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FRANK'S SHOWTIME SHAM



Frank Shamrock (Right) Was Disqualified Against Renzo Gracie After Kneeing His Opponent In The Head (C) Tom Casino

By Robin Jahdi

The passage of time makes the expression of an honest opinion more difficult than it should be.

For the last week, the major topic of debate in MMA circles has been the ill-fated bout between two legends of the sport; Renzo Gracie and the near-mythical Frank Shamrock. While my peers largely predicted Shamrock would cruise to victory via some kind of magic-infused Tiger Knee that sends both Gracie's lifeless body crunching to the mat, and Frank racing up the middleweight rankings, I didn't think that would happen.

In fact, I picked Renzo to win. Just not in the completely bizarre manner the fight ended. I won't bore you with the details, because

they have been pored over in the last few days, as though everybody on the internet was Oliver Stone and Frank's knees were a couple of bullets sent from the grassy knoll.

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Yes, apparently Shamrock's last fight took place in 1836. I'm surprised he didn't just pull out a blunderbuss and blast Gracie's face off.

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Ooh, did the illegally-thrown knees land on the head, or the neck, or one on each? Or did they in fact pierce the very BJJ-filled soul of Gracie? And how about the pressure

being put on referee extraordinaire Herb Dean? "Come on Herb. We need to know. DQ or no DQ?"

How about the fight itself? Well, it went pretty much as one would have reasonably expected: Shamrock was a bit handy on the feet, so Gracie decided to take him down. As with Shamrock versus Ortiz (no, not the laughable debacles with Ken from the last couple of years. The proper Shamrock against Ortiz fight), Frank was very active from the bottom. This was just as well, because he seemed about as able to escape from below as a concrete-shoed Sopranos' victim. In other words, he wasn't going anywhere, so he was right to knee the body as much as humanly possible.

But I would like to think that even an above

ALSO: REVIEWS OF CAGE RAGE 20 'BORN TO FIGHT' & TKO 28, PLUS ALL THE LATEST MMA NEWS

OPINION:

By Ross McTavish

The first ever MMA event to air on the USA's Showtime network must be deemed a success, after Elite XC's debut was watched by 365,000 viewers.

With around 18 million homes subscribing to Showtime, that is a positive figure for a first show and one which can be built upon. In that respect the result of the main event will actually benefit Elite XC in the long run, because Frank Shamrock and Renzo Gracie will be able to fight again due to the lack of a decisive outcome.

Given that Elite XC are so short of headliners who can draw viewers, that is undoubtedly a plus. Shamrock is the promotion's poster boy and due to a

partnership with Strikeforce, Phil Baroni will soon face off against the former UFC Middleweight Champion. But there is the chance Shamrock will not beat Baroni or Gracie and even if he does, by the end of the year, Elite XC will need some fresh blood on top.

Who they get could well determine if they can continue a good start and take MMA into more homes in America.

Main Card Results:

C. Bennett def. K.J. Noons

J. Villasenor def. D. Loiseau

G. Carano def. J. Kedzie

A. Silva def. W. Correia

R. Gracie def. F. Shamrock



Gina Carano Stole The Show For Elite XC (C) Tom Casino

average halibut would have the spacial awareness to know where someone's ribs are, which is somewhere entirely different from where a man's head is situated. That would lead me to reason that the cranial knees were rather intentional, and that dear Frank 'wot, me break the rules?' Shamrock got everything he deserved. People have been debating who was winning up until that point, which is rather moot if you ask me.

Anyway, the simple facts are that Gracie was controlling the fight, but doing little damage. Shamrock was doing some damage (I wouldn't fancy getting Tiger Kneed, even if they are being delivered from the ground up), but was a complete stranger to the concept of 'control'. Here is lesson number two for Shamrock (the first being 'in America, don't knee someone in the head when they are on the ground'): Gracie is a bit smarter on the mat than Bryan Pardoe and you therefore have to prepare something more in the way of a guard game than just the 'grab an arm' philosophy that worked so well a few years back. Or how about trying some takedown defence?

Funnily enough, Frank put in the kind of 'throw some strikes, get taken down and controlled' performance we have come to expect from his next opponent, one Phil Baroni. That should be a fun fight, though

one that should probably end up very much like this bout, albeit with Shamrock in the Gracie role. Still, the idea of one of these men getting knocked out fills me with the kind of toasty glow once only associated with a *Ready Brek** overdose. As long as that *one* is Shamrock. I would like to clarify that this doesn't come from a dislike of Shamrock; more an absolute fandom of Baroni.

Baroni is more of a jerk than Shamrock. He effortlessly oozes wonderful dickhead charisma as he saunters to the ring in his Yankees' cap and glittery robe. Shamrock, on the other hand, seems to try a little bit too hard to make people dislike him.

See, Shamrock performed a post-Gracie fight routine in the character of what fake-fighting fans would call a 'heel'. That is to say he was a jerk, but didn't really mean it. I think the etymology of the word is actually based outside the carnary world of pro-wrestling, but that's the only context you will find it being used in today. Anyway, he went on about how he was here to fight, and shucks, I wasn't to know these little knees of mine were illegal in this new fangled set of rules.

Yes, apparently Shamrock's last fight took place in 1836. I'm surprised he didn't just pull out a blunderbuss and blast Gracie's face off, if he really did think he was 'here to fight'. Maybe it's just me, but if I am a casual

observer of this show, a gimmick whereby a fighter claims not to know what the rules of a fight are would make me think he was a bit, you know... simple?

At least Wes Sims knew he was breaking the rules when he was stamping Frank Mir's brain cells in a few years ago. I'm sure Sims is a nice person, but if you're an MMA legend, you don't want to advertise yourself as being dimmer than him.

Still, something Shamrock knows a lot about is promoting a fight and when the inevitable Frank versus Renzo (fighters always seem more cuddly when referred to by their forenames) rematch is announced, lots of people will pay to see it. And, after all, is that not the reason why people fight for money? Well, I'd personally hope the desire to win might be somewhere near the top of the list marked 'PRIORITIES', but what can you do?

*For those wondering, *Ready Brek* is a warm, oat-based breakfast, somewhat reminiscent of porridge. Anyway, the adverts in the eighties would feature kids with mullets eating vatfuls of the stuff and being consumed in an orange glow. That's not an after-effect I would associate with a healthy breakfast, but maybe that's just me.

QUESTIONABLE CALLS CHALLENGED AT TKO 28

By Mike Doyle

In the most anticipated rematch in Canadian MMA history, former TKO Featherweight Champion Mark Hominick was poised to avenge his previous loss at the hands of current titleholder Hatsu Hioki last Friday.

In May 2006, Hioki submitted the Canadian striker in the second round to capture the 145-Pound Title. However, it's been speculated that Hominick was overconfident in his ground game heading into their initial showdown, especially after submitting Yves Edwards at UFC 58.

Therefore, the game plan this time around called for 'The Machine' to keep the fight standing and look for a knockout in the later rounds. Early on, Hominick seemed quite tentative, while Hioki used his size to score with leg kicks, establishing himself as the more aggressive striker over the first two rounds. Nonetheless, the UFC veteran found his range in the third and fourth stanzas and started taking the action to Hioki, which forced the Shooto star to consider taking the fight to the ground.

As the fifth round began it was obvious both fighters had won two rounds each and the final five minutes would ultimately decide the winner. Hominick was able to sustain the momentum, and in the final ninety seconds landed a number of power shots that seemed to seal the deal and the fact he would pull out the decision.

Unfortunately, the judges didn't see it the same way and declared Hioki the winner via majority decision. The hometown crowd was outraged. Furthermore, a complaint has been filed with the Quebec Athletic Commission by Hominick's manager, as well as the TKO promotion, to have the decision overturned and ruled a no contest.

The co-main event featured Hominick's training partner, TKO Lightweight Champion Sam Stout defending his title against Brazilian jiu-jitsu ace Fabio Holanda. This was a clash between Canada's best 155-pound striker and the country's best grappler. Of note, Stout's last UFC appearance was a submission loss against Kenny Florian in less than two minutes, yet Holanda had previously destroyed Florian in a grappling match.

In preparation for this fight, Stout spent time training in California with Team Quest, but wasn't able to execute his planned takedown defence. Holanda scored an early sin-

gle leg takedown and quickly mounted the champion, although Stout was successful in getting to half guard against the jiu-jitsu black belt. However, it was quite obvious that Holanda was beginning to fatigue as early as the second round, when he began lying on the ground a few extra seconds after Stout had gotten back to his feet.

During his pre-fight interview, Stout believed conditioning would play a huge factor in the outcome of the fight, but he couldn't have expected it would come into question this quickly. After the second round, Holanda, physically exhausted, was unable to continue and his corner stopped the fight. Stout, known for his 'Hands of Stone' didn't really get a chance to display his striking abilities, however if the post-fight comments are any indication he may get that opportunity in his next fight, as karate expert Stephane Dube called out the champion.

In other action, Jonathan Goulet was expected to challenge Steve Vigneault for the TKO Welterweight Title which was recently vacated by Georges St. Pierre. Yet, a knee injury suffered in training forced Vigneault to withdraw from the fight. Nonetheless, the championship fight has been rescheduled for June. Thomas Schulte stepped in to face 'The Road Warrior', seeking to spoil the upcoming date with Vigneault.

Goulet found himself trying to defend a rear naked choke attempt for the majority of the first round, all the while displaying excellent hand and wrist control to avoid being choked out. But near the end of the stanza, the referee called for a stand-up (with Schulte still working for a submission), and once standing the UFC veteran charged in and unloaded a barrage of strikes that dropped Schulte. Goulet pounced on his downed opponent and the referee stopped the fight, which seemed like it occurred just before the end of the round.

However, as TKO President Stephane Patry confirmed during the post-fight press conference, the round was actually over for about three seconds before the fight was stopped. Therefore, Schulte's camp has also filed a complaint with the Athletic Commission to have the bout ruled a no contest.

Rising welterweight contender Chris Clements registered a second round TKO victory over David Medd. Meanwhile, Lightweight Luke Caudillo recorded a TKO only twelve seconds into the opening round against Samuel Guillet. Surprisingly, Guillet went the distance with Hominick in his last fight.

NEWS

The Nevada State Athletic Commission has endured a busy week, with the suspension of Kevin Randleman the biggest news coming out of their latest meeting.

Randleman was banned for a year and fined \$5000 after submitting a false urine test at Pride 31. Thiago Alves was suspended until September following his positive test for a diuretic and Aaron Carvalho cannot compete until the end of June due to the discovery of marijuana in his blood.

Meanwhile, Gilbert Yvel was denied a license to fight at PRIDE 33 because he KO'd a referee during a fight in 2004.

The main event of UFC 70, set for Manchester, England will be Mirko Filipovic against Gabriel Gonzaga.

Tickets for the show go on sale next week.

Bodog confirmed that Matt Lindland will face Fedor Emelianenko on their Clash Of The Nations PPV event on April 14 in St. Petersburg, Russia.

On the undercard, Aleksander Emelianenko will fight Eric Pele.

Cage Rage are close to finalising the card for their April 21 show at Wembley Arena in London, which will feature Bob Sapp and Vitor Belfort.

The current line-up is:

Bob Sapp vs. Robert Berry

Marvin Eastman vs. Vitor Belfort

James Zikic vs. Evangelista Santos

Mark Weir vs. Daijiro Matsui

Roman Webber vs. Mark Epstein

Cyril Diabate vs. Ryan Robinson

James Nicholl vs. Matt Ewin

Xavier Foupa Pokam vs. Alex Reid

Paul Daley vs. Paul Kelly

CAGE RAGE FEASTS ON SUPER-SIZED U.S. BEEF

By Michael Farrow at Wembley Arena

On Saturday night at Wembley Arena, two key matches and a 400lb black man changed the face of Cage Rage Championships' heavyweight division; as a British Title change, a controversial main event and Bob 'The Beast' Sapp ensured another exciting night of MMA took place in London.

With Sapp's appearance to promote his debut for Cage Rage on April 21, the British promotion certainly appear to be placing their faith in super-sized American combatants. On this show it was Eric 'Butterbean' Esch who was given the main event slot and that decision certainly raised a few eyebrows. Fresh off a humbling by British Heavyweight Champion Rob Broughton, 'Butterbean's' credibility appeared to be fairly low ahead of his meeting with James Thompson. However, this was a match made for the 'Bean'.

Always more likely to trade punches than Broughton, Thompson stood right in front of his foe from the bell, allowing Esch to wind-mill in. An overhand left caught Thompson flush and referee Grant Waterman stopped the contest in the first round. The contentious nature of the decision was due to Thompson's attempts to scurry up from the floor to try and take 'Butterbean' down, with 'The Punk' adamant that he was not in serious trouble.

Thompson went into his meeting with Esch on the back of a career-defining victory over Hidehiko Yoshida on Pride Fighting Championships' New Year's Eve show. But it's amazing how a man fresh off his biggest career win, who possesses such intensity, marketability and physical skills, can repeatedly fail in such a blunderous way as Thompson has. You certainly never know what you are going to get with Thompson and at least that adds intrigue to a potential rematch with 'Butterbean'.

One fighter who arguably had an even worse night than Thompson was Mark Kerr – who saw his latest comeback attempt shot down in flames by a highly-motivated Mustapha Al-Turk. Kerr looked sluggish and more like a kitten than a 'Smashing Machine', as the American tamely rolled over. The end came right at the start, when Kerr missed a kick to the head, which provided Al-Turk with an opportunity to pounce. Fighting from the top, Al-Turk repeatedly hit Kerr squarely in the back of the head without receiving a warning. However, Al-Turk continued his assault, by moving away from the rabbit punching

to record a ground and pound TKO victory. Al-Turk deserved the win, but Kerr is in such a state now that Akebono would surely fancy his chances against the former UFC and Pride standout.

One heavyweight who had been enjoying far better fortunes than Kerr is Broughton, but the Liverpoolian's good run came to an end when he faced Tengiz Tedoradze, who finally reclaimed a belt he had stripped when he chose to fight for 2 Hot 2 Handle last June.

The Georgian got on the front foot early, clinching up with Broughton and pushing him against the cage. Using some effective dirty boxing to bloody up Broughton's nose, Tedoradze hit a suplex on 'The Bear' to find side control, from which he dominated by landing punches. Despite being stood-up, at the end of the first stanza Broughton was cut and his weaknesses seemed to be laid bare. The repeated tactic of bum-rushing Broughton and then clinching paid dividends for Tedoradze in the second and he opened up a gusher of a cut above the Brit's left eye. That was enough to end the fight and Tedoradze completed his seven-month path back to the title.

Meanwhile, Dan Severn, the Elder Statesman of MMA, disappointed in a dull decision loss to Dave Legeno. Two rounds of inactivity saw boos and catcalls rain down on the ring. Legeno's all-or-nothing edge has gone since he started diversifying his training and Severn seemed too slow to do anything, though Legeno won the opening two rounds by a slim margin. Severn eventually sprung into action in the third stanza when he managed to take Legeno down.

Severn stayed in side control and hit 'Deathwish' with hammerfists, despite the transition to full mount being on offer throughout. The match was stood up, but Severn took it to the mat again and controlled the rest of the third round. Ultimately though, to the surprise of nobody, but to the seeming dismay of all, Legeno took a unanimous

decision.

Nevertheless, the post-fight was far more interesting as Legeno admonished Sapp, stationed at ringside, for his supposed disrespect of Cage Rage heavyweights. Legeno actually went as far as saying he'd fight Sapp anywhere, even in the carpark after the show. This sent 'The Beast' into the cage and marching towards Legeno, whereupon the duo were kept apart. By this point the crowd were in an utter frenzy and the drama was pure professional wrestling, as Sapp took his shirt off and said he'd sign the contract there and then. As the heat intensified, Robert Berry and an ever-intense Thompson – who even climbed the cage – also came out to challenge Sapp in a highly-effective segment.

On this show Berry was up against Mark Buchanan and after finding dominant position, 'Buzz' finished the fight via ground and pound in the first round. It now looks as if Berry will be the man to face Sapp on the same night that the Ultimate Fighting Championship visit the M.E.N Arena.

UFC 70 will see Michael Bisping finally return to fight in his homeland, but one man that 'The Count' believes could eventually follow in his footsteps is Tom Blackledge – who is said to be one of best young fighters at the Wolfslair Gym. At Cage Rage 20, Blackledge's opponent was Tom Howard, who to this point was still without a win in his MMA career. No surprise with this result then, as Blackledge scored a quick KO win, which unfortunately told us little about his potential.

Finally, two Japanese fighters picked-up strong wins, as Daijiro Matsui and Masakazu Imanari made light work of their opponents. After the late withdrawal of Zelg Galesic, Matsui faced Tom Watson and duly arm-barred the combatant who made his way to the cage wearing a gorilla mask. That victory came after Imanari captured the World Featherweight Championship by beating British Title holder Robbie Olivier with an armbar in the first fight of the main show.



With Sapp's appearance to promote his debut for Cage Rage on April 21, the British promotion certainly appear to be placing their faith in super-sized American combatants.



WHO ARE THE MEN TO TRY & TAME THE BEAST?

By Iain Little at Wembley Arena

The biggest news to come out of this past Saturday's Cage Rage show, quite literally, was the announcement that Bob 'The Beast' Sapp had been signed by the promotion and would be competing at their next show in April.

Whilst Cage Rage have provided us with fighters of the caliber of Anderson Silva, Matt Lindland and Renato 'Babalu' Sobral before, securing the signature of the ex-Pride and K-1 star dwarfs them all from a personality and promotional standpoint. The news has led to intense speculation on these shores about what sort of impact the former American footballer will have and who his first opponent might be. Indeed, can the UK offer anyone able to compete with the man who has beaten the legendary kick boxer Ernesto Hoost and provided Antonio Rodrigo Nogueira with one of his toughest challenges?

With US companies struggling to find high-level heavyweight fighters to compete on their shows, let's talk a look at what sort of division Sapp is about to enter..

Antonio Silva Jr: Unfortunately, along with its welterweight and middleweight classes, Cage Rage has a Heavyweight Champion where you have to question when the next time we might see him defending his belt again may be. Silva has recently fought for Bodog against Eric Pele and is just coming off a win over Wesley 'Cabbage' Correira on Showtime's Elite XC debut event. With this in mind and no sign of a UK comeback on the horizon, there is definitely a case to be made for the World Heavyweight Title to be made vacant and this is surely a prize that Sapp will have his eye on.

Tengiz Tedoradze: One man who can make a more immediate claim for a shot at the title if such a situation were to arise, is newly-crowned British Champion and everyone's favourite Georgian currently residing in Barnsley. Whilst the finish to Saturday's bout against Rob Broughton was unfortunate, Tedoradze dominated the fight from the beginning and looked on course for a victory at the point it was stopped. The one problem from a promotional standpoint is that Tedoradze seems capable of beating the best heavyweights that Britain has to offer, but appears to freeze on the big occasion, having lost to Jeff Monson, Antonio Silva and Edson Drago in the past. Therefore, you have to wonder whether 'The Beast' will simply overwhelm him, just as larger opponents have done previously?



Is Rob Broughton Set For A Meeting With Bob Sapp? (C) Ring Pics & Cage Rage

James Thompson: Ah yes, the enigma of British MMA. Here you have a fighter who can go to Pride and beat Judo legend and Olympic gold-medalist Hidehiko Yoshida and then come back to the UK and lose to Eric 'Butterbean' Esch. To use a cliché, the only thing certain about Thompson is his unpredictability. He remains one of our most popular fighters though and you have to think that a match with Sapp is inevitable at some point down the line. It's certainly a big enough fight to headline any Cage Rage show. However, 'The Punk's more immediate priority is avenging a loss, which Thompson disputes as an early stoppage, to Esch at the next show in April.

Robert Berry: If rumours are to be believed, then this is the combatant who seems most likely to be facing Sapp in his first Cage Rage appearance. The ever-popular Sunderland native is a fighter who won't be afraid to stand and trade. Having recently lost his British title shot against Broughton, he will be keen for the opportunity to spring a major surprise and put his name back on the map.

Rob Broughton: The Liverpoolian was the Cinderella story of British MMA in 2006 – starting the year as an unknown and finishing it the British Champion. Having just lost his title due to a cut stoppage, Broughton's first aim will surely be getting his domestic belt back before looking up at the world strap. His memorable win over Thompson at Cage Rage 17 last January showed that he can absorb punishment and fight back in the latter part of a bout when a bigger opponent is showing signs of fatigue. This is a factor that could well come into play if a fight against Sapp were to occur.

Mustapha Al-Turk: The man that seemingly nobody is mentioning as a force in the heavyweight division could very well prove to be the wildcard. The ADCC competitor is a perfect 4-0 in Cage Rage, with all of those wins coming inside a round. He is one of our best submission grapplers and with his big frame he will not be over-awed by the physical presence of Sapp. Fresh of a win over Mark Kerr at Wembley, the Londoner is on a roll and starting to make a name for himself.