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## Women's Boxing's Odd Couple: Yvonne Caples and Elena Reid By David Avila

Intelligence and brutality are two words fleetingly opposite in meaning. But they describe Yvonne Caples who graduated from one of the nation's most prestigious universities and is the reigning IFBA junior flyweight champion.

Caples, a University of California at Berkeley alum, graduated with an English degree several years ago and is using it to batter opponents, not malapropisms. The tall quiet boxer is probably an enigma to her university professors. And there is more to the mysterious Caples.

A few years ago, the mild-mannered female pugilist had two slugfests with the powerful Elena "Baby Doll" Reid. Caples lost the first match, but pulled out a draw in the second.

So what did Caples do after two hard fought wars?

She offered Reid a place to stay.

Now the two roommates are a virtual "Odd Couple" with Caples as Felix Unger to Reid's Oscar Madison. Not that Reid's messy, but she is the antithesis of the calm quiet demeanor of Caples.

"We both have mutual friends and she would come up here to look for fights. So I would see her and we'd say hi and talk a little, but one time she said she was thinking about moving to Las Vegas. I said I have an extra room in my condo and she ended up doing it," said Caples.

Though roommates for several years now, they are as different as the moon and the sun.

"I think Elena is more social and extraverted than me. And there is quite a bit of an age gap. I'm 10 years older than her. I guess it makes a difference," said Caples who teaches high school. "But we get along good and I think she's a great girl and a great fighter."

Reid, a vivacious former cheerleader from Arizona, is on the fast track toward a junior bantamweight world title. Unlike Caples, she speaks her mind and actively seeks publicity and sponsorship without hesitation. She's like a female Bill Veeck.

“Yvonne is such a nice girl. We never see each other even though we’re roommates,” said Reid, who is the number one ranked junior bantamweight and recently beat Linda Tendberg for the second consecutive time. “But she is the nicest person, And she’s a great fighter too.”

It’s amazing that two former opponents like Reid and Caples could room together. One could imagine a fight breaking out in the bathroom, but not with these two.

Reid is often with her boyfriend, a boxing trainer and Caples usually is with her own boyfriend who is also a fighter. Otherwise she is working at a Las Vegas high school.

“It’s different,” says Caples, a soft speaking person. “But it helps me pay the bills.”

Despite her quiet demeanor, Caples does not hesitate when offered a fight, regardless of the opposition and the site.

In her short career, she has fought Kim Messer, Wendy Rodriguez, Marilyn Salcido, Para Draine and Germany’s Regina Halmich. It’s a virtual Murderer’s Row when you consider she also fought her roomie twice.

“A lot of people felt I beat Regina Halmich,” said Caples about a loss suffered by decision to Germany’s most popular fighter in that country. “People booed the decision.”

Caples won the IFBA junior flyweight title against Mary Duron in front of that fighter’s home crowd in Orange County. It was a goal she had finally attained after catching the fight bug out of college.

“I had a friend who was a boxer who took me to a gym,” she said, who at the time lived in Berkeley. “Once I started training I knew I wanted to continue.”

Since 1999, Caples has roared through the ranks of pr women fighters despite beginning at an age considered too old for boxing. She’s faced boxers, punchers and speedsters. It’s difficult for her to say who was her toughest opponent.

“I think my toughest in terms of being outboxed was Kim Messer. She’s good, I was just not experienced enough when I fought her in 2000, said Caples. “I had only had two fights when I fought her. Basically it was a close fight. I got tired and she kind of just outhustled me. That’s something I learned.”

But of all the fighters in the world, the one she considers the toughest, lives right down the hallway.

“It’s hard to say, I felt like most of my fights have been tough, but Elena hit the hardest out of all the fighters I fought,” said Caples.

Good thing they're friends.