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Amateur falls short in debut Series:
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ERIC MUSKATEVC. **St. Petersburg Times**. St. Petersburg, Fla.: Jun 12, 2005. pg. 12.C

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Natalie Keene took her first breath in six minutes when the bell rang Saturday at the end of her amateur Muay Thai debut at the Shin Do Kumate VII.

She then held her breath again, waiting for the results along with opponent Marilyn Vallejo of Denver and the 1,000 seated in USF's Phyllis P. Marshall Center.

The "Bonecrusher" Keene had lasted three two-minute rounds, surviving jabs and making a living off her forceful kicks against a fighter who had been in the ring six times before.

The Florida State Boxing and Athletic Commission's three judges scored the fight 29-28, 29-28 and 30-28, all in Vallejo's favor.

Keene fought Muay Thai, or Thai kickboxing, against Vallejo's "shoot fighting," pitting a kicker against a puncher.

Keene's nerves ran wild in the first round, and she quickly found herself on the defensive end of heavy jabs.

In the second round, she rolled off a slew of kick combos that wore down Vallejo's attack. Despite appearing poised and untouched to start the third round, Keene never kept her hands up enough to block a full round's worth of punches.

"I knew what I needed to do but my body just couldn't do it," said Keene, who works days in Tampa, then trains every night at Mehrdad Khan Moayedi's martial arts school in St. Petersburg. "I could tell she had dropped her guard down a bit, but that didn't bring my hands up at all."

"I felt like I was in the ring with her," said Keene's husband, Scott, who added he was anxious while watching. "I'm so proud of her more for the fact that she did this for herself and really no one else. This was all about her."

Shin Do Kumate is a hybrid sport that allows a fighter with a martial arts background such as karate, kung fu or tae kwon do to fight using full contact as long as it is upright and there is no clinching.

"It's just a huge accomplishment that I got through (six months of training) to my first fight," Keen said. "I finished. That's what I'm proud of."

Also, Duane "Lion" Hart of Tampa defeated Todd Cutler in one minute by knockout in his first win as a pro.

[Illustration]

Caption: Natalie Keene; Photo: PHOTO

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