

IT WAS an eventful weekend in Las Vegas as UFC 137 hit the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino.

The main event was one of the most exciting and brutal affairs I have ever seen, it is a shame it was only three rounds.

BJ Penn and Nick Diaz did exactly what was expected of them; they met in the centre of the Octagon and went to war. This fight was always going to be a barnstormer but it went over and above that.

Penn came and relentlessly pushed forward, landing solid shots and marking up Diaz. Diaz was always in the fight though; he used his sharp, rangy boxing to pepper Penn with stinging shots.

Penn secured a takedown but Diaz is superb off his back and shipped very little damage whilst grounded, I was impressed with Penn's game plan, I said last week his best chance of winning was to ground Diaz and smash him from the top position.

Diaz found his way back to his feet and the boxing match continued. Penn definitely took the first round but not by much and although Diaz was a little marked up he was just getting into his stride.

Round two was pivotal in the fight and saw Diaz find his range and start to reign down unrelenting blows on Penn. Penn was doing all he could just to stay in the fight, he was marking up and looking tired whilst Diaz looked fresh as a daisy.

There were times in that round when I thought the referee would surely step in and stop the fight but Penn showed his warrior spirit and found it deep down in his sole to throw back and continue.

Come the end of round two Penn looked done. Dana White, UFC promoter, said in the post fight press conference that he didn't think Penn would answer the bell for the third but I never doubted it, he doesn't know the meaning of the word quit.

Diaz came out in the third and carried on the onslaught from round two. To his credit Penn was more competitive in the third and did actually land some telling shots on Diaz.

Diaz was going nowhere though and really stamped his authority on the bout and left the decision in no doubt.

By the end of the fight, Penn's face was a mess. One of his eyes was swollen shut and he had severe bruising to much of his face. Diaz had a half closed eye too. Scars of the enthralling war that had just taken place.

It truly was one of the best fights I have seen for a very long time. The drama didn't end at the final bell though, in his post fight interview Diaz insinuated that Georges St Pierre was faking his injury and that he should have fought Carlos Condit.

After that outburst Penn was interviewed and said that he was going to retire. That was a big shock and will be a massive loss to the sport. Penn has won UFC world title belts at two weights, only Randy Couture has done that before, and has fought up as high as light



Avondale United AFC have unveiled a poster in support of the Ireland team ahead of their games against Estonia and the FAI Green Day on November 15. Photographed at the launch were Lorcan Brady, Noel Long, PRO Avondale Utd, Tony Murphy, chairman MSL, John Finnegan, chairman Youth League, George O'Kelly, DS Enterprises, Cllr Seán Martin, Kevin Daly, chairman Avondale Utd, Gerry Collins, Development Committee Avondale and John Aherne, Avondale Schoolboys Section.

Picture: Mike English

Headline act lives up to its billing

MMA

By BEN VICKERS

heavyweight.

He has never been involved in a dull fight and always, always came to have a war. If it is the end of the road for the 32-year-old then he will be sorely missed but must surely be found a place in the UFC hall of fame.

The saga didn't end with Penn's announcement though, at the press conference after the show Dana White quoted that Georges St Pierre had said.

"He's the most disrespectful human being I've ever met, and I'm going to put the worst beating you've ever seen on him in the UFC."

Clearly Diaz's comments had got to the ami-

able Canadian. White had made the call and reportedly Condit had 'stepped aside' to allow GSP to fight Diaz next.

This smacks of a lie to me, who would wittingly step aside and let their dream of becoming a world champion potentially slip away for ever?

All I would say is there must have been some hefty compensation figures flying around for Condit to move over.

When asked what would happen if Condit were to lose his next fight White answered "That'd suck!"

There are some real beasts in the welterweight division so to think Condit would have a guaranteed win would be stupid. Not once but twice in as many weeks has Condit been denied his opportunity and if I were him I'd be a touch annoyed right now.

Elsewhere on the card Matt Mitrione suffered his first loss at the hands of Cheick Kongo. It was a boring, plodding heavyweight affair in which the experience of Kongo was just too much for the relative new boy Mitrione.

One of my favourite fighters, and someone I flagged up to watch in last week's article, is Donald Cerrone. He dismantled Denis Siver in their lightweight match-up.

Cerrone had him rocked in round one with an explosive head kick, Siver did well to recover but never got back in the fight. Cerrone dropped him with a peachy straight right and then pounced, locking in the rear naked choke for a submission of the night victory.

This weekend the UFC 138 will be in the UK with Chris Leben v Mark Munoz headlining in Birmingham.

Near misses leave a bitter taste despite some success

WHEN you are calculating how well you have done tipping over a six-month period you are as likely to dwell on the near-misses as much as the winners and try not to mention the tips wider of the mark than an Aidan Walsh effort at the posts (in football, not hurling!)

Last weekend, Everton left us down in an 85-1 treble.

The weekend before it was Craig Joubert's decision to not award France a penalty in the World Cup final that cost us a 115-1 three-timer.

A few weeks before we had advised you to get on France to lift Webb Ellis at 20-1 so their final loss was doubly disappointing (although we recommended on a repeat of the 1987 final at 2-1).

If Denmark had drawn with instead of beaten Portugal 2-1 a few weeks ago in the Euro 2012 qualifiers, a 41-1 quad would have had us rolling in it (instead of the thing that rhymes with it).

But by far the greatest disappointment was the Copa America.

Sure, we gave you Uruguay to win it at 12-1, but going into the final, Luis Suarez was one goal ahead in the Golden Boot stakes. We had tipped him at 66-1 to be top scorer with Uruguay outright winners.

Then he goes and scores the first goal in the final. Quids in. We were also on him to score in the final and Uruguay to win 2-0 at 25-1!

Diego Forlan ruined that by scoring a third in the final minute to make it 3-0, but at least we had sown up the 66-1.

Not a chance.

One Pablo Guerrero of Peru decided to hit a hat-trick in the third place play-off to leapfrog Suarez to five goals, leaving the third excruciating goal until the third minute of injury-time to deny us even a share of the spoils!

It was a similar story with the Europa Cup final. We had you winning with 5-4 on Porto to be up at the break and win and 7-4 on Falcao to score anytime, but what made us very angry was we put



down Hulk to score and Porto to win 1-0 at 20-1 instead of Falcao, who we'd already tipped to score!

Something similar happened with the Tour de France, when we pointed out what a good price eventual winner Cadel Evans was at 25-1, before plumping for Andy Schleck (we at least gave you him and his brother Frank to be in the top three at 11-2).

The last month has been barren, but May saw a bonanza.

Three bets on Mike Perez in Prizefighter came up at 6-5, 7-2 and 7-1.

We would score on two more heavyweight bets in the summer, correctly

predicting both Tyson Fury and Vladimir Klitschko would win their British and World title contests on points at 4-1.

We tipped the Dubs to win Sam and the colour of the queen's hat on arrival in Ireland, both at 9-2.

Our lowest payout was on Cork and Kerry to be within three points of each other in the Munster final at 8-11, although we did suggest you lump on it (we had a sweat, mind), as we did with what we called the bet of the weekend and all weekends recently: even money on Argentina to stay within 14 points of England at the RWC (they lost by four).

Although we failed to see Carrigtwohill's potential at the start of the summer at 100-1 we did fancy them at 6-1 to beat Middleton by 1-3 points in the semi-final and to get the better of CIT in the final at 13-5.

And last weekend Cork City came up trumps for us at 11-2 to win the league and Graham Cummins was backed at 5-1 to be the first division's top scorer.

Where does that all leave us? We gave tips on 90 days in the past six months and if you had put €10 on each of the recommendations you would have won €878. So you would be €22 down overall.

Yet, being the longshot, we still have bets that haven't been decided.

One such is the 10-1 we gave on neither Darren Clarke or Rory McIlroy to win the BBC Sports Personality of the year, offered by Boylesports after they won their Majors. Cyclist Mark Cavendish is now the 5-4 favourite.

From 104 bets in my first six months I was up an implausible €920, so if you followed me for a year you would be up €898.

Not. Too. Shabby.

Recommendation: To beat that you would need a tenner on a 90-1 shot; in other words Inter, United, Bayern, Benfica, Real, CSKA and Ajax to win tonight and Man City to draw. Get on it at Paddy Power.