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Fighter Profile: Urijah Faber (144lbs, California, USA, age: 28)

Urijah Faber is my pick for 2007 Fighter of the Year. Sure, there were several fighters who had a really great '07 (Anderson Silva, Quinton Jackson & Forrest Griffin come to mind) but none can top the 'California Kid'. Urijah defended his WEC Featherweight title 4 times, destroying 4 out of 4 opponents, all by submission. Only one even made it to the second round.



It should be interesting to see what 2008 brings. Now that Fedor has been signed he has the opportunity to maintain his best pound-per-pound fighter in the world status and he's going to need to take advantage of it, because if '08 is anything like '07 for Urijah, he could just usurp that title.

Let's look at two of Urijah's fights last year. On January 20th he fought Joe Pearson of the Miletich Camp, who at the time had several more fights under his belt and who warned Urijah in the pre-fight interview to 'be ready for pain'. 12 seconds into the fight Urijah had Pearson in the air & executed the devastating slam you see to the right. It was one of several, combined with vicious, cobra-quick elbows & punches that forced the very game Pearson to tap at 2:27 of the first round. These were lethal, high impact blows, people, and it was some minutes before Pearson was even able to get up afterwards. It was, candidly speaking, a slaughter.



On Dec. 12th Urijah fought Jeff Curran, an American BJJ black belt who credits Royce Grace for bringing Jiu-Jitsu into his life, and who has nearly twice as many fights as Urijah. By one minute into the fight, Curran had Urijah's back with a full body triangle, eagerly seeking the RNC. This was a very bad predicament for the champ, as it always is when a great Jiu-Jitsu guy has your back. Urijah remained completely calm, never allowing the arm under his chin, and managed to stand up & plunge back down, knocking Curran's head into the mat. He was then able to reverse position into Curran's guard, pass, & deliver some devastating trademark elbows to close the round.



Round 2 was also awesome. Curran was relentless and did everything right, but he was just out-gunned. As far as athletic prowess goes, Urijah outguns pretty much everybody. Combine that with his MMA skills, excellent in all departments, along with his vicious combat spirit, and you can see why he's 2007's best. Memorable moments this round saw Urijah applying a shoulder guard lock with Curran's leg actually inside (top right) and defending a single leg takedown by firing a knee strike to the head from his base leg! (right). This led to Urijah seizing the guillotine, taking it into a roll on the mat, and choking out BJJ black belt Jeff Curran at the end of round 2 to retain the Featherweight Title (bottom right).



Now that Jens Pulver has entered the WEC featherweight division & garnered a victory, there is talk of a title fight between him & Urijah this year. I respect Jens just as I respect Pearson & Curran but with all due respect, I don't give him a chance. Urijah was an unstoppable juggernaut last year & I believe this 28 year old is ready to do it again in 2008. If he does, he may well be Fighter of the Year again.

