

UFC/Spike Finale: BJ Penn Punishes Pulver

Written by Michael Woods
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His nickname is "The Prodigy" but after delivering a thorough decimation of Jens Pulver, the man who handed him his first pro loss, BJ Penn needs to find a new nickname, something that indicates that he has matured fully as an athlete.

The game but outclassed and undersized Pulver tapped at 3:12 of the second round at the Palms in Las Vegas as Penn clamped on a rear naked choke that couldn't be broken with a jackhammer.

This was a fully mature practitioner at work, and his dedication to training and diet was in full evidence on Pulver's face. L'il Evil was marked heavily with scrapes, and those blemishes will remind him when he looks in the mirror that he earned his purse, every last cent. Pulver's face bore the mark of a master craftsman, with no rookie tendencies or holes in his game.

Penn and Pulver, who first met in January 2002, with Pulver taking a decision win, were the coaches in the fifth installment of Spike's Ultimate Fighter show. There was bad blood brewing between them throughout and the atmosphere was tense coming into the coach vs. coach showdown.

Penn, fighting at 155 pounds for the first time since 2003, mounted Pulver's back in the second, and yearned to take his neck. He locked down Pulver's left arm, and his midsection, with his legs, and slithered his left arm under Pulver's chin. In four seconds, Pulver's airway was blocked, and he tapped out with his free hand.

Penn (12-4-1) was on top of Pulver (21-8-1) and passing guard early in the second, masterfully using his weight to neutralize any Pulver offense. Pulver kept his head as it was getting battered with hammer fists, punches and elbows.

Penn (from Hilo, Hawaii) dumped Pulver (born in Sunnyside, Washington, living in Iowa) quickly in round one, and Pulver showed his mettle fighting off Penn's BJJ. Pulver was in a precarious state from the start, really.

Penn dumped him and worked to pass his guard, as Pulver remained calm, in half guard. BJ passed him, though, and he snagged an arm, but Pulver wriggled free. The technician Penn segued right into a triangle and he added insult to the situation with sharp elbows. Pulver pulled out of it, and lay atop the Hawaiian. The two stood up and traded strikes in the last minute, and Penn's hands looked to be the equal of the 32-year-old Pulver, who piled up four wins against no losses as a boxer in 2004.

Penn weighed 155 1/2 at the weigh in, while Pulver, who will drop down to a lighter class (145 pounds), scaled at 152. Penn is said to be eyeing a move back up to the 170 pound neighborhood. And the most satisfying moment in the bout? At the end, when the two fighters, their ire expelled, hugged it out, with Pulver grasping the victor, as Penn lay on his back after

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the finish.

In the chief undercard bout, judo expert Manny Gamburyan, an Armenian immigrant, took on Nate Diaz in the finale of the Spike reality program. The series pitted lightweights in an elimination tournament.

Gamburyan (Hollywood, CA), age 26, stands just 5-5, while Diaz (Stockton, CA), four years younger, is an even 6-0.

Both fighters came in at 5-2.

In the second round, Gamburyan looked for the takedown, and Diaz sprawled. Manny dislocated his right shoulder on the attempt, though, and he tapped out with his left hand as Diaz sprayed left hands down on his head. Diaz, as a result of the freakish injury, came away with the victory, and a "six figure contract" for the trouble. The end came with 20 seconds elapsed in the second.

In the first round, Manny cinched in a choke and Diaz rolled around to break the hold. Gamburyan is a lead weight who lays atop his foes and tires them out. Diaz, though, is far more seasoned than his seven prior fights would indicate, and didn't crumble as Gamburyan started out with fiery fury. Diaz, after fending off Gamburyan assault, looked to snap on a kimura, but couldn't get it locked.

OCTAGONAL ODDS AND ENDS Matt Hughes and Matt Serra will coach the TUF 6 crew.