

Muñoz maims ‘Crippler’ in UFC

Written by Administrator

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Mark Muñoz (left) pins down American Chris Leben in their UFC 138 showdown. (Photo by MMAWeekly.com)

MANILA — Fil-Am Mark Muñoz stopped American Chris “The Crippler” Leben in a virtual dogfight in UFC 138, pulling off a hard-fought, thrilling victory in the second round of their five-round, non-title bout at the LG Arena in Birmingham, England Sunday.

It was the biggest win for the 33-year-old Muñoz, a former two-time all-American wrestler fighting out of Vallejo, California and known in the UFC as the “Filipino Wrecking Machine,” since beating another contender Demian Maia in UFC 131 on July 11.

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He improved to 12-2-0 (win-loss-draw).

The victory likewise underscored Muñoz’s readiness to campaign in the middleweight division.

In fact, he called for a title crack against reigning middleweight champion Anderson “The Spider” Silva, considered the best pound-for-pound mixed martial arts fighter whom he sparred briefly before as part of his training.

But he would need a big fight or two, perhaps against top challenger Chael Sonnen or maybe the winner of The Ultimate Fighter 14 Finale between Michael “The Count” Bisping and Jason “Mayhem” Miller on Dec. 3 in Las Vegas, Nevada to get a shot at the crown.

“I came here knowing that I trained hard, extremely hard because I feel I want to be the best in the division and work my way up,” said Muñoz.

The 31-year-old Leben, coming off a smashing knockout victory over the legendary Wanderlei “The Axe Murderer” Silva in a bout that lasted just 27 seconds in UFC 132 on July 2, fell to his eighth loss against 22 victories.

“I definitely will want to fight anyone in the top five and I will do it with confidence where I could be the best in the division,” said Muñoz, who came into the fight at 186 lbs. in an interview with UFC’s official website www.ufc.com

Muñoz and Leben fiercely fought it out in the first five minutes of the 25-minute clash with the former flashing his noted striking skills and rocking the latter with a series of solid punches to the chin.

Leben countered with his crisp left hand blows that also staggered Muñoz, who went for a

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possible takedown where he is at his best owing to his vast wrestling experience.

But he ended up crouching against the fence while receiving hammer punches from Leben at the end of the first round.

Muñoz then launched a more aggressive assault at resumption and opened a nasty cut over Leben’s eye that had blood spurting, forcing the bout to be stopped briefly to allow the ring doctors to check on the injury.

The doctor allowed Leben to proceed anyway to the delight of the crowd, who repeatedly egged him on to continue fighting.

But Leben’s corner felt that the cut was just too bad and decided to end the fight, enabling Muñoz to clinch the well-deserved win.

“It takes a man to know when they’re beaten, and I was beaten tonight,” Leben told the Associated Press.

“My hat’s off to Mark Muñoz.”