

Fight Card Review - HDNet 'Fedor Returns' Dec31.07

Fedor Emelianenko (Russia 235lbs) vs. Hong-Man Choi (Korea 365lbs):

How I have been waiting for Fedor's return! He only fought twice in 2007 (in MMA), spending most of the year as a free agent, which has seriously jeopardized his position as the world's best pound-per-pound fighter. You have to beat the best to be the best and while this certainly summarizes Fedor's track record, this also means he has to keep fighting frequently (IE 3 or 4 fights per year), lest someone like Urijah Faber overtake him. This shouldn't be a problem now that he's been signed, and at the rate his M1 federation is rumored to be paying, there should be no shortage of top shelf fighters eager to get in there with him (not to mention there could be no finer bragging rights than beating the world's best fighter).



This card features a pre-fight interview in which Fedor is asked "is this a no win situation...you're supposed to beat him. If you lose it's a huge upset. Do you see this as a no-win situation for you?"

This was a surprising question because surely there should be considerable credit for beating the world's biggest combat athlete?! Hong-Man Choi has a K1 striking background with a victory over fellow giant Semmy Schildt, who has gone the distance with Fedor in Pride. I would give him favorable odds against anybody in the UFC, he's a 7'2" 360lb combat-savvy Goliath for crying out loud. Having said that, I predicted Fedor would win in the first round, which is exactly what happened via arm bar at 1:50 into the fight. Interesting to note that it actually took Fedor two attempts at arm bars before tapping him, which is atypical as Fedor's vicious submissions have always dealt immediate defeat when applied. Perhaps he has lost some of his ruthless efficacy or become a bit rusty after his hiatus...



In any case, this was an exciting albeit short fight with Fedor securing the take-downs and then the win, from his back (despite getting a little roughed up by those volleyball size fists of HMC).



This match is best summarized: the world's best fighter makes short work of the world's biggest fighter.



Murilo Bustamante (Brazil 183lbs) vs. Makoto Takimoto (Japan 179.5lbs):

The commentary during this fight deserves special mention here: In round one Takimoto takes a solid punch from Murilo which stuns him & he assumes the 'turtle' position (see right) prompting commentator Frank Trigg to say "now traditionally we'd see some head kicks here but remember the rules have changed...there's no head kicks to a downed opponent which changes the game because the fight would have been over in this position with the old rules but with the new rules, the more improved rules, the better rules, no head stomps, no soccer kicks to the head, makes it safe for the competitors and at least in this case better for the fans because you get a little more fight time".



I must say, I couldn't possibly disagree more. As a fan I am primarily interested in realistic, unhindered mixed martial arts combat. If I wanted artificially prolonged fight times and reality-flouting rule-sets I'd watch boxing! Frank actually hit the nail dead on when he said "the fight would have been over". That should have been exactly the case and the talking should have stopped there, period. Prohibiting kicks to a scrambling opponent takes a huge degree of reality out of the fight and destroys the 'as real as it gets' objective. Now I realize that fighter safety is paramount but with these rules, it comes at the direct expense of realism. Let's bear in mind that Pride was widely respected as by far the toughest federation (over all others, including UFC) because of having to deal with kicks on all fours, yet there was never a serious injury. Boxers by contrast die every year or two.



Murilo ended up losing the fight by split decision because he simply was not permitted to deal the finishing blow he could have.

Robert G. Viles is a lifer martial artist, writer, business owner & registered nurse. He lives and trains in Southern Ontario.