

Gracie, Lesnar Win, Ex-NFLer Trounced

Written by David A. Avila
Saturday, 02 June 2007 19:00

LOS ANGELES-Brazil's legendary Royce Gracie gained revenge against his former conqueror, former pro wrestler Brock Lesnar won his pro debut in mixed martial arts and former USC star Johnnie Morton was brutally knocked out in his pro debut and refused a drug test in a strange fight card on Saturday night.

More than 15,000 attended the first MMA event at the Los Angeles Coliseum that was promoted by Fight Entertainment Group, ProElite and Showtime. But attendance fell far below an expected sold out crowd that was televised on pay-per-view.

The main attraction featured a grudge match between Gracie and Sakuraba.

After a seven-year wait to enact revenge on Japan's Kazushi Sakuraba (21-10-1), Brazil's renowned jujitsu master Gracie finally got his victory. But the people booed the chess match fighting that took place for three five-minute rounds.

For fans of the ground war it was grappling heaven. For those who like punching, there were precious few fists flying.

With former pro wrestler Sakuraba facing the legendary Gracie (14-3-3), the action that included strategic arm holds, attempted chokes and take downs was much expected. But to most of the crowd, many seeing their first MMA fight card, it was a snooze fest with little action.

After three rounds of grappling and counter moves, the judges scored it 30-27, 29-28 twice for Brazil's legendary fighter Gracie.

Former NFL and USC star Johnnie Morton returned to his former stomping grounds and promptly got stomped by Africa's Bernard Ackah in 38 seconds of the first round. Morton lay unconscious for what seemed two minutes and left on a stretcher with his neck in a brace. He raised his fist as he was carried on a stretcher to an ambulance.

"Everything is ok," said Armando Garcia executive director for the California State Athletic Commission. "He was taken to the California Hospital for observation."

Later, after most of the fights had been completed, California's Garcia informed TSS that Morton refused to submit to a urine test required by the Commission.

"He (Morton) will not be paid and he is suspended indefinitely," Garcia said. "He refused on the advice of his agent, whatever that means."

Other bouts

Wrestlers prevailed most of the night against punchers and Lesnar was no different in capturing

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his first pro MMA bout with a win by submission due to strikes at 1:09 of the first round against Korea's Min Soo Kim (2-6).

"All my preparation is due to my amateur wrestling," said Lesnar who jumped on top of Kim and forced him to quit by pounding his face with left hands. "I was disappointed I couldn't fight the big-headed guy."

Kim was a replacement for Hong Man Choi who failed medical examinations and was prohibited from fighting by the Commission.

Loma Linda's Mighty Mo found his left hand effective against big Ruben Villareal in a heavyweight bout that ended in a technical knockout at 1:33 of the first round. Mo, whose real name is Siala Siliga, traded punches in the opening seconds of the fight. Both landed but Villareal decided to try and take the fight to the ground. He was unsuccessful. Both traded again with Mo missing a big right but a follow up left hand caught the Sacramento fighter on the cheekbone and down he went. Villareal attempted to drag Mo down with him but failed. Mo pushed him down and fired another left hand that caught Villareal again. Referee Herb Dean stopped the fight.

Korea's Dong Sik Yoon (1-4), a judo expert, lost mini battles inside the ring to Melvin Manhoef (16-4-1) of the Netherlands. But in the second round Yoon, whose right eye was completely closed from punches, caught Manhoef on the ground and worked his way to an arm bar that forced the Dutch fighter to tap out at 1:17 of the second round.

Fast-rising fighter Jake Shields, 170 lbs., had planned to show off his practiced standup skills but Israel's Ido Pariente (4-3) was unable to offer a defense and was choked out from behind at 2:06 of the first round.

"I wanted to show I'm number one in the world," said Shields (19-4-1), who fights out of San Francisco.

Jonathan Wiezorek (12-1) mounted Tim Persey (8-2) from behind and pummeled him at will until referee Herb Dean stopped the fight for a technical knockout at 50 seconds of the second round.

Brazil's JZ Calvancanti (12-1-1) overwhelmed Garden Grove's Nam Pham (12-4) in 26 seconds and pummeled him with punches for a technical knockout in a lightweight bout.

Japan's Hideo Tokoro (18-11-2) faced Great Britain's Brad Pickett (10-4) in another match pitting a submission specialist against a puncher. Once again the submission artist prevailed as he rolled on the ground with Pickett as he grabbed an arm and forced the British fighter to submit at 2:41 of the first round.