

# Santa Clarita Teens Shine at World Championship of French Kickboxing

Over the course of June 22nd, 23rd, and 24th, history was made as six talented teenagers from Santa Clarita, California, competed in the prestigious World Championship of French Kickboxing in Podcetrtek, Slovenia. This landmark event marked the first time the United States was represented at the Youth World Championship, with all six exceptional competitors hailing from the Ekata Training Center in Santa Clarita.

The sport of Savate, known as French Kickboxing, boasts a massive following in Europe, with thousands of participants participating in the sport. Top level competitors from 26 countries converged at the championship in Slovenia. Many of the participants were seasoned fighters, having earned accolades with 40, 50, and even 70 fights under their belts. Remarkably, our Santa Clarita teens, under the guidance of their coach JoAnn Wabisca, exhibited remarkable skills and determination, holding their own against formidable opponents despite having minimal experience in comparison.

In a proud moment for the United States, one of our own teens secured the first-ever gold medal in the country's history in this sport. Logan Dino, aged 15, showcased her exceptional abilities and brought home the coveted gold medal, a testament to her relentless dedication and hard work.

The success of the U.S. team extended beyond the gold medal triumph. Siena McCord, aged 14, earned a well-deserved silver medal, displaying extraordinary talent and tenacity. Lily Wright, aged 17, was honored with the "Fair Play" award, a recognition of her outstanding sportsmanship and respect for her opponents. Christopher Thompson, age 16, Luiz Beltran, Jr., age 16, and Arin Lai, age 15, were also fierce competitors. These achievements

are a testament to the commitment and dedication of these young athletes and their coach, JoAnn Wabisca, who has been instrumental in shaping their skills and character.



(L-R) Lily Wright, Logan Dio, Arin Lai, Medal winners from team U.S.A.



Logan on her way to the gold!

Beyond the individual accolades, the entire U.S. team impressed with their sportsmanship, positive attitudes, and unwavering courage. As a result of their exemplary performance, the team received invitations to participate in eight more national open competitions from across the globe. This recognition speaks volumes about the potential and promise these teens hold, and it is a clear indication of the bright future that awaits them.

Credit must also be given to the Ekata teens' families, who displayed unwavering support throughout this journey. Despite the challenges posed by three trips to Europe for training and the championship, these families stood firmly behind their children's dreams, investing their time, effort, and resources. They showed incredible resilience, embodying the Ekata Training Center's motto: "Strong Body, Strong Mind, Strong Family."

It is important to recognize the significant role played by the head coach and president of the US Savate Federation, JoAnn Wabisca, and assistant coach and secretary, Ed Monaghan. Their guidance and mentorship have been instrumental in shaping these young athletes into champions. Their passion for the sport and unwavering commitment to their students' growth have been vital in achieving this unprecedented success.

Furthermore, the Santa Clarita community's support was notable, with local businesses contributing \$750 in donations to support the US team. However, the families bore the remaining financial burden, covering expenses such as uniforms, transportation, and training. Their dedication and sacrifices deserve commendation and gratitude.

In conclusion, the achievements of these six Santa Clarita teens at the World Championship of French

Kickboxing are a source of immense pride for their families, the Ekata Training Center, and the entire United States. Their remarkable performance has placed the USA on the international Savate map and has inspired other young athletes to strive for greatness. Let us celebrate their success, recognize their hard work, and continue supporting the growth of promising talent in our community. Together, we can foster a culture that champions perseverance, sportsmanship, and determination in the pursuit of excellence.

Ekata Training Center is located at 27831 Smyth Drive in Valencia, for more information please contact them at 661-255-1114.



(L-R) Lily Wright, Arin Lai, Chris Thompson Jr, JoAnn Wabisca, Ed Monaghan, Sienna McCord, Luis Beltran Jr, Logan Dino



Team U.S.A. and Families from Ekata Training Center in Valencia