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### Cause and Effect: Muay Thai

Muay Thai, which means “Thai Boxing,” is a stand-up striking sport from Thailand in which competitors strike at each other with punches, elbows, knees, and kicks. Personally, I got into Muay Thai when I was twelve years old. I fell madly in love with it quickly. The causes for me getting into Muay Thai were that I wanted to try something new, I wanted to learn how to defend myself and the people I cared about, and I loved UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) and boxing.

The first cause for joining Muay Thai was that I wanted to try something new in my life.

Twelve years old is a very young age, and with such a young age comes much free time and very minimal responsibilities. I was your average twelve-year-old kid. I would come home from school, eat, do homework, and after that, do whatever. I was still too young to be going out by myself, and the friends I had didn't really go outside to play. I would spend most of my free time in the house either watching TV, on my tablet (no, I was not the typical tablet kid), or playing video games. I never really got physically active unless I was in gym class at my middle school. One day, my older brother told me about a small gym he was going to. He told me they taught Muay Thai and showed me what it was. I became interested in trying it out. Combat sports were not completely new to me as I watched stuff like UFC and boxing. The idea of actually doing it was crazy to me since I was so young, but it was something new in my life that I really wanted to try out. So one day I went with my brother. I put on gloves for the first time, and I hit mitts. Of

course, doing it for the first time, my technique wasn't the best, but I was having fun. Let's just say when training ended, I didn't want to stop. I knew this was going to be my new hobby. Also, I was a bit chubby, so I thought I could slim down a bit with training, which I was happy about because it was something I genuinely enjoyed doing.

**The second reason for joining Muay Thai was because I wanted to learn how to defend not only myself but also those that I love.** I was just a little kid at the time, but I knew bad situations could happen to everyone. My brother had told me stories of the few times he got into fights throughout his life. I remember the time he told me of when he got into his first-ever fight. He was in middle school, and some kid was mad at him during football practice for pulling a dirty move on him, even though the boy pulled one first on my brother. After football practice, the kid tried to fight him in the locker room, and my brother said he didn't know how to fight, so he started to kick the boy. He actually managed to make him fall and, after that, one of my brother's friends jumped in to help him, so they both beat the boy up. We both kind of laughed about the story because of the way he beat the boy up. I planned to join football for my seventh-grade year, and once my brother told me his story, I realized that this could happen to me too and if it did, I needed to know how to defend myself. I also had two cousins who were a grade below me that were going to enter sixth grade when I entered seventh. I had seen people get into fights at my middle school when I was in sixth grade, and I knew it could happen to my cousins too, so I wanted to be able to defend them.

**The biggest reason for joining Muay Thai was because of my love for combat sports.** Prior to Muay Thai, I had been watching UFC and boxing for quite a while. At the time, my favorite UFC fighter was Conor McGregor. This guy was absolutely electric. He was a rising star in the UFC, and he was making the organization gain tons of fans. Not only was he a great

fighter, but he was also a marketing genius. He sold his fights like no other fighter with his great and funny trash talk. This would also help him get into his opponents' heads, causing them to fight emotionally, and Conor was very good at taking advantage of that. He basically made the UFC what it is today. On the other hand, my favorite boxer was and still is Saul "Canelo" Alvarez. A major reason why he is my favorite fighter is because he is Mexican, like my family and me. The funny thing about this is that Canelo and Conor are two very different people. Of course, both do different sports, but their personas are also so different. Conor is more of a trash-talking showman who could fight very well, and Canelo could box exceptionally well, but he wasn't very much of a trash talker; he was more of an "I do my talking in the ring" kind of guy. Canelo was recognized as "El Orgullo de Mexico" which translates to the pride of Mexico. I looked up to Canelo not only because of his boxing skills, but also because of how he was as a person. He was very humble, and he carried himself well. Canelo was the reason I loved boxing.

An effect of training in Muay Thai at a gym was that I would do combat sports-related things outside of the gym. I would often shadowbox at random times. For example, I would always shadowbox before showering, or I would randomly start shadowboxing in my room. I would sometimes do a sneak attack on my brother with a "wacking kick to his behind, and I would laugh while doing so. Sometimes I would unintentionally scare my friends because I would start shadowboxing with them, and none of my friends knew how to fight, but I would tell them, "Chill, I'm not actually going to hit you -- I'm just shadowboxing." I also would often watch UFC or boxing highlights. I loved watching those "top ten UFC knockouts" or "top ten boxing knockouts" types of videos. I also would watch tons of Canelo highlights since he was my favorite boxer, and I loved his style.

Another effect of training in Muay Thai was that it put people's attention at school on me.

Many people from my school noticed my training videos on my Instagram page. Some of them would comment on my videos, and they would ask me questions at school about my training. Some boys would try to get me to "slap box," but I was having none of it. I knew some people were trying to test me out for their own entertainment and for others, too. Eventually, I noticed that the energy of some boys in athletics towards me changed. I felt like they finally realized not to poke at me, but I knew to not pay too much attention to it or let it inflate my ego. Being someone people knew not to mess with was a goal of mine, but I didn't want to be one of those kids who had a big ego that tried to show off that he could fight, so I made sure to be humble and just tried to be a person who was cool, calm, and collected.

Therefore, wanting to try something new, wanting to be able to defend myself and those that I love, and my love for combat sports were why I did Muay Thai. It has been about six years since I started this sport, and I have taken a long time off due to school and other responsibilities one gains while growing up. I miss it very much, and I plan to go back soon.