

## Shane Chapman

Choppa added another belt to his collection by winning the inaugural S-1 Oceania tournament in Auckland on 2nd September. The event was an historic first for Muay Thai in New Zealand, being the first ever completely full Thai rules, totally professional event staged in this country. The main event was the 8 man qualifying tournament for the S-1 final to be held in Thailand in December.

The tournament line up featured international fighters such as Wanlop and Mot Eck from Thailand, Warren Elson from Australia, and Prince Hamid from New Zealand, as well as providing opportunities for top kiwi fighters Aaron Dixon, Spike Chamberlain, and Shane Cornish to step up to the next level.

Choppa's first fight was against Mot Eck. Shane used his height and reach advantage to good effect and proved too strong for the diminutive Thai in the grapple. He scored well with low kicks and hand combinations, and looked to have his opponent's measure almost from the outset.

It was obvious that Mot quickly recognised the fact that he was outgunned and he pulled out the elbows early in the first round – inflicting a cut appearing to be his best shot at the victory. Choppa managed to avoid Mot's numerous elbow attempts and scored with one or two of his own – cruising to victory in a relatively one sided contest.

His second opponent, Warren Elson provided more of a challenge, with the taller Australian continually looking to smother Shane's offence in the grapple. Both fighters are particularly adept at this part of the game and the net effect of this was that neither was able to create much in the way of kneeing opportunities (although Choppa managed to land more than his opponent did).

It was obvious that Elson had no interest in fighting at range and 'left jab, right cross, tie-up' was his go to move throughout the fight. There was one brief toe-to-toe exchange at the end of the second round that got the crowd roaring and Shane seemed to get the best of it but the bell put an end to it before he could capitalise. A grinding, frustrating fight for Choppa but he was able to keep busy enough to earn the nod from the judges.

The final was against Wanlop Sitpholek from Thailand, a fighter who counts John Wayne Parr among his recent scalps. Both fighters started reasonably tentatively as they felt each other out. Shane landed a nice right hand about half way through the round that looked to wobble the Thai had him moving backwards. Choppa looked to jump in and take advantage but Wanlop managed to tie him up and give himself some valuable recovery time. The Thai retaliated with a couple of nice right hands of his own but Shane did not seem phased by them and maintained a higher work rate.

Choppa had definitely found his range in the second and was scoring with both hand combos and kicks. Wanlop was still fighting back hard but a perfectly timed left hook from Shane sent him crashing to the canvas and earned Choppa the first ever S-1 Oceania Championship belt.