

Benny Urquidez

Benny Urquidez (born June 20, 1952) is an American kickboxer, martial arts choreographer and actor. Nicknamed The Jet, Urquidez was a non-contact karate competitor who later pioneered full-contact fighting in the USA. He made the transition from point to full-contact karate in 1974 – the year of its inception in the US – frequently fighting in bouts where the rules were ambiguous and contrasts in styles were dramatic.

Between 1974 and 1993, he amassed a record of 58-0-0 (win-loss-draw) with 49 knockouts and two controversial no-contests. Black Belt Magazine voted Urquidez "Fighter of the Year" in 1978.

Biography

Urquidez was born in Los Angeles California, the son of a wrestling mother and a boxing father, and is descended from Spaniards and Amerindians. He began competing in 1958, at the age of five, in "peewee" boxing in Los Angeles. This was followed by martial arts instruction at the age of 8, for which his first formal teacher was Bill Ryusaki. He received his black belt at the age of 14, a feat which was highly unusual during the 1960s. He entered the point circuit in 1964, and earned the reputation as an extremely colorful fighter. In the 1973 Internationals, he fought John Natividad in one of the greatest non-contact bouts in history. He also competed in England and Belgium as a member of Ed Parker's 1974 US team. Also, in 1974, he began his move away from the non-contact style by entering and winning the World Series of Martial Arts Championship, which was effectively a tough-man contest with few rules. Over the next two decades he fought under various different kickboxing organizations (NKL, WPKO, PKA, WKA, AJKBA, KATOGL, NJPW and MTN) to amass a record of 58 wins with no losses. There is a good deal of controversy surrounding this record.

In 1977, Urquidez travelled to Japan for the first time and fought under WKA rules which included leg kicks. In his first fight he defeated Katsuyuki Suzuki by 6th round KO (August 1977). To avenge this loss, the undefeated fighter Kunimatsu Okau came out of retirement to challenge Urquidez. The result was another win for Urquidez, this time by 4th round KO (November 1977).

In 1993, Urquidez retired from kickboxing competition. At that point he had won six world championships. From that time on, he devoted himself to acting and teaching kick boxing and martial arts choreography. For the latter he has written various books and produced instructional videos.

Urquidez has obtained black belts in nine styles: judo, kempo, shotokan, taekwondo, lima lama, white crane kung fu, jujutsu, aikido, and karate. He is the founder of Ukidokan Karate. Today, he continues to teach at "The Jets Gym" in North Hollywood, California.

Controversial Fight Decisions

Urquidez fought in three bouts which were eventually ruled no-contest (NC). The first, in Los Angeles in March 1977, was a nine-round NC (WKA) against Thai boxer Narongnoi Kiatbandit. The second and most controversial fight was against another Thai fighter, Prayuth (sometimes spelled Prayoud) Sittiboonlert in August 1978 in Tokyo, Japan. The fight was ruled a six-round NC (KATOGL). Finally, Urquidez fought to a seven-round NC (WKA) against Billye Jackson in Palm Beach, Florida. The no-contest status of these fights has been corroborated in print by Paul Maslak (Chief Administrator of the Star System).

Movie Roles

Urquidez played a leading role in various martial art movies. The first was Force: Five (1981) starring Joe Lewis and Bong Soo Han. Later, he made two movies with Jackie Chan: Wheels on Meals (1984) and Dragons Forever (1988), where he fights against the characters played by Chan, Sammo Hung and Yuen Biao, with Urquidez as a tough opponent who is defeated in the climactic fight scenes of both movies. His final fight with Chan in Wheels on Meals is considered to be one of the finest fights of the movie genre. Urquidez also starred in the film Grosse Pointe Blank as a hitman sent to kill a character played by John Cusack (whom Urquidez trained in the western style of kickboxing).