

Ultimate Fighter TV report

By Brent Wilson

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I am shocked, shocked to find out that a fight promotion with Jeremy Lappen at the helm has had to fold due to financial constraints.

Quickly, onto things I laughed at from fight cards this weekend. Firstly it was at how Mike Goldberg kept reiterating how we were seeing a brand new Chris Leben on Saturday afternoon. In all honesty, physically Leben looked great, bordering on unrecognizable from his prior appearance. But from the pre-fight promo and the way he fought it was abundantly clear that Leben was exactly the same as a fighter. Michael Bisping based his entire fight off of Leben's well-worn weaknesses, the fact that Leben is very easy to counter due to him not using a jab or footwork to set up powershots, and that he relies almost entirely on his chin rather than head movement for defense. That led to the same recipe for three rounds of Bisping moving back and countering off of his back foot. I thought Leben's best chance to win would be to muscle Bisping up in the clinch or to take him down, as Leben has a very underrated ground game, but it wasn't to be.

Luckily, here in Canada the UFC card was shown live so I also got a chance to check out the Pavlik-Hopkins boxing card that night. In stark contrast to the UFC announcers bending-over backwards to praise fighters, even if the praise is directly shown to be false from the action, the HBO announce team had no problems burying the fighters on its card. Jim Lampley and Larry Merchant first buried prelim fighter Billy Dib for a lackluster performance, and then in the main event absolutely killed Kelly Pavlik as he got dominated by Bernard Hopkins. They both characterized Pavlik as greedy for going for the big money fight at a higher weight (170 lbs) rather than fighting a challenger at Middleweight (160 lbs.) where Pavlik is the champ. However, if you know the circumstances around the fight selection it was HBO that pressured Pavlik's camp into taking a "big name" opponent, and rejected some lesser-known challenger types raised by the Pavlik camp as possible opponents. It's very interesting how opposite the tone of the two broadcasts was, I prefer the HBO presentation where they aren't afraid to challenge the fighters or to call a poor fight what it is, but when they're a little off-base as they were in this case it can be very grating.

Lastly, TUF Team Frank Mir Grappling Coach Robert Drysdale made his amateur MMA debut against Josh Musick an 18 year old scrub this weekend. In addition to being on TUF Drysdale is one of the best grapplers in the world and the defending Abu-Dhabi Absolute Submissions Champion and is currently working out with Xtreme Couture. As you can hear in the video, people in the crowd start yelling "It's over!" as soon as the fight hits the ground. While I'm down with fighters building their way up to tougher competition this was a little ridiculous. If you look at other BJJ stalwarts who have recently stepped over to MMA almost all made their debuts against guys who can actually fight, with that being the case for Jacare, Roger Gracie, Marcello Garcia, Andre Galvao and on and on and on. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fy2mAKrS284>)

And of course Akihiro Gono's entrance get me every time, I was fine until Gono and his seconds starting dancing with the security guards, then I lost it laughing.

Show recap---

We get some quick shots of Eliot Marshal's quick win over Shane Pimm from last week and the intro highlights Junie Browning and Roli Delgado who will be fighting on tonight's show. In the dressing room after Marshalls' win Coach Mir tells Junie he feels he can smash Delgado as Delgado isn't a real athlete. Junie mentions that Delgado is a nerd, and doesn't belong on the show since he lost in the opening round to George Roop. For his part Delgado says that Junie was the fight that he wants.

After the win Frank Mir stops by the house to celebrate with his team. As Delgado passes by Mir asks Delgado who he got his black belt under. Delgado indeed got his black belt under Dione Farias who heads a Gracie-Barra affiliate in Brazil. Delgado follows that up by mentioning he was only in Brazil for a week, Mir seems a bit perplexed as Delgado goes on to explain how he was originally with Nova Uniao. The other fighters and Mir have some fun at Delgado's expense and his convoluted story, with Lawlor and Junie intimating that Delgado does not deserve his belt. Mir then relates an awesome story about how if he didn't sub Tim Sylvia then his instructor Ricardo Pires wouldn't promote him, and then after breaking Sylvia's arm Pires just threw him the belt nonchalantly.

Junie begins to try and psyche Delgado out by telling him he is picking him to go after the weakest link, and that there's no way Delgado is making it out of the first round. Delgado attempts to respond but his promo skills are lacking in

comparison. Actually they might be lacking in comparison to a rock. Not The Rock, a rock.

At the fight announcement Junie throws a black belt reading McDojo BJJ at Delgado and then spits on it. Mir feels that spitting on the belt was going too far. Anderson Silva also appears a bit proturbed, Junie Browning is a dead man. Big Nog points out that he thinks Junie is just an attention hog and that Delgado can finish him, Anderson feels that Junie is afraid of Delgado to do such things. Anderson is familiar with such things as he had a similar pre-fight buildup with the infamous Lee Murray.

Delgado doesn't know why Junie is underestimating him and feels that he can make Junie "blow his wad" and get tired, and that this is a "cookie-cutter" fight for him. Team Nog striking Coach Al Stankie tells Delgado "I'll guarantee a win if you just listen to me, when he spit at you I said, "Watch we're going to make him eat that spit", Bang Bang Bam." And then later, "It's a game of kill, fight, fight, kill."
...Right.

Junie's at 163 the day before the fight, but that's really not that far off, and neither he nor Mir is concerned about making it to 155. Of course they wouldn't show this if he did make weight easily and he weighs in at 158 his first attempt. Mir is a little pissed at Junie causing further problems, and is further worried that if Junie can't make weight that they just gave the win to Team Nogs' worst fighter.

Nog is glad that Junie will be draining himself the day before the fight. Junie throws on a sauna suit and hops on the treadmill, if you've never put one of those things on then guys can look kind of weak when they stop running as Junie does, but man...sauna suits suck.

Cutting weight sucks, I've only had to do it a couple times but it's atrocious. Junie then hops on an Aero-Dyne outside in the hot sun to sweat more off, it looks like he's having problems with leg cramps and Junie expresses that he will be very sore in the fight the next day. Junie hops on the scale and makes 156 on the dot and gets to chugging the Pedialyte.

Junie beat the dude who is down with Hitler Jose Aguillar in the opening round by TKO corner stoppage. Delgado lost to George Roop by decision in the opening round and was brought back with the injury to Lightweight Brian McLaughlin. Delgado wants this fight on the ground, he's a decent fighter but has lost every time he's taken even a small step up in competition. From the clips they showed of a back and forth brawl and the time this fight starts in the show it looks like it will be close and definately gets out of the first round. The fight follows the classic story of seeing if a guy can back up his talk...and Junie needs to with all he has talked.

Junie Browning (2-0) vs. Roli Delgado (5-3-1)

Round One

Junie throws a sweet body shot to open things up, and then a leg kick knocks an off balance Delgado off his feet. Back standing Delgado leads with a knee to the head that lands and a left hook that also lands. Delgado circles and steps in with another knee that's just short, as the two clinch Delgado climbs up Junie and looks for a guillotine while being pinned against the cage, the choke isn't there and the two end up against the fence with the only action being Delgado throwing knees. Delgado is using his reach very well, circling out of range of Junie while still using the jab, or else jumping in with knees looking to clinch. Junie starts to use a leg kick to counter this lack of reach. Junie is also timing Delgados jumps in and is circling away from them. Delgado now with leg kicks and lands a left hook counter, and a really nice body shot of his own. Junie is really coming up short on all his strikes, I think Delgado is also trying to bait Junie to rush in so Delgado can try and take him down. Junie appears to have a bloodied up nose from the jabs and pats his belly after another Delgado body shot. Junie looks to be getting frustrated and is calling Delgado on. After another jab lands with a minute left Delgado shoots for a takedown, doesn't get it and pulls half-guard, Delgado looks like he's trying to wrap Junie up into a sort of "spider's web" but Junie breaks free and stands up, and now its Delgado calling Junie to come back down to the ground. Junie sticks his chin out and calls Delgado to hit it, Delgado places a jab right on it, Delgado with another jab and a blocked spinning back fist. Junie with his first real strike as a hard right lands. Junie may be finding his rthyhm as two more hard rights land. Delgado answers with another knee to the head as the round ends.

Delgado's round easily 10-9, I feel a bit for Junie as it's really hard to look good against someone with a reach advantage who is content to step away and counter and who peppers you with jabs and low kicks. That being said Junie made himself look even worse by being completely flummoxed by this style, until the last twenty seconds he had more hand waves than clean strikes landed.

A lot of fans bemoan this countering style and call it boring or running, but you need to be pretty skilled to implement it, and at the end of the day the name of the game is hit the other guy and don't get hit and that's what Delgado did.

Round Two

Delgado feints with a low kick then comes with a double jab, the second of which lands. Delgado is following the same style and lands two more jabs, Junie with a hard body shot. Delgado leaps in with a knee and eats a counter left for his

troubles. Delgado ducks a haymaker and again gets stuffed on a Junie sprawl. Back on the feet and it's Junie with a jab of his own. Delgado may be tiring as his workrate has slowed and his footwork is getting worse, this allows Junie to land another body shot, a jab and stuff another takedown attempt. Junie with another hard body shot, Delgado's hands are dropping and he's now letting Junie really close the distance. Delgado's strikes have absolutely nothing on them, Junie with a really hard left-right hook combo but Delgado isn't phased. Delgado with a weak jab, Junie is starting to unload, Anderson corner is yelling for Delgado to pull guard. The two are just standing in front of each other, both are landing with regularity, Junie's shots are much harder but Delgado still doesn't look hurt by them, Junie's hands have also dropped considerably. Three hard flush shots on Delgado's chin but he's still there. Hard jab, push kick, leg kick combo from Junie. Hard right finally drops Delgado, Junie looks to finish while Delgado looks to pull him tight to him on the ground, Junie disengages and steps away. Junie is gassed from trying to finish and neither guy's strikes have anything left on them. Hard 1-2 from Junie with ten seconds left, Delgado turns it on five seconds from the bell and lands his best offense of the round.

Wow, really sloppy round but back and forth action the whole five minutes. A borderline 10-8 round for Junie but I'll give it to him 10-9.

Delgado didn't have the gas tank to keep up his hit and move strategy and that just left him standing in front of Junie getting hit for five minutes. Neither guy's cardio came off well at all. Mir thinks round two might be 10-8 as well but ref Josh Rosenthal announces there will be a third round. It'll be fun to see how much more sloppy and tired the two can get with five more minutes to go.

Round Three

Delgado looks a little re-energized, we'll see how long that lasts, although he is back to firing jabs. A minute in and no one has really landed anything or really thrown that much although Delgado has come with a few jabs. Junie with a hard jab but Delgado comes back with a jab, then feints a knee and lands a jab to the body. Junie with a leg kick, Delgado with a few more jabs. Now Junie's right hand is starting to land again as he lands two. Delgado isn't landing enough to stepping away from enough strikes to take this round yet, Junie misses with a spinning back fist. Junie with a hard body shot, he then catches a Delgado push kick, Delgado goes to the ground, Junie fakes an ax kick and looks like he's feinting action to rest and keep Delgado on his back to make it look like he's winning. After a full minute Delgado finally stands up and eats a right hand as he does. Junie is the one landing more over the last minute although Delgado picks up his kicking game and starts landing some nice body and leg kicks.

Junie's round 10-9. One judge gives it to Delgado and Junie wins a split decision. Delgado picked the best strategy he could but just didn't have the cardio to keep up the movement to stay out of range of Junie's punches. Junie didn't look great and I'm sure he's catching flak all over message boards as I type this. But again, it's tough to look good against a circling counter puncher, there are legitimate questions now about whether he lacks power, or if blowing his cardio sapped his power, or even if Delgado just has a monster chin for taking all those shots and never wilting. We'll see if a lackluster win over the worst guy on Team Nog takes any wind out of his sails.

Junie says Delgado has earned his respect and apologizes to Nog for the black belt stunt. Mir blames it on the UFC telling the guys to act crazy. Nog talks about what a big heart Delgado showed and that there is no shame in losing like that.

Next week Team Mir does some snorkel training, while Team Nog plays leap frog...yay!