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LAS VEGAS-You can't teach an old dog new tricks but Ultimate Fighting Championship heavyweight champion Randy "The Natural" Couture had plenty of surprises in beating Brazil's bigger and younger Gabriel Gonzaga by technical knockout on Saturday.

"I felt if I kept the pressure on I could go from there," Couture said.

Couture, 44, successfully defended his title against Gonzaga (9-2) before more than 11,000 people at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino and established that his championship reign is far from over regardless of age.

In the opening seconds of the fight Gonzaga was stunned by a left hook and was picked up and tossed on his head and never seemed to recover. The Brazilian fighter suffered a gash on the bridge of the nose and Couture aimed for that bloody target for the remainder of the fight.

A right foot by Gonzaga found its mark in the opening seconds of the third round but Couture survived the blow, threw the Brazilian to the ground and pummeled him until referee Herb Dean stopped the fight at 1:37 of the third round.

"He's a tough guy. He hurt me a couple of times," said Couture (16-8). "I had to stay in close range, he's a big strong guy. I had to stay in that half guard so he had no place to go."

Gonzaga was trying to repeat his victory against another MMA legend but fell short. In his last fight he knocked out Mirko "Cro Cop" Filipovic. No luck this time.

In the semi-main event Georges St. Pierre reached back to his experience and put Josh Koscheck (11-2) on his back for most of the three rounds in winning a unanimous decision. Though known as a striker the Canadian fighter took the fight to the floor and used his jujitsu moves to keep the wrestling expert from gaining the upper hand.

Though two judges gave Koscheck the first round in a close round, the next two rounds were all St. Pierre. The judges scored it 30-27, 29-28 twice for St. Pierre.

"It was unbelievable. I come from very far it's like I was just reborn," said St. Pierre (14-2) who was knocked out in his first defense of the UFC welterweight title last March by Matt Serra. "I think it was the best thing that happened in my career. Now I'm back better than ever."

Koscheck was unable to figure out the various arm locks from the former champion and spent most of the last two rounds avoiding submission holds.

"He's a very good wrestler. My goal was to put him out of his comfort zone," St. Pierre said of Koscheck. "I seen a lot of tape of him and I worked with some of the best wrestlers in the world."

St. Pierre asked that UFC hold an MMA card in Canada.

“If UFC comes to my country my people will go crazy,” he said.

California’s Roger Huerta (21-1-1), who was born in Mexico, managed to evade everything jujitsu expert Alberto Crane (8-1) of New Mexico tossed his way. After two back and forth rounds Crane began to sustain punishment from Huerta’s punches. During the third round as Crane grabbed Huerta from behind, Huerta looked up at one of the large screens to see where Crane’s head was and fired elbows. They hit their mark.

“That was the first time we’ve seen somebody use the television prompter,” said Joe Rogan a UFC television analyst.

Huerta used his strength to slip out of Crane’s holds and pounded the New Mexico fighter until referee Steve Mazzagatti stopped the fight for a technical knockout at 1:50 of the third round.

A battle between two top lightweights ended in a unanimous decision for Torrance’s Joe Stevenson over New Jersey’s Kurt Pellegrino (16-3) after three rounds, but the pair of skilled fighters contested each round hotly.

“It was the extra work I did in Big Bear,” Stevenson (33-7) said. “Kurt, that guy is good. He was a great athlete and a great opponent.”

Stevenson worked several days with Riverside’s boxing contender Josesito Lopez in Big Bear and in Riverside. The judges scored it 30-27 twice and 29-28 for Stevenson.

Canada’s Patrick Cote (12-4) dropped Hawaii’s Kendall Grove (10-4) with a right hand behind the left ear and then proceeded to pound the tall and lanky fighter for a technical knockout at 4:45 of the first round.

“That’s what I do I knockout people,” said Cote a former contestant on Ultimate Fighter reality TV show. “I wanted to go for an elbow first.”

In a bloody light heavyweight bout that was heightened by harsh words exchanged during a weigh-in, Brazil’s Renato Sobral (28-7) battered and bloodied Oklahoma’s David Heath (9-2) in the second round. With Sobral on top of him with a headlock, Heath pounded the canvas to signify submission at 3:30 of the round but the Brazilian refused to stop. The referee forced the fighter to halt as Heath lay motionless. The crowd booed the victor for his lack of sportsmanship. After the fight the Brazilian said it was due to the bad words exchanged.

Former UFC heavyweight champion Frank Mir (10-3) took another step back to the title ranks with a first round submission victory over Holland’s Antoni Hardon (5-4) at 1:17 with a Kimura (arm lock) jujitsu hold.

“I finally have my body back,” said Mir, who was in a motorcycle accident and needed more than a year to recover. “I’m back.”

Clay Guida (22-5) didn't let his long hair distract him in taking a split-decision over Marcus Aurelio (14-5) in a lightweight bout. By keeping the fight standing up Guida was able to dictate the pace over Aurelio who tried for a submission to no avail. The judges scored it 30-27 twice for Guida and 29-28 for Aurelio.

In a flashy fight between Brazil's Thales Leites (11-1) and Nebraska's Ryan Jensen (11-2), it was the fighter from Rio de Janiero who emerged on the winning side when he manipulated an arm bar submission from Jensen at 3:27 of the first round.