

## Penn, Silva Score Stops At UFC 101; Florian And Griffin Can't Hang

Written by Michael Woods  
Saturday, 08 August 2009 19:00

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Pundits and fans wondered if we'd see the inspired BJ Penn, or the lackluster, overly cocky BJ, coming off his ugly loss to Georges St-Pierre six months ago, in the main event of UFC 101 at the Wachovia Center in Philadelphia, PA on Saturday evening.

Yes, we saw that the cocky manner of the Hawaiian hasn't been erased by GSP's steamrolling. Penn's ample confidence was on display in the weeks leading to the Philly faceoff. But the confidence was earned; there was nothing lackluster about Penn in Philly, as he finished off the outclassed Florian in the fourth, via choke, at the 3:54 mark. After eight seconds of carotid crushing pressure, Florian tapped out, to the Submission of the Night, and submitted to the class of the 155 pound division.

"I love the fans, I love Hawaii, you want to know anything else, go to BJPenn.com," he said abruptly postbout, when asked for his assessment of his effort. TSS will step in to the breach; Florian, it looks like, has advanced as far as humanly possible with heavy-duty willpower and aggressiveness, but his athleticism isn't where it needs to be against someone of Penn's ilk. No shame in that, none at all. And if you will permit us some theorizing--TSS thinks that Penn was fantasizing that he was taking the wind out of GSP with the game-ender rear naked application in the fourth. He won't rest 'til he gets a rematch.

Florian was on a six fight win streak. He'd been unsuccessful in his previous title shot, to Sean Sherk in 2006.

Champion Penn (from Hawaii; age 30; 13-5-1 entering) weighed 155, while Florian (from Massachusetts; JJ black belt; age 33; 13-3 coming in) was also 155 pounds in the light heavyweight defense, scheduled for five or fewer rounds.

Penn trained under Marv Marinovich, son of noted NFL flameout Todd Marinovich, ex USC thrower who was pulled under by a drug addiction, and he said that his fitness was at another level coming in. He didn't seem put off by Florian's bold wordplay before the bout. "BJ Penn is the master, I'm coming to slay the master," Florian had said. "I may finish him in the first round."

Not on this night, and probably not ever. In the first, Penn smacked Florian off balance with a sharp right thirty seconds in. Florian moved left and right against the skilled boxer Penn. They scrummed on the cage for a minute, testing each others' strength, and after that Florian seemed to settle down some. But he ate a right hand, on the temple, which wobbled him badly at the tail end of the first. Clear Penn round.

In the second, Florian ripped off a few leg kicks but worried that BJ would counter him quickly. The fight featured no ground action for the first two rounds, though Florian looked for a single leg at the 1:40 mark. He pressed BJ on the cage, but Penn's heavy hands scored again. Closer round, Penn took it. Florian hoped Penn was overtrained, and his stamina was on the wane.

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In the third, Florian looked somewhat purposeless early. He pinned Penn on the cage, Couture style, in the middle of the round. The crowd was mildly put off by the pace and strategy of this clash, a cerebral tussle. Penn wanted to press matters at the 1:12 mark, perhaps feeling that the round was too close to call. His flurry with 25 seconds remaining probably stole a card or two.

In the fourth, Florian attacked, but got caught coming in. Again, he smooshed Penn against the cage, but once there, he was a bit adrift. Penn scored a takedown at 3:50, and the crowd buzzed. He worked from on top, dropping elbows as Florian held half guard. BJ passed at 2:30, and then got his back. He wanted a choke, and got it, as Florian tapped out.

Forrest Griffin has said that he didn't much care for owning the light heavyweight belt he took from Rampage Jackson at UFC 86; the affable slugger, with that Mayberryesque charm, said that he's more comfortable fighting as the underdog, without a scarlet T tattoo on his back. He was the underdog, in a big way, against Anderson Silva, in the co-main event. Silva is the top dog in the sport, pound for pound, with Georges St-Pierre expressing minor aggravation at any pundit not at least throwing him a bone in the P4P conversation. Some boring showings in the last year have spurred some defections from the Silva fan-wagon, entertainment-wise, if not skills-wise. He cracked a horrified/amused grin when he heard hoots as his name was announced by Michael Buffer.

In the first round of the battle between the two 205 pounders, Griffin (from Ohio; age 30; 16-5 coming in) looked to invest with leg kicks, while the UFC middleweight champion Silva (from Brazil; 24-4 coming; JJ black belt; age 34), entering holding the UFC record with nine straight wins, caught a front kick and countered with a straight right. Silva shifted stances lefty then righty, and sent Forrest to the mat with a right. Griffin shook it off, but looked at the clock two minutes in. A left sent him down again at 2:16, and Silva let him get up, and offered hand to aid the underdog. A quick, sharp,  $\frac{3}{4}$  power right jab from the southy stance dropped Griffin, and that was it. Griffin was in la-la land, off a jab and accumulated punishment, and the crowd was stunned at the ease of Silva's demolition job. The official time was 3:23 of the first.

"I love Forrest Griffin but this is one of the most embarrassing knockouts we've ever seen," said analyst Joe Rogan. Silva gestured to the crowd, as if to say, Hey, I gave y'all what you wanted, show me some love, huh? This is the third straight stoppage loss on strikes for Forrest, and second in his last two outings.

Would not be surprised if he spends some serious contemplation time, a la Chuck Liddell, on vocational Plan B. His chin is now officially suspect, no need to dust for prints. Afterwards, Silva said, "Forrest is a good fighter, a good man, but I trained more." He said 185, 205, it doesn't matter, he wants to fight the best foes. I'd like to see GSP-Silva early in 2010.

Rogan didn't manage to chat with Forrest after...

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OCTAGONAL ODDS N ENDS Rogan said that Randy Couture said that Griffin is the hardest

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workin' guy in the gym he's ever seen.

---Griffin, for what it's worth, is 6-3, and walks around at around 240 pounds when he can eat what he wants to.

---Tito Ortiz was in the house with the missus, Jenna Jameson. He was drenched pretty good with boos when they showed him on the jumbotron.

---Strange that the best MMAer in the world can't find himself the sort of match that would headline the PPV, isn't it? No wonder Silva is so keen on testing the sweet science, against Roy Jones.

---Didn't care for the mini movie infomercial featuring two actors after the co main event. Not on a pay per view, gents, not good form. At least Mike Goldberg asked the master thespians who they liked in the mainer, to keep up appearances.