

HOW EFC 135 RESHAPED THE AFRICAN MMA LANDSCAPE

CHAMPIONSHIPS WERE DEFENDED, NEW CONTENDERS EMERGED AND THE ROAD TO FUTURE TITLE FIGHTS BECAME CLEARER. HERE'S WHAT COMES NEXT.



The champion remains the benchmark

For five rounds, former EFC Flyweight Champion Gift Walker asked questions that few opponents have been able to ask of Faez Jacobs.

Would the champion be able to deal with sustained wrestling pressure? Could Walker's experience in championship fights expose weaknesses that others had failed to find?

Jacobs answered in the way champions often do. Not by dominating every moment, but by finding the biggest moments. Sharp striking, damaging elbows and timely reversals proved enough to earn a unanimous decision and preserve his reign at 135 pounds.

Anyone who wants the EFC Bantamweight Championship still has to go through Faez Jacobs. But after five fiercely contested rounds, Gift Walker also established himself as the benchmark for every future challenger.

The champion retained his title, but elsewhere on the card another bantamweight may have taken the biggest step of his career.

A title challenger may have emerged

Few performances changed a fighter's stock more than Moses Mokhari's.

For much of the opening exchanges, Bryn Gwavava appeared to be dictating where the fight was taking place, controlling the clinch and asking difficult questions.

Then one combination changed everything.

A perfectly timed one two ended the contest instantly.

One punch can win a fight.

Sometimes it also changes a career.

Mokhari now finds himself firmly in the championship picture and could well have earned himself a shot at EFC gold.

While the bantamweight division gained another contender, the lightweight division may have found its next star.

The lightweight division has a new contender

Khanyo Maqam arrived at EFC 135 as one of South Africa's brightest prospects.

He left as something different.

Against experienced Congo Brazzaville veteran Emmanuel Sita, Maqam displayed patience, composure and maturity beyond his years before forcing a stoppage with relentless ground and pound in the second round.

Afterwards, instead of calling for opponents, he thanked teammate Demarte Pena before making one thing clear.

"We're going to the top."

Whether that journey leads to a title opportunity next remains to be seen, but EFC 135 confirmed that Maqam is no longer simply a promising young lightweight. He has established himself as one of the division's genuine contenders.

Not far away, another athlete also strengthened his claim to be among the elite.

Obasi announces himself at light heavyweight

Josiah Obasi's split decision victory over Jaden van der Merwe may not have produced the clean finish many expected, but it demonstrated exactly why the Nigerian believes he belongs among the best.

Over three demanding rounds, Obasi survived difficult moments on the feet, imposed his grappling when it mattered most and earned one of the hardest fought victories of the night.

Afterwards, he made no secret of his ambitions.

Obasi believes he is ready to compete against the very best in the division, and EFC 135 may prove to be the performance that earns him that opportunity.

If the men's divisions welcomed new contenders, the women's divisions may have discovered two more.

The women's divisions continue to raise the standard

Two performances stood out.

Charmaine Venter announced herself with an impressive first round stoppage in her EFC debut against Nepal's Anisha Khadka.

Later in the evening, Nicole van Wyk produced one of the most memorable finishes of the night, locking in a guillotine choke with just two seconds remaining in the opening round against Jessica Mouneimne.

The victories also reinforced another trend. EFC continues to produce female athletes capable of competing on the sport's biggest stages. Former EFC champions Manon Fiorot and Alice Ardelean both used the promotion as a platform before reaching the UFC, and the performances of Charmaine Venter and Nicole van Wyk suggested the next generation may already be emerging.

The next chapter has already begun

While EFC 135 answered several important questions, it also established the storylines that will define the coming months.

Can anyone dethrone Faez Jacobs?

Is Moses Mokhari next in line for a bantamweight title opportunity?

How quickly should Khanyo Maqam be moved towards the lightweight elite?

Who stands across from Nigeria's Josiah Obasi next?

Those questions begin to unfold at EFC 136 on Thursday, 6 August, when Adrian Sanchez meets Bradley Swanepoel for the interim lightweight championship.

Beyond that, another major championship contest already awaits, with Chadrack Yemba set to face Boyd Allen for the interim featherweight championship in the main event of EFC 137.

Thursday night's event crowned winners.

Its lasting impact, however, may be the new generation of contenders it introduced and the championship races it accelerated across African mixed martial arts.

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