



In Scoot's "Day in the Life," we ask a writer to spend a day with a local resident whose job plays a significant role in the city's cultural identity.



DAY IN THE LIFE:
INSIDE THE RING WITH
A **MUAY THAI**
FIGHTER

Writer **Ja Racharaks** steps into the world of Muay Thai fighting in Bangkok and gets a glimpse of life behind and beyond the ring



FIGHT PLAN

Emma's typical schedule as a professional Muay Thai fighter packs a punch.

6 a.m.

Breakfast (oatmeal and banana or granola and yoghurt)

8 a.m.

Arrive at gym. Go for a five-kilometre treadmill run before official training starts.

8:30 a.m.

Commence morning training session (includes jump rope, shadow boxing, pad work, bag work, sparring, and sit-ups).

10 a.m.

Cycle back home to make a fruit smoothie or a protein shake, take a nap (if needed) and do some freelance writing work.

1 p.m.

Lunch (smoked salmon omelette or tuna pasta salad)

2:30 p.m.

Prepare for afternoon training session

3 p.m.

Arrive at back at the gym. Go another for five-kilometre treadmill run.

5 p.m.

Finish afternoon training

7 to 8 p.m.

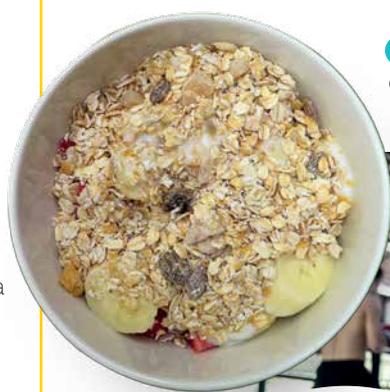
Attend strength and conditioning classes at Rhino Fitness or go straight home.

7 p.m.

Dinner (healthy vegetarian dishes)

11 p.m.

Bedtime



6 a.m.



8:30 a.m.



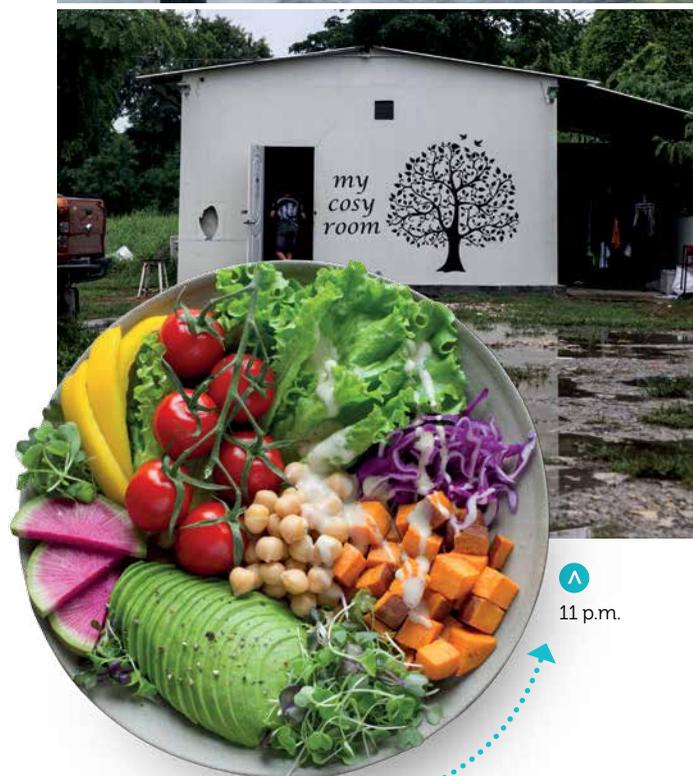
10 a.m.



1 p.m.



5 p.m.



11 p.m.

7 p.m.



7 to 8 p.m.

It's only a little over 8 a.m. when photographer Jovo Jovanovic and I arrive at Attachai Gym, yet the tin-roofed open-air Thai boxing centre along the Suan Luang district in Bangkok is already buzzing with flurried activity. Several sweaty Muay Thai trainees punch, kick, and spar with fellow fighters, altogether showing sheer determination to better their Muay Thai fighting skills.

But our objective today isn't to ogle at Thai boxers – our main agenda is to get to know Emma Thomas, a British female professional Muay Thai fighter, and peek into her life as a professional Muay Thai fighter.

There is light drizzling when we see Emma arriving at Attachai Gym, hurrying to get in as she parks her bicycle by the side of the door's entrance. Taking in her small height and fair complexion, the former English teacher isn't someone I would typically peg as the professional Muay Thai fighter – and a female one, at that. After exchanging pleasantries, Emma goes on to tell us that she has been training since 2011 with a guy who goes by the name Master Toddy until mid-2016. Now, Attachai Gym sponsors Emma by allowing her to train here for free. In exchange, she promotes the Thai boxing centre regularly via her popular Muay Thai-themed blog, *Under the Ropes* (undertheropes.com).

It's close to 9 a.m. when Emma starts to move towards a group of nine male fighters doing warmups using jumping

ropes. After about half an hour, they all proceed with some shadow boxing drills which involves sparring with an imaginary opponent. Emma enjoys an extended water break and takes this opportunity to tell me that a promoter called this morning to ask if she could be ready for a fight in two weeks' time.

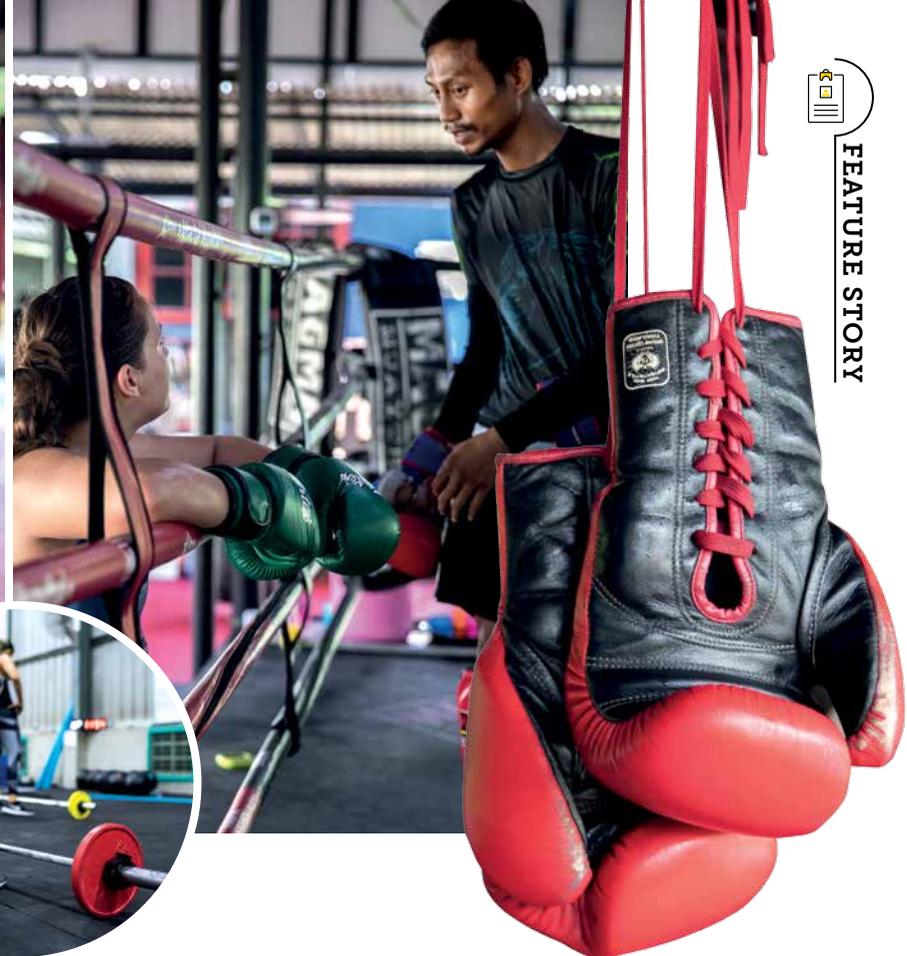
"Do you know who you will be fighting?" I ask curiously.

"I have no idea," she shrugs. "Here in Thailand, details of a Muay Thai fight always change. Sometimes, I'll only know the full details the day before a fight."

Before returning to the training area, Emma shares another benefit of being under Attachai Gym's sponsorship. "They allow me to keep all the money I make from my fights," she says. While this can be a good thing, Emma adds, "Foreign female fighters don't make enough money from fights to support themselves like how men can. I only make enough cash to buy beers for everyone." Thanks to Thailand's low cost of living, Emma has been able to live comfortably in Bangkok with the money she steadily earns from freelance writing jobs.

Emma's group starts to split into pairs for sparring drills. She partners with a fellow trainer named Gaew. As I watch from a distance, I can't help but notice how quick and rapid their movements are. Emma swings her left leg with an aim to hit Gaew's stomach, but the male trainer blocks the attack by catching her leg, smiling before letting

PHOTOGRAPHY FEDERICA DILIBERTO, ANNA PELZER, JOSHUA SORENSON ON UNSPLASH, JOJO JOVANOVIC



▲ Emma Thomas, a British female professional Muay Thai fighter, trains hard for an upcoming fight.

"I'M PERFECTLY HAPPY WHERE I AM."

go. She tries again, this time launching her right fist towards Gaew's face. He dodges Emma's attack and then lands a punch of his own by her left shoulder. As Gaew prepares to throw out a kick, Emma cleverly falls a knock on his face with her fist. Good fight, I thought.

By 9:50 a.m., Emma starts to do some sit-ups (she does 100 a day) while the other fighters sit under the ropes to rest.

"What makes you love Muay Thai?" I query. It was precisely 10:11 a.m. now and Emma's morning training session has just ended.

She waits for a few beats, considering the question. "Every time I finish a fight, I come out as a better person. There's always a lesson to be learned even in losing! My goal is to conquer challenges that the sport throws at me because I want to be a better fighter and

a human being overall," she declares.

"I prefer Muay Thai over mixed martial arts because of the respect ingrained in the sport. Muay Thai fighters treat everyone with utmost dignity including their opponents," she says. "I've made a lot of friends in the industry simply by having conversations with my competitors before and after a fight."

I get a text message from Emma at around 2 p.m., informing me that she is going to skip training in the afternoon because of a minor strain to her shoulder. I agree to meet her in the evening at Rhino Fitness for her strength training class instead. Upon reaching the warehouse-style fitness centre, I'm pleasantly surprised to see such a welcoming, well-lit space. The gym is divided into two sections: the left side is dedicated to strength training

classes led by Rhino Fitness founder, Patience, while the right side is for boot camp classes spearheaded by another trainer.

Emma and three other students had already started class before Jovo and I arrive. After finishing their warm-up and weight-lifting routine, the class prepares to tackle the challenges written on the whiteboard: 75 ring rows, 75 power cleans, and 75 back squats. Emma adds 2.5kg of weights to each side of her 15kg bar while Patience instructs his students on the best positions for the first exercise. Signalling an extremely strenuous workout session, the trainer cranks up a bass-heavy rap music playlist and chirpily asks his students, "Are you ready?"

At the end of the class, I learn that Emma was the last to finish. Patience tells me that she is usually the first one



"I LOVE MY LIFE IN BANGKOK. MY ROUTINE AT HOME AND AT THE GYM GIVES ME A SENSE OF PEACE."



BACK TO BASICS

Don your fighting gloves and train at these Thai boxing gyms if you aim to be a professional at Muay Thai.

Attachai Muay Thai Gym

📍 900 Soi On Nut 36, Suan Luang, Bangkok
🌐 attachaimuaythai.com

Eminent Air

📍 114/2 Soi Punnawithi 20, Sukhumvit 101, Bangkok
🌐 eminentgym.com

Master Toddy's Muay Thai Academy

📍 55/103-109 Bearing Soi 22, Sukhumvit 107, Bangkok
🌐 mastertoddy.com

Sasiprapa Gym

📍 Soi Min Sakhon 9, Khlong Chan, Bang Kapi, Bangkok
🌐 mightyoak.co.uk/sasiprapa

Sitsongpeenong Gym

📍 Soi Min Sakhon 9, Khlong Chan, Bang Kapi, Bangkok
🌐 sitsongpeenong.com/muay-thai



TOP: Male trainer Patience guides Emma while lifting weights
CIRCLE: Emma posing triumphantly after her class at Rhino Fitness
BOTTOM: Emma swings her leg at her sparring partner, Gaew

done, but he increased the difficulty of the ring rows this time to challenge her.

On our way out of the gym, I ask Emma what made her leave her hometown in the United Kingdom to stay in Thailand as a professional Muay Thai fighter.

"I love my life in Bangkok," she quickly answers. "My routine at home and at the gym gives me a sense of peace. It makes me feel that I don't need to go anywhere else."

Muay Thai isn't the only reason Emma chooses to live

in the Land of Smiles. "I like that Bangkok has a little bit of everything, and that there are always new and exciting things happening around here," she says. "There's also the fact that I can easily go for a quick getaway to the beach or trek the mountains anytime I want. Being near the things that makes me happy keep me sane and brings balance in my life."

"I'm perfectly happy where I am," she finishes.