

Mother kicks hobby into high gear

BY JONATHAN HAMELIN, SPECIAL TO THE LEADER-POST SEPTEMBER 15, 2010



Charmaine (Not So Sweet) Tweet works out at Complete MMA Fitness in Regina.

Photograph by: Bryan Schlosser, Leader-Post

Charmaine (Not So Sweet) Tweet has a hobby not very typical of a working mother.

Then again, with the nickname "Not So Sweet," what did you expect?

For around nine years, the 34-year-old resident of Fort Qu'Appelle has participated in the sport of Muay Thai, a form of martial arts that originated in Thailand. Muay Thai is very similar to forms of kickboxing, and while the rules vary in different countries, fighters use punches, kicks, elbows and knee strikes to defeat their opponents.

Tweet first began the sport in Milwaukee, Wisc., where she and her husband, Cord Crowthers, were living at the time. They now live in Fort Qu'Appelle with their two children, Joshua, 13, and Christian, 10.

"I'd always kind of been interested in (Muay Thai)," Tweet explains.

"Originally I'd wanted to box and I was taking a taekwon-do class (in Milwaukee) at the time. Cord told me he met some guys who owned a gym, so I went down there and checked it out. I told them I wanted to box or kickbox and they said I had a perfect build for a kickboxer."

"It kind of snuck up on us," notes Crowthers, 40, of his wife's early involvement in the sport. "I thought she was just going to do it for exercise and all of a sudden they started asking her to fight."

While Tweet may have started Muay Thai just to get exercise, she has since developed into a bona-fide fighter. Competing as an amateur, Tweet boasts a record of 10-1-1. She usually fights in the light middleweight class (147 to 156 pounds), though her weight class can vary.

Much like in boxing, Tweet fights against random opponents. There is not really a structured league in which she competes. When she is not competing at major events, her opponents come from North America. Each fight runs a maximum of five rounds, with each round being three minutes long with a two-minute rest period between each round.

Tweet's stellar record is not the only thing that is impressive about her fighting career. She has also performed well on the big stage.

At the 2009 International Federation of Muay Thai world championships in Bangkok, Thailand, Tweet captured the light middleweight title by defeating Mira Marjamaki of Finland.

From July 23-25 at the 2010 International Kickboxing Federation's amateur kickboxing and Muay Thai championships in Orlando, Fla., Tweet defeated Ontario's Natalia Camarena by a unanimous decision to win the welterweight (140-150 lbs.) title.

Tweet also won the light middleweight 2009 Canadian Muay Thai championship in Calgary, an event in which her opponent withdrew. She will defend this title on Saturday in Calgary. If she wins in Calgary, she will get a chance to defend her light middleweight title at the IFMA World Muay Thai Championships in Bangkok, Nov. 23 to Dec. 5.

"For me, it's surreal to think that (Charmaine) has two world championship belts, just like Sugar Ray Leonard or Mike Tyson," notes Crowthers. "It'll be pretty cool for her to look back in a few years and say, 'Wow, I was a world champion.' "

"It's awesome," adds her son, Christian.

Pretty soon, Tweet may be able to add the title of Olympic gold medallist to her already impressive resume. The International Olympic Committee is currently deciding if women's Muay Thai will be made an Olympic sport for 2012 in London. If it is, Tweet will compete for Canada.

"That would be amazing," she says. "I remember being a little girl and wanting to be in the Olympics and thinking, 'Well, how would I get there, and in what sport?' Then this came up."

When she is not fighting, Tweet maintains a steady training regimen. She usually trains five days a week at Complete MMA Fitness in Regina. She maintains a long-term relationship with her coach from St. John's, N.L., Kru James Richard, and also receives a lot of help from Complete MMA Fitness head instructor A.J. Scales, a black belt.

Along with fighting and training, Tweet also has to balance work and parenting. She works full-time at

the Plansview Credit Union in Indian Head and her kids are actively involved in sports. Crowthers works full time as well at Taylor Volkswagen in Regina.

"It's tough," Tweet notes of her schedule.

The toughest part of the sport may be raising the money required to compete. It usually costs Tweet around \$20,000 a year. Since she is an amateur, she does not earn any money and it is not easy to get sponsorships. Crowthers and Tweet have to work hard to earn the necessary money. They get small donations from businesses and friends and fundraise through steak nights, raffle tickets and silent auctions. In 2009, for one of their fundraising events, Tweet fought Woody from 94.5 Jack FM in an event called "Battle of The Sexes."

If there isn't enough money raised, Tweet will not be able to fight in the big events. Besides participating in their fundraising events, one can help out Tweet by visiting www.reachingourgoal.org/notebook/?t=tweet and donating money.

Crowthers and Tweet are willing to work hard to so that Tweet can participate in the sport. After all, their family is very passionate about the sport, MMA in particular, and watch it on TV.

Their kids have even begun training in martial arts at the same gym Tweet attends. On June 12, Joshua and Christian took part in the Copa Sask Brazilian jiu jitsu and submission wrestling championship at O'Neill High School. Joshua won the B side under-18 division and Christian won gold in the kids' division.

"We're kind of a fight family," notes Crowthers.

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