded trophies at the conclusion of their crowd-pleasing skirmish, two rounds in duration.

Lydia made her pro debut before her senior year of high school had even begun, boxing to a four-round draw against Karen Bennett of Las Vegas on September 6, 1977 at the Hyatt Hotel in Lake Tahoe. Not bad at all for a total novice, seeing a though Bennett, a future Nevada State bantamweight champion, already had a handful of fights on her resume and rode a four-fight knockout streak into the bout against Bayardo, who was now known by her ring moniker 'Squeaky.'

Lydia was given the nickname because of her propensity for squealing whenever she was hugged tight. She would enter the ring wearing a t-shirt with SQUEAKY spelled out in black iron-on letters across the front, and THE BEST written from shoulder to shoulder on the back.

Bennett and Bayardo would square off again three months later. Same venue. Different outcome. Squeaky's rematch with Karen Bennett was one of four female bouts comprising the undercard to the main event pitting Robbie Epps opposite Henry Walker in a

super-welterweight dustup. The card was assembled by matchmaker Bill Dickson who confirmed for the press that this was the very first time more than two women's fights occurred on the same bill. Shirley 'Zebra Girl' Tucker took a four-round decision from Fonda Gayden and, similarly, Toni Lear Rodriguez outpointed Tansy 'Baby Bear' James, whereas Julie Mullen notched a first-round KO over Rochelle Johnson.

Squeaky made a favorable impression on the Tahoe fight fans by overpowering and stopping Bennett in the fourth and final stanza. Heavyweight Greg Page, still in the early stages of his amateur career with a Golden Gloves title soon to come and a brief stint as WBA world champion to materialize later, was obviously far more impressed by Bayardo than his U.S. Boxing mates in attendance. Brandishing a Polaroid camera, Page enthusiastically ran up to Bayardo and requested to take a picture with her. "That was a damn good fight," he exclaimed. "You're a fighter."

Already being talked about as a potential title contender after just two fights, the pragmatic eighteen-year-old preferred to keep things in perspective. "I just want to get in there and do my best," said Squeaky after her win over Karen Bennett. "I'm not thinking about anything else." Her humility notwithstanding, a title shot was exactly what awaited Bayardo next.

Nevada State junior-lightweight champion prior to graduation was a distinction that very much set Lydia Bayardo apart from her San Pedro High School classmates, one that she was able to boast by beating the more experienced

Toni Lear Rodriguez in a six-rounder at the Lake Tahoe Hyatt in March 1978. Squeaky made two quick return trips to her stomping ground at Lake Tahoe, scoring knockout victories over Ginate Troy on April 4 and Mary Kudla on May 30. A right hook put an already bloodied and battered Kudla down for the count at the 51 second mark of the third round. Because she was experiencing trouble breathing, Mary was sent to the emergency room as a precautionary measure. Fortunately, it was nothing more serious than a broken nose.

Bayardo was back in Tahoe two months later, only this time enjoying a change of scenery from the Hyatt ballroom, as she won on points against Joann Williams at Truckee High School's Surprise Stadium. She would, however, make one last visit to the Hyatt that November when no fewer than four women's Nevada State championships would be decided.

Ginate Troy claimed possession of the flyweight title by virtue of a first-round knockout of Laurie Ferris, Julie Mullen put Lavonne Ludian away in the fourth of six rounds to take home the welterweight crown, and Karen Bennett became the bantamweight champion by knocking out Bonnie Prestwood in round two. Squeaky alone was unable to finish her opponent inside the distance, but nevertheless acquired the Nevada State lightweight title by decisively outmuscling registered nurse and former kickboxer Carlotta Lee in what was thought to be the best fight on the card dubbed Ladies Night.

Los Angeles' Hoover St. Gym, known as the Cradle of Boxing Champions, was ahead of the curve with regard to allowing females to train there. Other establishments in the 1970s were known to turn women away at the door. Bayardo worked out there, sparring on a regular basis with welterweight contender Britt VanBuskirk. Future world lightweight champion and hall of famer Lady Tyger Trimiari was a familiar face at the Hoover St. Gym, as was Cora Webber, one of a set of prizefighting twins (her sister Dora would step between the ropes four years later) who was tuning up for her first fight. Turns out, it would be against Squeaky.

No garden variety event was the super-featherweight bout between Squeaky Bayardo and Cora Webber. They dueled to a vigorous five-round draw on the first ever all-women's boxing card, a set of four world title elimination matches put on by promoter Sammy Sanders at the

Hawthorne Memorial Center on February 11, 1979. Shirley 'Zebra Girl' Tucker won a split decision over Toni Lear Rodriguez (a late substitute for Ginate Troy) in a super-bantamweight scrap,

'Sweet' Dulce Lucas needed only two rounds to dispatch fellow welterweight Valerie Ganther, and Lady Tyger Trimiari outpointed Carlotta Lee in the main event. Lady Tyger would win the world lightweight championship seven weeks later, decisioning Sue 'KO' Carlson in San Antonio, Texas.

Sammy Sanders staged a second all-female fight card five months after the first, this one held at the Los Angeles Sports Arena on July 13 and headlined by a California State Championship Triple Crown. Britt VanBuskirk knocked out Dulce Lucas in the second round for the welterweight title, Lily Rodriguez edged out Toni Lear Rodriguez in the featherweight contest, and the super-featherweight championship went to Cora Webber via unanimous decision over Carlotta Lee. Graciella Casillas upset Karen Bennett and Lady Tyger stopped Ernestine Jones in two of the preliminary matches. Squeaky accounted for the other.

Unfortunately, Bayardo wasn't involved in any of the title fights that night, but she just might have stolen the show regardless. She celebrated her fifth-round knockout of Ginate Troy (a last-minute replacement for Toni Bryant) by pumping her gloved fists in the air and jogging around the ring while the theme music to Rocky played on the PA system. Before exiting the ring, the triumphant Squeaky dislodged her mouthpiece and tossed it into the crowd for some lucky admirer to bring home as a souvenir. Evidently not sure what to make of such a unique occurrence of joyful abandon exhibited by a female, one bewildered observer remarked, "I'm used to women throwing garters from a stage." The times, they were a-changing. Bayardo's October 9, 1979 points win over Yvonne Barkley, whose kid brother Iran would go on to twice conquer Thomas Hearns and win world titles in three weight classes, seems to have been her swan song dedicated to a boxing career that was especially remarkable given its brevity, and in which she became acquainted with championship renown on two occasions and not once with defeat.

**EUROPE**

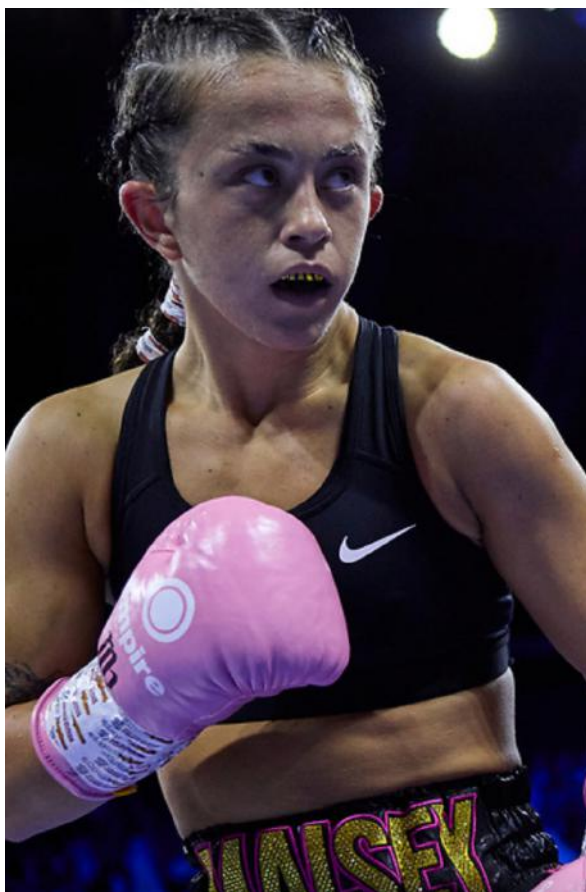
## MAISEYROSE COURTNEY SIGNS WITH MATCHROOM BOXING

Eltham Flyweight prospect and former amateur standout Maiseyrose Courtney has signed a multi-fight promotional deal with Eddie Hearn's Matchroom Boxing.

The 22-year-old South Londoner made a winning start to her professional career by comfortably outpointing Hungary's Judit Hackbold over four rounds on the undercard of Katie Taylor's Undisputed Lightweight World Title defence against Karen Elizabeth Carabajal at the OVO Arena in Wembley last October.

Courtney, who is the first female boxer to train out of the Matchroom Boxing Elite Gym in Essex, started boxing at just eight-years-old and went on to represent the famous Repton Boxing Club, winning six National Titles and fighting her way into the Team England set-up.

Trained by Tony Sims and Kevin Mitchell, Courtney joins a thriving Matchroom stable boasting some of the very best female fighters on the planet including Ireland's Undisputed Queen Taylor, Undisputed Super-Lightweight ruler Chantelle Cameron and Unified Super-Featherweight Champion Alycia Baumgardner.



"It's a dream come true to have signed a deal with Matchroom Boxing," said Courtney. "From walking into the Matchroom Elite Gym a year ago and becoming Tony Sims' and Kevin Mitchell's first female fighter, to making my debut on Katie Taylor's undercard and now this, it's been an incredible few months.

"Now it's time to repay the faith that Eddie, Tony and Kevin have shown in me. In 2023 I'm going to show the world why I believe I'm one of the most exciting female fighters around.

"I've been boxing my whole life, mixed it with some of the best boxers across the country and now finally I've got the right team in place to help build me into the World Champion I know I will become."

"I'm delighted to welcome 1-0 Eltham Flyweight talent Maiseyrose Courtney to the Matchroom Boxing team," said Matchroom Sport Chairman Eddie Hearn. "Maiseyrose has lived and breathed boxing since she was a child and she has huge ambitions in the sport. Her achievements in the amateurs speak for themselves and I believe she will enjoy even more success in the professional ranks under the guidance of Tony Sims and Kevin Mitchell. I was really impressed with her debut performance on such a big stage right ahead of Irish legend Katie Taylor's last defence of her Undisputed World Title and she looks like she's made for the big stage. I look forward to guiding her throughout her career."



By Matt Elliott

Photograph credit - Cecilia Braekhus

## The First Lady is back and looking for gold

CECILIA BRAEKHUS  
CECILIA BRAEKHUS  
CECILIA BRAEKHUS

December saw a winning return to the world of professional boxing for Cecilia Braekhus after a twenty-one-month absence following her back-to-back defeats against Jessica McCaskill in 2020 and 2021, respectively. The former undisputed welterweight champion secured a unanimous points decision, winning every round against Argentinian opponent Marisa Joana Portillo.

Braekhus, nicknamed the 'First Lady' and heavily lauded as being someone who brought eyes to the world of women's boxing, made her winning return at super welterweight having spent the majority of her career at welterweight, where she carved her reputation, becoming the first female to fully unify all of the major titles and going on an unbeaten run of thirty-six fights over a twelve year period, during which she made twenty-five title defences.

Defeat to McCaskill via a majority decision in August 2020 brought that run to an end and the defeat was far wider when the two met in a rematch seven months later, McCaskill taking a unanimous decision, winning virtually every round. At the age of thirty-nine, many expected this to be the end for Braekhus who was gracious in defeat post-fight and non-committal about what lay ahead.

Yet almost two years later, and now aged forty-one, she is back, and this is not simply for a career swansong or one final payday. Braekhus was originally scheduled to return in August and face then WBC champion Patricia Berghult in Colombia, but the show was cancelled as it clashed with the honeymoon of Jennifer Lopez. Yes, you have read that right. J-Lo was due to perform at the show but due to her marriage to Ben Affleck she could no longer make the date, hence the show was pulled. The fight was not rescheduled and Berghult went on to lose her title to Natasha Jonas in September.

Braekhus therefore returned against Portillo and although it was scrappy at times, it was a chance to ease her way back in after such a long lay-off. We may see her take another tune-up fight, but time is not on her side, so expect her to go looking for Natasha Jonas or Terri Harper, who between them hold the four divisional belts. We know that an undisputed clash is unlikely to happen and if both Jonas and Harper are to remain at 154lbs then a clash with Braekhus and the chance to fight against a legend of the sport would surely prove tempting.

Whatever happens between now and the end of her career, at a time when women's boxing is excelling, it feels only right that the First Lady is back to be part of it.



# CAROLINE DUBOIS

*by BOXXER  
Photo by Lawrence Lustig*

'Sweet' Caroline Dubois (5-0, 4 KO's) takes a big step up on February 11 when she faces the highly-experienced Argentinian national champion Yamila Belen Abellaneda (15-5-1, 3 KO's).

Best known to British fight fans for her WBA Intercontinental title battle with Natasha Jonas' arch-rival Terri Harper in March last year, Abellaneda - who has successfully defended her Argentinian national title four times since winning it in December 2020 - is making her second visit to the UK next month.

Dubois' standout amateur career - in which she became Youth Olympic champion, World Youth champion and four-times European Youth champion - has segued seamlessly into the professional ranks. Like her stablemate Adam Azim, she went 5-0 in 2022 and marked herself out as one of the global boxing scene's talents to watch.

## → Deirdre Gogarty

**Ireland's First female professional boxer & Professional World Champion - International Women's Boxing Hall of Famer - Drogheda First and Only Professional Boxing World Champion**



"I cannot begin to express how thrilled I am about the potential of a statue in the place where my journey began! In my days as a young woman, cycling through Drogheda on my way to the boxing club, I had such big dreams and

ambitions. It was a very exciting time, but unfortunately my future as a boxer looked very bleak, when door after door would slam shut against women's boxing in 1988.

When Drogheda put up the statue of Tony "Socks" Byrne, I was in awe. I wanted to accomplish great things like Byrne's Olympic medal, but women were not allowed box amateur, or in the Olympics back then, which was hugely frustrating. I made the difficult decision to leave Drogheda, turn professional, and move to the United States. Eventually, I fulfilled my dream of winning a world title, just like my idol Barry McGuigan. However, it would've been in vain if I weren't able to break down barriers for other female boxers. So in the same way that I was inspired by Byrne's statue, I hope that my statue will remind others that the most important factor in pursuing a dream is, persistence is everything!"



## **Drogheda woman who made Irish boxing history to be honoured with a statue in her hometown**

In 1991 Drogheda woman Deirdre Gogarty stepped into the boxing ring at the back of a pub in Limerick for an 'illegal fight' that would not only become legendary but would mark the beginning of an incredible fighting career for Deirdre. Just five short years later Deirdre would step into a very different ring in the MGM grand Las Vegas for a fierce fight against Christy Martin that would become the spark to ignite much needed change for women's boxing. This would be the first all-female bout to take place on a PPV boxing card which was the Mike Tyson Vs Frank Bruno bout. This changed the face of women's forever. Despite losing the bout it was a win for women's boxing and became respected in the sport.

Just a year later Deirdre reached her dream of becoming a world champion in beating Bonnie Canino in Florida on 2nd of March 1997 for the Featherweight world professional title.

Since retiring in 1998, Deirdre has been recognised for her achievements in the boxing world by being inducted into the International Women's Boxing Hall of Fame in 2015.

Despite being a trailblazer for female athletes, becoming Ireland's first female professional boxer and professional world champion inspiring the next generation of great fighters like Katie Taylor who used to write to Deirdre as a young girl, Deirdre Gogarty has yet to receive the recognition in her hometown of Drogheda she deserves, recognition worthy of her incredible sporting career.

Monasterboice native Ciaran Mc Ivor of the Boxing Bants podcast has spearheaded a committee who are now working hard to have a statue of Deirdre Gogarty erected in her hometown where her story began. The committee who are made up of Natalie Kelly of the Drogheda dolls, Louth County Counsellor Joanna Byrne, Sinéad Brassil (LMFM radio) and David Thornton (Drogheda boxing Club) have received a lot of support for this campaign already, they plan to launch a go fund me campaign in the coming days and are hopeful the people of Drogheda and surrounding communities will support them.

## → Katie Taylor

**2012 Olympic Gold Medalist - Undisputed Lightweight professional World champion - 2 weight world champion**



"I'm delighted that Deirdre's contribution to the sport is being recognised. She was a true pioneer for women in boxing and one of my heroes growing up. She's been a huge support to me over the years and it's women like Deirdre and her

fighters with the likes of Christy Martin who paved the way for myself and the current generation of female fighters."

## → Christy Martin

**Women's International Boxing Hall of Famer - Former World Champion - Deirdre's opponent in the first Female bout to take place on a PPV**



"Deirdre Gogarty was tough as nails in the boxing ring and together we changed the world of women's boxing. For that alone, I think a statue is only fitting. Deirdre Gogarty is a champion in and out of ring and it is a privilege for me to call her my friend."

## → Jane Couch MBE

**Women's International Boxing Hall of Famer - UK's first licensed female boxer - 5-time World Champion**



Deirdre really should have a statue. Without Deirdre none of us would have been able to do what we did and women's boxing wouldn't be in the position it is today. She was my inspiration and my reason for taking up boxing.

The committee feel that a statue would be a great way for Deirdre to be remembered following in the footsteps of Tony 'Socks' Byrne who is immortalised on South Quay with Joey Maher.



# Bree Wright

- Sheffield's First Female Pro Boxer
- Signed to One Empire Management
- 2-0

- **How is training going for your upcoming fight?**

Brilliant! All going well.

- **Who would you like to fight in the future?**

Anyone with a belt when it's my turn.

- **Where would your dream fight location be?**

Sheffield United ground.

- **If you could have a training session with any trainer past or present, who would it be and why?**

Stick with my own, only one that will put up with me



- **What's your average training day like?**

I wake up at half 5, train at 6 for a couple of hours. Come home, have food, relax for a while ready for running or strength later on depending what day it is.

- **What's your favourite training activity?**

Sparring

- **What's your least favourite training activity?**

Sprints 😊

- **2 minutes or 3 minutes?**

Happy with whatever.

- **Favourite boxer, male or female, you like to watch?**

Loma, Tank, a guy called Shak in my gym. There's a few I like to watch to learn from.

- **Serrano or Taylor in rematch?**

Taylor

- **Hobbies/Passions outside of boxing?**

Started learning to swim. It goes ok if I can still touch the bottom 😊

- **Favourite movie?**

Avatar

- **Favourite music to listen to?**

Literally got the wildest range of music in my phone.

AUSTRALIA



# ON WOMEN'S BOXING

Opinion by Malissa Smith

Women's boxing historian and author of *A History of Women's Boxing*. Malissa is at work on her second book tentatively titled, *The Promise of Women's Boxing*.  
Girlboxing.org (website) | @girlboxingnow (Twitter/Instagram/Post.News)

Happy 2023 ... and for those counting down to our next big roster of super fights on February 4th at Madison Square Garden's Hulu Theater ... I'm with you! TWO, count them, TWO undisputed battles plus three highly competitive bouts on the undercard. But I do want to look back to 2022, one more time, before moving forward!

If there was a "fight" of December, it had to be Ebanie Bridges (9-1, 4 KOs) TKO win in the eighth round of her IBF World Bantam title defense over Shannon O'Connell (23-7-1, 11 KOs).

Bridges' tenacity alone would have won her the month, but the unrelenting pressure she put on O'Connell, round after round, became a calling card of bone fides when it came to the barrage of punches she threw, over and over again.

Bridges began her career in sports with strong record of achievement as a body builder before combat sports for women was legal in her native Queensland in 2008. Jumping in into boxing 2016, she built an amateur record of 26-4 in two years of fighting before choosing to eschew her career as a qualified Math teacher (including a master's degree) to enter the ring as a pro in February of 2019. She won her first bout by split decision. Still, a win, is a win, is a win, and when she climbed back through the ropes in October of that year, she won by TKO in the third round of a four-round bout. With one more fight, a mere six weeks later, she achieved victory by TKO, this time in the second round, giving her a total of three wins in 2019.

To me, Bridges is old school. Harkening back to the women of boxing who learned their trade as pros during a time when there was no amateur boxing. In Bridges' case, though she fought in the amateurs with success, she didn't begin to box till she was nearly 30, and even with robust amateur boxing programs available to her, she left it after two years.

And that too is old school in the mold of Heather Hardy who at 41 is still boxing, but entered the game in her late 20s, and though she had some success in the amateurs, with six fights, it was still very light compared to fighters such as Katie Taylor or Claressa Shields.

Hardy turned pro in 2012, the year she turned 30. The same year Taylor and Shields won gold in London. But for Hardy, August of 2012 was all about winning her first DiBella Entertainment Broadway Boxing club show at Roseland Ballroom, a barn burner of a brawl that saw her hit the canvas in the first round before coming back with everything she had to win.

Hardy made her career in that fight. She showed something. Determination. Grit. Heart. All the accolades we associate with boxers and boxing. And it didn't matter that she was a girl. Not then. Not now. Not ever.

Bridges shows that. And fighting off the haters too. Another career feature they share.

Given I'm no spring chicken and fairly jaded when it comes to the pre-fight garbage that can be spewed between fighters and their camps, the attacks on Bridges heading into her showdown against O'Connell were next level.

The nastiness truly was over the top, but even more so, the post-fight filth that was spewed all over Twitter was not only offensive but very threatening. I get that our first-world reality is kind of no-holds-barred these days, but the language and intent really did cross the line and exposed the underlying fissures that have plagued women in the sport for a long time.

Sexism, misogyny, fear, and loathing, it all seemed to bubble up to take on one women's sense of her own self and joyous sexual identity. But again, it's an old story. Hardy's been "punished" for it. For being



Credit: Getty, The U. S. Sun, Dec. 10, 2022

pretty. Just as Shelly Vincent has been "punished" for her appearance. For have close cropped hair dyed in the colors of the Italian flag. For being out as a lesbian.

In a prior generation, Christy Martin tortuously maintained a life inside the closet - while her contemporary, Lucia Rijker, was ridiculed for having clearly defined muscles and a low body-fat content. She was even "called out" to take a chromosome test to prove she was female. Then there was Mia St. John famously posing for a Playboy Magazine cover with red boxing gloves covering her bare breasts—all hell broke loose when that happened (not to mention, that she has also admitted to using steroids when she fought, but that's another story).

The point is, Bridges is far from the first female boxing champion to be ridiculed for her sexuality rather than applauded for her willingness to literally put her life on the line to entertain us with her boxing prowess in the ring.

What we all must do is say enough and call out the haters at every turn for the filth they spew—and make that something we finally bury for all time.

# Boxing is for everyone: World Gay Boxing Championships comes to Sydney WorldPride

History will be made this February when the inaugural World Gay Boxing Championships (WGBC) will be held as part of Sydney WorldPride, WorldPride Sports. Fighters from around the world will be taking part in this exciting and inclusive event which will be the first accredited amateur boxing competition for the LGBTQIA+ community and allies, with straight people also able to compete to show their support. The World Gay Boxing Championships will take place over five days from February 18-22, 2023 at The Winx Stand, Randwick Racecourse.

Over 100 fighters from countries including Australia, the United States, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Singapore will be battling it out in the ring during Sydney WorldPride. There will be two sessions on each of the five days of competition, with spectators being treated to world-class boxing and entertainment, as well as the choice of general admission standing, reserved seating or VIP table service tickets.

The World Gay Boxing Championships were founded in 2020 by Martin Stark to disrupt homophobia, transphobia, and hatred in sport through LGBTQIA+ inclusion and participation, and to send the message that boxing is for everyone. As part of Sydney WorldPride Sports, WGBC gives LGBTQIA+ people the opportunity to compete in a safe and supportive environment that champions confidence, health and wellness, love and friendship.

The championships will host fighters from the LGBTQIA+ community with incredible tales of resilience and strength and allies with unwavering support for those close to them. Boxers competing at the event will include the founder of Queer Combat Collective Sze Sze Rowlinson, transgender-professional boxing coach Pharrell Shaymar, Nigerian boxing champion Adejumola Toyin Esther, Australia's youngest corporate fighter and advocate for anti-bullying advocate Charlie Hall who will participate in a non-combative exhibition bout, advocate for mental health and fighting in support of his nephew Darcy Brown, and Ron Cantrall, who was diagnosed with HIV nearly 40 years ago and has been undetectable for the past 20 years.

"I created the World Gay Boxing Championships to disrupt hatred in sport and provide everyone the opportunity to participate in boxing in a friendly and welcoming environment," says founder Martin Stark. "I am grateful for the support of Boxing Australia, Boxing NSW, the Australian boxing community, and for the backing of the World Boxing Council."

"Muhammad Ali said, "It isn't the mountains ahead to climb that wear you out; it's the pebble in your shoe." There are no pebbles in the boxing boots of the athletes competing in the Championships "Stark continues. "They are bringing courage, determination, acceptance for all, and the unifying spirit of sport to the boxing ring. It is super exciting to bring the Championships to Sydney WorldPride, the largest event Australia has held since the Sydney Olympics."

The World Gay Boxing Championships will be held at The Winx Stand at Randwick Racecourse from Saturday, February 18 to Wednesday, February 22, 2023 with cards at 12pm and 6pm. For tickets, please visit Ticket Master.

NEW

ZEALAND

# 2022 NEW ZEALAND BOXING AWARDS

WE ARE IN THE FOURTH YEAR OF THE NEW ZEALAND BOXING AWARDS THIS YEAR AND FOR THE THIRD TIME, WE HAVE A FEMALE BOXER FOR BOXER OF THE YEAR. THIS YEAR HAS BEEN A FANTASTIC YEAR FOR BOXING AFTER THE COVID PANDEMIC.

## MOST ENTERTAINING BOXER OF THE YEAR

### **Mea Motu**

For three years in a row, the award would go to her stablemate Andrei Mikhailovich. However this year Mea Motu takes the award for multiple reasons including because of her addictive personality. She is a true warrior and wants to take on all comers.



## EVENT OF THE YEAR

### **Bruce Glozier 30th April**

This show was the most entertaining event of the year, especially with two extremely exciting female fights Mea Motu vs Baby Nansen and Lani Daniels vs Sequita Hemingway. It also included some great knockouts.

## NON-BOXER OF THE YEAR

### **Michael Clifton**

Michael Clifton has always been a contender for this award over the past four years. You may not know who he is, however, you might know his work. If you read any article about Peach boxing boxers, chances are it's his article you are actually reading.

## COMMENTATOR OF THE YEAR

### **Chad Milnes**

I have to be honest in my personal opinion, we haven't had the best Commentators this year. Mostly because most commentators from CSN poorly do their research and don't know how to get their facts straight.

Chad Milnes speaks well, he has amazing knowledge inside and out of the ring and out of all the commentators this year he was the most entertaining too.

## MC OF THE YEAR

### **Adam Felix**

Adam is very new to the role of MC in New Zealand as he only started this year. However, in his first year, he is doing an amazing job, is very entertaining and is very good at pronunciation. You would have seen him at the Junior Pati, Craig Thomson and Red Line Combat Academy Vasco events.

## JUDGE OF THE YEAR

### **Soraya Sabetian**

This was a tough one to call, however Soraya a veteran judge really deserves it this year. She always goes above and beyond, showing kindness to everyone and one of the most accurate scorecards this year.

## REFEREE OF THE YEAR

### **John Conway**

John Conway has had a busy year this year both inside and out of the ring. He truly deserves this award this year, especially with his high level of professionalism at events.

## NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL CHAMPION OF THE YEAR

### **Mea Motu**

This was a tough decision to make as there were four other champions in contention. Marcus Heywood vs Shay Brock, Alrie Meleisea vs Sequita Hemingway, Jerome Pampellone vs Joshua Francis and Lani Daniels vs Tinta Smith.

However, Mea Motu is the well deserve champion as she broke a 14-year record holding more New Zealand titles than any other female boxer ever.

## NEW ZEALAND FIGHT OF THE YEAR

### **Michelle Preston vs Nicila Costello for WBA Oceania title**

This brought a lot of different levels of amazing. Michelle Preston's second fight in her return after retiring years ago, Nicila Costello came home for her first fight in New Zealand, a regional title between two New Zealanders and ultimately an amazing fight between two amazing women.

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## NEW PROMOTER FIGHT OF THE YEAR

### **Jordan Tuigamala**

Retired Professional boxer Jordan Tuigamala returns to promote his own event at ABA Stadium which was a decent event.

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## PROMOTER OF THE YEAR

### **Bruce Glozier**

Bruce Glozier put on two amazing events that would be worthy of a Sky TV event. Not only the first event won the award of the event of the year, but also the second event which featured the return of the amazing Nailini Helu. We await what he will do next year.

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## TRAINER OF THE YEAR



### **Isaac Peach**

Truly the trainer who has had the best outcome of the year both nationally and international. Peach boxing has been the lead boxing gym for the past three years through Amateur, Corporate and professional boxing. It's his leadership and the hard workers of the gym that earns Isaac Peach this award.

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## RETURNING BOXER OF THE YEAR

### **Michelle Preston**

In 2016 Michelle Preston had her last fight in Argentina for her second World title shot which she unfortunately lost. In November 2017, after winning the Women's World WBC Muay Thai Super Flyweight Title, she announced her retirement from combat sports. This year she return to win two international titles and became a world title mandatory challenger, in theory, should happen next year.

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## FEMALE NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR

### **Tricia MacKenzie**

Tricia MacKenzie made her professional boxing debut this year. In her second fight, she got her second win, winning the fight by second-round stoppage. We are looking forward to seeing what she will do next year.

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## GYM OF THE YEAR

### **Peach Boxing**

On the tradition of these awards, the award goes to the gym with the most awards, and of course, with 8 awards this year, peach boxing gets the victory. But let go down the list of accomplishments.

Multiple amateur boxing champions, Mikhailovich IBF Pan Pacific & WBO Global Middleweight, Mea Motu 4 time New Zealand, PBCNZ International and WBC Asia Continental, Jerome Pampellone 2 division IBF Australasian and New Zealand champion and finally David Light WBO International, WBO Global and world title contender,

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## FEMALE BOXER OF THE YEAR

### **Mea Motu**

We have mentioned so many reasons why she won this year, however just to put the icing on the cake, she fought five times this year, four titles, three titles, two Thai opponents and one fight in Dubai.

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## BOXER OF THE YEAR

### **Mea Motu**

For multiple reasons why she won Boxer of the year as we mentioned before this has been a historical year for her. Winning a historical 4th New Zealand title, winning a regional title in Dubai and reaching second in the IBF, putting her in high contention for a world title.

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# TOP 10 NEW ZEALAND WOMEN'S BOXING MOMENTS OF 2022

New Zealand made a statement in New Zealand boxing in 2022 with five women in the top 10 sanctioning bodies. With so much happening and with great moments nationally and internationally. We have compiled the top ten best moments of women boxing in 2022.

**First the listed honourable mentions**  
**Mea Motu Knockout Thailand boxer**  
**Tricia MacKenzie's stoppage win in her second fight**  
**Nicila Costello Wins the Australian title in Knockout fashion**  
**Cherneka Johnson becomes World Champion**

**Cherneka Johnson becomes for Maori World champion to successfully defend the title.**

## ➔ 10 - Michelle Preston makes her return

(Photo credit: Podis Boxing and Vish Kumar Art)



Before this year, we last saw Michelle Preston in a boxing ring in December 2016 when she was for the IBF World Super Flyweight title in Argentina against Debora Anahi Dionicius. After that, in November 2017 she fought in Muay Thai for the Women's World WBC Muay Thai Super

Flyweight Title against Greek fighter Fani Peloumpi in New Zealand. After that fight, she announced her retirement from Combat Sports.

Five years later, Michelle Preston return to the boxing ring to fight multiple-time New Zealand amateur champion Holly McMath. The fight was close but Preston edged it with a Split Decision win. People called it a controversial victory as some believe McMath won. However, Preston got the win and went on to do bigger and better fights.

## ➔ 9 - The return of Nailini Helu

(Photo credit: Paea Winston Helu)



Last time we saw The Tongan Goddess Nailini Helu was in 2018 when she took on Lani Daniels for her third unsuccessful New Zealand title. Four years later, Nailini Helu returns to the boxing ring with many changes in her boxing career. Fighting in a different weight division, going back to her

Famateur trainer Master Lollo and now becoming champion. Nailini Helu made her return to take on Tanita Smith for the South Pacific (PBCNZ version) Super Middleweight title. For the first time since her debut in 2016, she finally got her title belt winning by majority decision. You can see this fight on CSN.

## ➔ 8 - Return on Lani Daniels, taking on Sequita Hemingway

(photo credit:CSN NZ)



Last time we saw Lani Daniels was in October 2019, when she came off consecutive draws against Tessa Tualevao. After three years of being away from the ring, Lani Daniels makes her return against Professional Rugby Player Sequita Hemingway.

Sequita Hemingway herself already making a name for herself in New Zealand boxing after a massive victory over World-ranked Alrie Meleisea in 2021 on her debut.

Despite Hemingway having the height and reach advantage, it was Lani Daniels experience that got her the win by Unanimous decision, putting her back on track for future world title challenges. You can see this fight on CSN.

## ➔ 7 - Michelle Preston vs Nicila Costello

(Photo Credit: Benjamin Thomas Watt)



This was one epic fight, which won New Zealand Fight Of The Year. This was so amazing in so many ways. First WBA Oceania title fight in seven years, the first time New Zealand-born Nicila Costello fought in New Zealand, and the winner received a big rankings boost. You can see

this fight on CSN. Preston took home the win by Unanimous decision with her instantly receiving a rankings boost in the WBA.

## ➔ 6 - Mea Motu vs Baby Nansen

(photo credit:CSN NZ)



It's not often New Zealand has what we call Super Fights in New Zealand. Only a couple comes to mind, David Tua vs Shane Cameron, Joseph Parker vs Junior Fa, Robert Berridge vs Adrian Taihia. The idea of these super fights making massive main events when you this the idea of the fight is mouth-watering. The only time New Zealand really had a womens Super fight was between Daniella Smith and Gentiane Lupi in their rematch.

I would say this year's Super Fight would be between former WBC World-ranked, veteran of all combat sports Baby Nansen, taking on the next big thing Mea Motu. You can see this fight on CSN. This was for a New Zealand title fight with the victory going to Mea Motu who extended her record-breaking fourth New Zealand title.

## ➔ 5 - Lani Daniels ranked number 1 in the world after the New Zealand title fight

(Photo Credit: Lani Daniels)



In her second fight back, Lani Daniels took on New Zealand Amateur Champion Tinta Smith for Smith's debut for the New Zealand title. The fight was incredibly close which shows how good Tinta Smith was, but Lani Daniels go to walk away with her

Third New Zealand title.

After this win, Lani Daniels got an incredible ranking boost, being ranked 1st in the WBC, 1st on Boxrec and 2nd in the WBA, putting herself in line for a world title shot. But now we wait for the perfect opponent.

## ➔ 4 - Alrie Meleisea Becomes New Zealand Champion again



(Photo Credit: Benjamin Thomas Watt)

It has been 17 months since the fight between Alrie Meleisea and Sequita Hemingway with Hemingway taking home a shocking victory in 2021. The rematch had so much on the line, not only for the New Zealand title but also for a World title shot on the line for the winner. After eight rounds at North Shore Event Centre, Alrie Meleisea won the fight taking home the second New Zealand title of her career. This also meant she receives a massive win as Hemingway was ranked 3rd in the WBA.

After the fight, Alrie Meleisea said she would take on Lani Daniels for a World title "Anytime, Anywhere, Anyplace, let's get it on".

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## ➔ 3 - Michelle Preston Ranked Number 2 in the world



(Photo credit: Calden Jamieson and King in the Ring)

In September 2022, Preston took on Phannaluk Kongsang for the WBA International Super Flyweight title at formerly known as North Shore Events Centre, now called Eventfinda Stadium. Preston won the fight by unanimous

decision. But it was after the fight that the biggest news. Not only won her second major WBA regional title but received a ranking of 2nd in the WBA, putting her in position for a WBA World title shot.

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## ➔ 2 - Mea Motu ranked 2nd IBF after Dubai fight



(Photo Credit: Peach Boxing)

You might think this was the number one moment for New Zealand women's boxing, but I will come to that in a moment why number one is number one.

In November, Mea Motu fought for the first time international for her first international title. She took on Iran boxer Nastaran Fathi for the WBC ABCO Continental title

Which in English the Asian Boxing Council is a WBC regional title (also known as the Asia title) with a three-tier title. Three tiers are the full ABCO title, the ABCO Continental title and the ABCO Silver title.

The fight was one epic international fight Mea walking away with multiple awards. First a massive cut over her right eye, a Split Decision win, the WBC title and the promoter's best fight of the night award. After the Fight, Mea Motu receive a ranking of second in the IBF, putting herself in world title contention, making her the third New Zealander this year who could possibly go for a New Zealand title in 2023.

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## ➔ 1 - Mea Motu beats 14-year record

(Photo Credit: Benjamin Thomas Watt, Photo from 2021)



In 2008, Daniella Smith became the first female to win two New Zealand titles. Multiple New Zealand women have matched that record over the years including retired WBO World Light Heavyweight champion Geovana Peres, former World title contender Lani Daniels and most recently former world-ranked boxer Alrie Meleisea.

Not only did Mea Motu beat the 14-year record, but she also set the record with four New Zealand titles in four different weight divisions. The First New Zealand title as seen in the photo above was the NZPBA

Lightweight title, won by third-round stoppage in March 2021 against Australasian champion Tania Reid. The second title was the PBCNZ Super Lightweight title in July 2021 against former New Zealand Champion Michaela Jenkins by Unanimous Decision. The third title which was the record-breaking title fight was a first-round knockout for the PBCNZ Featherweight title against Ayisha Abied. And finally, the title fight which I call the Super Fight and now the record-setting title. Winning the PBCNZ Super Featherweight title against former World ranked boxer Baby Nansen.

Mea Motu also added a PBCNZ International Featherweight title to her collection as well as the WBC Asia Continental Super Bantamweight title, with a full collection of six titles since debuting in 2020 in 15 fights.

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# ALRIE MELEISEA

## WINS SECOND NEW ZEALAND TITLE, WORLD TITLE LOOMING

Alrie Meleisea is back with a massive win over Sequita Hemingway for the New Zealand National (Pro Box NZ) Heavyweight title with a possible world title next.

**N**ew Zealand-born Samoan descendant Alrie Meleisea, won her first New Zealand title against Tongan Nailini Helu in 2017. Five years later she now has her third professional boxing title to her name, Pro Box NZ version of the New Zealand Heavyweight title.

Sequita Hemingway (Ngāti Tūwharetoa and Ngāi Tūhoe) was ranked 3rd in the WBA leading into this fight. After eight rounds the judge's scorecards read 80 - 73, 79 - 73 and 78 - 74 with Meleisea winning by Unanimous Decision. With this victory, Meleisea puts herself in the World title picture, possibly against World ranked number one, New Zealander Lani Daniels (Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi, Te Orewai).

After Meleisea said her thank yous to her trainer and everyone in the crowd, the question is asked would she take on Lani Daniels for a world title? She replied "Anytime, Anywhere, Anyplace" she is officially calling out Lani Daniels for a world title shot.

Currently, the World champion in the heavyweight division is Hanna Gabriels

who won the unified WBA and WBC World titles in April 2021. She is at risk of losing her title due to inactivity. But the WBO and IBF are currently vacant which gives Lani Daniels and Alrie Meleisea an opportunity to fight for either of the titles.

As for Sequita Hemingway, the professional rugby player who is now a former number 3 in the World in the WBA, What is next for her? After the fight, She said on the mic that she would be keen for a rematch with Meleisea. However, She wouldn't mind a crack at South Pacific (PBCNZ version) Super Middleweight champion Tongan Nailini Helu.

On the undercard, Philippines-born New Zealander Jose Errazo took on Congo-born New Zealander Obedi Maguchi in their rematch. In their first fight back in 2018, Maguchi won the fight by what it called a controversial majority decision. This Maguchi came in 2 kgs overweight and came to the venue late during the fight night.

The fight was a hard-hitting fight with some strange scorecards of 40 - 38, 40 - 37 and 40 - 36. Ultimately the right person won with Jose Errazo winning the fight by



unanimous Decision.

Now all eyes are on Alrie Meleisea with her coach/promoter Vasco Kovačević and her possible opponent Lani Daniels with her coach John Conway and promoter Bruce Glozier. Will this fight happen? Will this fight be a World title fight? If it does happen for a world title fight it would be significant with the first-ever world title between Maori and Pasifika.



## *Three New Zealand women ready for a world title shot*

BENJAMIN WATT

***Three New Zealand women are ranked in the top two in the world who are in the position for a world title fight. Who are they? What title will they fight for? And who could they fight?***

### ***Michelle Preston 2nd WBA***

*Before this year, we last saw Michelle Preston in a boxing ring in December 2016 when she was for the IBF World Super Flyweight title in Argentina against Debora Anahi Dionicius in their rematch. After that, in November 2017 she fought in Muay Thai for the Women's World WBC Muay Thai Super Flyweight Title against Greek fighter Fani Peloumpi in New Zealand. After that fight, she announced her retirement from Combat Sports.*

*This year she made her return winning the WBA Oceania and WBA Internationa Super Flyweight titles after having three big wins this year. With these wins she jumped in the rankings, becoming 2nd in the WBA.*

*Currently, the WBA World Super Flyweight champion is held by Argentina boxer Clara Lescurat. Historically when Preston fought in Argentina for the world title she lost both fights. But I feel something in the air that could make this potential fight different. But lets hope we can have this world title fight in New Zealand.*



**Lani Daniels 1st Boxrec, 1st WBC, 2nd WBA  
(6 - 2 - 2)**

*Lani Daniels (Te Tai Tokerau, Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi, Te Orewai) made her massive return to boxing this year after a three-year hiatus from the ring. She fought WBA ranked 3rd Sequita Hemingway in her first fight back, and Tinta Smith for her Third New Zealand title in her second fight for the year. After those wins, she received a massive rankings increase, being on top across the board.*

*Daniels is already a World title challenger when she lost against Brazilian-born New Zealand citizen Geovana Peres for the WBO Light Heavyweight title back in 2019 in their rematch. But who would she fight for the world title?*

*Realistically Daniels has two options. She could fight for the current unified WBA & WBC World Heavyweight Champion Hanna Gabriels. However, there is another and better option that would suit better for New Zealand. Currently, the IBF and the WBO World heavyweight titles are vacant, but who would she fight?*

*Well, we may have an answer with the most recent New Zealand Heavyweight Champion. On the 9th of December, Alrie Meleisea defeated WBA ranked 3rd boxer Sequita Hemingway for the New Zealand title, taking her place in the rankings when the next updated ranking will eventually get published. This fight would be big for New Zealand as this would be the first-ever Maori vs Pasifika World title fight in history.*



**Mea Motu 2nd IBF (15 - 0 - 0 6 wins by KO)**

*Mea Motu (Te Rarawa and Ngāpuhi) only debuted in 2020 and already she has made big moves in boxing in New Zealand. This year she broke a 14-year record winning the more New Zealand title than any other women boxer. Better yet in four different weight divisions. A record that was set in 2008 by Daniella Smith.*

*Motu has had a busy year this year with 5 fights total, 4 of them in New Zealand, 3 of them against international opponents, 2 of those opponents against Thai boxers and 1 fight in Dubai. In her last fight of the year she won her biggest title so far, the WBC (ABCO) Asia Continental Super Bantamweight title.*

*After her most recently won, she jumped up in the IBF ranking significantly, now ranked 2nd in the Super Bantamweight division, putting her in line for a world title. The current IBF World Super Bantamweight champion is a New Zealand-born boxer from Australia Cherneka Johnson who won her title in April this year and successfully defended it in October.*

*This would be an epic fight to be made between Mea Motu and Cherneka Johnson for the IBF World Super Bantamweight title this would back history, not only for the indigenous Maori communities of New Zealand but for all indigenous people across the world as this would be the first time ever a Maori vs Maori for a World title. Now Mea Motu is 2nd in IBF, the next thing to do is to make it happen.*



# WORLD BOXING COUNCIL (WBC) PLANS TO CREATE TRANSGENDER BOXING DIVISION

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One of the four major world boxing bodies has announced that they plan to create a transgender division for male-to-female (MTF) and female-to-Male (FTM) professional boxers.

WBC president Mauricio Sulaiman stated they plan to introduce the new division in 2023 and call interested athletes to come forward. "We are going to put out a global call for those who are interested in 2023 and we will set up the protocols, start consultation and most likely create a league and a tournament," Sulaiman told The Telegraph.

"It is the time to do this, and we are doing this because of safety and inclusion. We have been the leaders in rules for women's boxing - so the dangers of a man fighting a woman will never happen because of what we are going to put in place.

"In boxing, a man fighting a woman must never be accepted regardless of gender change. There should be no grey area around this, and we want to go into it with transparency and the correct decisions. Woman to man or man to woman transgender change will never be allowed to fight a different gender by birth."

Sulaiman added: "We are creating a set of rules and structures so that transgender boxing can take place, as they fully deserve to if they want to box.

"We do not yet know the numbers that there are out there, but we're opening a universal registration in 2023, so that we can understand the boxers that are out there - and we'll start from there."

Transgender rights in sports have been a hot topic in all sports across the world. In 2021, New Zealand organisation Rainbow Boxing New Zealand was created in hopes of creating a National Rainbow Competition, however, it was shut down a year later citing the New Zealand Boxing amateur body 'Boxing New Zealand inc' was not ready for such an organisation. The president of Rainbow Boxing New Zealand accused Boxing NZ as transphobic and the community of being homophobic.

"I am advocating a separate division where trans women compete with trans women and trans men compete with other trans men. NOT Trans women competing against CIS women nor Trans men competing against CIS men.

Currently, the stance with Boxing New Zealand is that trans women must fight cisgender men and trans men must fight cisgender women which is also unsafe and technically a breach of human rights. What I was trying to achieve is that the trans community who wish to compete as an amateur boxer has their own division so they can get the dignity and respect to be named under the gender that they are transitioning in. Boxing New Zealand has refused to consider this option, and this was the criticism I was levelling at the organisation."

Since this accusation, Boxing New Zealand lost their main broadcaster Sky Sports NZ who would broadcast New Zealand Golden Gloves and the New Zealand Amateur Boxing Championships.

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Four months later, however, Boxing New Zealand announced they had created their own Transgender division, called the open category.

One News New Zealand reported on August 30th: In their statement, Boxing NZ outlined data behind their decision to create the category and why male puberty was a key issue, noting from a World Rugby Summary of transgender biology and performance research that there is an average 160% advantage in punching force for a male vs a female boxer.

"Allowing any male, regardless of how he identifies, to box against a female would be to actively accept that the physical safety of a female boxer is worth less than the wishes of a male boxer to be included in the sex category they identify with," Boxing NZ said.

"We will not allow male people who have undergone puberty and who may be undertaking a medical transition to participate in the female category given the evidence around retained advantage."

Boxing NZ added female participants in the sport "welcome the inclusion and participation of gender diverse people in boxing but have made it very clear they will not accept transgender females competing in the female category in the name of inclusion".

Since August when Boxing New Zealand announced the open division for transgender boxers, Boxing NZ has yet to sanction their first Transgender fight.

In 2023 will have the World Gay boxing Championships which will happen in Australia during the World Pride event. This will include Transgender boxers that will be allowed to compete. During the build-up to the event, the creator Martin Start asked for all major bodies to send a letter of support for the event to happen. WBA, WBC, WBO and two amateur bodies AIBA and IOC announced their letter of support. The only body that declined to announce their support of the event was the professional body, IBF.

Going back to the WBC announcing a transgender division, this would make big moves for the Transgender boxing community. Looking at it in this way, we would have Rankings, their affiliated bodies and federations would have regional titles for transgender athletes, and best of all there would be World titles for transgender boxers.

There are very few transgender boxers that are open to the world. This includes the most well-known trans boxer, Patricio Manuel who fought and won against a cisgender boxer in 2018. Another well-known combat sports fighter that could transition to boxing could be MMA fighter, Fallon Fox. There are also retired fighters including 41-year-old Muay Thai fighter Parinya Charoenphol and former WBC World flyweight champion Go Shindo who is also retired in 2016.

Written by: Benjamin Watt

# The history of New Zealand women's Heavyweight boxing

New Zealand has accomplished a lot in the sport of boxing, especially considering being a small country. One division in particular that has had a lot of success is the Heavyweight division for women's boxing. Here is a brief history of the division in New Zealand.

Disclaimer: We will be looking at the division with the weight of 76.2 and above (168+ lbs or 12+ st). This will be looking at the professional boxing history, not amateur boxing history.



Photo Credit: Calden Jamieson

## Introducing Women Heavyweight boxing 2002 - 2012

The first Female heavyweight fight to happen in New Zealand in the professional division was between Kellie Doull and Evelyn Sua on the 29th of August 2002. The fight was only 3 x 2-minute rounds. However, Kellie Doull only needed two rounds to win the fight, winning by TKO. That was Doull's only fight. After that, the division was mostly ruled by Ali Dutt.

Ali Dutt participated in the second fight in New Zealand Heavyweight women's boxing history when she also stopped Evelyn Sua in the first round on 19th December 2002. Dutt will have two more victories in her career against debutants, Bobbie August in 2004 and Mariam Graham in 2007. However she will also have three losses in her career, all against Lisa Marie Vizaniari in 2003, 2004 and 2012 with them all being title fights. The first two fights were for the South Pacific Women's Heavyweight Title and the last fight was for a minor world title, the World Boxing Foundation World Women's Heavyweight Title. Dutt retired after her last fight in 2012.



Photo Credit: Calden Jamieson

## Beginning of a new era of Heavyweight Women's Boxing 2016

The division will start becoming a lot more popular in 2016 when Tongan-born Nailini Helu made her debut against Kirsty Lupeamanu on the 16th of April 2016. It was around this time, between 2016 and 2018 that New Zealand had more heavyweight female boxers than any other country in the world, and at one point more than any other country combined.

On the 24th of September 2016, the first New Zealand National (NZPBA version) & UBF Asia Pacific Heavyweight titles fight was held for women boxing between Nailini Helu and Ange Davis. However, the fight was full of controversy. The fight was originally announced as a split-decision win for Nailini Helu. The Ange Davis team challenged the decision of the fight which the sanctioning body accepted, launching an investigation. The investigation found that one of the judges had created an error on their scorecards and their scores were meant to end in a draw. As a result of the fight, the decision was changed to a Split Decision Draw and the Judge was never allowed to judge a professional fight again.



Photo Credit: Benjamin Watt

### **New Zealand Heavyweight Champions and rivalries 2016 – 2017**

A rematch was ordered between the two boxers, however, Ange Davis received a major injury, forcing her to retire from boxing. Helu was scheduled to take on Cheyenne Whaanga for a New Zealand Heavyweight title in October 2016, however, Whaanga pulled out of the fight two weeks before the fight. Helu would take on MMA fighter Alrie Meleisea who had never fought in boxing before. This was the moment heavyweight boxing changed again.

Meleisea would win against Nailini Helu by Split Decision on 28th October 2016, which at the time was considered the biggest upset in New Zealand women boxing history at the time. Meleisea would take another fight on short notice two weeks later when she won against Kirsty Lupeamanu by unanimous decision.

On the 10th of March 2017, Alrie Meleisea had a rematch against Nailini Helu for the New Zealand National (NZPBA version) & UBF Asia Pacific Heavyweight titles. This was a close fight that ended with Meleisea winning by Split Decision becoming the first female to hold a New Zealand Heavyweight title. After the fight in June 2017, Meleisea became the first ever New Zealand heavyweight female to be ranked in one of the major world-sanctioning bodies, ranked 6th in the WBA.

Meleisea would defend her New Zealand title in November 2017 when she began her rivalry against Sarah Long. The fight again was close with Meleisea winning by Split Decision. We will pause this rivalry for now as two important boxers also made their debut in 2017.

### **Geovana Peres vs Lani Daniels 2017 – 2018**

Geovana Peres and Lani Daniels both made their debut in 2017, both in different ways. Peres made her debut against Sarah Long on the undercard of the Alrie Meleisea vs Nailini Helu fight. Sarah Long won the fight by Unanimous Decision. This was the only fight that Geovana Peres lost in her boxing career. Lani Daniels made her debut in September 2017 against Trish Vaka, winning the fight by unanimous decision.

In Geovana Peres's second fight of her career, she took on Nailini Helu for the New Zealand National (NZNBF version) Light Heavyweight title in April 2017. Peres won the fight, becoming the first LGBT person to win a New Zealand national professional boxing title in New Zealand. In October 2017, Peres would win her second boxing title, winning the PBCNZ version of the New Zealand National Light Heavyweight title, becoming the second person ever to win multiple New Zealand titles, but the first person to win Multiple New Zealand titles from two different commissioning bodies.

Lani Daniels won her New Zealand National (NZPBA version) Light Heavyweight title in November 2017.

In 2018, the rivalry between Geovana Peres and Lani Daniels began when they both met in the ring for the first time in March. This fight was Geovana Peres's first defence of her PBCNZ New Zealand title. This was also the first time Lani Daniels began training with John Conway. Peres won the fight by Split Decision win, however, the fight had slight controversy. In the ninth round of the fight, Peres slipped, however, Daniels's corner claims it should have been recognised as a knockdown. However, if the knockdown had been recognised, it would not have changed the result of the fight.

After the fight, Lani Daniels became more active when she successfully defend her NZPBA New Zealand title against Nailini Helu in July 2018. In September 2018, Daniels would win her second New Zealand title, winning the Pro Box NZ version of the New Zealand National Super Middleweight title, becoming the third person to win a second female New Zealand title but the first female to win two New Zealand titles from two commissioning bodies in two weight divisions. We will pause from this rivalry between Geovana Peres and Lani Daniels and go back to Alrie Meleisea vs Sarah Long.



Photo Credit: Calden Jamieson



Photo Credit: Sarah Long

**Sarah Long finally wins title, Ashley Campbell vs Diane Beazley 2018 - 2019**

In June 2018, a rematch was booked between Alrie Meleisea and Sarah Long for Meleisea's New Zealand title defence. However, due to the death of Meleisea's mother two weeks before her fight, Meleisea decided to pull out of the fight and take a long hiatus from boxing. Sarah Long instead took on Ashley Campbell for the vacant New Zealand Heavyweight (NZPBA version) title. Sarah Long won the fight by Unanimous Decision.

After the fight, Ashley Campbell started a rivalry with Diane Beazley where both fighters fought each other twice within a month apart from each fight. Beazley once making her debut, became the first New Zealand-born LGBT boxer to fight as a professional boxer. Campbell won both fights.



Photo Credit: Calden Jamieson

**New Zealand vs New Zealand World title fight 2019**

Geovana Peres only had one fight in 2018 where she defeated Trish Vaka in December winning by Unanimous decision. After the fight, negotiations began to continue the rivalry between Geovana Peres and Lani Daniels, but this time both boxers held two New Zealand titles and a World title.

The fight happened in March 2019 for the WBO World Light Heavyweight title at the Sky City Convention Center with the fight being televised on Sky Sports New Zealand. Peres won the fight, becoming the first LGBT person to represent New Zealand to have won a major World boxing title. Peres would successfully defend her title in October 2019 when she defeated Canadian Claire Hafner. Peres would also win a Lineal title, winning the "Lineal Championship" Heavyweight title. She would also receive the number 1 position on Boxrec.com.

In January 2021, Peres would announce her retirement from boxing and begin her kickboxing career.

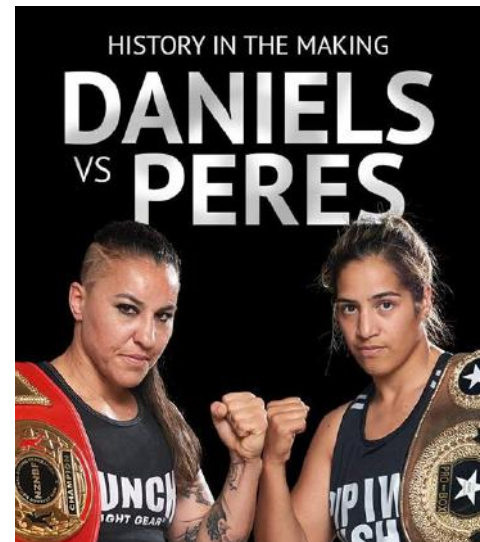


Photo Credit: Bruce Glozier

In September 2019, Meleisea would make her return in September 2019 when she continued her rivalry against Sarah Long. Currently, this is the final chapter in their rivalry, however, there is a possibility this could be revisited in the future. Sarah Long was originally scheduled to fight in a kickboxing fight, however, her opponent pulled out. Alrie Meleisea was offered to fight on short notice in a boxing fight, which she accepted. The fight ended in Split Decision Draw. The fight would end in controversy as all three judges had completely different scorecards. One judge scored all four rounds for Long, and another judge scored all four rounds for Meleisea, with the final judge scoring it as a draw.

Alrie Meleisea would return in November 2019 when she took on Ashley Campbell. This would be both boxers' television debut when they fought on Sky Sports TV. Meleisea won the fight by Unanimous Decision.

The Rivalry between Alrie Meleisea and Lani Daniels began in 2021 when the two were scheduled to fight on a Joseph Parker vs Junior Fa undercard. Unfortunately, the fight did not end up happening due to poor boxing politics. However, both teams still express interest in fighting.



Photo Credit: RLCA

### **Sequita Hemingway vs Lani Daniels vs Alrie Meleisea 2021 - 2022**

In July 2021, Meleisea took on professional Rugby Player Sequita Hemingway on Hemingway's professional boxing debut. Hemingway shocked the New Zealand boxing world when she defeated Meleisea by Majority Decision. This is considered the biggest upset in New Zealand female boxing history. Hemingway would receive a World ranking after the fight of 3rd in the WBA, after defeating Meleisea who was ranked in both WBA and WBC.

Hemingway would next fight Lani Daniels in April 2022. Daniels took a long hiatus from boxing to work on herself and her family. However, she returned to boxing to help with her physical health and weight loss. Daniels defeated Hemingway by a unanimous decision. After the fight, Daniels took on Tinta Smith on her debut for the Pro Box NZ version of the New Zealand Light Heavyweight title. Tinta Smith at the time successfully won a New Zealand National Amateur Championship. Daniels won the fight by a very close unanimous decision. After the fight, Daniels acknowledge during training camp how much she had to overcome with her having covid, nursing an Achilles injury and grieving the loss of her cousin. After the fight, Daniels receives a ranking of 2nd in the WBA, 1st in the WBC and 1st on Boxrec. She also received 4th on ESPN and 3rd with Lineal Championship websites.

Meleisea would return to the ring in December 2022 when she took on Sequita Hemingway in a rematch, but this time for a Pro Box NZ New Zealand Heavyweight title. Meleisea won the fight by Unanimous Decision, avenging her loss.

### **Alrie Meleisea vs Lani Daniels World title?**

Today the big fight we are looking for is Lani Daniels vs Alrie Meleisea for a world title. This we can confirm has begun negotiations between the two parties.



# FIGHT MADE

## IBF World title confirmed for Lani Daniels vs Alrie Meleisea



It has been confirmed that the IBF World title will be up for grabs in the Lani Daniels vs Alrie Meleisea world title fight on May 27th at Eventfinda Stadium. This will be the first IBF World women's Heavyweight title.

The IBF title has played an important part in New Zealand's boxing history, not only for the women's division but also for Maori boxers. There have been three New Zealand women's World boxing champions in history, with two of them winning the IBF world titles, both being incredible Maori women.

The trailblazer who came first was Kaikohe, Northland boxer Daniella Smith (Ngapuhi & Ngati Kahungunu), who won the first-ever IBF World title in 2010. Smith won the IBF World Welterweight title in Germany against Jennifer Retzke. Being a defending champion, she defended it in South Africa seven months later and lost to Noni Tenge. Daniella Smith is a true trailblazer for New Zealand women's boxing.

The second person from New Zealand to win the IBF World title was Tauranga-born Australian Cherneka Johnson (Ngāti Ranginui). Johnson won the IBF World Super Bantamweight title in April 2022 in Melbourne, Australia, against Mexican boxer Melissa Esquivel. She became the first Maori boxer to successfully defend a boxing world title in October last year when defeating Susie Ramadan.

This fight is historic for many reasons, including the first World title between two New Zealand-born boxers and Maori vs Pasifika World title. If either boxer wins, it will bring its own special moment, not only because it is a major world title. One thing is for sure we are guaranteed a fourth New Zealand world women's champion.

Lani Daniels (Te Tai Tokerau, Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi, Te Orewai) is from the small town of Pīpīwai in Northland. This will be Daniels's second attempt at the world title, with the first being against retired WBO Light Heavyweight world champion Geovana Peres. A win for Daniels will make her the third Maori to win a boxing world title and the second Northland boxer to bring the World title to the region.

Alrie Meleisea (Samoa) was born and raised in Auckland, New Zealand, training at Red Line Combat Academy on the North Shore. Meleisea heritage is important to her, which you can see with the traditional Samoan tattoos on her body which she got at a young age. If Meleisea wins the world title, she will become the third Samoan World champion and the first-ever Samoan Women's world champion. The first two are WBA World Middleweight champion Maselino Masoe who won in 2004, and of course, WBO World Heavyweight champion Joseph Parker who won in 2016.

The World title fight will happen on the 27th of May on the North Shore, Auckland Eventfinda Stadium. The event will be promoted by Vasco Kovacevic at Red Line Combat Academy (RLCA). Tickets will be on sale over the next couple of weeks, with GA and Corporate tables available. More information to be announced in the coming weeks.

# SEQUITA HEMINGWAY IN TALKS FOR REMATCH AGAINST BOXER WHO IS GOING FOR WORLD TITLE



**WBA world-ranked boxer Sequita Hemingway is currently in negotiations to have a rematch against Lani Daniels in March. Daniels themselves is also in negotiations for a major world title fight in May.**

Hemingway ranked 5th in the WBA and Boxrec, has just come off two losses against Lani Daniels from April and Alrie Meleisea for a New Zealand Heavyweight title back in December. Now that Daniels and Meleisea both have wins over Hemingway, they are in negotiations for a world title fight in Auckland in May.

Lani Daniels from Pipiwai, Northland, has expressed interest in having one more fight before her possible historic New Zealander vs New Zealander, Maori vs Samoa World title fight. Not only does Hemingway express interest in a rematch against Daniels, but a win for Hemingway could also put her back on track for World title status and put Daniels in the back of the line. Furthermore, a win for Hemingway would create an opportunity to turn into a trilogy.

If the fight does happen and Hemingway wins, She would need at least two more wins for a possible world title contendership. Negotiations are taking place with Aucklands Promoter Craig Thomson, who has been a professional boxing promoter in New Zealand for 16 years, with this possibly being his 60th event.

Further details are yet to be released, including venue, how many rounds, weight division, or even title. Two possible dates are on the table for the fight. The 10th or 11th of March, but the 10th is the preferred date, with it likely to occur in Auckland.

Sequita Hemingway is already in fight camp, in case the fight gets confirmed, where Lani Daniels will be starting next week. If Daniels's fight does not happen, a large selection of boxers, including Sarah Long, Nailini Helu, Tessa Tualevao, Ashley Campbell and Tinta Smith, could take her place. However, a win over Helu and Long would be a significant win that could improve her rankings.

Before Hemingway's fight against Alrie Meleisea, Sarah Long's management contacted the Hemingways team to discuss a possible match. Sarah Long is a former World Ranked boxer, ranked 8th in WBC back in 2021. Long was also a former New Zealand Heavyweight champion when she won the title in 2018.

Nailini Helu is currently ranked 7th in the Super Middleweight division, peaking in her career. Helu has had four attempts in her career to win a professional boxing title but won a South Pacific title in 2022 in her fifth attempt. Helu started her career as a Heavyweight before moving to the Super Middleweight division last year.

Lani Daniels will be coming into this fight against Sequita Hemingway as a warm-up fight before her second world title opportunity. Hemingway, who has a professional rugby and rugby league player background, has learnt a lot this past year in her new profession as a professional boxer. Hemingway could have enough skills to shake up the New Zealand Heavyweight division again.

# DANIELLA SMITH TO BE INDUCTED INTO THE HALL OF FAME

The first ever IBF Women's world champion, Northland's own Daniella Smith will be inducted into the International Womens Boxing Hall of Fame.

This year the International Womens Boxing Hall of Fame is an extra special ceremony as it will not only celebrate its 10th year anniversary but the Women's boxing archive network (WBAN) which is known for the women's new website will also be celebrating its 25-year anniversary. Both are created by retired legendary boxer Sue Fox.

For the past 5 years, New Zealand boxing writer Benjamin Watt has been nominating Daniella Smith to be inducted into the hall of fame. Today he got to inform Daniella Smith that she will be inducted this October into the IWBHF.

The only downside of the event is due to it being a womens boxing event, the organisers don't get enough sponsorship. Daniella Smith will be guaranteed to be inducted, but she will have to pay for her own flights and accommodation if she wants to be inducted in person in Las Vegas.

Daniella Smith (Ngāpuhi) was a true trailblazer for women's boxing in New Zealand. Before making her professional debut in 2005, she was already a four-time New Zealand amateur champion. She also won the Oceania title which qualified her to compete at the 2002 World Championships in Turkey.

Just a year after debuting, she won her first New Zealand national title as a professional, becoming the second woman ever to win a New Zealand professional title. She won her second New Zealand title in 2008, becoming the first female to win two New Zealand titles. This was history-making as she set the record for most New Zealand titles for a women boxer which did not get broken until 14 years after she won the title.

In 2007 Smith was part of history when she fought the first-ever South African woman boxer to turn pro. South African Sandra Almeida fought Daniella Smith at the Sky City Convention Centre. Daniella Smith won the fight by an easy Decision. This is an important part of South Africa's boxing history, not only for this debut, but also later in Smith Career.

In 2010 she received an opportunity to fight for the first-ever IBF World womens title in Germany. Before she fought for the title, she fought in a warm-up fight two months before the title shot against a former world title contender, Argentina Gabriela Marcela Zapata. Smith not only won the

fight, she dominated her opponent, proving she was ready to take on the world.

In November 2010, she took on undefeated Jennifer Retzke for the inaugural IBF Women Welterweight title. Retzke had the advantage of being in her hometown in Germany. Two of the scorecards were very close, however, Smith knocked down her opponent in the 8th round which helped. Smith won the fight by unanimous decision becoming the first Maori world boxing champion and the first New Zealand women's world boxing champion.

In June 2011, Smith lost her IBF World title in South Africa against undefeated boxer Noni Tenge. Smith was again an important part of South Africa's boxing history, not only in 2007 but now for South Africa's first women's world champion. Daniella Smith had her final fight in December 2014 when she fought Gentine Lupi for the New Zealand title. Unfortunately, Gentiane Lupi won the fight.

Since retirement, Daniella Smith has become a boxing trainer for corporate, amateur and professional boxing. She is also a promoter for corporate boxing to raise money for multiple charities. In 2012 alone she raised over \$150,000 for prostate cancer.

Daniella Smith has created a massive legacy for women boxing to follow. Without her career, we wouldn't have amazing boxers like WBO World champion Geovana Peres, IBF World Champion Chernetka Johnson, Northland boxer Lani Daniels and Northland boxer Mea Motu. Here are Daniella Smith accomplishments

## Titles

New Zealand National (NZPBA version) Super Welterweight title (2006)  
New Zealand National (NZPBA version) Welterweight title (2008)

## Awards

New Zealand Maori Sports Awards scholarship (2002)  
Northland Maori Sportswoman of the Year (2007)  
New Zealand Boxing Hall of fame (2019)

Daniella Smith would finish her career with a record of 34 - 6 (Amateur) and 13 - 6 (Professional).

ARGENTINA



# Champion in three divisions

BY IRENE DESERTI

Debora "La Gurisa" Dionicius continues to write the great history of women's boxing in Argentina. After her defeat against her compatriot Jorgelina Guanini in 2018, where she lost her IBF super flyweight crown, Dionicius' career suffered a long sporting break that made us think that being crowned world champion again was an almost impossible goal. .

However, with that gift of resistance that champions are born with, "La Gurisa" came back stronger than ever.

The first step in this triumphant return was taken in 2021, when she defeated Marcela "La Tigresa" Acuña, her idol in boxing. It was a dream come true for Debora under the sky of the legendary Luna Park, which also came back to life after several years of absence from boxing within its walls. Here she won her second world title, the interim WBO featherweight crown, a belt that she would unfairly lose at the hands of the judges with the Argentinian Brenda Carabajal in 2022.

However, the rematch with Acuña was not long in coming, and hours before the Christmas festivities, Debora categorically beat her idol again, making this "second wind" evident in her career as a professional. The golden brooch for her was to be crowned in a third weight division, the super bantamweight, hanging on her waist the absolute WBO belt.



Now, it is her turn to defend what she has won in distant lands, more precisely in France, where she will have to face the local Segolene "The Majestic" Lefebvre. Curiously, weeks before the Acuña-Dionicius 2 lawsuit, some pages reported that said title had been withdrawn from the French woman without much explanation. That is why, for Lefebvre, this fight will have a very special emotional component: trying to recover what was taken from him.

This great combat, with a reserved forecast, will be a true duel of styles. She will have an appointment on April 29 in Douai and it will be a unique opportunity for the Argentine to shine abroad, as she already did once before Simona Galassi, "La Romagna Queen". For that, she will have to defeat a fierce Lefebvre, with great boxing intelligence and fast offensives, appealing to all that experience that she has forged both in the amateur and professional spheres.

AFRICA



# KENYAN SARAH ACHIENG RETAIN HER COMMONWEALTH TITLE.

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By Fight Gist  
Photographs by Fight Gist



Sarah "Angel of War" Achieng (15-2-0-8KOs) Stopped Chiedza "The Queen" Tiger Homakoma in round 8 via Technical Knock out.

To improve record to (15-2-0-8KOs) and ranked 5th in the world in her weight category.

The Bondo-born female boxer Achieng, had once topped up her training at the dusty Kariobangi Social Hall for over three months to the fight and had warned the Zimbabwean, Homakoma to expect little from the fight as she vowed to retain her Commonwealth title for another year. "The belt is going nowhere, the title is remaining here,"

Achieng dominated every round from the beginning of the fight and forced the referee to wave it off in round eight to prevent more punishment on Homakoma. "We are glad that our strategy for the fight worked out" said Achieng.

Achieng captured the vacant female Commonwealth Super-lightweight title back in October, 2021 after defeating Malawi's Anisha Basheel by Unanimous decision at Nairobi in Kenya.

"I have done enough training, I feel my body is in great shape, I'm ready to punch to glory.

Achieng now eye the WBC and IBF title in 2023. "Next year, I'm planning to go for other belts like the WBC and the IBF," the former Universal Boxing Organisation (UBO) InterContinental female lightweight champion underlined.

"Together with my coach, Priest Analo, we have come up with a game plan that will help us retain the belt".

"From here, I'm going to start thorough preparations for the the IBF title to be staged in Belgium in February," Achieng' added.

On Friday night, december 16th, 2022, Achieng successfully defended her Commonwealth Boxing Council Super Lightweight belt against Zimbabwean Chiedza "The Queen Tiger" Homakoma at Charter Hall in Nairobi, Kenya.



# THE LINEAL WORLD CHAMPIONS

## SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT: FRANCHON CREWS DEZURN

UD10 Elin Cederroos (Vacant Championship) - April 30th, 2022



## MIDDLEWEIGHT: CLARESSA SHIELDS

UD10 Christina Hammer (Vacant Championship) - April 13th, 2019

## JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT: CLARESSA SHIELDS

UD10 Marie Eve Dicaire (Vacant Championship) - March 5th, 2021

## WELTERWEIGHT : JESSICA MCCASKILL

UD10 Cecilia Braekhus (Vacant Championship) - March 13th, 2021

## JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT: CHANTELE CAMERON

UD10 Mary McGee (Vacant Championship) - October 30th, 2021

## LIGHTWEIGHT: KATIE TAYLOR

MD10 Delfine Persoon (Vacant Championship) - June 1st, 2019

## JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT: ALYCIA BAUMGARDNER

SD10 Mikaela Mayer (Vacant Championship) - October 15th, 2022

## FLYWEIGHT: MARLEN ESPARZA

UD10 Naoko Fujioka (Vacant Championship) - April 9th, 2022

## JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT: JESSICA NERY PLATA

UD10 Kim Clavel (Vacant Championship) - January 14th, 2023



# **TOP 10**

## **POUND-FOR-POUND**

- 1 CLARESSA SHIELDS**
- 2 KATIE TAYLOR**
- 3 AMANDA SERRANO**
- 4 CHANTELE CAMERON**
- 5 SENEISA ESTRADA**
- 6 ALYCIA BAUMGARDNER**
- 7 JESSICA MCCASKILL**
- 8 DELFINE PERSON**
- 9 MARLEN ESPARZA**
- 10 YULIAHN LUNA AVILA**

# DIVISIONAL RANKINGS

## ATOMWEIGHT

- 1 MONSERRAT ALARCON**
- 2 MIKA IWAKAWA**
- 3 YUKO KUROKI**
- 4 NANAE SUZUKI**
- 5 FABIANA BYTYQI**

## STRAWWEIGHT

- 1 SENEISA ESTRADA**
- 2 YOKASTA VALLE**
- 3 TINA RUPPRECHT**
- 4 KATIA GUTIERREZ**
- 5 THI THUN NHI NGUYEN**

## JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

WORLD CHAMPION JESSICA PLATA

- 1 KIM CLAVEL**
- 2 EVELIN BERMUDEZ**
- 3 TENKAI TSUNAMI**
- 4 YESICA BOPP**
- 5 TANIA ENRIQUEZ**

## FLYWEIGHT

WORLD CHAMPION MARLEN ESPARZA

- 1 ARELY MUCINO**
- 2 KENIA ENRIQUEZ**
- 3 NAOKO FUJIOKA**
- 4 GABRIELA ALANIZ**
- 5 LEONELA YUDICA**

## JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

- 1 MICAELA LUJAN**
- 2 ASLEY MAGIAS**
- 3 LOURDES JUAREZ**
- 4 DIANA FERNANDEZ**
- 5 YESSICA CHAVEZ**

## BANTAMWEIGHT

- 1 YULIHAN LUNA AVILA**
- 2 DINA THORSLUND**
- 3 EBANIE BRIDGES**
- 4 NINA HUGHES**
- 5 MELISSA ODESSA PARKER**

## JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

- 1 MAYERLIN RIVAS**
- 2 YAMILETH MERCADO**
- 3 SEGOLENE LEFEBVRE**
- 4 CHERNEKA JOHNSON**
- 5 ELLIE SCOTNEY**

## FEATHERWEIGHT

- 1 AMANDA SERRANO**
- 2 ERIKA CRUZ HERNANDEZ**
- 3 SARAH MAHFOUD**
- 4 BRENDA CARABAJAL**
- 5 NINA MEINKE**

# DIVISIONAL RANKINGS

## JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

WORLD CHAMPION ALYCIA BAUMGARDNER

- 1 MIKAELA MAYER**
- 2 MAIVA HAMADOUCHE**
- 3 DELFINE PERSOON**
- 4 HYUN CHOI**
- 5 ELHEM MEKHALED**

## LIGHTWEIGHT

WORLD CHAMPION KATIE TAYLOR

- 1 AMANDA SERRANO**
- 2 ESTELLE MOSSELY**
- 3 MELISSA ST VIL**
- 4 YANINA LESCANO**
- 5 MARIA MONEO**

## JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

WORLD CHAMPION CHANTELE CAMERON

- 1 MARY MCGEE**
- 2 KALI REIS**
- 3 SANDY RYAN**
- 4 VICTORIA BUSTOS**
- 5 JESSICA CAMARA**

## WELTERWEIGHT

WORLD CHAMPION JESSICA MCCASKILL

- 1 LAYLA MCCARTER**
- 2 IVANA HABAZIN**
- 3 MARIE HOULE**
- 4 MARIE HOULE**
- 5 DEE ALLEN**

## JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

WORLD CHAMPION CLARESSA SHIELDS

- 1 NATASHA JONES**
- 2 TERRI HARPER**
- 3 MARIE EVE DICAIRE**
- 4 FEMKE HERMANS**
- 5 MARY SPENCER**

## MIDDLEWEIGHT

WORLD CHAMPION CLARESSA SHIELDS

- 1 SAVANNAH MARSHALL**
- 2 EMA KOZIN**
- 3 MARICELA CORNEIO**
- 4 FEMKE HERMANS**
- 5 MAPULE NGUBANE**

## SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

WORLD CHAMPION FRANCHON CREWS DEZURN

- 1 CHRISTINA HAMMER**
- 2 ELIN CEDERROOS**
- 3 SHADASIA GREEN**
- 4 SANNA TURUNEN**
- 5 DIANA CASTRO**

## HEAVYWEIGHT

- 1 HANNA GABRIELS**
- 2 OXANDIA CASTILLO**
- 3 LANI DANIELS**
- 4 ALRIE MELEISEA**
- 5 SEQUITA HEMINGWAY**