

Boxed in

Sigma Chi's Fight Night turns amateurs into athletes

By JONATHAN HOUGHTON
Staff Reporter

James Gartner is not a fighter. That is, fighting doesn't come as a second nature to him. The sophomore agriculture economics major would rather talk his way out of a tense situation than resort to violence, and, on most occasions, he does.

But Saturday night, he fought.

In fact, as a participant in Sigma Chi's Annual Fight Night, he fought like he never had before. Swinging, ducking, blocking—he gave the fight everything he had.

Fight Night, which drew 1,100 people and raised about \$7,000, featured 13 bouts; Gartner's was fifth. Many of the boxers were first-time competitors, Fight Night Organizer Jon Gilfry said, although some were already registered in amateur boxing.

Gilfry said he thought the reasons many people signed up to box was curiosity about the sport as well as a desire to represent their individual greek houses.

"It's a great feeling, having 40 or 50 of your friends cheering you on," he said.

But for Gartner, who boxed independently, his place in Fight Night came under different circumstances.

Growing up in Hastings, Gartner said he never imagined he'd one day compete in the ring. He said he first discovered his interest in boxing by watching an early Mike Tyson fight, and was intrigued by the dedication displayed by the fighters.

"It was the skill, being able to defend yourself and take the hits," he said.

But Gartner said his interest in boxing was strictly as a spectator until a colleague at work encouraged him to compete in Fight Night. He said his competitive personality as well as his admiration for the sport gave him the courage to try boxing.

"I've been told it's kind of an ego thing for me, but I don't know," he said.

Every day, Gartner trained for the competition by running, working out and sparring with friends. His boss's son, an amateur boxer himself, taught Gartner some of the basics—blocking, different types of punches and so on—in one-on-one sessions.

"I could always prepare more," Gartner said, "but I'm confident enough to step into the ring."

Nevertheless, the night before the fight was a restless one for Gartner.

"I was rolling around a lot. I didn't sleep too well," he said.

Gartner said he started feeling nervous the day before the fight. His biggest fear, he said, was not performing to his potential in the competition.

But Gartner said his fears had all but vanished by the time he stepped into the ring Saturday night.

Unfortunately, things began to go downhill for him at the end of the first round, when he took several quick shots to the head.

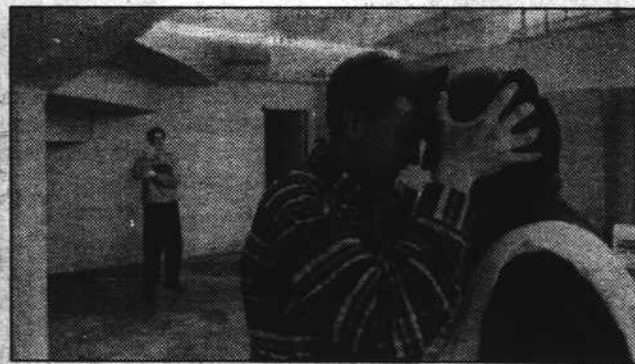
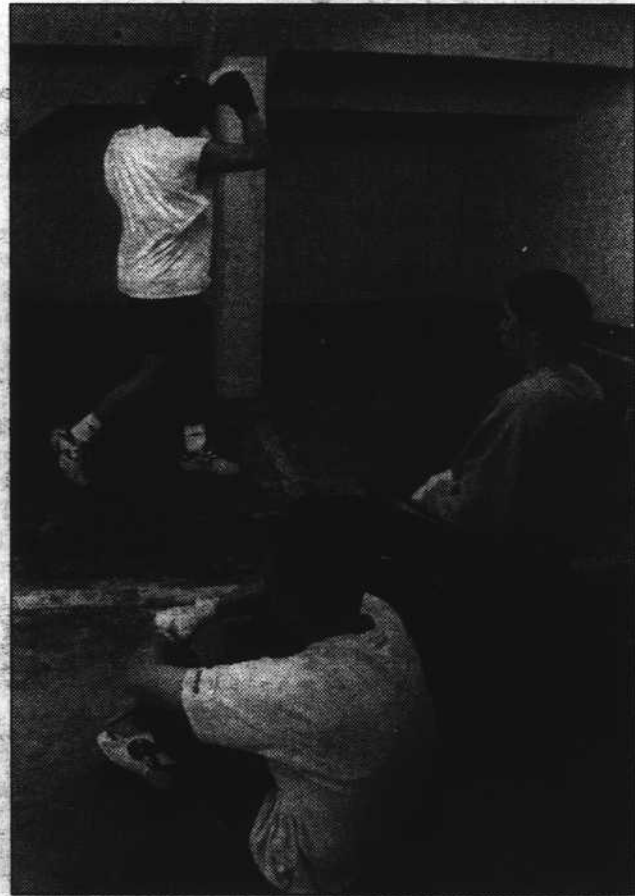
Although he appeared to have been re-energized by the short break between rounds, Gartner said he struggled in the second round. At 1:33 into the second round, Gartner's energy ran out. His opponent won by a technical knockout.

After the fight, Gartner said he would have benefited by additional training.

"Endurance-wise, I could've been better conditioned," he said.

Gartner said he believed an important attribute of a fighter is the ability to be a good sportsman, and accept a loss.

"I think I had a really good fight," he said. "I'll try again next year."



TOP: JAMES GARTNER is offered assistance by a referee after getting knocked down in the second round of his fight. Gartner, fighting as an independent, was TKO'd midway through the second round. Photo by Scott Bruhn/DN

ABOVE: GARTNER, standing, goes through some last-minute warm-ups before his fight Saturday night. This was the first time Gartner had fought at Fight Night. Photo by Scott Bruhn/DN

RIGHT TOP: PETE MITCHELL, left, and Jeff Benda cheer for their Delta Upsilon fraternity brother Colin Gibson. Gibson has fought at Fight Night for four years, winning every time. Photo by Matt Miller/DN

RIGHT MIDDLE: JEFF HAHN, left, a sophomore at Sigma Chi fraternity, gives freshman Adam Lundgren a pop talk before the fight. The fighters wait in the makeshift locker rooms backstage before they enter the arena to fight. Photo by Matt Miller/DN

RIGHT BOTTOM: GARTNER takes a break on his way to the locker rooms after his fight as his opponent, Nick Fredrickson, left, is congratulated by a friend. Photo by Scott Bruhn/DN