

# Total MMA

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## DALEY DISPUTE RESOLVED BUT REPERCUSSIONS RUMBLE ON

By Ross McTavish, Co-Editor

The confusion over where British fighter Paul 'Semtex' Daley will compete on December 9 has been resolved, but not without much acrimony as the Nottingham native decided to renege on a verbal agreement with Cage Warriors Fighting Championships, which has ultimately led to him being ostracised from the promotion.

It was announced at Cage Warriors' last event – entitled 'Showdown' – on September 16, that Daley had confirmed his participation in a bout with Frenchman David Baron at the upcoming 'Enter The Rough House' show, scheduled for December 9 in Nottingham.

However, London based promotion Cage Rage, who Daley is contracted to, then secured December 9 as the date for their debut at the Earl's Court complex and requested that their current British Welterweight Champion take part on what will be their biggest ever show – potentially against Duane Ludwig.

That left with Daley with no choice other than to back out of the planned fight with Baron, the third time he has reversed an agreement to compete in Cage Warriors within nine months, after previously shelving plans to fight at the promotion's 'Strike Force 5' and 'Strike Force 6' events.

Cage Warriors now claim that on every occasion Daley has changed his mind with regards to fighting for them, it has been due to pressure from Cage Rage, much to the Midlands' organisation's chagrin.

Andy Lillis, Vice-President of Cage Warriors told Total MMA: "Paul said to Cage Rage that he would not be competing for them in December because he wanted to fight in-front of his hometown fans for Cage Warriors.

"Paul is desperate to fight in Nottingham, but every time his name has appeared on our bill, Cage Rage have told him that if he fights for Cage Warriors then he will not fight for Cage Rage again.

"It is strange that Cage Rage continually stop him fighting on our shows, but he has been able to compete for FX3 and Pancrase without any problems and I believe that Cage Rage have bullied him into fighting at their event".

However, Cage Rage co-promoter Dave O'Donnell vehemently dismissed those accusations, stating that his only interest is



Paul 'Semtex' Daley - Will Now Compete For Cage Rage (C) DC Sports Management LTD

having his contracted fighters compete at Cage Rage events.

O'Donnell also outlined why Cage Rage are now running on December 9 – the same day as Cage Warriors – instead of a planned December 2 show, insisting there is nothing sinister at hand.

He told Total MMA: "All we are trying to do is promote the sport to the best of our ability and we have a show on December 9<sup>th</sup> at Earl's Court that we want Paul to be apart of.

That event has been in the works for a while, but we were only given that date by the venue recently, so it is nothing to do with us deliberately trying to run on the same day as Cage Warriors.

"Paul has signed a contract with us for four fights and I phoned him to say that we would like him to fight on our December show.

"While any miscommunication over him fighting for Cage Warriors at their Nottingham event is

**ALSO: CAGE RAGE 18 'BATTLEGROUND' & TKO 27 PREVIEWS; UFC 63 'HUGHES VS. PENN', 'TUF 4' & IFL REVIEWS**

unfortunate, it is certainly through no fault of Cage Rage”.

Daley's manager, Daniel Cox, speaking on behalf of his client to Total MMA, further clarified the situation, stating that at the time 'Semtex' agreed to fight at 'Enter The Rough House', he was not scheduled to compete for Cage Rage and decided to take advantage of a contract clause which allows him to compete for another organisation as long as it is not within 30 days of a bout for Cage Rage.

Meanwhile, despite promoting the contest with Baron, at 'Showdown', alongside Cage Warriors' President Dougie Truman, Cox insisted Daley never signed to the fight, although both parties had agreed terms and conditions over 'Semtex's involvement in the December event.

He said: "I can confirm that my client did inform me that Cage Warriors Promotions approached him in regards to fighting at their show on December 9<sup>th</sup> 2006. At the time of the approach, Cage Rage already had their date for Cage Rage 19 set for December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006 and my client informed me that as far as he was aware, he was not on the card for that show.

"Yes, Paul has signed a four fight deal with Cage Rage and in his contract it states he can fight for another organisation as long as it is not within 30 days of a Cage Rage event. Paul was not down to fight in December for Cage Rage and he was excited about fighting in his home town of Nottingham against a class fighter in David Baron.

"I spoke with Mr Andy Lillis and we negotiated a purse two days before the Cage Warriors' show on September 16<sup>th</sup> 2006. I then asked him to send me the contract over, which he did. I informed Paul that he was not to sign anything unless I was there, as I knew I would not be in attendance due to the birth of my new born son. The contract was offered, but nothing was signed. I then found out on the day after the event that Cage Warriors announced that Paul would be fighting for them.

"Paul is under contract with Cage Rage at present and he must honour that contract. But we do not want to sever ties with any organisation. He has a big fight against Sol Gilbert this Saturday at Cage Rage 18 and he is focussing on that just now. Therefore, we do not want to hear more about this until myself, Paul, and Cage Warriors Promotions have met and discussed this in person”.

Cox will also be seeking to reverse Cage Warriors' decision to bar Daley from participating at any of their events as a fighter, cornerman or even as a spectator.

He said: "Cage Warriors have now banned Paul from their events, which I think is slightly harsh. I would like them to reconsider this situation and see if we can all meet to clear-up a few things. Paul has apologised to the Cage Warriors Promotions for the inconvenience of all this”.

However, an apology is not likely to appease Cage Warriors, who have admitted their frustration over their relationship with Cage Rage becoming even more fractious, to the point where they no longer wish to co-operate with

their rivals.

A Cage Warriors' statement released in the wake of the confirmation that Daley would not be fighting for them on December 9, read: "Warrior Promotions were informed that Mr Daley had chosen to fight for Cage Rage and because of his contract with Cage Rage, Mr Daley will not be allowed to fight for any other UK MMA promotion.

"This has left Warrior Promotions stunned as they had been in contact with Cage Rage Championships' Matchmaker Dave O'Donnell and were not informed that they would be taking this action.

"So, as a result, Warrior Promotions are left in no doubt that this petty action by Cage Rage Championships is nothing more than another blatant act of sabotage, as on three separate occasions they have waited for Warrior Promotions/Cage Warriors to announce that Mr Daley is fighting on a show before forcing Mr Daley to pull out.

"This has left Warrior Promotions no choice but to cease any further talks with Cage Rage Championships on matters concerning unity in the UK MMA scene, due to their continued reprehensible actions. Their dishonest and disreputable way of doing business shows they are not interested in promoting UK MMA for the greater good, but are instead looking to monopolise the scene for their own means.

"As many of you are aware, Warrior Promotions have tried to be as amicable as possible with regards to building bridges with Cage Rage and even changed two dates earlier this year, due to potential clashes. However Warrior Promotions were rewarded with Cage Rage altering their dates to clash with the original 'Strike Force 7' date on September 30<sup>th</sup> (Coventry) and now December 9<sup>th</sup> (Nottingham), as well as Cage Rage 'Contenders' clashing with 'Strike Force 6', which meant the withdrawal of Dave Lee from that show. Unfortunately the September 30<sup>th</sup> Coventry show had to be cancelled because of local council issues, but because of Cage Rage's behaviour, Warrior Promotions will no longer accommodate Cage Rage when it comes to the 2007 calendar and beyond”.

Further to that, Cage Warriors remain infuriated that on two separate occasions Cage Rage have approached Daley's team-mate Dan Hardy with a view to booking him on their shows, with Lillis claiming Cage Rage want to poach Cage Warriors fighters in order to harm their growth.

Lillis said: "We are trying to build bridges, but Cage Rage want to rule the industry and they have approached Dan Hardy to fight on their shows twice, even although they know he has a contract with Cage Warriors and that he has a manager who they should speak to if they are interested in booking him.

"On one occasion they contacted Dan only two days after it had been confirmed he would appear at an 'Enter The Rough House' event, despite the fact that they should go to his manager if they are interested in using Dan, rather than approach him directly”.

But while O'Donnell confirmed that Cage Rage

did want to book Hardy and contacted him over the situation, the Cage Rage promoter saw nothing wrong with his actions.

He said: "I phoned Dan Hardy about the possibility of him fighting on one of our shows and was told to speak to his manager to get an answer, which I don't think there is any problem with that at all”.

In the aftermath of the Daley dispute, Cage Warriors will now concentrate on recruiting a replacement for 'Semtex' and according to Lillis, talks with two possible combatants are well under way.

He said: "Since we knew that Paul would not be competing we have began lining-up a couple of possible fighters, one from Europe and one from the UK, although at this time we cannot identify who David will fight until everything is confirmed”.

Meanwhile, both British promotions received positive news this week in regard to future events.

Firstly, Cage Warriors announced a tentative date of February 1 for their debut show in Dubai – much to the delight of Lillis.

He said: "It is a massive move for us and Prince Al Maktoum is actually helping to organise us going over there. We have been in negotiations for over a year and have had a lot of legal technicalities to overcome, but it was great to finally get the all clear, just after we found out that Paul would not be fighting for us.

Lillis also confirmed that Cage Warriors are planning on making regular trips to the Gulf state in the future, so long as their first event passes without a hitch.

He said: "Future events will be gauged on the success of the first show, but it is not so much the spectator levels which may be an issue just now, rather some legal aspects such as the fact that people with tattoos are not allowed to use saunas in Dubai, which may have an impact on fighters trying to cut weight.

"If all goes well then we will put on three shows a year over there, as is stated in the contract, but there is a lot of planning which will have to go into this venture, although obviously it is great for us and for the sport to be taking mixed martial arts to a new region”.

For Cage Rage, O'Donnell confirmed that a 'Contenders' show will take place in Peterborough on November 11, with the possibility of British Featherweight Champion Brad Pickett competing on the Intense Fighting organised event.

He said: "Jay Gilbey of Intense Fighting will promote a show under the Cage Rage Contenders' banner in Peterborough, which is brilliant news and we are really happy to work with him because of how well he has done with his promotion. We want to roll out Contenders' shows across the country, but we are also going to work closely with the people running them, as shown by the fact that we want Brad Pickett to fight at the Peterborough event if he can win his fight at Cage Rage 18 on Saturday”.

# MACHINE VS. BEAST, WHO WILL WIN?

By Chris Brown

Cage Rage return to Wembley Arena this weekend to promote a show that will see the UK debut of a PRIDE superstar and an all British brawl headlining another stacked card.

In the bout which has garnered the most attention since the show's announcement, Murilo 'Ninja' Rua of Brazil's Chute Boxe Academy will travel to London to face British fighter Mark 'The Wizard' Weir. But as mouth-watering as that contest is, the main event of Cage Rage's 18<sup>th</sup> event will see the return of UK MMA legend Ian 'The Machine' Freeman to the promotion.

After losing to World Light-Heavyweight Champion Melvin Manhoef in devastating fashion last time out, Freeman will now challenge for the British Light-Heavyweight Title against Mark Epstein – who is coming into this fight on a frightening five fight win streak, with four of those victories coming by the way of first round stoppage.

Looking at possible tactics, I believe Freeman is certainly the better rounded fighter, but I don't think he'll take the fight to the ground unless absolutely necessary. After the way in which he lost to Manhoef, it's very conceivable that Freeman will be especially eager to stand and trade with 'The Beast'. Whether that's a good idea or not only time will tell. Though Freeman probably has the better technique of the two, if the fight were to turn into an out and out slugfest it will be exactly the kind of fight that Epstein likes and thrives on.

It's certainly possible to out-gun 'The Beast', as Michael Bisping and Evangelista Santos have shown in the past, but Epstein definitely has KO power and isn't afraid to eat a few punches either. It's possibly a bit early to break out an old cliché, but rarely has there been a more appropriate use of the tried and tested "whatever happens, I doubt it will go the distance" saying.

The semi-main event will see Rua make his first appearance in Cage Rage against Weir, in what can possibly be seen as a PRIDE feeder fight. Both are coming off of heavy defeats to Denis Kang and a win here could see the victor back in the reckoning for a spot in the PRIDE Bushido series.

This seems like a fight tailor made for Cage Rage. Two strikers whose aggressive styles may have cost them in the past but could be an asset in this fight. That's not to say it will not go to the ground at all. Chute Boxe fighters are well trained in jiu-jitsu and often take the fight to the floor if need be. It wouldn't surprise me at all if 'Ninja' were to look for a takedown at some point. Weir has quicker hands, probably more accurate too, and will have a large reach advantage, but he's not got the greatest takedown defence and is susceptible to 'ground 'n' pound', plus he has an unfortunate history of losing fight by cuts.

Also, both fighters have had their chins questioned at some point and when you add all



Ian 'The Machine' Freeman Will Fight Mark Epstein (C) Cage Rage & [www.ringpics.co.uk](http://www.ringpics.co.uk)

of this together it looks like we're in for a quick fight, but I wouldn't be shocked if it went past the first round, or even to a decision.

In an intriguing bout which may be akin to watching a car crash, Kimo Leopoldo will take on Dave Legeno – who must be a ticket seller. He must be. What other reason could there be for bringing back someone with a record of no wins and three losses, all in the first round? You have to respect that he doesn't want any easy opponents, but he's certainly out of his depth fighting opposition like Ikuhisa Minowa and Epstein.

This time around he's facing Kimo, a man famous in MMA solely because he gave Royce Gracie a tough fight back at UFC 3. He's also someone who has tested positively for steroids more than once (following a fight with Ken Shamrock and before a bout with Bas Rutten) and I consider his K-1 bout against Bob Sapp to be an affront to humanity.

Legeno has stated in the past that he'd like an opponent who will trade strikes with him (though that didn't work out very well for him against Epstein), but I don't think this will be it. Kimo has somehow got a reputation as a striker, despite showing very little propensity for it, but nearly all of his wins are by submission. Legeno may well have the advantage on the feet here, but I expect his takedown defence will be tested more than his chin.

Another heavyweight match will see Robert Berry fight Cage Rage fan favourite Rob Broughton. You may remember Broughton. He was the lamb set to be sacrificed by James Thompson at the last Cage Rage show after

## CARD:

**Cage Rage 18: Saturday 30 September - Wembley Arena, London, England**

British Light-Heavyweight Title Fight: Mark Epstein vs. Ian Freeman

Middleweight Fight: Murilo Rua vs. Mark Weir

Heavyweight Fight: Kimo vs. Dave Legeno

British Heavyweight Title Fight: Robert Berry vs. Rob Broughton

World Lightweight Title Fight: Abdul Mohamed vs. Vitor Ribeiro

Middleweight Fight: Tony Fryklund vs. Alex Reid

Heavyweight Fight: Mustafha Alturk vs. Henry Miller

Heavyweight Fight: Alexandru Lungu vs. Mark Bucannon

British Welterweight Title Fight: Sol Gilbert vs. Paul Daley

British Featherweight Title Fight: Brad Pickett vs. Robbie Olivier

Middleweight Fight: Alex Cook vs. Xavier Foupa-Pokam

Middleweight Fight: Zelg Galesic vs. James E. Nicolle



**Mark Epstein (Right) Is On A Five Fight Win Streak - Featuring Four First Round Knockouts! (C) Cage Rage & [www.ringpics.co.uk](http://www.ringpics.co.uk)**

Tengiz Tedoradze pulled out of the fight. Apparently he never got the memo and after taking a lot of punishment in the first two rounds, he beat the Pride FC veteran by TKO in the 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza to the absolute delight of the crowd. His reward? He gets to defend his British Heavyweight Title against 'Buzz' Berry.

Berry poses a much different challenge to Thompson and in some ways a much tougher one. Whereas Thompson, for the most part, likes to keep things standing and usually only goes for a takedown when he's tiring, Berry is more refined on the ground and carries a submission threat that Thompson lacks. On the feet, it's fair to say that Berry isn't the sharpest of strikers. He does have willingness to trade, but lacks the technique and the chin to have real success with it.

We know that Broughton can withstand an onslaught, but he can't afford to be on the defensive in this fight. If he can put Berry on the back foot, then he has a great chance of winning.

Another all British fight will see Paul Daley lock horns with Sol Gilbert in what should be a titanic tussle. After two crushing defeats in-a-row, Gilbert has rebounded with two straight wins (albeit one by DQ and against lesser opposition) that will have restored some confidence, which will be much needed in this title fight against the British Welterweight Champion 'Semtex' Daley.

Both fighters are primarily strikers, but anybody hoping for a wild slugfest may be disappointed. Neither shy away from trading shots, but as Daley showed in his last Cage Rage outing against Ross Mason, he won't hesitate to take the fight to the ground if things aren't going how he'd like on the feet.

Standing-up, I think that Daley has the better technique and has the bigger arsenal, but Gilbert possibly has more power, having recently dropped down a weight division. On the ground though, the edge has to go to Daley, and that may be what ends up deciding who wins this fight.

The British Featherweight Title fight sees a second bout between Brad 'One Punch' Pickett and Robbie Olivier. The first fight was somewhat controversial, with a lot of people thinking that Olivier should have earned the decision victory. The judges awarded the win to Pickett, but the close nature of the fight means that we get a rematch.

It's not hard to see why many thought that Olivier won their first encounter. He never gave Pickett any time to settle on his feet and took him down with ease several times. Perhaps rather surprisingly, once the fight was on the floor it was a far more even contest than was expected. Olivier was better at holding position, but Pickett never stopped working and reversed position a few times. In the end, the judges

sided with Pickett on the basis that he did more to try to finish the fight.

It's no secret that Pickett is improving quite rapidly, but one area where hasn't really got any better is his takedown defence. His ground game has reached the point where he's relatively comfortable working from the bottom, but against someone like Olivier that may not be enough. We may very well see another very close fight here.

Finally, I would like to conclude by saying Vitor 'Shaolin' Ribeiro is under-rated. I'm not truly sure whether I can get away with saying that, but it seems that since losing to Tatsuya Kawajiri in December 2004 (his only defeat), a lot of people have forgotten just how good he is. You'll rarely see better display of jiu-jitsu technique in MMA than that of Ribeiro and I'm absolutely shocked that some are actually picking Abdul Mohamed to win a fight against the Brazilian.

Not that Abdul has no chance, he's a good wrestler who's skilled at avoiding submissions, but this is 'Shaolin' and there's no doubt who the heavy favourite is. Mohamed has to be aggressive in this bout. His best bet to win the fight is to constantly be pressing the action, not giving Ribeiro a chance to compose himself. Unfortunately for him, that's a lot easier said than done as Ribeiro is great at creating space and imposing his game on his usually beaten opponents.

# PENN RIB INJURY THE REASON FOR COUNTRY BOY HUGHES' SURVIVAL

By Ross McTavish, Co-Editor

As B.J. Penn wearily slumped to the canvas following an ill-fated conclusion to his phenomenal bout with Matt Hughes at UFC 63, the Hawaiian was left to rue how the body which took him agonisingly close to a remarkable victory, was ultimately the reason for a devastating defeat.

For two momentous rounds, Penn's crisp striking and unbelievably dexterous takedown defence had stifled his freakishly powerful opponent, before allowing the 28-year-old to launch an attack which took him within a fraction of recapturing the Welterweight Championship.

With Penn's elastic legs grapevined around Hughes' bulging neck in a dominant triangle choke position, the challenger took hold of his foe's dangling right arm and attempted to hyperextend the limb at the elbow joint.

Despite coming perilously close to forcing Hughes to submit during a stanza which intensely raised the heartbeats of those in attendance and watching on television, to the point where all must have been on the edge of their seats, Penn's charge was, in the end, a futile, last-ditch effort as Hughes' power saw him break the hold, a split-second prior to the end of the round.

Throughout the second period, Penn showed that he is perhaps the most skilled fighter in the entire spectrum of mixed martial arts, but for all his natural talent, the Hilo native outlined on his official website how an unfortunate injury stopped him in his tracks.

He told bj penn.com: "I felt great going in and when Matt started trying to take me down from my right leg, it's something I expected he might do. He got me down against the fence, but I was thinking about this position a lot and I was ready. When he went for a big elbow, he missed and I capitalised and started going for his back. At this moment, when I was making the turn towards his back, I felt my ribs separate on my right side. Although I didn't know the severity of the situation, I was thinking that I had to finish him now because I knew something was wrong. Matt defended himself well and got through the round. When I got up to walk to my corner, I knew something was wrong, but I didn't want to talk about it with my corner. I wanted to be the champ. I wanted to keep fighting.

"I remember standing up out of the corner in pain. But I was thinking, 'Earn your title, this is what you have to do to get your belt back, fight through the pain'. I knew the opportunity I had with getting this fight, especially after losing my last fight and I wasn't going to quit on my corner. I kept going because I honestly believed it was

destiny.

"When Matt and I were boxing I felt like I couldn't breathe and had no mobility in my core. But I kept thinking something good is going to happen. When Matt started dominating the stand-up I tried for a takedown. I had nothing though and pulled to guard. I felt like I couldn't do anything on the ground. But I was still positive. Matt hit me in the ribs from half guard. The pain was so excruciating I had to use my far hand to block it. I would rather Matt pass my guard and punch my face the hit my ribs. When Matt was in his favourite position I was still thinking I was going to win somehow. 'Big John' [McCarthy – the referee] gave me plenty of time. I practiced defending against that position with flexibility, but I had none with my core. Even when 'Big John' stopped the fight, I was still so positive I thought I escaped. Congratulations to Matt, he is a great fighter. It's not his fault that happened and he fought like the champion he is. He deserved the victory".

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**It appears it was an ill-timed injury which ultimately cost Penn this fight and forced him into taking a two month hiatus.**

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There had been many before the bout who had queried whether Penn's questionable conditioning would be able to carry him through five rounds with a man, in Hughes, who possesses supreme cardio-vascular fitness. Those fears were heightened prior to the fight when it emerged that despite insisting he was in fine fettle through training five rounds a couple of days per week, Penn had missed his flight to the mainland and was spending plenty of time indulging of his passion of surfing.

When Penn emerged for the third round as little more than a punchbag, most immediately asserted that 'The Prodigy's conditioning had once again let him down. Penn's previous bout in the UFC saw him lose to Georges St. Pierre after running out of gas through over-training prior to the fight. It appeared that after completely changing his schedule, preparation had once again let Penn down.

However, given the way Penn suffered a complete turnaround from dominating the contest to being unable to compete, it seems that a separated rib was the main contributing factor towards his loss.

That is not to say Hughes, an extraordinary

## RESULTS:

### UFC 63 - Selected Results:

Matt Hughes def. B.J. Penn (R3)

Mike Swick def. David Loiseau (Dec)

Rashad Evans def. Jason Lambert (R2)

Joe Lauzon def. Jens Pulver (R1)

Melvin Guillard def. Gabe Ruediger (R2)

Tyson Griffin def. David Lee (R1)

physical specimen, would not have gone on to win the final three rounds against Penn had the Hawaiian not been stopped at 3:53 of the third round.

But it appears it was an ill-timed injury which ultimately cost Penn this fight and forced him into taking a two month hiatus from the sport in order to heal his ribs and consider his future.

Elsewhere at the Arrowhead Pond of Anaheim, Joe Lauzon caused the biggest upset of the night when he defeated Jens Pulver – the only previous lightweight champion in the UFC's history – in 'Little Evil's much vaunted return to the octagon. A booming left-hook only 47 seconds in to round one handed the 7/1 outsider victory and put paid to Pulver's plans to take on the winner of the Kenny Florian vs. Sean Sherk, who will meet for the Lightweight Title at UFC 64.

'The Ultimate Fighter 2' Heavyweight Champion Rashad Evans finished a fight for the first time in six attempts when he beat Jason Lambert by KO via punches from the mount during the second round of their light-heavyweight contest, while lightweight Melvin Guillard destroyed Gabe Ruediger with a brutal body shot early in the second round of their bout. However, the cocky 'Young Assassin' came perilously close to allowing his opponent the opportunity to sink in a choke at the end of the first round, which would have handed Ruediger an unlikely win.

In the semi-main event Mike Swick was taken to a decision for only the second time in his career, this time by David Loiseau, while Tyson Griffin enjoyed a successful UFC debut, beating the over-exuberant British fighter David Lee thanks to a rear-naked-choke.

Jorge Gurgel, Eddie Sanchez and Roger Huerta all won bouts which did not air on the main pay-per-view broadcast, but in the end it was Penn's fall from grace which captured all the headlines.

UFC 63: HUGHES VS. PENN REVIEW

# THE BRIEF BRILLIANCE OF B.J. PENN

## STATS:

Name: B.J. Penn

Nickname: 'The Prodigy'

Association: B.J. Penn's MMA

Birth Date: 13/12/1978

Birth Place: Hilo, Hawaii

Weight: 170lbs

Height: 5'9"

Record: 10 Wins, 4 Defeats, 1 Draw

Method Of Victory: 4 TKO, 3 Submissions, 3 Decisions

Cause Of Defeat: 3 Decisions, 1 TKO

By Stash Capar

**Whether it be through fate, divine intervention or simply coincidence, every now and then the World produces an individual who is born for a specific purpose, with limitless talent in a particular area: Alexander The Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking all come to mind.**

In the World of MMA few were and are as talented as B.J. 'The Prodigy' Penn. Even before entering professional MMA, he was surrounded by an aura of hype. There were rumors circulating of Penn took part in a Judo tournament as a white belt and destroyed black belts. Some said he was capable of out-grappling and submitting experienced opponents 30 or 40 pounds heavier than him without breaking a sweat. 'The Prodigy' just seemed to have a unique ability to close off the World around him and enter a mental zone, where the only thing that existed was defeating his opponent.

Using his vast toolset, he would make fighters like Takanori Gomi and Matt Hughes look like novices, humiliating them in all ranges and aspects of the game. Of course, at that time the only thing nearly as impressive as B.J.'s talent, was his iron will, which also happened to reside in an iron body. Unfortunately, much has changed since then as Penn's will and body have deteriorated and so have the lines between the man and the myth.

Saturday's contest at UFC 63 with Hughes was one of those unique bouts that a fight fan will always remember. As soon as B.J. walked into the Octagon, with Gnarles Barkley blasting in the background, I began to catch glimpses of the former Welterweight Champion, the man who left Hughes panting on the floor of the Octagon, and who left a



**B.J. Penn Was Defeated By Matt Hughes At UFC 63, Despite An Awesome Effort**

blood soaked Gomi wheezing for air.

For the first two rounds the old B.J. Penn, 'The Prodigy' – the man born to be a mixed martial arts legend - took over the cage. Hughes looked like a child trying to beat his instructor, as he was simply outclassed. Standing, Hughes was eating shots from all directions, he even admitted himself in the post-fight press conference: "In the first round I couldn't even see his punches before they hit me, in the second I could see them but there was no way I could move out of the way", said Hughes.

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**For a brief moment we saw what Penn was truly capable of and what he could potentially be today.**

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On the ground it was no better for Hughes. Penn used his inhuman balance and defended the takedown over and over again. When the bout finally hit the ground, B.J. launched an arsenal of submission attempts that would make Antonio Rodrigo Nogueira scratch his head at his opponent. At the closing stage of the second round it looked like it was over for Hughes.

"I just said a little prayer and tried my best to hang on," said the Welterweight Champion.

Unfortunately as Hughes rose and walked

over to his corner, something changed in B.J. Some say the years of half-assed training and partying suddenly raised their ugly heads, others say he suffered a rib injury. Whatever it was, the fight had left Penn, just like it did against earlier opponents, and although his mind was willing, his body was weak – and you can't have any weaknesses against someone like Hughes.

As the third round started something had changed in Penn and everyone could see it. In the end Penn beat himself, but what we saw in the process was simply unbelievable.

When was the last time any UFC or PRIDE champion looked that bad? I'll always remember UFC 63 not because Hughes beat Penn, but because for a brief moment we saw what Penn was truly capable of and what he could potentially be today. He had an opportunity to showcase his skills against the most dominant fighter to have ever entered the UFC Octagon and in my opinion he did this to an extent. As great and hardworking as Hughes may be, Penn's performance basically told him: "You'll never have the skills and talent that I do".

However, it seems like it's always the most talented individuals who squander their gifts and become mere shadows of what they could potentially be. Just imagine what a well-trained and in-shape Penn would have done to Hughes. Although somewhere deep down I know we'll never see the return of the old B.J. Penn, like a crazy religious fanatic I'll keep hanging on to that false promise and hope that one day the real 'Prodigy' will return.

# EXPLOSION OF THE LIGHTWEIGHTS

By Ally Clark

**UFC 55, October 7 2005. No lightweight fights. UFC 63, September 23 2006. Five out of nine fights are a lightweight contest.**

What a difference a year makes for the sub-155-pounders in the UFC. A sudden explosion of interest and an injection of fresh lightweight challengers have transformed the division from being dead to very much alive. Also, with Kenny Florian taking on Sean Sherk at UFC 64 in three weeks' time for the vacant lightweight title, it looks as if UFC President Dana White has massive plans for the most exciting fighters in the promotion. Here, we take a look at the most promising lightweight fighters from around the World, many of whom could be future UFC competitors.

## Melvin Gulliard

'The Ultimate Fighter 2' participant Gulliard is naturally a welterweight fighter but seems to adapt better to the lightweight division. Two dominating wins over Rick Davis and Gabe Rudiger have proved to the watching World that Melvin brings more than just a big mouth. Powerful, with a large frame at this weight, Melvin will cause problems for many of the smaller fighters in the 155lb division. The only problem that Gulliard might face, is that he seems unwilling to take a beating. Often his head goes down and he makes himself vulnerable, but with Tito Ortiz in his corner, he has somebody who will be able to jig him up at the end of a round he has perhaps lost.

## Urijah Faber

Fighting out of California, the current KOTC Featherweight Champion is making waves in the lower leagues of MMA in America. Faber holds a 15-1 record (his only loss was to UFC new boy Tyson Griffin in 2005). He is very well rounded, being able to take out opponents via his devastating fists or his crisp submission skills. Six of his wins have come via submission and six via knockout. Unlike Gulliard, Faber has a name for being able to take punishment. I believe it's only a matter of time before we see Urijah in the UFC and I have no doubt he could well be a top contender.

## 'Razor' Rob McCullough

Like Faber, 'Razor' is making a name for himself in smaller promotions. McCullough carries a 13-3 record and is unbeaten since January 2004. WEC fans will have seen him annihilating Ryan Healy and Randy Hauer recently, as well as earning an impressive decision victory over Harris Sirmiento at the WFA 'King Of The Streets' event. McCullough is strong, powerful and dangerous when standing. Eight of his thirteen victories have arrived via TKO, most of which coming from his impressive right hand. He lacks a little bit on the



Melvin Gulliard (C) Freestyle Fighting Federation & [www.youngassassin.com](http://www.youngassassin.com)

ground, something that may get in his way in the UFC, but McCullough is a massive prospect and he'll be a force to be reckoned with in years to come.

## Nathan Diaz

Brother of UFC veteran Nick, the younger Nathan fights pretty much the same style as his sibling. A skilful Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu artist as well as a fast and effective boxer, Nathan can end a fight in the blink of an eye. Diaz holds a 5-1 record including victories over credible opponents like Joe Hurley and Dennis Davies. Nathan, again like his brother, has the amazing ability to have the crowd on their feet in an instant. He may however, be at least a year away from debuting in a mainstream MMA promotion. Despite his victory at StrikeForce, Diaz has a habit of sometimes being too naive in fights, something that cost him victory against Koji Oishi - who incidentally lost to Nick at UFC 53.

## Tyson Griffin

Griffin made his UFC debut last weekend in

an impressive outing against Cage Rage warrior David Lee. Griffin is unbeaten and has, as mentioned earlier, defeated rival lightweight prospect Faber. However Griffin's most impressive victory came over Duane 'Bang' Ludwig at StrikeForce 2. Extremely exciting and very fast on his feet, Griffin also has agility on the ground as one of his major pluses. Having a UFC victory under his belt will now, obviously, put him up the ladder. Rumours are circulating that Griffin's next UFC fight will be against former champion and lightweight legend Jens Pulver. And with Pulver coming of a defeat to Joe Lauzon, I wouldn't bet against Griffin picking up the victory.

These five fighters are just my top picks of the many, many lightweight fighters out there who have the ability to become greats at their weight. The 155lb division has a history of being both quick and captivating and I can guarantee you that the new breed of lightweights are faster and more exciting than anything you've seen in UFC before. Watch this space, but don't blink or you'll miss it!

# REVIEW: THE ULTIMATE FIGHTER 4



*The Ultimate Fighter 4 - Sundays At 10 On Bravo (UK), Thursdays At 10 On Spike (US)*

By Michael Farrow

As everyone should now be aware, 'The Ultimate Fighter 4' is entitled 'The Comeback' and the week after we saw two guys straight out of the 'Where are they now?' files fight, we are due a middleweight bout between two of the four that remain – Pete Sell, Patrick Côté, Jorge Rivera and Charles McCarthy. They do not exactly conjure up images of a comeback...

Firstly though, one last time, we pour over the sad departure of Mikey Burnett from the competition. While the opponent who eliminated him, Din Thomas, is a modern mixed martial artist, Burnett still seems like the same old puncher he was of years past. The win allowed Team Mojo to get back to their plans for the middleweights and they want to make their opposition sweat.

McCarthy's nickname in the house is now 'Captain Miserable', which isn't a patch on my earlier moniker for him 'Lightning Charlie'. Shonie Carter plays a trick on him by writing "a personality" on his shopping list and 'Mr International' blames Sell of the deed – a claim 'Drago' strenuously denies. I'm not a playa hater, but when McCarthy called Shonie "mean-spirited" last week, this was the sort of thing he was talking about.

Meanwhile, Rivera is going nuts. The mindgames are driving him crazy and his babymomma's about to drop his child. However, trainer (and legend) Randy Couture soon turns up with a sheepish look and congratulates Jorge on becoming a father. The relief is palpable and he's pleased as punch with the product-placed mobile phone which contains videos of his baby girl.

Rich Franklin is brought in as a guest coach before the fight announcement, where Sell goes for the hand-picked, tailor-made easy option of McCarthy. This leads to our customary coverage of the fighters' careers to date. 'Lightning Charlie' seems like he has spent his time assimilating life manuals and uses the phrase "social-engineering", which is seldom uttered outside articles in the second section of 'The Guardian', or academic papers. McCarthy's UFC career is covered, a single fight with David Loiseau, which was the French-Canadian's coming-out party. He destroyed

Charlie with a spinning heel kick after McCarthy had made a decent fist of the first round.

Sell describes his life like he was born into a Nas song about surviving the ghetto. We see him choke out Phil Baroni, a match in which 'Drago' was overmatched, but thankfully he doesn't oversell the victory... I mean, it's not like he says Baroni was only out for "30 to 40 seconds" before the fight was stopped.... If somebody ended up in a choke for 30 to 40 seconds and they were already out, they'd probably be dead. Who says MMA isn't like pro wrestling?

The bout starts in good time, meaning that it is going to be a long fight and that we don't have to make do with ten minutes of filler. After an early feeling out period, McCarthy clinches, leading to a takedown from Sell, before 'Captain Miserable' searches for a heel hook in vain as 'Drago' easily clambers back to his feet.

Suddenly and inexplicably, McCarthy starts screaming in pain and Sell capitalises in pounding on his opponent, who gamely hangs in there, eventually pulling guard. Sell is constantly active, trying to pass guard and raining down elbows, while McCarthy tries to hold him off. It was domination until the round ended and while Sell used the position well, he never looked like finishing McCarthy.

The second round quickly became a lesson in what happens when you don't get an all-or-nothing submission attempt. 'Drago' went for his famed guillotine choke, but it wasn't sunk in because McCarthy lasted in it for 45 seconds before managing to get out and find half guard. He had a good position but he did not pass, or look as active as Sell did in the first round. Nothing quite clicks for McCarthy, but Sell is on his back the whole stanza and this is one of those times where the ten point must system gives 'Captrain Miserable' the round cheaply.

To decide the outcome, we go to a third round, where Sell looks to keep the fight standing and push the action. His punches don't land at first, but 'Drago' is in control and scores some nice body shots. McCarthy clinches and again he's made to pay by Sell, who takes him down. 'Drago' is somehow cut but it doesn't faze him, as he finds side control and uses short elbows. McCarthy then gives up his back, but manages to stay away from the rear naked choke. However, the activity ebbs out of them for a

second and this benefits McCarthy, who flips over into Sell's guard. 'Drago's team-mate Matt Serra screams him to go for the omaplata and Sell rolls into it. McCarthy eventually counters by going to his back and attempting an armbar, but Sell's elbow is past the groin so there's no armbar available.

When the match finishes, Sell is obviously the winner, but I can't help but feel that McCarthy never gave a full account of himself. Maybe 'Captain Miserable's negativity finally overtook him and killed his spirit?

## OPINION:

By Stuart Millard

**Charles McCarthy:** Like a kid at school who stands in two separate dog dirt in front of his classmates and realises he will be known as 'Poo On The Shoe' until the day he dies – a purely hypothetical schoolboy, you understand – McCarthy too found himself permanently labelled. 'Captain Miserable', as he's now known, looked resplendent in home made 'Captain Miserable' cape and trademark sullen face. Surely an accompanying theme tune is just around the corner, like it was for 'Poo On The Shoe'. Or would have been, were he real. McCarthy's superpowers include the ability to whine and complain at staggering speeds, highly evolved tear-ducts that leak profusely in any situation, and the power to react to Shonie Carter writing "personality" on a shopping list as though Shonie had just laughed at the Holocaust and shat in a baby's crib.

**The Science Of McCarthy:** For a man hailing from Coconut Creek, which sounds like the fictional opening level of an old console platform game, 'Captain Miserable' sees himself as somewhat of a Stephen Hawking figure. Who else would work their life out with equations?

**Shonie Carter:** "In my kingdom, there shall be blingdom," proclaimed our pimp emperor, or pimperor, if you will. The good 'Captain's whiny antics were dismissed by Shonie as "silliness and foolishness", and Shonie's decision to rib McCarthy's lack of a personality would probably end with him dismantling his raft and filling all three hundred bottles with the tears that would surely follow.

**Jorge Rivera:** In a truly heartwarming moment, with absolutely no undertones of product placement or whorish advertising, Rivera shared in the magic of newly created life via an Amp'd Mobile replay. Just out of shot on the tiny phone screen was Matt Lindland pulling a GoldenPalace.com t-shirt over the baby's head and forcing handfuls of Xcience into its squealing mouth. There's something of a UFC baby boom at the moment, with Frank Mir expecting his waters to break any day now.

**Poo On The Shoe:** Just to clarify, 'Poo On The Shoe' is merely a metaphor. Besides, I had a nickname at school, and it was... 'Coolpants McAmazing', not 'Fatty', not 'Stu-Farts Mongard', and certainly not 'Poo On The Shoe'. Besides, it was thirteen years ago, JUST LET IT LIE!

# SAM STOUT TAKES CENTRE STAGE FOR TKO 27: 'REINCARNATION'

By Tommy Hackett in Seattle

Long a staple of the Japanese MMA scene, the under-70kg divisions have finally enjoyed a resurgence in North America.

We have seen the UFC re-establish their lightweight division, with Kenny Florian and Sam Stout even given the privilege of headlining a UFC 'Fight Night'. Stars that were making their name in the 'Land of the Rising Sun' like Yves Edwards and Jens Pulver have been featured on UFC broadcasts and the promotion will have a new Lightweight Champion by the conclusion of their next pay-per-view event when Florian and Sean Sherk lock horns for the vacant title. Sherk is just one contender who has made the cut from a higher weight level in order to have a chance of winning a championship.

Not to be outdone, TKO Major League MMA, the Canada-based promotion which has developed and featured such MMA luminaries as David 'The Crow' Loiseau and Georges St. Pierre, made plans to offer a show on Saturday at the Bell Centre in Montreal, Quebec which should have featured not one but two main events in the lightweight and featherweight divisions. Sadly, only one of the fights has come to fruition.

However, as the song goes, let's accentuate the positive. K-1 and UFC veteran 'Hands Of Stone' Stout will definitely defend his lightweight title against Jay 'El Terrible' Estrada – a tough regional fighter in the US and Canada. As his Roberto Duran-inspired moniker implies, Stout is noted for his power in both fists, which have taken him to a 9-2-1 record in fights throughout Canada and the US. The London, Ontario native garnered international attention when he was part of an early 2006 fight of the year candidate in his UFC debut in March, where he defeated Spencer Fisher by split decision. That night Stout won with a powerful stand-up attack, but unfortunately the Canadian suffered a setback in his second appearance for ZUFFA as he was taken to the mat and quickly dispatched with a rear naked choke by Florian. This marks Stout's comeback fight in front of his home country and his first opportunity to climb back up the world rankings.

In contrast, Estrada – who actually recorded a win against Stout in bout that marked both men's professional debut – has been toiling in obscurity in small regional shows around the US and Canada, amassing a 13-5 MMA record. This Saturday may be a moment for



the Illinois native to finally capture MMA glory and it is conveniently coming against an opponent that he previously defeated in two minutes via rear naked choke.

Estrada remarked recently that the loss to Florian revealed that Stout has the same deficiencies in his groundwork, not only losing on the mat, but succumbing to the same hold. Expect him to try and take the heavy hitter from the other London right back down to the canvas.

The bout has been a long time in the making. Their first fight was back in June 2003 in Estrada's home state of Illinois and the two were supposed to rematch at TKO 24 in January, but Stout was forced to pull out due to illness. However while the contest will finally take place, TKO were less fortunate with their scheduled main event as Ivan 'The Pride of El Salvador' Menjivar – noted for his two recent wins for Japanese promotion HERO's, has pulled out of his bout with Mark Hominek.

Menjivar, a master grappler who is not afraid to bang it out and Hominick, who is arguably the best pound for pound striker in MMA today, are unquestionably among North America's finest competitors in the featherweight division. And with Norifumi 'Kid' Yamamoto leaving MMA to give Olympic wrestling another shot, I'd expect both of them to challenge for the top spot in the World. It is a bitter disappointment that this fight has been cancelled so late and no reason has been yet given as to why by TKO. However, the Quebec faithful will still have a chance to see Hominick – who is 2-0 in the UFC – as he will battle late replacement Samuel Guillet of Brazilian Top Team's Canadian affiliate.

On a very different note, I and Total MMA would like to express their condolences to the family and friends of Shelby Walker, the American Top Team fighter who died this week at the age of 31 due to an apparent overdose of pain medication. Walker was known in MMA circles for her pro bouts with Hook'n'Shoot & AFC and for also recording a five second KO for USMMA. Shelby was a veteran of the US Army and an energetic presence on MMA's internet message boards as well. Please remember her and her loved ones in your thoughts and prayers.

## UK TV:

Here are the listings for MMA and boxing on UK TV next week:

### Saturday 30th

Five: 12.40-1.40 AM: Boxing

Player: 9-10 PM: UFC 63 Highlights

TWC: 11-12 AM: Cage Warriors

Eurosport: 11.45-1 AM: Pride FC

### Sunday 1st October

Men & Motors: 12.50-1.20 AM: Cage Rage

Player: 9-10 PM: UFC

Bravo: 10-11 AM: UFC 'The Ultimate Fighter 4 - The Comeback'

Bravo: 11-1 AM: UFC 63 Highlights

### Monday 2nd October

All In Sport: 4-5 PM: IFC

Player: 10-11 PM: UFC

All In Sport: 11.30-12.30 AM: IFC Uncut

### Tuesday 3rd October

TWC: 12-1 PM: Cage Warriors

All In Sport: 4-5 PM IFC

Eurosport: 9.00-12.30 PM: Boxing

Player: 10-11 PM: UFC

All In Sport: 11.30-12.30 AM: IFC Uncut

### Wednesday 4th October

All In Sport: 4-5 PM IFC

Bravo: 11-12 AM: UFC 'The Ultimate Fighter 4 - The Comeback'

All In Sport: 11.30-12.30 AM: IFC Uncut

IN FOCUS: USA SPONSORED BY WWW.EVOLUTIONFIGHTWEAR.COM



By Stewart Allen

This past Saturday saw the International Fight League run another live event, this time at the Mark Of The Quad Cities in Moline, IL featuring two sets of team battles, topped off with a hotly anticipated superfight between two of the teams' legendary coaches, as the Silverbacks' Pat Miletich stepped back into the ring against The Pitbulls' Renzo Gracie.

This was the first time in competition in over four years for Miletich, who has added to his already considerable legacy by becoming arguably the top MMA coach in the US. We can't quite call this a comeback, since Pat never officially 'retired' from fighting, but the long layoff from active competition may have been contributory to his shock loss to Gracie in just 3:37 of the first round of the show's main event. I've had an opportunity to view a handheld camcorder recording of the fight, as the match will not air on Fox Sports Net for a few weeks, but from what I was able to gather from the footage, it seemed that Miletich made the seemingly elementary mistake of ducking his head a little too far as both men tussled at the ropes, allowing Gracie to clamp on a guillotine choke at the two-and-a-half minute mark. It took a good minute before Pat eventually succumbed, and the reaction after the fight was phenomenal, as people swarmed the ring from both corners.

It's difficult to really judge Miletich based on this fight, because everyone can make a mistake – even a relatively simple one like giving up your neck for a guillotine – especially with four years of competition ring rust, but it can't help but damage Pat's reputation in what can only be termed his home area. It's also worth noting that Pat has suffered from neck problems in the past, so perhaps tapping out to what is considered an elementary technique like a guillotine can be somewhat forgiven. I've yet to hear any news from the Miletich camp about whether Pat will fight on (though I can't believe he'd like to bow out like this), but for now all congratulations have to go to Gracie, who has come back from a disastrous record of one win in his last seven fights to restore some pride to the Gracie family, which has taken some heavy losses recently.

The submission win for Pitbulls' coach Gracie was revenge for his team falling 3-2 to Miletich's Silverbacks – the defending IFL Team Champions from the inaugural season. In the other team battle of the night, Carlos Newton's Dragons defeated Frank Shamrock's Razorclaws by the same margin. Both teams will now progress to the semi-final round of the 2006 Championship. The event was said to have been a success from eyewitness reports, with a pretty healthy turnout considering the show was on the same day as UFC 63 and I'm sure the buzz from the Miletich vs. Gracie fight should help numbers when the show airs on FSN in the USA.

Speaking of FSN, Sunday night saw the debut of the IFL's new TV season, with footage from the recent event in Portland, OR of the encounter between Bas Rutten's Anacondas

# INTERNATIONAL FIGHT LEAGUE ROUND-UP

and Antonio Inoki's Sabres. Well, I say Inoki's Sabres... but the enigmatic Mr Inoki himself ended up no-showing the event, leaving his team in the hands of bodybuilder Ken Yasuda and pro-wrestler Tokimitsu Ishizawa (who wore his Kendo Kashin mask all evening). Part of me spent the show wondering whether Inoki has even *met* the members of his 'team' at any point, let alone coached them. I'll say this much at least – the Sabres sure fought like a team coached by Antonio Inoki, because they were awful – falling in a clean sweep of 5-0 to Rutten's side.

Three of the members of the Sabres (including PRIDE/K-1 fighter Kazuhiro Hamanaka) tapped to guillotines in less than two minutes combined, and Tom Howard (a pro wrestler with a miserable 0-5 record in MMA) actually

sweep at the start of the programme. For some reason, I'm not sure Inoki knew or cared. Mr Inoki, if you're reading this – your team lost.

While you can question the sense in having Inoki as a coach in this venture, you cannot question the credentials of the latest two legendary coaches, announced by the IFL on Monday, who will take their teams into battle in the 2007 season. Don Frye will coach the Scorpions, based out of Tuscon, AZ, while Marco Ruas will take charge of the Piranhas, fighting out of Southern California. The addition of Frye and Ruas as coaches brings the number of teams up to ten, with the promise that two more teams and coaches will be added before the end of the year.

It is just as well that Kurt Otto and the IFL can continue to attract legends of this quality to their product because quite frankly that's the main selling point right of the league right now. No-one tuned in on FSN on Sunday night to see Tom Howard fight, nor did they even tune in to see Alex Schoenauer who competed on the first season of 'The Ultimate Fighter'. They tuned in because (a) fighting is hot business right now on the back of UFC's explosion, and (b) Bas Rutten was coaching a team of fighters. Future viewers will be drawn in to see teams coached by Frank Shamrock, Maurice Smith, Matt Lindland et al – and from there, fans may start to pick up on individual combatants and make them stars in their own right, but as of this moment, viewers are going to want to tune in to support the team of their favourite legendary MMA figure.

After watching some of the IFL from last season and also the new season debut, it *feels* very much like a 'B' league show in comparison to UFC, WFA and even Cage Rage – and that's something that they'll eventually need to shake off in order to become a competitive name in the industry. Having recognisable names like Bas and his fellow coaches makes the promotion far more interesting, and far more major league.



appeared to be running to escape the fists of the Anacondas' Krzysztof Soszynski in the final bout of the show before losing via TKO to standing strikes in 3:47. To be fair to Howard, the stoppage definitely looked a little early, but with the Sabres already down 0-4 and the fact that Howard never looked comfortable in there, I don't feel a huge sense of injustice at the result. The only match that was really worth watching on the show was the opener between Chris Horodecki (Anacondas) and Ed 'Wild' West (Sabres). Fought at 155lbs, this match was a really fun three round decision, won by the baby-faced Horodecki, who looks to have a load of potential. Rutten, at ringside throughout for his team, seemed very happy with proceedings, having predicted a clean

But it's early days for the IFL, and I'd be lying if I said I didn't quite enjoy the new season debut on FSN. Their heavy emphasis on sports (as opposed to entertainment) may not work with some who are more used to and more comfortable with the pyrotechnics and hoopla of UFC and PRIDE, but for the most part it was a perfectly acceptable way to spend an hour of your time. Besides, it's not really fair to judge what the IFL is all about until they complete their team line-up and they launch their first 'full' season early in 2007. For now, they're back and they're doing fine.

*The IFL will air Horn vs. Lindland on Sunday and feature on 'The Best Damn Sports Show Period' on Monday - Both On FSN in the USA.*

# LIVE ROADS: JAPAN NEWS & NOTES

By Jordan Breen  
of completevaletudoaccess.blogspot.com

**Fight Entertainment Group held a press conference on Thursday in Tokyo where Kazushi Sakuraba announced his withdrawal from the HERO'S card on October 9 and discussed his medical condition.**

Wednesday's mixed martial arts headlines were dominated by reports of Sakuraba being rushed to the hospital by friend and training partner Minoru Toyanaga, after feeling dizzy and vomiting during practice. The situation appeared to suggest that there was no way that the Japanese superstar could compete as scheduled against Yoshihiro Akiyama on October 9.

FEG president Sadaharu Tanigawa told the media that although Sakuraba's MRI scans following his August bout with Kestutis Smirnovas showed no abnormalities, Wednesday's testing revealed that Sakuraba has damage to his vertebrobasilar artery system. It was stressed that it was not a brain injury, but rather repeated blows to the head and neck of Sakuraba have prevented blood from circulating properly to the base of the brain.

Tanigawa suggested that although Sakuraba was unable to compete as scheduled, hopefully following month or so of rest, he would be able to spar and perhaps fight on New Year's Eve at K-1's 'Dynamite!!' show. He also stated that he has not yet thought of a replacement for Sakuraba in the 85 kilogram tournament bracket, and that truthfully, there is no fighter who could replace Sakuraba.

Sakuraba addressed the media, who he apologised to, along with the fans, the Tokyo Broadcasting System, and Akiyama. As Tanigawa suggested, Sakuraba said that he wants to recover and fight on New Year's Eve. Sakuraba also told the media during questioning that although his condition gives him no trouble in his day-to-day life, he would undergo an operation or treatment to correct his condition if one were available.

**A 93 kilogram contest between Vitor Belfort and Dan Henderson has been added to PRIDE's October 21 Las Vegas card.**

Belfort last stepped into the PRIDE ring on July 1 in the second round of the Openweight Grand Prix, where he quickly knocked out Pancrase veteran Yoshiaki Takahashi just 36 seconds into the first round.

Henderson last competed at the August 26 instalment of the Bushido series, where he was defeated by Kazuo Misaki by unanimous decision. Now it appears that PRIDE's 83 Kilogram Divisional Champion will step up ten kilograms and face Belfort.

**According to Brazilian sources close**



'Sak' (C) Dream Stage Entertainment

**to Marcus Aurelio, it is confirmed that 'Maximus' will take on Takanori Gomi for the Japanese fighter's PRIDE Lightweight Championship at the Bushido Grand Prix Welterweight Finale on November 5 in Yokohama.**

In one of the biggest upsets in a year full of surprises, Aurelio choked out the lightweight division kingpin at the tenth instalment of Bushido this past April. However, the ramifications of the non-title match became somewhat more complex, as Aurelio was defeated two months later by Mitsuhiro Ishida at the following Bushido card.

Dream Stage Entertainment boss Nobuyuki Sakakibara has stated since June that Gomi would defend his championship in November, and said that Ishida and Aurelio were both contenders to face Gomi, but that he felt Aurelio was the leading candidate.

DSE has not yet made an official statement regarding the alleged rematch between Aurelio and Gomi, but with the Grand Prix Welterweight Final just over six weeks away, it is likely that their announcement regarding Gomi's official challenger will be made soon.

**Confirming much speculation inside the fight media, Dream Stage Entertainment have officially announced their plans to have Mike Tyson fight in Macau on New Year's Eve.**

DSE want Tyson to compete against a PRIDE fighter in a boxing match, in the Macau Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. The locale serves two purposes for DSE: Tyson is unable to compete in Japan due to his felony rapsheet, whilst Macau is one of the world's hottest gambling venues, which could net revenue for DSE abroad.

DSE representatives say that Tyson's bout will be slotted into the live telecast of 'Otoko Matsuri', and will be seen by the crowd at Saitama Super Arena in Japan on giant video screens. It is the goal of DSE to have this year's 'Otoko Matsuri' broadcast worldwide, including mainland China, Africa and the Middle East via internet stream.

Also, the announcement of Tyson's participation on New Year's Eve may be the key to restoring PRIDE's status on Japanese television. Despite losing their deal with Fuji Television in June, those in the television industry have stated that if DSE were able to get Tyson to fight on New Year's Eve, then Nippon Television and TV Asahi would both be interested in acquiring the broadcasting rights for the event. According to broadcasting insiders, Nippon TV would be the frontrunner in acquiring the show, due to higher spending power.

**The plans for K-1's 2006 edition of 'Dynamite!!' are beginning to take shape.**

Fight Entertainment Group have announced that for the third year in a row, 'Dynamite!!' will take place at the Kyocera Osaka Dome in Osaka, Japan. The return to Osaka after a lackluster New Year's Eve offering last year shows bravery on the part of FEG, as they once again put their biggest card of the year in front of the Osaka audience, historically noted for their intense and expectant nature.

In addition, Tokyo Broadcasting System president Hiroshi Inoue has stated that he has high hopes and big plans for this year's 'Dynamite!!'. Last year, TBS and FEG suffered disappointment, losing the New Year's Eve ratings war to Dream Stage Entertainment's PRIDE 'Otoko Matsuri' card on Fuji Television, drawing only a 14.8% rating for their telecast. In 2004, 'Dynamite!!' drew a muscular 20.1%, over 5% higher than the 2005 edition's disappointing rating.

One alteration may give some insight into Inoue's plans for 'Dynamite!!' as the date of the 'Record Taisho', Japan's equivalent to the Grammy Awards, has been moved to December 30. The 'Record Taisho' is typically held on New Year's Eve, and has served as the televised lead-in to K-1's 'Dynamite!!' cards in the recent years. In addition, Inoue has denied rumours that TBS plans to televise bouts of the wildly popular boxing brothers Daiki and Koki Kameda in lieu of 'Dynamite!!'.

While the New Year's Eve plans of TBS and FEG are still largely unknown, the bolstering of the 'Dynamite!!' line-up may be a precautionary measure to help ensure ratings success, with the announcement that Dream Stage Entertainment's PRIDE New Year's Eve card will feature the reported Mike Tyson boxing bout from Macau.