



'BREAK JAWS,
NOT LAWS,'
MMA FIGHTER
JIMMY JENNETT
SAYS

THE GOOD FIGHT

Local MMA brawler Jimmy Jennett turns his checkered past into an outreach program

STORY BY BEN RICKER • PHOTOS BY TRASK BEDORTHA

Locked together in a cage during a recent MMA match, heavyweight fighters Jimmy Jennett and Juan Figuerva rip into each other like wild bears. Figuerva punishes Jennett with short inside punches and brain-rattling uppercuts. Jennett slams his knees over and over again into his opponent's stocky, muscled body.

The sold-out crowd that packed the Chinook Winds Casino in Lincoln City for the fight was on its feet, screaming for blood.

"It was beautiful," Jennett says, wistfully, the gnarly gash over his right eye still angry and swollen weeks later.

Six years of training, months of drills, countless hours sparring in the gym for 15 blurry minutes of furious combat with a beast like Figuerva — all boiled down to a fleeting chance for "Jungle Jim" Jennett to grab hold of the announcer's microphone and spread the word about his Checkered Past MMA Outreach a little further.

Checkered Past, the nonprofit youth outreach program Jennett formed more than a year ago, offers free and low-cost mixed martial arts (MMA) training to at-risk youth.

The idea for Checkered Past began to take shape in Jennett's mind while doing hard time in Folsom State Prison for battery over a decade ago.

This was during a period in Jennett's life when he "solved problems with [his] hands," he says. In this case, however, he attacked fellow hoodlum with a Maglite flashlight.

Growing up in Sacramento, Jennett was a sharp kid looking at a bright future. Confident, popular and handsome, young Jennett got good grades and expected basketball scholarships to help pay his way through college until drugs spoiled everything.