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SECURING A SPOT

The Ultimate Warrior Challenge Is Finding Its Niche in a Saturated Market

BY ROBERT MONROE

In case you haven't noticed, there is no lack of competition in the mixed martial arts promotional world and sitting atop the heap is the UFC, the 10-ton gorilla.

Smaller scale shows pop up left and right, vying for a place in a saturated market. Finding a niche in a full marketplace is easier said than done.

But one seems to have done it. In only its second show, "Ultimate Warrior Challenge," based in Florida, is quickly emerging from being just another show to looking like it's a leading mixed martial arts promotion. Promoter Marcello Foran seems to have found a niche in the form of creative matchmaking.

LIKE ROYALTY

The UWC has top fighters bring in their protégés, who compete on the cards. For example, on June 30th, Denis Kang, boxing's Olympic gold medalist Howard Davis Jr., Din Thomas, WEC champ Carlos Condit, Dean Lister, David Loiseau and Crafton Wallace were all present.

In addition to that, the promotion treats the participants like royalty. From the moment of arrival, coaches and fighters are whisked off in polished limousines to world-class hotels. Plus, the UWC utilizes overhead big screens, laser lights, top-quality cage lighting and smoking hot ring girls.

Putting on a top-notch show with lavish accommodations is nothing new to Foran. His primary business, "Ultimate VIP International," provides parties and jetsetter-esque outings for well-known and wealthy clientele.

"We are in the entertainment business," he says. "We know how to treat people well. That is really what it's all about—treating people well ... from the fighters to the trainers to everyone involved. It's an opportunity for a guy who may not get this type of chance elsewhere. The fighters on the card may not be as well known, but they are treated every bit as well as the UFC stars in attendance."

They also have some ambitious growth plans. "Ultimate Warrior Challenge" will connect with a network of reputable

smaller shows that will carry the "Ultimate Warrior Challenge" moniker.

"We have been making contacts with many reputable smaller scale shows that know the ins and outs of their particular markets," says Foran. "All they are missing are the tools, the marketing and the glitz, which is what we provide. It's not unlike planting seeds in many areas instead of planting one seed and waiting until it becomes a tree. It is almost like franchising the show."

GLITZ, GLAMOUR

All the glitz and glamour is great, but the bottom line is the fights have to be good and showcase solid matchmaking.

In June, the fights were all evenly matched and some proved that having a world-class fighter in your corner does not always guarantee a victory. For example, Jonathan Brookings looked unfazed and defeated Yves Jabouin, the Canadian trained by David Loiseau.



THE BOX SCORE

What: "Ultimate Warrior Challenge"

Where: Jacksonville, Florida

When: June 30th

The Fights

- Jeremy May defeated Shawn Gay
- Matt Dorsten defeated Marcus Foran
- Danny Brykett defeated Brandon Bledsoe
- Lew Polley defeated Tony Sousa
- John Skidmore defeated John Morrison
- Terry Cohens defeated Canan Dunn
- Charley Blanchard defeated Beto Nunes
- John Mahlow defeated Anthony Lapsley
- Jonathan Brookings defeated Yves Jabouin
- Chris Baten defeated Herbert Goodman

UG