

Extreme Cage Combat draws huge crowd

As the lights dimmed and the fights wore on, fighter after fighter entered the ring.

As they left, they scattered, but as the night wore on more and more of one group of fighters stayed together, cheering on their



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fellow members.

It was the San Da Fight Club's night to shine.

If mixed martial arts is here to stay in Southwest Oklahoma, one of the

biggest groups who will be looked at to keep it growing are the gyms around the area training the up and comers. It's those gym's responsibility to make sure these guys don't just get hyped up and go out there without proper training, without being ready to not only deliver punches, but to take one.

At Saturday's Extreme Cage Combat 8.0 event in the Great Plains Coliseum, San Da Fight Club made a statement they are one of the top gyms for MMA in Southwest Oklahoma.

With six fighters on the Lawton card, five of them collected wins while this reporter was there to witness the action. We had to leave the event early to make press time, but the excitement amongst the fighters and the trainers from San Da was visible as each and every fighter was there win the fight was over to congratulate their fellow fighter.

"I'm really pumped. I'm just so proud of the way these guys are fighting," said Gerald Thomason, who is one of the people who runs the gym.

With a strong crowd

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GERALD THOMASON

TRAINER AT SAN DA FIGHT CLUB

shouting down on the cage, it's easy to see that MMA is growing in Lawton, and with gyms like San Da and Grady Brewer's Bad Boy Gym already on the scene, more and more of Lawton's own may try to put themselves in the octagon soon enough.

San Da got their win streak going when Anthony Teasley won after the referee called the match in Teasley's favor between the first and second rounds. Teasley was being knocked around by David Steece pretty good, and at one point was in a head lock for an extended period of time. However, after the 10-second warning Teasley was able to get free and land significant blows to Steece.

"It's something that we train for," Teasley said. "It wasn't as tight as it looked, so I just relaxed and stayed breathing and he just wore himself out."

When the round was over, Steece stood in the corner and looked around until the referee came over and signaled the fight was over.

"I knew he was hurt bad, so I was going to go in there and keep it going," Teasley said. "I was ready to run in there and get him again."

Not bad for Teasley's debut fight.

Just another day in the office for the fighters of San Da, who also won earned a title belt as David Nelson won a 155-pound title belt in Hinton while the rest of the crew was fighting in Lawton.

"We work hard," Thomason said. "For a little gym in Lawton, America we have a program and a cur-

riculum and we put these guys through that curriculum and this is what happens when these guys follow it."

Started in 2005, San Da had been building strong, but with problems revolving around amateur fights getting canceled and others outlawed completely, it was tough at first for the gym.

However, with the emergence of Extreme Cage Combat in the area, the fighters have a place to get in the cage.

"It took a while to get it going back, but the last few years Extreme Cage Combat comes to Lawton and gets everyone excited about it and when people see fights, they want to fight," Thomason said.

"They are coming to the gym, so we are slowly growing it up, and turning it into a good program."

For fighters like Derek Lemos, who won on Saturday night by TKO in Round 3, the work at the gym is what separates him from his opponent.

"All he could do was hold me and punch me a little bit, but punching doesn't hurt," Lemos said. "We train hard, don't take breaks and it shows every time we step in the ring."

For Lawton, the thirst for MMA will wane for a few months until it likely returns in the summer along with the Toughman competition.

For the fighters of San Da, there will be a short break then it's back to the cage with another title bout in March and many more to come.