

Herald Sports



Umatilla man changes his life with mixed martial arts

By **WILL DENNER**
For the Hermiston Herald

Nearing the most important fight of his career to date, Abraham Campos of Umatilla said he's now making the right choices.

Training out of Pendleton mixed martial arts gym Solid Base Jiu-Jitsu, Campos has dedicated himself to eating healthy, and improving his stamina and technique in preparation for a bout with Idaho's Andrew Cruz. Campos and Cruz will square off at Front Street Fights 9 in Boise on Friday.

The stakes of this fight are unlike any Campos has faced previously.

Front Street Fights is a feeder organization to Bellator MMA — widely considered the most elite circuit below UFC. If Campos beats Cruz, who owns a 2-0 professional record, he could gain significant momentum in his fighting career.

"I look at it like the most important fight of my career and I take it very seriously," he said.

Campos, 22, has come a long way professionally and personally since he first set foot in an MMA gym seven years ago.

Johnny Picard, owner of Solid Base, met Campos in December 2009 when both started training the same week at Straight Blast Gym in Umatilla.

Campos came in a scrawny, tall and troubled kid. Picard heard stories from Campos involving him packing weapons and often getting into fights to fend for himself. He was raw, both in skill and attitude, and didn't stick around for long.

As he continued getting into trouble at school, his parents grew increasingly worried. At their urging, Campos eventually agreed to attend Oregon Youth Challenge Program, an alternative school and boot camp program in Bend. He spent 22 weeks there, and returned home determined to get his life on track.

"I started thinking about the decisions I was making that were not just affecting me, they were affecting my family and everybody else around me," Campos said. "That's when I started focusing."

Campos enters Friday's featherweight bout with a 1-1 professional record,



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Abraham Campos, left, warms up with sparring partner Justin Milani on Monday at Solid Base Jiu-Jitsu while preparing for a fight later this week in Boise.

although his loss came against the UFC's Jason Novelli.

It was Campos' first professional match-up in March 2014. Novelli was undefeated at the time, and Campos battled him into the second round before ultimately losing by technical knockout. Novelli is now 11-1 as a professional, and made his UFC debut Aug. 6.

"That loss, it didn't put me down, it let me know what I needed to work on," Campos said. "I look at (Jason) like a lesson in life and my MMA career... I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for that (fight)."

Campos began lifting weights more often, trying to bulk up his 6-foot-1, 145-pound frame. He also started running in the mountains to improve his conditioning. But his return to the cage had to wait. His second son was born shortly after the loss to Novelli. As a single father, he found little time to train for a fight.

Two years later, however, Campos finally got his chance to move on from

the loss. At Wildhorse Casino's Mission Mayhem in April, Campos defeated Jack Floyd in two minutes, 44 seconds to earn his first professional win.

His growth as a fighter is impressive, Picard said, but even more so, how he's turned his life around. Campos, has since become a correctional officer at Two Rivers Correctional Institution, and commutes to Solid Base a few times a week for training. All of this while raising his two boys, ages 1 and 3, with help from his mother.

"I'm on the road a lot," he said.

His job at TRCI often puts him in chaotic situations where he must keep his cool. With the help of MMA, which Campos calls a lifestyle more than a sport, he learned how to channel his anger. Campos still has a mean streak, but now it's being put to good use.

Front Street Fights 9 begins Friday at 7 p.m. The organization will live stream each fight with commentary on its Front Street Fights YouTube channel.

Talley brings momentum into Farm-City

Past Hermiston winners performing well on tour

PRCA Media & Hermiston Herald

Jacob Talley's 2016 season has officially gone from a dream to a reality.

The 25-year-old steer wrestler from Keatchie, Louisiana, won the 40th annual Dodge City Roundup Rodeo Aug. 7, continuing his career-best year.

He clocked a time of 4.2 seconds to win the short round, and took the average title with a time of 13.6 seconds on three head.

"I knew I had a good steer drawn — they had been 3.8 and 4.4 on him this week — so I just had to score well," Talley said of his run in the short go. "He did exactly what I thought he would do, and he was outstanding on the ground."

Talley's emergence into the top 10 of the world standings has been rapid. He picked up big wins earlier this season in Clovis, California, and Pleasant Grove, Utah, and hasn't lost any steam.

He entered the week-end ninth in the world, but with the \$6,237 he earned in Dodge City, along with \$3,011 banked in Idaho Falls, Idaho, and Heber City, Utah, Talley moved to sixth.

"It doesn't feel real to be having this kind of season, and it won't sink in until the regular season is over and I'm in the top 15," Talley said.

His next chances to help lock up that standing come this week in a trio of Wrangler Million Dollar

28th Farm-City Pro Rodeo

WHAT: One of the final stops on the PRCA's Wrangler Million Dollar Tour
WHEN: Wednesday-Saturday, 7:25 p.m. (Specialty acts begin at 6:45 p.m. the first two nights)
WHERE: Farm-City Arena at the Umatilla County Fairgrounds
COST: \$17 general admission, \$20 reserved, \$5 children

Tour Silver Rodeos which also represent contestants' final chance to earn money toward qualifying for the nationally televised PRCA Champions Challenge events.

One of those stops is in Hermiston with the Farm-City Pro Rodeo, which begins tonight in conjunction with the Umatilla County Fair.

Also coming into Hermiston with a head of steam is new PRCA all-around leader Russell Cardoza of Terrebonne.

The 2012 Farm-City all-around winner became the third cowboy to top the world standings in as many weeks when he and team roping partner Dustin Bird split wins at two Montana rodeos to leapfrog Colorado tie-down roper and steer wrestler Josh Peek.

Cardoza isn't the only former Hermiston champion coming into the week atop the world standings.

Kaleb Driggers, who won the team roping title last year with heeler Martin Lucero in 10.1 seconds on two head, leads Luke Brown by nearly \$7,000 as

he chases his first world title.

Defending Farm-City tie-down champion Timber Moore also is hoping to follow Hermiston success with a world championship as he leads his event by more than \$12,000 over Marcos Costa. He made his fourth National Finals last year but is still looking for his first title.

Steer wrestler Ty Erickson, another 2015 Hermiston champion, is less than \$3,000 behind world leader Jason Thomas and defending Farm-City saddle bronc champion Zeke Thurston is ranked fourth.

Garrett Smith won the 2015 Farm-City all-around with the unconventional pairing of bull riding and steer wrestling and enters the week No. 15 in bull riding.

The highest ranked Eastern Oregon cowboy entering the week is team roping header Garrett Rogers of Baker City in 15th. Bareback rider R.C. Landingham, formerly of Pendleton but now residing in Hat Creek, California, is ranked fifth.

The 28th Farm-City Pro Rodeo will hold performances at the Umatilla County Fairgrounds tonight through Saturday at 7:25 p.m.

Tickets are \$17 for general admission, \$20 for reserved seating and \$5 for children — cost includes entry to the Umatilla County Fair.

Tickets can be purchased at Banner Bank locations in Hermiston, Pendleton, Umatilla, Stanfield and Boardman, the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce, NW Farm Supply and Fiesta Foods in Hermiston, and the Farm-City Pro Rodeo and Umatilla County Fair offices.

Tournament golfs 'fore' life

Golf Fore Life benefits Pregnancy Care Services in Pendleton and Hermiston.

The nine-hole, four-person scramble is Saturday, Aug. 27 with sign-in at 1 p.m. and a shotgun start at 2 p.m. at Echo Hills Golf Course.

The cost is \$240 per team. Individuals can pay \$60 and be added to a four-some. The fee includes green fees, a cart and a barbecue dinner.

In addition, prizes will be awarded to the top team and winners of the longest drive, closest to the pin and longest putt contests. Mulligans can be purchased for \$10. Also, people who don't golf are invited to come for the dinner, which costs \$15.

Pregnancy Care Services provides resources for men and women who are faced with making decisions regarding an unplanned pregnancy. They have offices in Hermiston and Pendleton.

People planning to participate are asked to register by Wednesday, Aug. 17. For more information or for a registration form, call 541-276-5757, 541-567-2393 or visit www.pregnancycareservices.com.



7:45 PM
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TICKET OUTLETS

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Rodeo ticket includes Free Admission to the Umatilla County Fair

Metal Mulisha Pre-Rodeo Show
Wed/Thurs Only
6:45 pm





For Ticket Information, Call or Go Online:
541-564-8500 ★ farmcityprorodeo.com