

## MMA

By BEN VICKERS

**LAST weekend saw a fantastic Strikeforce card at the HP Pavilion in San Jose, California.**

The main event saw two of the most exciting fighters in the promotion go head-to-head. Nick Diaz is, in my opinion, one of the most talented fighters in the world today. He has professional boxing experience, is a Gracie Jiu Jitsu black belt, and does triathlon when he's not fighting.

He is the Strikeforce welterweight champion and holds a record of 24 wins seven losses and 1 no contest. Of these wins 12 have come by knockout and eight by submission, there is no doubt he is a finisher.

Cyborg Santos is a heavily tattooed Brazilian Jiu Jitsu black belt and renowned Muay Thai fighter. Co-incidentally his wife is the Strikeforce women's middleweight champion. Santos's record is a mixed bag, 18 wins and 14 losses, but he is a finisher too with 11 KO's and five submission wins.

Santos came out with a game plan to kick Diaz's lead leg to a pulp and it seemed to be working, he was keeping Diaz off balance by hacking at his leg. The ever-tough Diaz kept coming though and was landing his trademark accurate, stinging strikes and slowly marking the face of the Brazilian.

It was a pretty even first round, Santos dominating the first part and Diaz doing the better work in the second. It was more of the same in round two but Diaz was coming on stronger as Santos seemed to tire.

Although both men are talented Jiu Jitsu fighters one place you don't want to be is in the leggy Diaz guard. For some reason, perhaps fatigue, Santos took Diaz down with just 20 seconds left in the round. That was all the time Diaz needed to lock on a slick armbar and leave Santos having to tap or watch his arm snap.

That was the third defence of his welterweight title and it is getting hard to think of who can challenge Diaz for his belt. I would love to see him mixing it up in the UFC's welterweight division but that will never happen as the rift between him and Dana White is just too deep. He is also a massive PR risk for the UFC as it heads towards being widely accepted as a main stream sports organisation.

Diaz is exciting pre-fight, during the fight and after as you never know what you're going to get. He



Ger Cummins (centre), Ballymartle GAA, receives his prize of €20,000, following his win in the December Cork GAA Club Members Draw. Also included are Anthony Cummins (seller), Seamus Coughlan (draw manager), Richard Butler (draw co-ordinator at Ballymartle), Dan McCarthy (club official) and Joe Hallissey (chairman).

Picture: Mike English.

# Slick armbar enables Diaz retain crown

doesn't buy into the whole respect thing, certainly not pre-fight. He is no GSP, that's for sure. He also has a penchant for outwardly supporting and using cannabis, another knock for the squeaky clean image the UFC try to portray.

So for now we will have to settle watching him beat mediocre foes.

In another exciting fight the hard punching, wrestling country boy Robbie Lawler took on world-class Jiu Jitsu fighter Ronaldo Souza. The key for Lawler was to keep the fight

standing at all costs and pre fight he stated Souza would not take him down.

Early in the first round he was proved wrong as Souza dumped him on his back. Souza then proceeded to make Lawler wear him like a T-Shirt for the rest of the round with Lawler managing to pop up seconds before the bell.

Lawler was encouraged though as he avoided Souza's submission attempts really well. More of the same in the second, being a title fight

there were to be five rounds, Souza scoring the takedown and Lawler showed truly awesome submission defence.

Souza, in true BJJ style, didn't get frustrated and kept to the game plan. In the third he again got Lawler to the matt and this time found a way onto the American's back and locked in the rear naked choke to retain his middleweight title.

It was a very good showing from Strikeforce and I would love for them to make Paul Daley versus

Nick Diaz happen, that's one of my must see fights for 2011, fingers crossed!

This coming weekend we are in for a treat with another stellar card from the UFC. UFC 126 from the Mandalay Bay Events Centre in Las Vegas is going to be huge. The main event see's two Brazilians face off for the middleweight title.

Long-term champ Anderson Silva will defend against fearsome striker Vitor Belfort. Expect fireworks.

In the co-main event fan favourite Forrest Griffin, who has been out of the cage for a long time, will face former middleweight champ Rich Franklin, who is once again stepping up to light heavyweight.

This has all the promise of a stand up war too.

In another light heavyweight clash unbeaten wrestling machine Ryan Bader will take on the highly touted and ultra-exciting Jon Jones.

Bader will be looking to hit the ground early doors but Jones has amazing Greco Roman wrestling abilities and very versatile striking, ensuring another barnstormer is in the making.

Add to that a host of the most exciting names from the defunct WEC organisation and it makes for a card worth sitting up until 5am for. I most certainly won't be missing this one and I suggest you don't either.

## Men in white coats ought to take a close look at Bertie

HAWK-EYE is a complex computer system used in cricket, tennis and other sports to visually track the path of the ball and display a record of its most statistically likely path.

That last sentence was lifted directly from the Wikipedia website.

Perhaps I should trust myself to explain it better: it's a sort of virtual hindsight.

If you were to track the path of this article you would find out that from a starting position of some lazy internet plagiarism, it will follow a trajectory that begins with why GAA umpires are in danger of becoming obsolete, bounce on a line that takes a pop at an easy political target and end up with a tip that anyone with a pair of eyes could see is well wide of the mark.

Talk that the GAA were poised to embrace the Hawk-Eye brand this year has proven premature and "a full feasibility study on the pos-

sible use of score detection technology" will now not be completed before May says the GAA.

So another season will pass and victims of poor decisions will sigh with resignation and men with white coats hung up at home will sigh with relief.

I once had the pleasure of spending a day in the company of two umpires at Croke Park for an article to penetrate their psyche and I'll admit I went in with the preconception that they were strange and inscrutable characters and left with that belief close to unshaken.

Yet I have a certain affinity with them: they spend a lot of their time looking at the sky, are indecisive in the presence of authority and are usually looking for a lift home after a game.



While decent eyesight is essential for an umpire and foresight needed for a tipster, hindsight is not always 20/20, as Bertie Ahern — who stepped out of Leinster House for the last time yesterday — recently proved.

Asked what his greatest regret from his time in politics was outside the Dáil last week he could have used hindsight to perhaps mention 450,000 unemployed, 1,000 a week emigrating, tax increases, welfare cuts, the ailing Health service or even the dig-outs.

But no, "I would have loved if someone told me what was going on in the banks in this country but nobody ever did," he said. "You get wise after the event," he added, before immediately contradicting that statement to

say his "biggest" regret was "when I see little countries like Qatar and Kuwait talking about their 10 stadiums and we never succeeded in getting one national stadium."

Ah yes, I wonder how those Gulf States paid for those stadiums. Perhaps they sell all their empty houses and offices to other countries who have no access to them. Could we do this? Could we maybe pipe our excess ghost housing estates to the rest of Europe for a huge profit?

But maybe he was right. Maybe a giant empty stadium would have been a fitting monument to his legacy.

**Recommendation:** Bertie's beloved Dubs will play their home league games at Croke Park (it's a massive stadium, it's slap bang in the middle of his constituency; and we have another one) and this should help them lift the Division One title in three months' time. It's a worthwhile punt at 6-1 with Bet365.