

Shinya Aoki Visits Millennia MMA

Japanese MMA star, Shinya Aoki (33-7), stopped by Millennia MMA Gym in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., June 7, 2013, en route to the submission-only event, "Metamoris 2" scheduled for Sunday, June 9 at Pauley Pavilion in Westwood Village.

Aoki showed up to Millennia MMA for a training session shortly after noon, with his translator and a fellow MMA fighter. Aoki was excited and eager to train after arriving Wednesday in Calif. for his match on Sunday, and explained his appreciation for World Sports Management's Steve Lara and the Millennia MMA Team for inviting he and his small group to train during Saturday's "Pro Day" at Millennia MMA, "We arrived on Wednesday, we got in contact with Steve through a reporter for 'Fight Magazine' in Japan and we are happy to be here training."

Aoki showed his admiration and respect for the Millennia MMA team and Lara, by bowing before shaking hands and greeting each team member and active member of the gym. Aoki's excitement seemed a bit more serious with his focus on training hard for his Sunday match, while there was a noticeable buzz amongst the members of the Millennia gym, as nearly the entire gym hung out in the bleachers to watch Aoki train and grapple with other Millennia pro's.

Aoki stood focused during his entire training session and was more than willing to wrestle on the mat with anyone who dared to challenge him. Aoki also made it a point that he himself was a fan on Saturday as well, "I am a huge and big fan of Georgi (Karakhanyan)." Georgi Karakhanyan was the instructor who helped oversee the training session with Aoki, and also found time to wrestle himself with the Japanese MMA star, taking some time to notice and mention Aoki's defense skills.

Before the training session was over, Karakhanyan asked Aoki if he would help show the class his own defense skills against a guillotine choke. Aoki held no reservations and offered his help by showing the class his technique and some other defense skills.

After the training session finished, Aoki was very friendly and took pictures with almost everyone who was in the gym, even taking some comedic poses for pictures with some of the younger gym members that were in attendance Saturday.

Aoki continued to express his appreciation to Millennia for allowing his small team to train and use their facilities, "I am traveling a lot and fighting in different countries, so coming here was great. Jetlag will always be an issue but I consider it a part of training." The 30-year-old Aoki continued to show humility, when he expressed his feelings on pursuing the UFC and his future as a fighter, "I am not 100 percent yet as a fighter, so once I feel my technique is 100 percent there I will pursue that goal. I am trying to be fully prepared each fight and then take them one by one."

The Japanese fighter found his love for MMA after getting a taste of fighting early as a student of Judo, "I started with Judo, and was a huge fan of PRIDE and from there I found my own love for MMA."

While most fighters are counting down the days till they can get an opportunity to fight in the UFC, Aoki is staying patient and setting more concrete goals for him and his career, “I want to be an effective Featherweight fighter before I am ready for the UFC, I am fighting at 155 pounds right now, in that division that is on the light side, so by dropping a weight class I think I have a bigger chance of becoming a champion.”

With speed, skill and stamina, Aoki has a plethora of strong assets he can point to as his biggest strength in his game, but when asked, the humble Japanese MMA star didn't need his translator to interpret the question he simply stated, “I have a student's mind, always have a student's mind.”

This asset will be tested in the coming weeks after Aoki ironically on Sunday, lost his match to Kron Gracie, who won the submission-only match during “Metamoris 2,” after successfully securing a guillotine choke four minutes into the scheduled 20-minute bout.