

## MMA

By BEN VICKERS

**THIS YEAR is already shaping up to be a big one, and we have the first UFC event of the year to look forward to this weekend in Brazil.**

UFC 142 returns to the home of Vale Tudo and the atmosphere was electric last time the promotion graced Rio's HSBC Arena.

The headline bout will see one of Brazil's favourite fighting sons, Jose Aldo, defend his featherweight crown against Chad Mendes.

Aldo is undefeated since 2005 and that was the only loss in 21 fights.

He is one of the most technically gifted strikers in the sport and also has won major BJJ competitions at black belt so is a force to be reckoned with wherever the fight goes.

Mendes is undefeated and most of his wins have come via decision.

He is a powerful guy who will be looking to get in Aldo's face and land big shots in order to set up take downs.

However, with Aldo's prowess on the ground it might not be such a good idea. I struggle to see where Mendes can beat Aldo.

Aldo shipped in Gray Maynard to help him with his takedown defence so is obviously well aware of what he is up against.

Add to all this the hometown support Aldo is going to get and one has to believe the featherweight title will remain in Brazil.

The co-main event will see one of Brazil's most experienced fighters, Vitor Belfort, face off against a tough, young fighter in Anthony Johnson. This fight is my tip for shock of the night.

Most will see Belfort as being too experienced and possessing too much power to defeat Johnson but Johnson is a beast. Both men have genuine knock-out power in their hands and legs but Johnson is a far superior wrestler.

If Johnson gets the fight to the floor then Belfort may be in a world of trouble.

Belfort won his last fight by knockout but it was against a middle of the road journeyman in Akiyama.

The previous fight he was savagely knocked out by Anderson Silva with a front kick to the face.

Johnson has two good wins behind him with a quick KO last time out and a solid and mature decision win over Dan Hardy the fight before.

He will be confident of finding the ageing Belfort's chin or getting the take down and causing damage on the ground, and I fear the partisan crowd will be upset in this one.

Elsewhere on the card the UK's Terry Etim will be looking for another sharp performance to go with his 17-second submission victory in his last outing. Prior to that fight Etim had been side lined with for over a year with an injury.

He will be unpopular on Saturday night when he faces local favourite Edson Barboza.

Barboza is a Rio native and brings an undefeated record into the fight.

He is a fantastic Muay Thai fighter and has one a couple of fights with stoppages due to leg

# UFC show gets back on the road in Rio



**Corkman Graham Boylan, who runs Cage Warriors, has announced a hectic schedule for his MMA fighters, which will see them in action in 17 shows in 13 different countries over the next six months.**

kicks, which is no mean feat.

Don't blink during this one as it is going to be explosive, fight of the night is a good possibility.

All in all this card should be amazing, great fights and an atmosphere that is second to none back in the home of the sport.

Elsewhere in the sport, Europe's leading promotion, Cage Warriors has announced a hectic schedule spanning 13 countries for this year and a total of 17 shows.

The first show will be in Lebanon, yes Lebanon, on February 11. After that it's London the following weekend and Ukraine the week after that!

The show returns to Ireland in May for the start of the women's 125lbs tournament where

local favourite Aisling 'Ais the Bash' Daly will fight another woman ranked in the top 10 in the world, Rosi Sexton.

We may even see popular Irishman Joe Duffy return to action after breaking his hand in a tough loss to Ivan Musardo last time out. Cage Warriors has teamed up with one of the world's largest production companies.

Sky Stone, a Dubai based operation, will be taking control of the management of international schedule of events for the whole of 2012.

"With a schedule of 17 shows in 2012, Sky Stone linking up with Cage Warriors will take the promotion to a whole new level," said Cage Warriors director, Corkman Graham Boylan.

"This move will create massive opportunities for fighters in the Middle East and around

the world.

"Cage Warriors are really excited to have such a massive partner now on board."

Sky Stone Production and Entertainment FZ LLC is an advertising and media agency based in the United Arab Emirates and has strategic partnerships with a number of international organisations, including Translink and Roya TV.

Add to this the introduction of mandatory blood testing for fighters this year and it is clear to see that the Cage Warriors' management are doing all they can to move into line with top US promotions, and are putting fighter safety right up at the top of their list of priorities.

Refreshing news for UK MMA.

## Longest of longshots Lights up Taunton with 200-1 win

THE longest odds I've ever backed a winning horse on the nose at is 16-1 (Minnehoma in the 1994 National as you're asking).

I recall hazily a few each way celebrations in the 25-1 range mark, but I'm sure there was nothing north of that.

Unless a horse's name is *Gay Future* it's not too wise to have much riding on a horse with odds in double figures.

So when one in triple figures canters in it's always going to make the news.

If a horse is over a 100-1 that usually means that even if it was turned into glue, it wouldn't hold your posters on the wall.

Yet Lights of Broadway, trained by Jo Hughes and ridden by Mark Grant, pulled off a 200-1 upset to win the EBF

Mares' Novice Hurdle by three-quarters of a length at Taunton on Tuesday.

The mare, who finished a football field (83 lengths) behind the winner on her most recent outing before that in December, pushed on to win when favourite Night Rose fell two fences from home.

To top off the story, two other outsiders, Wishes And Stars (50-1) and Fortuna Rose (33-1), rounded out the places.

That's probably the highest priced first three to ever finish in a horse race.

Ladbrokes are the only firm to say that a £5 each-way bet had been placed with them, netting one lucky punter £1,250 sterling.

The last 200-1 winner both here and



across the water was Maoi Chinn Tire at Wetherby in October 2010.

So if you factor that there are around 15 races on an average day, then the chances of any 200-1 shot winning should really be greater than 5,00-1!

Moving on to someone who prefers short odds, we get to a full-time gambler and part-time boxer Floyd Mayweather Jr won \$333,333.35 on a \$400,000 bet

on a college football game on Tuesday when Alabama won 21-0.

The \$400,000 wager is actually pretty modest for Floyd and he reportedly put down \$1 million on the Patriots against the Broncos a few weeks ago.

Mayweather, nicknamed 'Money' more often than 'Pretty Boy' these days, likes to post his winning dockets on Twitter.

He never tweets losing one's though, and we're assuming he must take more hits at the bookies than he does in the ring.

The world's best boxer is supposed to be serving a 90-day prison sentence, but that has now been postponed until after a ring date in May in Las Vegas, apparently because his fights bring in so

much revenue to the city.

Mayweather called out long-time rival but yet-to-be adversary Manny Pacquiao for a showdown before he gets locked up

"I'm calling you out let's fight May 5 and give the world what they want to see," he said.

"My jail sentence was pushed back because the date was locked in. Step up punk."

Let's not get our hopes up, but Mayweather is 4-7 with Paddy Power with 5-4 for Pacquiao. The draw, which shouldn't be ruled out as a rematch would be even more lucrative, is 30-1.

Recommendation: He might not be as long, but Whipcrackaway in the 7.15pm at Kempton can triumph at 10-1.