

## MUAYTHAI



**"A CAPACITY CROWD PROVIDED 360 DEGREES OF SCREAMING SUPPORT, WITH THE FIGHTERS THROWING FEARSOME SHOTS IN ORDER TO WIN."**

The ring was set in front of the palace with a crowd of over 100,000 loyal fans waiting for Thai victory. The changing areas were far from private, with local gamblers and fans gaining access and watching the fighters warm up. The event started with the introduction of the fighters who were all part of the ceremonial candle lighting in honour of the birthday of the King at 19:19 hours, with Denise's six-year-old daughter, **Leah**, taking centre stage.

When the fights started, it was clear that the Thai's had selected opponents to try and nullify the UK fighter's strengths, with Loma not trying to exchange with Denise, but simply utilise a weight advantage in the clinch to wrestle her down. Round one sees Denise initiate an immediate Boxing attack, landing clear jab and crosses to Loma's face, forcing her back to the ropes where Loma clinched for safety and twisted Denise to the ground, landing a good knee midway down. Straight up, Denise attacked down the middle, again forcing Loma back to the ropes where she defended with a left pushkick. The round continued in a similar fashion with Denise landing a great four punch combination towards the end which Loma acknowledged with a nod of the head. A great first round with Denise constantly the aggressor, having great effect with her Boxing.

Round two saw Loma begin with a hard right roundhouse kick, countered by Denise with a barrage of strong punches forcing Loma back to her own corner. The girls both exchanged some elbows this round, but all blocked well and the round continued with Denise stalking Loma around the ring and countering her kicks with well timed jabs leading onto a counter. Denise stabbed in some dangerous high pushkicks that forced Loma to jump back in defence, but the round ended with Loma landing a great right side knee which sent Denise across the ring.

Round three saw the girls touch gloves after earning respect for each other in the first two rounds. A clinch battle followed which saw a good exchange of knees but, again, ends with Loma landing on top of Denise rather than continue to strike. A great kick exchange followed with Denise counter-



The greatest honour for any Muay Thai fighter was bestowed upon the UK's WBC world champion when she was crowned for 'Best Muay Thai Technique' at **The Kings Cup** by Muay Thai ambassador, **Songchai**. Both **Denise Mellor** and **Sally McCarthy** [Champions Gym, Bournemouth] were officially invited to fight top Thai opposition at the **OneSongchai Kings Cup** event based in Sanamalueg Palace Grounds on the Kings birthday, December 5th 2012. Thailand is one of the most patriotic countries in the world and the 85th birthday of their monarch was an event that everyone turned out to see, with over 100,000 in the palace grounds alone.

Prior to the competition day, the UK team had witnessed what a high profile event this would be at the press conference at the **Royal Palace Hotel** on December 3th which was attended by over six live TV stations and featured Muay Thai legend, **Ramon Dekkers**, as guest of honour. The following day every national newspaper carried features on the upcoming event - it was clear that Muay Thai was the national sport and the **OneSongchai** event was the *creme de la creme* of Muay Thai.

**Lorne Castle** reports on two of his fighters, **Denise Mellor** and **Sally McCarthy**, who both fought at the prestigious **Kings Birthday** tournament in Thailand last December.

# ONESONGCHAI KINGS CUP

The UK team was rewarded with a VIP ringside and behind the scenes trip to **Rajadamnern Stadium** for the **OneSongchai** event (they host two events there a month) where the reality of Muay Thai can be seen. A capacity crowd provided 360 degrees of screaming support, with the fighters throwing fearsome shots in order to win. The difference in a Thai warming up and a Western fighter warming up is clear in the dressing rooms - no pads hit, no shadow boxing, just wrapping hands, stretching and mentally preparing for the battle. The fights gave Sally and Denise a great chance to get in to the fight spirit for what was to come.

Thailand favours same-day weigh-ins, with the weigh-in taking place at 6am on the morning of the event. Sally and her opponent both weighed in within the agreed limit, with Sally at 114lbs and **Nonggift** at 110.5lbs. Denise was facing **Loma Sitjaatou** for the **100lbs S1 Female Title** following Denise's crushing win over her teammate in July for the **WBC Under 45kg World Title**. Denise, as usual, weighed in under the limit at 98lbs - with Loma originally stepping on at 104lbs. Three attempts later, after work with a sweat suit, she cut down to the 100lbs limit, but was physically a stockier fighter.





ing Loma's kicks with fast kicks of her own, constantly being first to land the jab when Loma tried to throw a hard kick.

Round four saw Denise counter Loma's round-kicks by catching and throwing the right cross, effective several times in the round - one time Denise managed to continue with a left hook and knee combination. When in the clinch, Denise dropped her weight meaning that, although she can't throw effective knees, she cannot be turned to the floor either, which was Loma's goal.

Round five and Denise started off with a great left pushkick that landed mid-chest on Loma and was followed with some aggressive Boxing during the round. After five fantastic rounds of action, the judges awarded the *S1 Belt* to Loma, but the *Best Muaythai Fighter of the Night* was awarded to Denise by Songchai and **Dr. JarinSuankaew**, President of **King Rama IX** - drawing comparisons to Ramon Dekkers' fights of the '90s where he would have to knock out his Thai opponents to win.

**Sally McCarthy** faced an experienced Thai opponent in **NonggiftOrOneched** - an aggressive counterattacker known for being great with left and right side striking. The opening 30

seconds of the first round saw both girls land high roundhouse kicks to the head in an attempt to stamp their dominance. As the rounds progressed, Nonggift managed to infuriate Sally into missing distance on a couple of shots and then countered with jumping roundhouses and knees, much to the crowd's delight. This only spurred Sally on to utilise moves that she has not tried since her junior days and she landed a scissor pushkick, knowing that Nonggift would evade back from the first fake, allowing the second to land.

Round four saw Sally land a clean backfist from an evaded roundhouse kick, but Nonggift took it strongly and continued with her attacks. Again going to points, the judges awarded a deserved victory to Nonggift.

The crowning moment of the event was when Denise was awarded *Best Muaythai Technique* from Songchai for the whole event. In the presentation speech, they commended Denise on perfect Boxing, elbow, knee and kick technique and Dr.JarinSuankaew, President of King Rama IX, presented Denise with the award, making her the first female and only UK fighter to ever receive this accolade - and in the same year that she won the *WBC Muaythai* title - it surely is a golden year for Denise. The whole UK team



was honoured to be involved in such a great event and look forward to many more.

Looking towards 2013, Denise has already stated her interest to compete again, but knowing the weight advantages, she will look to cut to the minimum weight that Thai females fight at, which is 96lbs, knowing that a KO would be the only way to guarantee victory, but at least she would face a same weight opponent. Sally is eager to return after taking a couple of rounds to ease into her flow, due in part to the sheer size of the crowd. Now this is known, we all believe a return would be more fruitful. ■ **LORNE CASTLE**

**ONE SONGCHAI  
KINGS CUP**