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SAN JOSE, Calif., March 10 — As [Frank Shamrock \(Pictures\)](#) sat in a gray locker room with his right hand immersed in a bucket of ice water it was difficult to tell which was more gratifying to the former UFC champion: stopping [Cesar Gracie \(Pictures\)](#) in 21 seconds or doing it in front of a record crowd at California's first regulated mixed martial arts event.

"I was so charged up man," Shamrock said as people filed in and out of the small room. "We set a record here. The whole community has come out to support. The news, everybody has come out to support us. I'm just glad that an independent show is making news like this and people are recognizing there are stars and that the stars are bringing the fans."

That's an understatement.

All told, event organizers indicated that 18,265 people filled the HP Pavilion for Friday's card, shattering the previous North American attendance mark of 14,562 set when [Chuck Liddell \(Pictures\)](#) re-matched [Randy Couture \(Pictures\)](#) on April 16, 2005 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

Whether that came as a result of fans wanting to be part of history or their desire to witness a main event that had been hyped for several years, a cold rainy night did not keep them away.

Fighting in his hometown with renewed vigor, Shamrock entered the hexagon-shaped cage in great condition. And almost as soon as it started the 33-year-old former champion planted an overhand right on the 40-year-old rookie's chin that put him down on the well-lit canvas.

"If you're a striker you know it's coming," the winner said.

From the outset Shamrock refused to show any fear. He unleashed a quick combination that culminated with a kick, and then landed another to the body before Gracie provided an opening.

"His first jab was real heavy so I knew he was sitting down on his punches," Shamrock recalled. "He was intending to stand up with me. So I figured I'd give him the ole Looping Overhand Right of Death to see if he was paying attention. And obviously he wasn't."

Though Gracie was touted by the event's promoter as having been undefeated in 14 career fights, it was clear by both his demeanor in the cage and his words after the fight that this was, in fact, his MMA debut.

Without professional fighting experience, any semblance of a game plan disappeared as he walked to the cage. "All of a sudden it becomes a street fight and that's really the game plan going in," said Gracie in an empty locker room almost an hour after Shamrock dropped him to the canvas.

"Once you become a seasoned fighter like the guys on my team — Jake, Nick, Gilbert and those guys — they are a lot better fighters than I am," he said. "They've got the experience to go in there and institute a game plan and stick to it. And I kinda just said 'hey, I'm gonna swing with this guy.'"

"It was stupid of him to stand-up with me," Shamrock quipped.

"I learned a lot, looking at it," said Gracie. "I'm obviously disappointed, but to be honest with you I see people — this isn't the worst thing in life you know. People, they lose. That's just life. I know there's going to be a lot of haters and everything like that but I'm a jiu-jitsu guy. I'm proud of what I've accomplished in my life so far."

Stopping an overmatched competitor does nothing to answer questions about how well Shamrock would stack up among today's best fighters. He has not competed in a meaningful contest since his final UFC bout against [Tito Ortiz \(Pictures\)](#) in 1999. But Shamrock insists those type of fights are on the horizon, and though he would not commit to it, there appears to be a strong possibility the 185-pound fighter will face [Kazushi Sakuraba \(Pictures\)](#) in PRIDE.

If not, there's no debate as to his drawing power among Northern California fight fans.

It didn't take long for [Cung Le \(Pictures\)](#), another San Jose favorite, to acclimate himself to mixed martial arts. Showing the same overpowering game that made him a star in San Shou-style fighting, the Vietnamese competitor deftly dispatched Houston's [Mike Altman \(Pictures\)](#) 3:51 of round one.

From the opening bell Le stalked Altman around the cage, which should not have surprised anyone, including Altman who previously lost to Le in a San Shou bout.

Le's style shone early. Spinning kicks, dynamic punches and sharp movement punctuated the MMA newcomer's effort. Against Altman he looked wonderful, though like Shamrock the level of competition was lacking to make an accurate assessment.

But fans in the large arena did not care about Altman's credentials. They were there to roar for Le, and he gave them much to cheer.

The second of two Le spinning back kicks forced Altman into the cage fencing. This time Le was close enough to follow with a chopping right hand that sent Altman to the canvas. Referee Cecil Peoples, who did not need to separate the fighters until the end, jumped in to prevent further damage.

A Shamrock-Le bout in this city would probably best tonight's record-setting attendance figure, but considering their history it's doubtful a match like that could get made.

Should Le continue competing in MMA, he needs a serious elevation in the talent level of his opponents. Unlike San Shou, a sport he dominated for several years while having difficulty finding worthy challengers, Le should have no problem finding middleweight mixed martial artists who could provide a worthy test.

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