

Fame, Fortune, and Fury—Female Style

Two KC area women are rising stars in the exciting world of female boxing

By: Danny Campbell

In America boxing has always been considered a macho sport. But as we grow closer to the next millennium, it is rapidly becoming known as a "Female

"I was intimidated once by this lady who was a huge bodybuilder," said Anani. "I wanted to learn how to defend myself and had at one time considered martial arts. Barry, who had a heavy bag hanging in his living room said he would teach me how to defend myself, and I started going over to his house for workouts on the bag every night."

Anani's moving away to Jamaica didn't divert Becker from his dream of seeing her become the best woman boxer on the planet. He flew to Jamaica and presented Anani with a magazine article about Christy Martin and her success, persuading Anani to return to the States and continue her boxing career — this time in the confines of the arenas and ballrooms of the casinos instead of the living room of his apartment.

Anani's day is consumed with working out. She begins each day at 5:30 a.m. with swimming, lifting weights and stretching in the afternoon, and concludes her day with an appearance at the boxing gym around 4:30 p.m. where she spends approximately three hours. In between workouts she stays busy with her son, Matthew, who she considers her biggest accomplishment in life.

Two years have passed since Jamaica. Anani recently returned from her great win over Martin. "I never imagined I would

do something like this with my life," said Anani. "My family was happy, but my mother keeps wondering when am I going to become a nurse or something like that."

The reaction Anani receives from other women is very positive. "Women are really for it. They don't even know there is such a thing as women's boxing. I would say ninety percent of the population is unaware that women are in the sport of boxing."

Mary Ortega found the sport through a different avenue. Having played soccer and growing up in Pleasant Valley, Mo., she was accustomed to playing with dolls, and being dressed in dresses most of her life. "When I was fifteen years old my sister and I wanted to do something other than play soccer," said Ortega. "We went over to Brian's house because we

heard he had a boxing gym in his basement. From the first day I fell in love with the sport."

After a successful amateur career of twelve fights, winning ten, she decided to turn pro where she would be able to gain more boxing exposure. "I had been in several fights with boy's growing up," said Ortega, "so fighting another woman did not scare me in the least."

In her last pro fight Ortega sold over one hundred and twenty tickets to her family and friends. "My family really supports me and my friends think that it's real cool," she said, "I just want people to think of me as a person who gave it everything, no matter what."

Anani dreams of healing people with the therapeutic touch of her hands, adding,

"Touch, Yoga, anything that can help the body, spirit, and mind... that is what is important in life."



photo courtesy Danny Campbell

Sumya Anani never imagined she would do something like this with her life

But for now, knocking people out is what is important in both these young women's lives.



photo courtesy Danny Campbell

Mary Ortega fell in love with the sport of boxing "from the first day."

Fury." In Kansas City two up and coming boxers of the female gender are rapidly taking over the sport.

Mary Ortega, (9-0, 3 KO's) and Sumya Anani, (12-0, 9 KO's) pronounced (Sue-my-ah Ah-naw-nee) have swept upon the Kansas City pugilistic market with a profound effect. Anani recently upset Christy Martin (who many consider the best woman boxer in the history of the sport), and with boxing at its highest peak in the metropolitan area, Ortega, at eighteen years of age, has secured the reputation as the most popular female boxer in the Kansas City market.

Both boxers started their careers in the privacy of their friends' homes: Anani in the living room of her boyfriend, Barry Becker, and Ortega in the basement of her boxing coach, Brian Spicer.

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