



# SPORTS & LEISURE

## 'Nice guys' hoping to find 'Ultimate' fame

**EAMONN MAHER**  
Staff Writer

Even though it's a sport that isn't legally sanctioned in Ontario, ultimate fighting continues to find new converts at Boreland's School of Karate in Georgetown.

Even during the recent heat wave, on most evenings, several mostly 20-something-aged men can be found sparring and working out with the Boreland Combat Team, training towards what they hope is a prize fight in a sold-out arena in front of thousands of spectators.

A professional contract would be ideal, but most team members are realistic in their goals. Some have already fought and won matches on a big stage in front of 5,600 paying fans in Halifax, while other team members just want to stay physically active in a competitive atmosphere. For a sport that's as individualistic as any, the Boreland group has developed a camaraderie that puts the team aspect first.

"I'm probably the least sports-interested person in the world, but I've always had a thing for the cage fight," said 27-year-old Ray Penney, a roofer and bouncer who wrestled during his Georgetown District High School days.

"We have a team here and we want to see how far we can all take it. It's almost like being back in high school again."

Penney weighed about 240 pounds just a few months ago before a friend suggested getting into shape at Boreland's gym on Armstrong Ave. After taking up the challenge to work out five or six days a week, three hours at a time, Penney won his first pro heavyweight bout in Halifax by pinning his opponent to the cage in the first round, resulting in a tap-out.

"As much as they're prepared to go when they step in the ring, they're all really nice guys," said Boreland, who has retired from competition to concentrate on coaching. "The CBC did a documentary about the fights in Halifax, and when they first got there, they had this idea that they were doing a story about human cockfighting and how the sport was so terrible. But when they interviewed the (fighters) backstage, the reporter couldn't get over that the first thing these big, tough guys do when they get back to the dressing room is to call their mother and tell her they're okay."

Twenty-five-year-old Shaun Krysa wears a suit and tie to work each day as a salesman for a digital printing and graphics firm. He would like to switch careers to become a full-time UFC competitor, and despite several decisive match wins in the cage and a five-

fight pro contract with Maritime-based Apex Promotions, the prize money currently isn't lucrative enough for Krysa to leave his sales job.

"It's something that could potentially be full-time in the next couple of years—I'm hoping," said the Flin Flon, Man. native, who was one of the Boreland Combat Team originals five years ago. "It's a long process. There's a lot of hard training and sacrifice at home. But I'm a competitive person—I enjoyed wrestling at a high level and it's just been a natural transition. I'm more of a grappling-type guy, but in my last few fights I've been working on my boxing and I've got a surprise for my next opponent."

As seen on the popular reality TV shows that have sprouted in the U.S., there is no shortage of egotism and behind-the-scenes gamesmanship that is a part of the sport. Dropping or putting on several pounds of body weight between the weigh-in and the actual fight is common, and some combatants try to do as much research on their opponent beforehand in order to get an advantage, with video footage often hard to come by.

The risk of serious injury during a bout, that usually ends in a knockout or submission, is something on which the local fighters prefer not to ponder.

"I've always loved to fight and yes you do think about your family, but my wife, Celeste, is very supportive of it," said Mike Large, 31, a father of two who works as a printing press operator in Bramalea. "She doesn't like to see me all banged up, which



André Gears (left) and Andrew Burns of the Boreland Combat Team sparred in their home gym earlier this week in preparation for separate bouts in Calgary on Sept. 9. Despite having to travel out of province for each fight, the Boreland crew has had an impressive run of results in 2006.

Photos by Eamonn Maher

is understandable, but win, lose or draw, you're going to get some bumps and bruises. Actually, you get hurt more while training here. I've had broken bones in my hands, feet and nose. You won't find another club that trains as hard as we do."

Large, another of the Boreland team day-owners, lost his fight in Halifax but said he was pleased with how he fought against his

imposing opponent. Not interested in dressing up his won-lost record with lesser-lights in the 155-pound weight class, Large surmises, "If you fight big names, you'll become a big name, and that's what I want."

Daniel Hardstaff of Georgetown made the front page of the *Halifax Chronicle Herald* for his winning effort during the Extreme Cage Combat mixed martial arts show against a much bigger opponent. At 6-foot-2 and 170 pounds, Hardstaff's lengthy reach and superior fitness level saw him through the bout. Coming from an athletic background that didn't include any martial arts, the once-passive fan of Brazilian Ju-Jitsu decided to start training at Boreland's just over a year ago.

"Lifting weights just didn't do it for me," said Hardstaff, 25, a marketing and business grad. "By chance, a friend of a friend told me that someone in Georgetown was training for a mixed martial arts match. So I tried the classes at Boreland's and I loved it. I'm only going to live in this world once and I'm going to do what I want and that includes fighting in a ring or a cage."

The next Boreland team members to see action are André Gears and Andy Burns, who have bouts scheduled in Calgary in September. Krysa, Penney, Large and Hardstaff will likely fight again in either Gatineau, Que. or Halifax in October.

(Eamonn Maher can be reached at [emaher@independentfreepress.com](mailto:emaher@independentfreepress.com))



**SALE**  
HELDOVER UNTIL SATURDAY 5 PM  
**Georgetown KIA**

Voted #1 for  
Customer Satisfaction  
in Canada by  
KIA Canada

**HURRAY  
IN!**

314 Guelph St, Georgetown

1-866-364-0697

[www.georgetownkia.com](http://www.georgetownkia.com)