

# Women's boxing captures hearts of men

**Beaumont crowd reacts positively to the three bouts won by KC area female fighters.**

By DAVID BOYCE

Staff Writer

For a brief moment in the third round, a near-capacity crowd at the Beaumont Club in Westport chanted, "Julie," "Julie," "Julie."

"It brings tears to my eyes," said Julie's husband, Thor Ardwin.

And just think: Kansas City's Julie Ardwin was the root of the emotional outburst in her professional debut.

The excitement her bout brought Monday

night against Springfield's Rhonda England made her comparable to Kansas City's favorite, Craig "Kid Fire" Cummings.

Judging by the crowd's response to the three female fights on the six-bout card, women's boxing is here to stay in Kansas City.

Women's boxing, in fact, has the same trappings of men's bouts, including controversial decisions.

After Ardwin scored a four-round unanimous decision over England, England's trainer Roni Lewis yelled a few words at promoter Danny Campbell.

"We did a sweep tonight," Lewis said.

In Lewis' mind, all three fighters he brought from Springfield beat all three of the Kansas City area fighters.

"Hometown decisions," he said. "If you lose, you lost. When you get a bad decision, it breaks your spirits. We will be back."

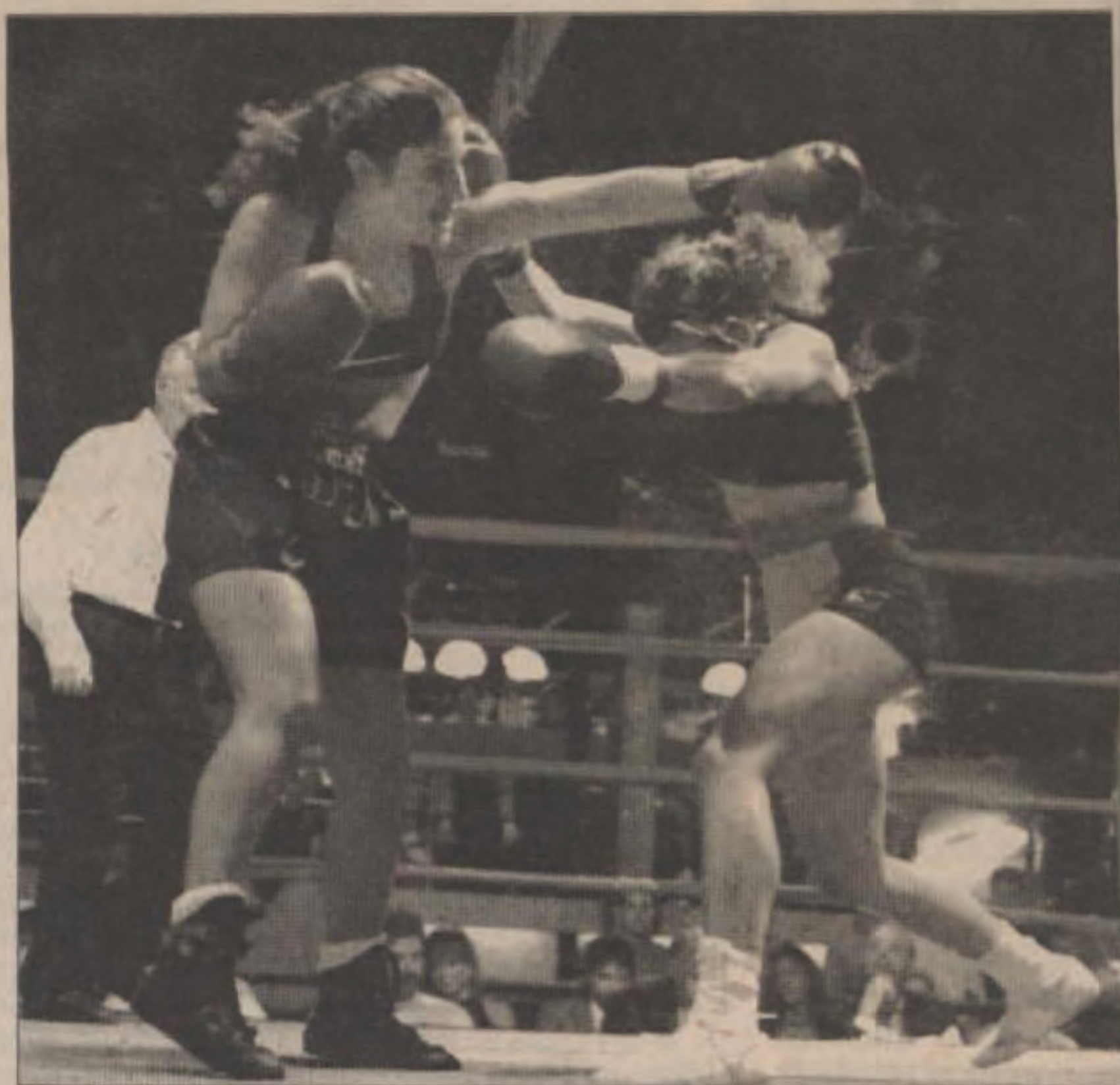
Ardwin didn't notice Lewis' reaction. The only thing going through her mind was the victory and the crowd shouting her name.

"That was cool," she said. "I'm a woman in the ring, and they still supported me."

"It's nice to have the whole room behind me. When you have the whole room behind you, you can't lose."

The Beaumont crowd was behind every women's bout. In the first fight, Sumya Anani of Shawnee scored a four-round unanimous decision over Jessica Breitfelder.

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RICH SUGG/The Star

Jessica Breitfelder (left) went over the top of a ducking Sumya Anani during their bout Monday night at the Beaumont Club in Westport. Anani, from Shawnee, won a unanimous decision. Breitfelder is from Springfield.

## Fans like women's bouts

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It was Anani's first professional bout, which showed. Both fighters tended to stick their heads down and swing. The fans hardly cared, considering the non-stop action.

"It was pretty interesting," said Jeff Justus of North Kansas City, who was watching his first women's bout live. "You could tell they were rookies, but they are just like men starting out. They can develop into pretty good fighters."

Robin Calloway, the wife of boxer Rob Calloway, grimaced during the first bout, but she said she was nervous about her husband's bout later on the card.

"The only other woman's fight I've seen was on television," she said. "They looked professional."

"These girls looked green, but they were tough. I couldn't do it."

The main event probably brought the loudest response from a crowd sipping beer and smoking cigars in the packed country music bar.

Jennifer "J.C. from K.C." McCartney knocked down Barbie Phillips once and won a four-round unanimous decision.

"I don't judge them any different," judge Mike Putnam said. "I think their skill level is just as high as the men."

Promoter Campbell, a former

professional boxer, is a believer. This is the first time he has had women boxers in one of his shows.

He acknowledged that most women fighters are at a novice level. He said they don't use much strategy.

But that was fine with him.

"It doesn't take two great fighters to make a great fight," he said. "Two fighters at the same skill level make a great fight."

Jesse "El Torito" Aquino of Kansas City said he didn't mind the hoopla the women's bouts generated.

"They should never let them fight men," he said. "As long as women fight women, it's OK."

"But they are not going to take away from me. I'm going to put on my show even if it's all women."

Aquino did just that, scoring a four-round unanimous decision over Reggie Strickland of Cincinnati in a middleweight bout.

### Other bouts

■ Heavyweight Sean Jegen of Overland Park won a first-round knockout over Gary Jenkins of Independence in a bout scheduled for four rounds.

Light-heavyweight Rob Calloway of St. Joseph won a unanimous decision over Rich Wilson of Indianapolis in six rounds.