

MMA's Armageddon '09 has start delays, ring way-lays

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TYLER – It may be becoming one of the nation's hottest new sports, but some organizational skills are definitely going to have to get much better.

Saturday night the Oil Palace, introduced the fast-growing Mixed Martial Arts to East Texas along with Marines Promotions, and Texas Pro MMA bringing Armageddon '09 to Tyler.

It was the first pro MMA event in the octagon scheduled for the Oil Palace, and hopefully by listening to the 1,500-plus disgruntled fans, it will hopefully not be the last.

It was fun to watch. And so were the fights.

But long in the making, and short in the minutes of actual fighting left many in disgruntled demeanors until they announced a rebate for those that weathered the delay storm.

And when they did fight, it was not for very long. One of seven fights lasted the duration scheduled.

I would do it again, based on the ring-side sights alone. It was fun to watch so many good looking, refined fans get so hyped up over some blood. And, curious to see if the Armageddon Tour was exactly that.....The Armageddon (meaning the beginning of the end?).

GET IT TOGETHER
A press conference was unknown to the majority of the press made for a great start for sure! The weigh-in at "Where's Rufus" was more like "Where's The Fight?" as two fighters were on hand one hour ahead of the scheduled weigh-in, hit the scales and left.

Strike two to coin a baseball phrase.

I will even give the next boo-foo, and BIGGEST problem a long foul ball before we completely strike these modern day gladiators out, and are put on these sports page shelves.

The event was originally scheduled to feature MMA legends, up-and-coming fighters and even some local fighters. That was what the crowd got, but my no means the original fight card.

SHOW ME THE MONEY

After a one-hour and

30-minute delay, it was discovered the main delay was some un-signed contracts of some fighters and also the guarantee

money 'in-the-house' before any of the fighters on the card would grease-up for their bouts.

After that was settled we were just about ready when a mishap in the crowd took emergency care out of position for the fights and rightfully focusing on the slip-and-fall.

The faller fell and was fine, everyone was in place, and the PA announcer could finally stop his award-winning stall.

As the fights commenced, what was eight scheduled fights turned into seven, making one main event, proceeded by two semifinals (ranked fighters), and four preliminary bouts.

That's one main event and the 'special event' scratched.

Shoot....the 'special event was half of my interest already expecting a hormone overdose from the fights alone. Not to mention the wild-eyed rumpblers within swinging distance all night long.

GETTING DOWN TO IT

The main event was a short feature as former UFC heavyweight champion Ricco

"Suave" Rodriguez, one of the top 10 MMA heavyweights in the sport. He absolutely bulldogged Doug "The Carthage Killer" Williams, of Carthage from the get-go.

A very debatable end in the first round as the referee declared a stoppage to a bewildered Williams and his trainers.

Williams is one of a few local MMA fighters that can expect a "home-field" advantage, but just the opposite played out in the ring.

Rodriguez, a former UFC Heavyweight Champion, forced Williams into submission in one minute and two seconds. Williams argued with the referee that he didn't 'tap out' but the fight was called and Rodriguez moved to 35-9 in his professional career.

In the 145-pound division, the fans of Tyler's Kris "Hurricane" Hobbs were all on their feet yelling after a quick 30-second whoopin' over Angel DeJesus.

Hobbs is now 3-2 thus far in his MMA career with DeJesus drops to 1-3 on the record.

"Razr" Ross Cates, did not fare as well in the 155-pound class against Justin Reiswerg, the Louisiana state amateur champion who is unbeaten in just one professional MMA bout.

Cates tried to make it 2-for-2 for Tylerites, but this time the local fighter was choked out by Reiswerg. Cates looked to have Reiswerg into submission in the first round, but the bell saved him. Then, just seconds into the second round, Cates ran at Reiswerg again trying to take him down once more, but the Houston fighter turned the tables, getting Cates into a submission choke hold.

Both Cates and Hobbs fight under 'Team Thunder'.

Tony Melton, of Sherman, provided the biggest punch of the night, hammering Markus Suarez with an overhand right that knocked him out.

The punch was successful because Suarez left himself exposed when trying to block a kick.

Another local fighter, James "The Polar Bear Express" Hall from Gun Barrel, forced submission from Nick Smith with 2:43 left in the second round. Mount Pleasant's Marcs Lanier defeated Martin Castro by decision and the only fight to go the distance.

In the opening bout, Will Florentino of Miami, put his opponent, Jason Fisher, to the canvas early and began to pummel him with continuous punches to the face. Fisher did enough to survive the first round, but Florentino did the same thing to begin round No. 2 and Fisher tapped out two minutes and 35 seconds into the round.

MMA MAKE GOOD
Tickets for Armageddon '09 event were \$25 at the gate, \$45 for reserved floor and \$65 for cage side. Those in attendance for the first five events were given

20 per-cent of their ticket price for the delays, and fight card changes. And mainly because the night was short on blows, and long on woes being one Main Event shy.



At top is the opening bout as Will Florentino won in convincing fashion. Above, James Hall sits atop the octagon after his quick second round win in MMA action. Below, Marcs and Martin Castro was the best bout of the night going to a decision after three rounds. At bottom, Hall celebrates his win and talks with the crowd and PA announcer after his bout



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