

UFC: Touching Gloves with the Public

Customer Relationship
Management

Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) is a sports promotion platform founded in 1993. Encompassing multiple contact sports under the name of mixed martial arts (MMA), the initial lack of regulations lead to UFC being branded as “human cockfighting” (Miller, 2008). In 2001, UFC was purchased by Dana White, along with Frank and Lorenzo Fertitta, exchanging \$2 million for little more in the way of assets than the brand name itself. Since then, UFC has been developed into a multi-billion-dollar enterprise, featuring renowned fighters across a dozen weight divisions, competing under the Unified Rules of Mixed Martial Arts. The brand has since become the biggest MMA promotion company in the world (Boice, 2004).

Dana White and the Fertitta brothers purchased the UFC brand upon hearing of its imminent bankruptcy, securing sanctions for MMA fights within Nevada and turning the UFC into the 'Ultimate Cash Machine' (Miller, 2008). Whilst White possesses the smallest stake of the enterprise, his experience of nearly every aspect of the MMA world has seen him become the President of the brand with a business approach compared to David facing Goliath; “he looked for an angle, an approach that would let him floor an opponent who could destroy him [...] and he found it” (Boice, 2004). It could be argued that it is the dichotomy of White that has been key to UFC success. A family man, business strategist and passionate fighter himself, his ability to make or break the careers of those involved in UFC makes him as formidable - if not, more so – than any fighter in the cage (Woods, 2009).

Within less than a decade of White's presidency, the UFC began to achieve numbers beyond that of NASCAR, major league baseball and often drew as many male pay-per-view viewers between the ages of 18-49 as large college football games – approximately 3 million (Miller, 2008). The emergence of UFC has also seen a remarkable uptake of MMA classes among children as young

as six, a venture White has been keen to encourage through his philanthropy, whether out of generosity or business thinking. The Fertittas have even commented on how their catalogue of fights can be repackaged as new fans emerge, making it one of the most lucrative UFC assets. The majority of UFC revenue comes from pay-per-view events, along with tickets to live events and licensing fees for spin-off shows such as *The Ultimate Fighter* on Spike TV. These shows averaged 1.9 million viewers, in addition to over 2 million viewers across five to eight live events. With approximately 750,000 buys across the events held in a year, and each fan paying over an average of \$44.95 to watch, it is no surprise UFC has become one of the most successful business models in the world of sport. Brands including Bud Light and Harley-Davidson have attempted to utilise the success, sponsoring events in the hopes of acquiring a new generation of customer. Fighters themselves are also able to make several-million dollars between fights, with stars like Chuck Liddell and Rampage Jackson being endorsed by Dell and Nike (Miller, 2008).

Whilst UFC's upwards trajectory appears to be unstoppable, events between two of its most infamous fighters have threatened the reputation White has worked so hard to create; the rivalry between Irish Conor McGregor and Russian Khabib Nurmagomedov has seen some of the most violent scenes in and outside the octagon cage, resulting in injuries to two other fighters, an arrest for McGregor, a review by the Nevada State Athletics Commission and a brawl at UFC 229 (Britton, 2018). McGregor – who became the first fighter to hold titles across two weight divisions and has a fiery, unpredictable nature similar to White – has now become as much a threat to the UFC name as an asset (Brown, 2018). Because fans associate ideas, feelings, images or experiences with brands, the recent McGregor/Nurmagomedov conflict has dealt a severe blow to the reputation of Dana White's sports companies and risks tarnishing the UFC brand.

Proceeding from this research, the next step will be to assess the attitudes of the current viewership to UFC, as well as the perspectives of separate MMA fighters, and will be done through a combination of interviews and surveys. From there, we will identify resolutions, as well as the perfect time and place to launch them. The conclusion will be founded on research and insights to generate ideas, creativity and resourcefulness to construct and promote them, as well as a form of strategy to determine authenticity and effectiveness.

Reputation Management

Corporate Reputation is an overall assessment of a company's experience based on direct or indirect information. A negative reputation can cause one to be repelled in the social environment or cause serious damage in the professional field. A good business reputation can not only help organizations produce ideal stakeholder-based results, but also attract talented people, create higher quality products, prolong the company's existence and play a decisive role in the success of business competition (Verčič and Ćorić 2018). The management and maintenance of reputation is essential, because it is one of the most valuable intangible assets of an enterprise (Vidaver-Cohen 2007). McGregor and Khabib's fights have dealt a severe blow to the reputation of White's sports companies and have tarnished the sport brand. As a result, it is necessary to organize public welfare or marketing activities to improve the reputation of UFC.

Aims, Objectives and Strategic Options

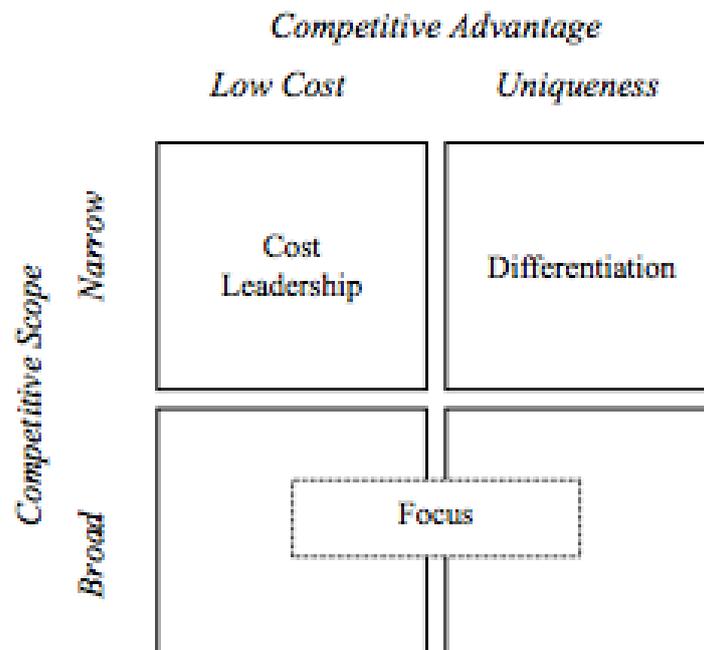
In order to reframe the fighters as athletes guiding consumer fitness and encourage students and young adults to participate in sports activities, the campaigns will be promoted online and offline.

To achieve publicity, the main offline activities include working with charities, Case Related Sports Marketing (CRSM) and the launch UFC branded food trucks in major cities such as Manchester, London and Birmingham. Furthermore, cinema viewings in key areas, a touring roadshow including Q&A sessions with fitness and UFC enthusiasts Jason Statham and Chris Pratt and advertisements in shopping centers, cinemas and railway stations.

For online advertising: YouTube is the main platform, because its subscription volume is 5.7 million. In addition, basic social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram will be used to publish posters and to promote events.

Objectives:

1. To increase reach of UFC around UK by attracting millennials to the sport
2. Make British UFC fighters big names
3. Re-develop trust and reputation as a global professional sport



Strategic options are paramount to the success of a business operation and rely heavily on matrix systems, such as Porter's generic strategy matrix and SWOT analyses (Kim et al, 2004). This matrix outlines three key areas which businesses should focus on to achieve their objectives through strategic options. Firstly, cost leadership is used to reduce the firm's costs at all levels and create a higher return on investment. For the UFC, their cost leadership will be focusing on addressing a wide market to get a greater volume of attention to the product. As the market for competition is very small and the industry is based on high-fixed costs, the most profitable route will be to maximise capacity utilisation. Secondly, the focus of the objectives is reviewed and a niche strategy will be created, giving UFC a competitive advantage and gaining a better understanding of consumer demands. Focus can be divided into two; differentiation focus and cost focus. These allow for businesses to either take competitive advantage by selling a unique product or by having competitive pricing. For UFC, the strategy would be more focused on differentiation as the product of UFC tickets, the roadshow and the cinema screenings are all completely unique for a relatively new sport in the UK, giving them the competitive advantage in the market. Finally, the third option in Porter's matrix is differentiation. While being applied through all stages of the value chain, creating a unique product will promote differentiation in the market. High quality products can suffer, much in the way that UFC did, by damaged reputation or through poor distribution. UFC can change this by relaunching in the UK as a professional global sport and by making its fights more accessible to its customers on television and streaming services. According to a Global Web Index (2017 a) report, UFC is still less popular in Europe than boxing and only 61% of UFC fans pay for a subscription service for fights. Therefore, if UFC create a bigger and more accessible market in the UK for MMA fighting, the product will be differentiated enough to create a clear market advantage.

The first objective for UFC can be met by having a greater social media presence with key influencers. Millennials are mobile driven and will be more responsive to the endorsements of celebrities and fitness influencers, subsequently being more interested in the sport as a whole and more inclined to watch the fights. Secondly, by creating a higher profile on social media, the UK fighters will have better publicity. Following on from the brawls at the McGregor v. Khabib fight, current UK fighters will have a harder time achieving positive reputations. Therefore, the increased publicity on social media will help to repair any damaged reputation. The final objective can be met by going into schools, training academies and gyms to promote and influence the younger generations to get into the sport and watch the fights.

Target Audience

Thinking about the insights we have discovered, we decided that the most appropriate target audience to focus on would be Millennials and Gen Z, having found that the audience for UFC pay-per-view in the USA was mainly aged 18-49 years old (Miller 2008). Considering the viewership of sport moving onto digital platforms, Price Waterhouse Coopers identifies Millennials as an ideal target audience for sports organisations to court, in their latest sports survey (2018). They highlight that millennials are active consumers seeking high levels of engagement, making them an ideal demographic for the UFC, who want their audience to interact and engage with the sport, to generate loyal MMA fans.

Additionally, GWI highlights Gen Z as wanting brands they follow to add value to their lives through expanding their skills, knowledge or entertaining them (Mander & Young 2017). This offers interesting opportunities to engage with the

audience by utilising outreach in order to attract them to interact with the sport beyond merely watching fights, inspiring connection and loyalty to the brand. More recent GWI reports (2018a) have identified that 'brands you like' captures 36% and 'sports stars' get 22% of social following online, leading to a need to deploy online alongside offline methods to balance the needs and desires for engagement for the Millennial and Gen Z audience.

This demographic is also the most active online, with exposure to digital culture at its greatest, and Gen Z are also the most prevalent smartphone users with 91% personally owning one (Intel 2018). This suggests a need for prevalence of social media that is easily accessible on mobile platforms. However, Intel (2018) has found that the digital world is persuasive in the lives of Gen Z, with many having trouble switching off. Similarly, GWI (2018b) highlights the trend for 2019 of 'conscious effort to decrease time spent on social media, with 58% of 16-34s decreasing their time spent on social media. This is an important factor to account for when rolling out promotional activities, keeping a strong presence offline as well as online.

Promotion platforms

With the average consumer interested in fitness spending 2 hours and 26 minutes on social media each day (GWI 2018c), we will garner their attention through partnering with social media influencers, The Lean Machines. Personal trainers and influencers John and Leon, utilise their fitness and healthy living videos to grow an audience of 430,000 on YouTube, 111,000 on Instagram, 42,100 on Twitter and 123,000 followers on Facebook. With their videos focusing on making work-outs fun and accessible, but maintaining genuine passion and interest in sport, they are ideal personalities to work with making UFC accessible to our target audience. Utilising their experience creating fitness videos we will pair them with fighters Michael Bisping and Cory

McKenna in a training session, to create short workout videos that can then be shared across platforms. This means they can feature on the Lean Machines YouTube, Instagram and Facebook stories allowing for cross-promotion across platforms, alongside featuring the content on the UFC Instagram and YouTube accounts. This facilitates the creation of a series that runs over several weeks, alongside behind-the-scenes posts on both sets of accounts, trailing the work-outs, combined with featuring the Roadshow in a behind-the-scenes vlog video. The aim is to open UFC to consumers not already considering the sport as 'one to watch', making it accessible and shaking the aggressive and violent connotations, which it has been dismissed with by some.

With Gen Z over-indexing for following vloggers and musicians (Mander & Young 2017), we wanted to utilise external interests to draw new consumer's attention to UFC. With that in mind, we looked at which celebrities are already investing their interest in UFC and found amongst the many following the brand on Instagram, singer Ellie Goulding. Established in the UK and international music scene, Goulding projects a modern twist on a 'strong woman', continuing the Fourth Wave Feminism trend, providing the opportunity to appeal to a female audience for a brand that has traditionally been male-dominated (Mintel 2017), identifying the sport as offering modern feminists a fitness and sporting interest. As someone already interested in UFC, Goulding presents the enthusiasm for the sport from an authentic viewpoint, building further trust with audiences. With social following for musicians at 31% of platform users (GWI 2018b), working with Goulding presents the chance to access audiences beyond the sporting sphere and taps into the top interest of Gen Z, where music features most prevalently in 61% of chosen interests (Mander & Young 2017). Goulding serves an ideal guide for our online and media coverage of the roadshows and will feature in pre-show performances at fights in the UK.

Twitter is a great platform to promote UFC. As of 2018 Q2, Twitter has a total of 335 million monthly active users. The number of international users is 267 million, accounting for 80%. The number of users in the United States is 68 million, accounting for 20% (Jie 2018). Twitter has a large user base and its' influence should not be underestimated. The data shows that Twitter users are 45% more likely to tweet about brands than other platforms, and 31% more likely to convince other social media users (eMarketer 2017). The UFC Twitter has 6.8million followers, with the hashtag #UFC23 in 580 tweets. The pinned tweet shows the latest news about teamed up with Omaze has 916 likes. In order to enhance the brand awareness of UFC, three ways of promotion in Twitter are used: promoted tweets, accounts and trends. The promotion of tweets and promotional accounts is a pay-for-performance advertising product. That is, when a user completes an advertiser's design, such as retweeting, liking and replying to a promotional tweet, the corresponding advertising costs are paid, achieving effective promotion.

Instagram has been focused on developing a global advertising business and furthering real-time sharing. Data shows that Millennials are the most influenced by Instagram images, due to Instagram stories making it easier to add creative flair to their photos or videos (Clarket, 2018). UFC can take advantage of the platform to promote and shape their image, utilising elements of the distinct and recognizable colours and unique creative styles for their own pictures and texts. The video surrounds a theme to tell the relationship between UFC and sports, enhancing the brand's recognition and directly creating an impression with the audience.

In addition to Twitter, many social networks including Facebook and Instagram use hashtags. A good hashtag can increase the brand's exposure,

mobilise the user's participation and emphasise information. A hashtag such as #UFCfitness could be a great way of monitoring audience engagement.

With 63% of 16-44-year-olds in the UK going to the cinema (DCM 2017), there is an opportunity to bring UFC fights to a wider audience, seeking entertainment and the opportunity to watch sport live in groups rather than simply streaming (Mander & Young 2017). As Peter Bradshaw (2018) asserts, cinema in the UK is booming with it on course to have the best year in ticket sales since 1971, making it a lucrative market to be a part of. Bringing the fights to event cinema also follows trends highlighted by a 2018 survey of Cardiff students aged 18-31, with 36% (40 of 110 respondents) having attended event cinema performances, utilising the burgeoning market. It also offers a communal experience for UFC fans at reduced cost compared to individual pay-per-view prices. This would only be viable for fights in the UK, due to time-zone restrictions. It may be the case to roll-out to sites based on demand, starting with key cities exhibiting the roadshow, to ascertain success and subsequently expand to further sites. By being part of the event cinema season, the UFC gains opportunities within cinema advertising, including on cinema chain websites and apps (see Appendix A), point-of-sale in-house (posters) and leaflets. With the popularity of boxing related cinematic releases, such as *Creed*, alongside action films, we can also advertise the events with links to the roadshow, through trailers prior to appropriate titles to cater to potential audiences.

Tactics (Ideas and Creative)

In order to re-launch the UFC brand in the UK, there needs to be a greater interest in the sport, its athletes and the positives around the industry. MMA and the UFC brand promote some of the fittest and most all-rounded athletes in the world, however the sport is often associated with the blood bath shown in

the Octagon. The UK has a range of large arenas up and down the country which will be perfect to launch our UFC Roadshow. The roadshow will be a touring event beginning in Manchester and ending in London to promote the brand, the fighters and the positive charity work surrounding MMA. As an event, the roadshow will be large and will need sponsorship from both UFC and BT Sport, as the only television provider of UFC fights in the UK (Cauchi, 2018). At the roadshow itself, members of the public will be able to meet UFC stars, including Michael Bisping - the UFC Champion 2017, along with a range of health and fitness celebrities such as Jason Statham and Chris Pratt, who share an existing interest in the UFC. These stars will be engaging in Q&A sessions with roadshow attendants and fitness journalists, allowing some of the more pressing issues of MMA fighting to be addressed in a relaxed environment and presents the fighters in a more natural light.

Addressing our aims in this campaign, we want to highlight the importance of good health and fitness along with a strong representation of women, therefore Ellie Goulding, a well-known fitness enthusiast and musician, and Cory McKenna, an upcoming British UFC star will be at the event to provide an insight into female fitness and fighting in the UFC as a woman. Being a large event, food will be available from the UFC Food Truck, run in association with TGI Fridays to bring an American feel to the events, and featuring 'fighter-themed' food such as Khabib Kebabs and Rousey Ribs. Based on our research, this roadshow will enable the UFC to become more easily accessible to young people up and down the country, while maintaining the already sustained interest of the current viewers by sparking further interest in the new fighters.

In order to publicise the fights in more prominent areas, we propose advertisements promoting the event go up in the main train stations across the

country; Waterloo, Kings Cross, Victoria, Manchester Piccadilly and Cardiff Central for example. With the high footfall traffic, they are the ideal places to attract a variety of people to both the fights and the roadshow. These advertisements can also be used in shopping centres and on the sides of buses and bus shelters as public transport will be key in aiding the success of the roadshow. Further to this, as BT is one of the main sponsors in the UK for UFC, there will be projected images of the fighters on the sides of the BT buildings across the country, much like the projected images of Gareth Bale and Cristiano Ronaldo on the side of the BT Tower in Cardiff for the promotion of the 2017 UEFA Champions League Final. Finally, short videos will be created for an online format, which will also be utilised in cinema trailers as previously mentioned.

A key area of professional sports organizations is to gain and maintain a good reputation, which reflects the overall perception of an organization (Elsbach 2003). If a company is negatively evaluated, the organization should engage in philanthropy or charity activities to improve the perception of fans or consumers about the company and differentiate itself from the competition in the market (Agyemang and Williams 2013). As a result, UFC can work with local charities to build sports venues for schools in disadvantaged areas and provide a wide range of sports facilities. Students use running and games as their main sports activities because they have no access to formal sports and sports facilities. As a global sports company, UFC can also provide representatives and sports equipment for children from deprived areas, such as sportswear. At the same time, posters and detailed procedures of these activities will be displayed online for the public. MMA fighter and European WBAF Boxing Champion, Jayden Cauchi works with young children in martial arts academies across Cardiff and has highlighted the importance of disciplined teaching. Cauchi explains in an interview (see Appendix B) that

teaching children how to be respectful while fighting and learning how to gracefully accept a defeat are key skills in making the next generation of MMA fighters more respectful and professional. Working with children from disadvantaged backgrounds in this way promote self-development and prevent them from fighting on the streets.

In addition to organizing philanthropy, other socially responsible behaviours exhibited by sports companies are what sports fans want to see.

Cause-related sports marketing (CRSM) is a way of embodying corporate social responsibility and promotes the reputation and brand image of professional sports organizations (Lachowetz and Gladden 2003). CRSM refers to the establishment of a connection through sports events or projects, which is mutually beneficial in sports organizations or athletes and social welfare (ibid). Like FC Barcelona's commitment to UNICEF, UFC can build long-term relationships with Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) to collaborate and create a disability campaign providing support and funding. Furthermore, advertising on various social platforms is essential to attract public attention to the project. With the increasingly close connections between sports organizations, athletes and social welfare, the importance of corporate social responsibility is increasingly prominent (Walker and Kent 2009). Therefore, for UFC, it is necessary to participate in socially responsible activities, which reflect corporate social responsibility.

Conclusion

From our research we have identified a multitude of ways in which the UFC can begin rebranding itself in the UK. Combining offline and online platforms allows us to connect with a wide consumer market within the demographic of Millennials and Gen Z. We envision this campaign running across a year, continuing from UFC 25th Anniversary Celebrations in 2018. Beginning in

January to coincide with New Year fitness trends, working through to summer body fitness before concluding in November as the sporting season begins to relax.

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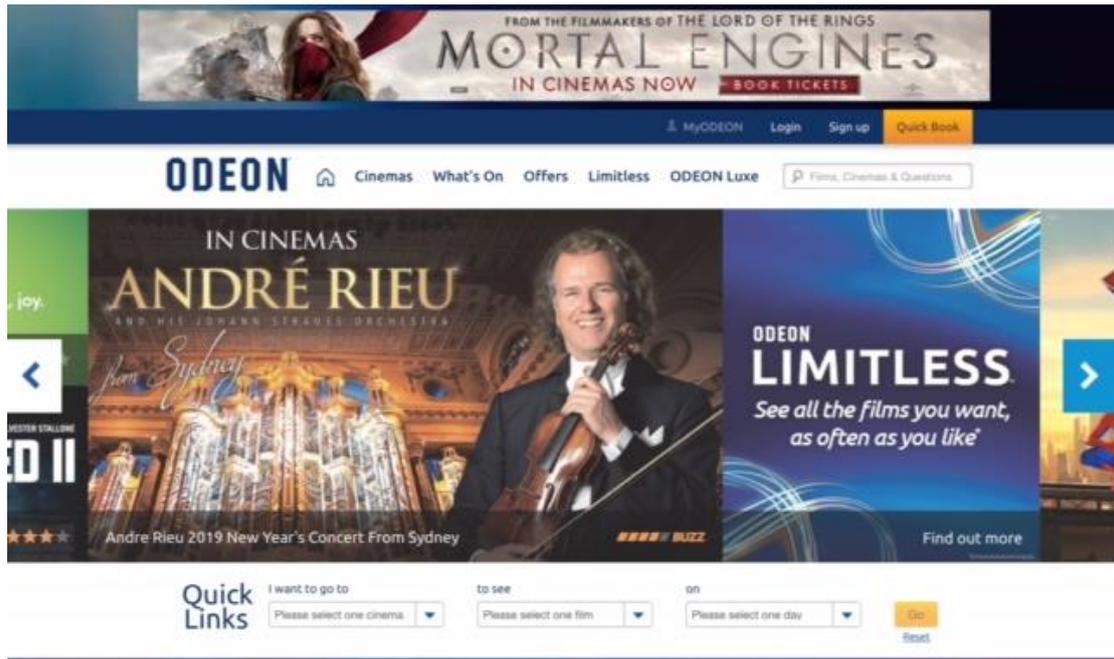
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Appendix

Appendix A:

Images illustrating positioning of Event Cinema promotion on Odeon website (www.odeon.co.uk) and Odeon app, as examples to show where live event cinema would feature for UFC fights shown live as event cinema across major cinemas.

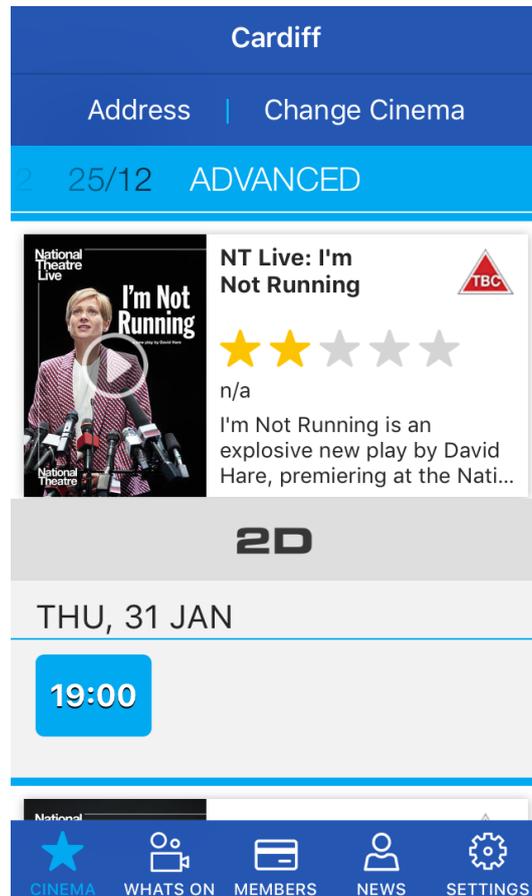
On Odeon Homepage (Placement where Andre Rieu features):



On Event Cinema page:



On the Odeon App in cinema listings for Advanced showings for pre-booking events:



Appendix B: Interview with Mr Jayden Cauchi

Interviewer: Cardiff University IPR&GCM Student

Interviewee: Jayden Cauchi - WBAF European Boxing Champion and MMA Featherweight Champion.

Interview Setting: Cafe Nero, Castle Street, Cardiff. The interview was conducted at 10:30am on 28th November.

Affiliation with Interviewee: Work colleagues at The Angel Hotel and good friends for 3 years.

(Start of Interview)

Interviewer: Hi Jayden, thank you so much for coming to talk to me today, I just have some questions about UFC, MMA and the recent fight between Conor McGregor and Khabib Nurmagomedov. I hope that's okay.

Interviewee: Yes of course, I'm more than happy to talk to you about this.

Background:

Interviewer: How long have you been an MMA fighter?

Interviewee: I've trained MMA since I was 9 years old and had my first MMS bout at age 11.

Interviewer: What attracted you to the sport?

Interviewee: I was always fascinated by the sport as it combined all aspects of martial arts and seeing two men or women who are world class at two different fighting styles come against each other and just watching each style grow and how one technique could nullify another was something I was always interested in seeing.

Interviewer: Has it helped to get you off the streets or out of trouble?

Interviewee: It definitely helped me in both ways as it gave me a career path that I could succeed in but offer other routes such as teaching, corner work, refereeing and even going beyond that too help give an understanding of how impactful the sport can be and make me want to help others just as other helped me. Hopefully causing a chain reaction for the near and far future.

Interviewer: Do you think watching UFC encourages people to fight?

Interviewee: I think to a certain degree it does but fighting in a sense of doing it with respect. Always bowing and touching gloves before and after a fight, so yes, they do encourage fighting but in the right way in my opinion.

Interviewer: You teach young children - are there certain values or things that you try to instil in them when they fight?

Interviewee: The one thing I always tell my students is that we can either win or we learn, every defeat is a learning opportunity to grow. I always tell the kids to simply be themselves and not be someone they think they should be, and the most important thing is to always respect an opponent whether you do it silently or are very public about it.

The McGregor/Khabib fight:

Interviewer: How did you watch the fight between McGregor and Khabib - pay per view, Sky, etc?

Interviewee: I was at the Cardiff Martial Arts Academy where we had an 'AFD training night' where we got the fight card on the BT Sport app and had it on the projector and watched the fights as a team.

Interviewer: Are there fights on readily available channels for you to use?

Interviewee: Most fights are on BT sport via television but you can watch them on the UFC app on the phone and CBS fighting on the laptop so there is always options and availability.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the fights that broke out after the match?

Interviewee: I think it was bad for Khabib because it was out of character for him and over shadows an excellent performance. It does give the port that hooligan look as well that they have been trying to get rid of for so many years. I think both teams were in the wrong and should of called it a day once the

fight was over but I think the main thing that got in the way for McGregor's camp was pride and the same can be said for Khabib's team as they wanted to show they weren't a pushover team as many had suggested in the past leading up to the fight.

Interviewer: How do you think the UFC dealt with the fighters and in their recovery from the brawl?

Interviewee: Considering there was no predicting that would ever happen I think they dealt with it in the best possible way, refusing to give any belts out or declaring any winners whilst both fighters were still in the octagon. This could have set off many other fights with the fighters themselves or even fans, leading to more injuries than the ones that had already occurred. I think their actions stopped anything more dangerous happening and almost calmed things down definitely for the fans and their safety in the arena.

Interviewer: Do you think UFC as a brand has suffered as a result of the brawl?

Interviewee: No, I think the UFC, whilst saying it was a terrible event, have really benefited from this as it brought more eyes to the sport and got people talking about it. The fight itself was already the biggest in history and this made it even bigger. It made Khabib a recognised fighter, which before the fight only the hardcore, dedicated fans truly knew who he was, and it made McGregor an even bigger superstar than he ever was. So in the long run I think it was almost the best thing that has happened to the UFC and will make them a bigger combat sport competition for boxing in the future.

Interviewer: What do you think of UFC? Do you have any personal experiences with them?

Interviewee: My only personal experience with the UFC has been when I was a training partner for a fighter called Paul Daley. I was helping him train Jiu Jitsu for his upcoming fight against Dustin Hazlett. I think they (UFC) are very supportive to their fighters and give them every chance to brand themselves and make a name to earn themselves more money and fame.

Interviewer: Have you encountered any female fighters in the UK?

Interviewee: I've known Cory McKenna, who is a cage warriors' fighter, for a few years now and I really believe she will be at the UFC one day and elevating women's UFC to a high level. I've trained with her since she was 17 and she's always been fighting at a much higher standard than many other people with her experience or age. Her work ethic has been truly inspiring to so many women in the UK looking to get into the sport and she is still very young.

Interviewer: What are your opinions for women joining the sport? Is it an all-inclusive sport?

Interviewee: Since Ronda Rousey it has been a very inclusive sport with female fighters even being main events and drawing great numbers. In my opinion I'm very on board to see women progress in the sport and making themselves household name just like many male fighters have done. There is of course the issue of stomach kicks and strikes affecting a woman's chance of giving birth which is a worry to some, but I feel that if the fighter herself is happy to fight

and says herself she will take the risk then she should be allowed to pursue her fighting career and goals.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on the McGregor/Khabib fight before the brawl happened?

Interviewee: I think the fight went as many expected, grappling was dominated by Khabib but when the striking was there, and the fight was on the feet I feel Conor had more control and crisp striking, using angles and range to control their fight. But with Conor's ground game not being very strong it was how I imagined the fight would end, being a submission.

Interviewer: How has UFC travelled across to the UK? Is it big in the UK now?

Interviewee: I think in the past 5 years there has been a big rise in interest, it was always hard for UK fans as the UFC even admitted to not having the biggest fan base when the fights are usually at 2am-6am UK time. But the UFC is definitely getting bigger with more people wanting to train and watch the sport. I think this is down to Michael Bisping becoming the first UK champion in 2017 and giving the UK a base in the UFC and showing we can produce world class fighters, which was always something said when UK MMA was discussed.

Interviewer: In your opinion, how can McGregor come back from this?

Interviewee: Although he has realistically made enough money and has business lined up where he maybe doesn't have to fight to make money anymore, McGregor has always shown an ability to take defeats with grace and usually come back stronger. I think he will need to fight someone else before having the inevitable rematch with Khabib but the fans will grow restless and will want to see him win sooner or later and knowing how he reacted in his last defeat I believe he will have to come back in the same fashion and have a spectacular win against a top rated opponent to get back in the rematch contender spot.

Interviewer: What do you prefer MMA/UFC or boxing; both to watch and to fight in?

Interviewee: To watch I would say UFC because it's like watching a high stakes game of chess where both fighters need to be so careful but also take risks. I'm always on the edge of my seat watching MMA whereas in boxing, because I know what to look at. You can almost see 90% of the time who is going to win by round 6. But in terms of fighting boxing is what I prefer, I like the feeling of us both having just our hands and our stamina, both go toe to toe and see who the better man is. To take part in it is more intriguing whereas in MMA you can be a world class boxer but get taken down by a world class wrestler and then the fight is over.

Interviewer: Thank you again for coming to talk to me today.

Interviewee: You're welcome, anytime.