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## Cung Le: Fighter and Family Man

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Mike Sloan



**Cung Le (Pictures)** has had his fair share of criticism throughout his brilliant fighting career. Though he has dominated his opponents while capturing titles in San Shou kickboxing and racking up an impeccable professional record, some mixed martial arts watchers have griped that he hasn't proven himself as a worthy fighter.

For various reasons, fight fans and scattered members of the fight media have clamored for Le to turn to pro MMA, something the popular Vietnamese warrior has opted against — until now.

Le is set to make his professional MMA debut Friday in San Jose, Calif. in what will be the chief support bout to the highly anticipated showdown between **Frank Shamrock (Pictures)** and his rival **Cesar Gracie** on the first ever California State Athletic Commission-sanctioned MMA event.

"This is quite an honor to be making my MMA debut on the same card that will actually be the first ever California State Athletic Commission-sanctioned MMA event," Le told Sherdog.com. "It's also a plus that it is going to take place in my hometown. This way my friends, family and hometown fans will be there. I just hope that I can put on a great show for them."

Putting on great shows is something Le and his fans have grown accustomed to throughout the years. But his fight this weekend is an altogether different animal. Le has prided himself as being a top San Shou specialist, yet admits that he is a bit nervous about his first fight in the cage.

"Of course, I am a bit nervous, you know," he said. "I have some pre-fight jitters because this is my first ever MMA fight and I am nervous going into this. There are a lot of expectations from me in regards to what people think, so that does add a little more pressure to (the situation). But I am feeling really good right now. I feel good because my training camp went very well. I trained hard, I had a great team and I am as prepared as I can be. But it's hard not to get a little anxious or nervous before a fight, especially one of this magnitude."

Le isn't one to shy away from the truth and he openly admits to knowing the risks of entering this bout. His opponent, one **Mike Altman**, has more experience in MMA than does Le and Altman has something else going for him in terms of intangibles once the bell rings. The two met a few years ago in a San Shou match and Le stopped him in the third round. Le heeds that Altman is hungry and expects a tough, grueling battle.

"I have fought my opponent, **Mike Altman**, already," Le said. "We had a fight a few years ago in San Shou. He took the fight on last-minute notice so I don't think he was truly ready for the fight. He was tough, but I wound up knocking him out in the third round. I know he wasn't fully prepared and he's been waiting for the chance to fight me again ever since."

"I know he's been waiting a long time for this and he deserves to fight me again. He has more to prove to everybody. Now he's already had a few MMA fights and with the fact that he has been dying to fight me again, I expect it to be a tough, tough fight. Mike is a very good fighter and like I said, our first fight really doesn't mean much because he took the fight on such late notice. Sure, I won, but he took the fight on such late notice."

Le understands that his reputation is probably at stake in this fight. He hasn't fought in a while and he is a popular figure in the fight game. So much seems to be riding on Friday's bout, but Le welcomes the challenge with open arms.

"I think I do have a lot to prove and rightfully so," he suggested. "Many people have been waiting for me to turn pro in MMA. Whether it be my fans or the people who criticize me, they have all waited for me to go into MMA. Naturally it is very different from San Shou, but I think I'll do fine. I don't think that I am the best in the world at San Shou at all. I am very good, but I'm not the greatest. MMA is different from San Shou and I expect it to be much tougher. But like I said, I am as prepared as I can be and I look forward to the challenge."

Le has been one of a number of fighters who seems to gather detractors no matter what he says or does. Like [Tito Ortiz \(Pictures\)](#) or [Wanderlei Silva \(Pictures\)](#), Le gets as much flack as he does praise. But Le is a humble guy and realizes that he can't please everyone or make everybody his fan.

"No matter what you do, there is always somebody to nitpick and find things wrong," he said. "It's OK. It's all part of the sport. I expect that there will be a lot of people who don't like me for various reasons but in the same sense, I have a lot of fans and a lot of support from my family. It's a perfect yin-yang situation and its fine. I feel in my heart that I do have a lot to prove and I will do everything I can to win. We'll see if I can muster the strength to come back in the fight if I am trailing or if I am hurt. I know that I will give it my all; I'll give it 110 percent when I fight because this is very important to me. I will try my best and may the best man win. If I fail, then it's OK for me to get criticized."

The 33-year-old Le doesn't have too much time left in the fight game and many wonder why the Californian took up MMA so late in his fistic career. One would figure that he would have at least dabbled in the sport years ago, but Le never did.

"I decided to turn to MMA while I was out with an injury," he revealed. "I was rehabbing my injured elbow and it was Javier Mendez who inspired me to go into MMA. He told me about it, thought it was a good idea to go into MMA and after we talked for quite a bit, I decided to give it a shot once my elbow was healed. I was off for quite some time and now that I'm back, I want to try another avenue of my talents.

"I had some personal things to take care of, like my kids and family," he added. "That's why I haven't been as active. I may have gone to MMA sooner, but my family, especially my kids, come first. I had to make sure they were secure and had everything they needed. Now that they are older and are more manageable, I decided to come back full force. I am doing this for myself, first and foremost, to prove to myself that I can do this. But, of course, I am doing this for my family because I have to support them. I will do whatever it takes to take care of my kids."

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