

Shelby Walker Fights for Title in Providence

Written by Robert Ecksel
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The fighter Shelby "Girl" Walker is 5'7" tall, weighs 130 pounds, and her record is 7-4-1 (6 KOs). On August 26 in Providence, RI, Walker challenges Jaime "Hurricane" Clampitt (15-3-1, 6 KOs) for the vacant IBWF lightweight title.

Shelby Walker was born in Kingsville, Texas on February 27, 1975 and was athletic as a kid. She told me she was "sort of a tomboy." Shelby joined the army at 18 and served five years in the military.

She was honorably discharged from the service and tried her hand at college. "But I needed more," said the lightweight contender. "So I started training for mixed martial arts. It's also known as Ultimate Fighting." Shelby Walker paused. "Cage fighting, it's called sometimes."

Her background in Brazilian jiu jitsu and kickboxing was good training for MMA, "but I wanted to make a career out of fighting and it was impossible to do at the mixed martial arts fights, because there weren't enough opponents," Walker said, "and there weren't enough opportunities."

So Shelby looked to the sweet science.

"I met a promoter in Indiana who offered me a six-fight deal, on a small show, just boxing. So I moved to Indiana and had my six fights with him, and some others also, until I got recruited to American Top Team."

American Top Team is located in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, where Shelby Walker now lives and trains. I asked her about her trainer, Howard Davis Jr., the 1976 Olympic gold medalist, and how they hooked up.

"Howard Davis Jr. is the boxing coach on Top Team," said Walker. "I had come to Florida for one of their shows, an Absolute Fighting Championship, a mixed martial arts show, and I was training for my world title fight with Emiko Raika. So I asked him if he could help me out and we trained together and he liked my heart and asked me to join the team."

I asked Davis about turning Shelby into a boxer.

"I discussed with her what she wanted to do and [told her] she's got to make a choice," Walker's trainer said, "because if you do one sport you're taking away from the other sport. So she had to make up her mind what she wanted to do. And for right about eight months straight she's been concentrating on boxing."

And how's that going?

"She just came from California about 2½ months ago," Davis said. "She knocked out a very

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tough girl in the sixth round, a Mexican girl out of California, and she showed me a lotta heart. That was our first professional boxing match together and she showed a lot of promise in that fight. She showed me what she was made of. [Since I've been training her] she's developed even more power out of her right hand, she's developed the right hook, and she's developed the defense, something she didn't have before. She's got head movement. She got feet movement now. I tell you, this girl ... you can't get near her."

There are some differences between mixed martial arts and the good old Marquis of Queensberry. I wondered if Shelby could describe them.

"First of all," she said, "in mixed martial arts if you go to the ground, obviously you keep fighting. It involves a lot more than just boxing. It's knees. It's kicks. It's grappling. It's wrestling. The biggest difference is I don't believe you can give as many blows to the head in mixed martial arts. But the ones you do take are with 4 oz. gloves, as opposed to 10 oz. gloves, so it's kinda comparable."

For those who haven't seen her fight, I asked Walker to describe her style.

"I press the action," she said. "I get bored if there's nothing going on. I press the action and I'm a very heavy hitter."

"She's a very determined fighter," Davis added. "She hits very hard with the right hand. I can't see this fight going past five or six rounds. [Clampitt] is a little buzz saw. She comes straight at you – and that's what we want. She doesn't have much defense, takes a lotta punches. So we're working on [Shelby's] jab. You're gonna look for a lotta jabs in this fight, to keep that girl at bay and frustrate her. The jab is going to make her blink. The right hand is going to be right behind that jab. And when that happens, you can say goodnight Irene."

Or, come August 26 in Providence, goodnight Jaime.