

UFC-Penn Chokes Out Stevenson In England

Written by Ronan Keenan
Friday, 18 January 2008 19:00

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, England -- B.J. Penn wasted little time in making history at the UFC 80: Rapid Fire event in front of a feverous sold out crowd of 8,412 at the Metro Radio Arena. In defeating Joe Stevenson for the vacant 155-pound lightweight title Penn joins Randy Couture as the only fighters to championships in two weight classes.

The former welterweight champion forced Stevenson to tap out after midway through the second round.

Penn, 13-4-1, is regarded as one of the most talented fighters in the world, but his commitment to MMA has been questioned in the past after some disappointing performances. But tonight Penn's body appeared well conditioned and his dismantling of Stevenson must rank among his greatest accomplishments.

"B.J. Penn is one of the most gifted, talented fighters I've ever seen in my life," said UFC President Dana White prior to tonight's bout.

And on this night Penn finally lived up to such praise.

Immediately after the opening bell the Hawaiian rushed across the octagon and caught Stevenson with a right uppercut that sent the Californian to the canvas. The ultra-flexible Penn, 29, proceeded to control the remainder of the round on the ground, repeatedly stifling Stevenson's efforts to escape. A pinpoint right elbow from Penn opened up a deep cut on Stevenson's forehead that covered his face in a mask of crimson.

Stevenson, 33-8, came out firing jabs in the second, but Penn displayed outstanding stand-up skills by constantly landing sharp counter punches. A two punch combination finally sent Stevenson stumbling to the canvas. The 25-year-old wore a look of desperation and Penn eventually managed to force Stevenson into a position to sink in the rear naked choke.

Penn will now face returning former champion Sean Sherk who was stripped of the title after failing a postfight drugs test last July.

"I just know that's going to be a great fight," predicted Penn.

In the chief support, Fabricio Werdum defeated former heavyweight title challenger Gabriel Gonzaga for the second time, landing a series of right hands to win on a second round stoppage. Gonzaga, 9-3, controlled the standing action in the first, landing numerous hard right kicks to the Spaniard's leg. Conversely, Werdum, 10-3-1, had the upper hand when the fighters went to the ground, but he couldn't prevent Gonzaga from regaining his feet.

But in the following round Werdum began to find his mark with a sharp knee strikes. After absorbing a barrage of knees Gonzaga fell to the canvas where Werdum pummeled on the

UFC-Penn Chokes Out Stevenson In England

Written by Ronan Keenan
Friday, 18 January 2008 19:00

defenseless Brazilian.

In a battle between streaking welterweight contenders, former pro boxer Marcus Davis recorded his eleventh straight victory with a first round stoppage over Jess Liaudin, 12-9. Davis, 19-4, used his boxing skills to send Liaudin to the canvas with a hard left hook to the Frenchman's head. A follow-up salvo prompted referee Mario Yamasaki to halt the fight.

"I was angry. I said beforehand that I was going to punch a hold through his face," remarked the Maine native Davis. "I was never this nervous for a fight. But I used the old boxing trick of the counter left hook."

Wilson Gouveia scored a stunning second round knockout over Paul Lambert, 23-7, in a light heavyweight bout. After being outwrestled in the opening round, Gouveia, 10-4, started to strike more in the second, eventually catching Lambert with a wild let hook that sent the American sprawling to the canvas.

Jorge Rivera lived up to his "El Conquistador" moniker by scoring a TKO over Kendall Grove at 1:20 of the first round. Rivera, 15-6, started aggressively, knocking Grove to the ground at the offset before unloading a series of punches that forced the stoppage. It's the second consecutive first round knockout loss for The Ultimate Fighter 3 winner Grove, 10-5.

"I hurt him with my very first punch," said Rivera. "I could see his knees buckle. He didn't feel very strong to me."

Antoni Hardonk, 6-4, needed just 17 seconds to defeat Northern Ireland's Colin Robinson, 9-4. A series of leg kicks and a stiff jab sent Robinson to the ground, with referee Steve Mazzagatti rendering him unable to continue.

In an all-English welterweight war, Paul Kelly, 8-0, used his superior strength and wrestling ability to pound out a unanimous decision win over Paul Taylor, 8-3-1.

Former pro boxer Alessio Sakara, 16-6-1, scored a first round stoppage due to head strikes over UFC debutant James Lee, 25-3 in a light heavyweight contest.

In the first bout of the evening Sam Stout moved his record to 14-3-1 with a unanimous points victory over Sweden's Per Eklund, 14-3-1.