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- CUNG LE TAKES CENTER STAGE

Sunday, April 06, 2008 - by Al Yu - MMAWeekly.com

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It was one of the most exciting and entertaining fights of the year. Cung Le engaged in the biggest challenge of his young mixed martial arts career and emerged a champion. The former San Shou star put on an impressive performance in front of 16,326 fans.

Utilizing his powerful kicks, Le broke Frank Shamrock's arm and claimed the Strikeforce 185-pound title after Shamrock was unable to continue.

"The fans created so much energy it was almost overwhelming. I like to feed off that energy, but there was so much energy I had to ground myself, close my eyes and take a deep breath," commented the newly crowned champion as he reflected back on his entrance into the cage.

"It was a very tough fight. Frank brought the best out of me. I rose to the occasion. I fought a very hard, fast-paced fight," said Le. "I never thought he would stand that long. Since he did, the fight definitely lived up to the hype."

Love him or hate him, Frank Shamrock knows how to entertain. He has been known to provoke his opponents with the occasional taunt and this fight was no exception as the former UFC champion greeted Le with a few gestures and acknowledgements.

"That didn't bother me at all," explained Le. "I was prepared; I worked hard. He's such a tough dude and has a great poker face. I had to be smart and be patient."

The third round of the championship fight was the most memorable as both fighters were willing to exchange. Shamrock stunned Le with a straight right that had the challenger seemingly in trouble. With a minute left, Le recovered and fired back with a barrage of his own that included the kick which ultimately ended the fight.

"During the fight he was catching me with some cross punches. The third round he did rock me. He rocked me pretty good. I didn't expect that. I actually thought he was going to shoot and was getting ready to stuff the shot. The shot never came except for a right hand. Frank has a hard head, but so do I."

After the round ended, Shamrock walked towards his corner and knelt down in pain. He could be seen acknowledging an arm injury as he sat on his stool.

"I threw a really hard kick with bad intentions. I knew he was going to cover it, but I was just going to kick through his arm. As soon as I hit him, I heard this crazy sound and I knew his arm was broken," revealed Le. "He tried to shake it off and I chased him down into the fence and started opening up."

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With just six fights under his belt, Cung Le has fulfilled one of his goals as a professional fighter.

"This is a dream come true," exclaimed the undefeated fighter. "This was the biggest fight of my life. I'm just grateful to be part of this mega fight and to win; to beat someone like Frank... I'm honored, I feel blessed and I'm happy.

"The fans are crazy; they're true fans. It's great," added Le. "That night, I had a lot of Frank Shamrock fans say that they were Cung Le fans now."

Le dedicated a lot of his time in preparation for his fight with Frank Shamrock. Now that it is over, he intends on spending some time with his family.

"I'm going to take a little time off. I don't see myself fighting probably until the end of the year."

Cung Le has long been recognized as a San Shou champion. He will now be known as an MMA champion. He has successfully crossed over from another sport and established himself as a fighter to watch for. Not bad for guy who started his career just two years ago.

"I'm always working hard. I have to continue to grow and be more well-rounded as a martial artist and as a person. I'm definitely going to stay focused."



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