

UFC 129 Approaches in Toronto...D'SOUZA

Written by Brian J. D'Souza SPECIAL TO TSS
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With a record 55,000 tickets sold for Toronto's Rogers Centre, the live gate for UFC 129 is expected to ring in at around 11 million dollars. The main card on the April 30th show features two title fights: UFC welterweight champion Georges St-Pierre vs Jake Shields and UFC featherweight champion Jose Aldo vs Mark Hominick. Former two-division champion Randy Couture also squares off against former light-heavyweight champion Lyoto Machida.

St-Pierre has looked so smashingly dominant in every one of his recent performances, save a stoppage loss to Matt Serra back in 2007, that his victory over Jake Shields is considered a lock. Shields cannot stand with St-Pierre, and even if he gets St-Pierre to the ground, he'll have to contend with the implausibility of submitting the French-Canadian. There is a small chance of an ugly decision win for Shields, but more likely, St-Pierre will employ a risk-free strategy to outpoint his opponent over five rounds.

Jose Aldo quickly rocketed up many pound-for-pound lists with his dominant wins over Mike Thomas Brown and Urijah Faber in the WEC. The Nova Uniao featherweight boasts world class jiu-jitsu, thought to be the Achilles heel of Canadian challenger Mark Hominick. If the fight stays standing, Hominick will have a better chance to take the 145 lb title, as he has far superior striking to any fighter Aldo has met so far in the WEC.

The Couture-Machida match is intriguing because Couture recently spoke about retirement, talking about trading in his 5oz gloves for sunglasses in Hollywood. Couture's acting, however, is beyond atrocious; without any offers or other options, he has returned to the octagon at the

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age of 47.

Lyoto bears the stigma of two losses in a row against Mauricio "Shogun" Rua and Quinton "Rampage" Jackson in his last two fights. The Rampage fight was a controversial decision that could have easily gone Lyoto's way. With Randy having faced soft opposition in his wins over an antiquated Mark Coleman and a one-dimensional James Toney, expect Machida to be the favorite as he employs his stellar takedown defense.

In many ways, this card will mark the beginning of something special for the UFC in Ontario. Future events are guaranteed to sell-out as Canadian fans have repeatedly demonstrated fervor for the top-tier talent that Zuffa has complete control over.

The UFC has made global expansion a priority, with past events in Germany, the UK, Australia, and a November event planned for Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. There are huge profits to be generated through pay-per-view buys and the sale of television rights, so the outlook for Zuffa is very promising.

Toronto appears to be the most lucrative out of all the potential venue sites for a UFC. Not since the golden age of the Japanese MMA era, lasting from the late 90's until the death of the PRIDE Fighting Championship in 2007, has any country produced such large audience numbers. No doubt, the Canadian market will outperform all others in the foreseeable future.

{flv}Mark_Hominick_discusses_his_UFC_title_shot_against{/flv}

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