

## UFC 104: Lyoto Machida Beats Shogun, Velasquez Wins Too

Written by David A. Avila

Saturday, 24 October 2009 19:00

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LOS ANGELES-Lyoto Machida protected his hold on the light heavyweight world title according to the judges, but most fans felt Mauricio "Shogun" Rua won the fight after five tactical and deliberate rounds on Saturday.

People packed the Staples Center that was across the street from a local radio station's attempt to break the world record for most people dancing to Michael Jackson's Thriller at L.A. Live, but many of the more than 16,000 fans in the arena were disappointed that Rua lost to Machida.

All except for Ashton Kutcher, who openly commented to Demi Moore as they passed press row that, "No way Machida lost." The judges agreed with Kutcher.

After five tense and strategic rounds of kicks and counters, Machida won a close unanimous decision but lost two rounds. All three judges scored it 48-47.

The crowd that included Demi Moore and Janet Jackson booed the decision.

"We had three judges," argued Machida after the scores of 48-47 were read.

Rua was the aggressor throughout the tactical fight that saw Machida avoid throwing more than one or two blows at a time. The first round pretty much told the story as the two Brazilians fought standing up.

"Lyoto is a good fighter," said Rua, who is the first UFC fighter to win a round against Machida. "I feel I won the fight. What can I do?"

The challenger continually landed with vicious kicks to the leg and body while Machida scooted to safety.

"I trained for a 1,000 kicks a day," said Rua, who comes from Sao Paolo, Brazil. "That was the main strategy."

Machida used well-timed counters to score with his left cross or with his left knee to the chest. The lack of exchanges left the crowd unsatisfied.

"It was the most physical fight I had in UFC," said Machida, who had a busted lip suffered in the last round during a heavy exchange.

Both fighters raised their hands. In press row the majority of reporters felt Rua had won, but not all.

Velasquez vs. Rothwell

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In the co-main event, Cain Velasquez did better than expected in his Los Angeles debut.

Velasquez (7-0) arrived with most of the crowd support and overwhelmed veteran Ben Rothwell (30-7) with his wrestling skills and ground and pound attack. It didn't take long for the Mexican-American hopeful to show the fans that he was much more than hype. In the same arena where a Mexican heavyweight hopeful had failed to attain success in boxing, another found it much more fruitful in MMA.

"I trained hard for this fight," said Velasquez, a former All American wrestler from Arizona State who sparkled with his wrestling moves. Rothwell never had a chance on the ground and couldn't land a significant punch standing up.

In the first round Velasquez tossed Rothwell around several times and picked him up to throw him down again when the veteran attempted to escape. Rothwell withstood some big punches but couldn't zero in on the smaller but faster fighter.

Velasquez immediately started the second round like the previous frame and took Rothwell down again. When the bigger guy attempted to get up he was pinned against the cage and slammed with six punches to the head. Referee Steve Mazzagatti stopped the fight at 58 seconds of the round.

Rothwell complained when the fight was stopped.

"It could have gone on," said Velasquez, who did not want to disrespect the veteran Rothwell who was standing by. "I was ready."

The winner was tentatively scheduled to face the UFC heavyweight champion Brock Lesnar should he beat Shane Corwin next month.

### Stevenson vs. Fisher

Victorville's Joe "Big Daddy" Stevenson (36-10) finally returned close to home and made the most of it with a convincing victory over Iowa's Spencer Fisher (24-5) in a lightweight bout. Stevenson used his experience in big fights to manipulate a take down and also maneuver to a position to rain down a dozen elbows on Fisher. The Iowa fighter tapped out at 4:03 of the second round.

"I haven't fought in Southern California since I was 18," said Stevenson, who now trains in New Mexico.

### Tibau vs. Neer

Brazil's Gleison Tibau (30-6) seemed to play with Iowa's Josh Neer (25-9-1) for two rounds as he showed a variety of take downs. It seemed he could take him down whenever he wanted and decided to make it a high priced sparring match. But weariness slowed down the Brazilian and Neer was effective in the third round. It just wasn't enough. The judges scored it 30-37

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twice and 29-28 for Tibau.

### Johnson vs. Yoshida

In a fight expected to be a toss up, San Jose's Anthony Johnson (8-2) blasted away Japan's Yoshiyuki Yoshida (11-4) in 41 seconds with quick lefts and rights that pierced the Japanese fighter's guard in a welterweight bout held over the 170-pound weight limit. After a right cross dropped Yoshida, referee Steve Mazzagatti stopped the fight immediately.

"I saw a big face in front of me and I decided to hit it," said Johnson, who was six pounds over weight. "I'm sorry UFC, I'm sorry fans for being overweight."

### Bader vs. Schafer

Arizona's Ryan Bader (11-0) proved too strong for Milwaukee's Eric Schafer (13-4-2) in a three round light heavyweight contest. All three judges scored it for Bader, a former All-American wrestler in college.

### Prelims

A fight between teacher and pupil ended with Pat Barry (5-1) knocking out his former mentor Antoni Hardonk (8-6) with a straight right and left that dropped him to the floor. Once down on the ground Barry caught him with a perfect right that forced referee Josh Rosenthal to stop the heavyweight fight at 2:30 of the second round.

"That meant more than anything in the world to me," said Barry who fights out of Milwaukee. "Looping punches don't work all of the time. Straight punches work against taller guys."

A middleweight battle between two highly technical fighters ended in a win by unanimous decision for Oregon's Chael Sonnen (25-10-1) over Japan's Yushin Okami (24-5). Though Sonnen won all three rounds according to the judges, they were each hotly contested, but it was Sonnen's aggressiveness that proved beneficial in a fight that was won standing up.

"I went right after him," said Sonnen. "Yushin doesn't rush the action but he's always ready to fight. But he definitely hit me hard."

Massachusetts fighter Jorge Rivera (17-7) pummeled and bloodied Missouri's Rob Kimmons (22-5) for two of three rounds of a middleweight fight. At 1:53 of the third the referee stopped the fight for a technical knockout victory for Rivera.

"I really worked hard for this fight," said Rivera. "I have three kids to feed. My biggest fear is not being able to provide for them."

San Jose's Kyle Kingsley (8-2) did just a little bit more than Razak Al-Hassan (7-2) and captured a split-decision after three rounds in a light heavyweight bout. The judges scored it 29-28 twice for Kingsley and 29-28 for Al-Hassan. All three rounds were spent on the ground or

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in a clinch.

Stefan Stuve (22-3) used his height advantage well against the stockier Chase Gormley (6-1) in a heavyweight fight that went back and forth. But a surprise triangle hook at 4:04 by Stuve forced Gormley to tap out.

“He gave it away and I went for it,” said Stuve. “Keep looking out for me.”