

Bangor fighter eager to make pro debut

BY ERNIE CLARK
BDN STAFF

Fresh from winning New England Fights' amateur featherweight title last November, Bangor's Aaron "Relentless" Lacey is turning to the professional ranks in mixed martial arts.

MIXED MARTIAL ARTS REPORT

Lacey, the top-ranked amateur featherweight in New England according to massmma.com, will make his pro debut April 23 against veteran Derek Shorey (3-5) of Dover-Foxcroft in a

three-round bout contested at the featherweight limit of 145 pounds. That fight will be part of the NEF 22 card to be held at the Androscoggin Bank Coliseum in Lewiston.

Lacey has campaigned as an amateur since the fall of 2012, compiling a 6-1 record.

He won his NEF amateur title belt with a three-round decision over previously unbeaten Caleb Horner at NEF 20. That also marked Lacey's third consecutive victory in the cage.

"I am super excited to finally be making my pro debut come April," he said. "This is a goal I have had

for a long time and something I have always been working toward. Derek Shorey is a very tough challenge as a debut fight. He has a tremendous skill set and a ton of experience."

Lacey becomes the second fighter training at Young's MMA in Bangor within the last month to announce plans to vacate a New England Fights amateur title to join the professional ranks at NEF 22.

Training partner Josh Harvey, the promotion's former amateur lightweight champion, will make his pro debut against Matt Den-

ning (2-1) of Lewiston at a catchweight of 150 pounds.

"As far as vacating my belt, I had always viewed capturing the title as the capstone to my amateur career," Lacey said. "In the moment, it was an incredible feeling and it is something I will always be proud of. Part of what has made me successful is that I always keep looking forward for my next big challenge and my coaches along with myself believe those challenges are within the professional ranks."

The amateur title being left behind by Lacey won't be vacant for long, as Caleb Hall of Dixfield will

face Erik Nelson of Lewiston for the NEF amateur featherweight belt on the April 23 Lewiston card.

Hall (6-3) is a former two-time state wrestling champion from Dirigo High School in Dixfield who went on to compete in that sport at Plymouth (New Hampshire) State University and the University of Southern Maine.

He trains at the Choi Institute in Portland.

Nelson (2-2) is a jiu-jitsu instructor at Central Maine Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu in Lewiston who recently was awarded his brown belt in that discipline.

Johnson earns 2nd win of Sprint Cup season

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

FONTANA, California — Jimmie Johnson became the first two-time winner of the 2016 Sprint Cup Series season Sunday, earning a victory in the Auto Club 400 at Auto Club Speedway.

AUTO RACING

With his 77th career win, Johnson moved past Dale Earnhardt for seventh on the all-time list.

Kevin Harvick finished second for the eighth time in Johnson's last 11 wins. Denny Hamlin overcame an early-race unscheduled pit stop, radio issues and a pit-road speeding penalty to finish third.

Johnson led a total of 25 laps throughout the race. He took the lead for the final time on a restart that followed a caution that sent the race into overtime. Johnson restarted third and pushed Harvick to the lead while taking second for himself. After Harvick and Johnson moved out to the front, Johnson then passed Harvick for the lead and then the win.

Harvick dominated throughout most of the day, leading a total of 142 laps. Holding off charges from Carl Edwards and Martin Truex Jr., Harvick led much of the first half of the race. He got slightly off pit sequence when he gave up the lead to pit because of a vibration on lap 106.

Johnson and Truex both led laps before Harvick retook the lead with 64 laps remaining.

Then Johnson and Edwards both pitted under green just before a yellow flag for debris with 45 laps to go. After everyone else stopped under caution, they restarted on the front row.

Meanwhile, Harvick restarted sixth on tires just a few laps newer. He got up to fourth on the restart and retook the lead with 34 laps to go.

Tires were an issue for several drivers throughout the race. The most dramatic tire-related problem came on lap 48 when Larson slammed head-on into an inside retaining wall. He was not injured.

While most of the six cautions were tire-related, at least one was not. Danica Patrick spun and hit the wall after contact with Kasey Kahne with 80 laps remaining. Kahne's spotter and crew chief were called to the NASCAR trailer after the race as a result.

Joey Logano and Ricky Stenhouse Jr. rounded out the top five. Chase Elliott, Edwards, AJ Allmendinger, Brad Keselowski and Jamie McMurray finished sixth through 10th, respectively.

NOTES: Brad Keselowski won the 2015 Auto Club 400. ... Kyle Busch won at Auto Club Speedway in 2013 and 2014 before missing last year's race. ... Jimmie Johnson is the winningest driver at ACS with five. ... Pole sitter Austin Dillon won the NASCAR Xfinity Series race at ACS on Saturday, but he came in 24th place Sunday. Kyle Busch dominated much of the Xfinity race,



KELVIN KUO | USA TODAY

Sprint Cup Series driver Jimmie Johnson (48) races alongside Sprint Cup Series driver Carl Edwards (19) during the Auto Club 400 at Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, California, on Sunday.

leading 133 of 150 laps before finishing second. ... Although Dillon won the pole starting spot on Friday, Denny Hamlin set a track record with a 188.511 mph lap in the second of three rounds of qualifying.

Dillon captures Xfinity race

FONTANA, Calif. — Seconds after crossing the finish line .715 seconds ahead of runner-up Kyle Busch, Austin Dillon summed up Saturday's TreatMyClot.com 300 by Janssen in one short sentence.

"I'd rather be lucky than good," Dillon chortled on his team radio after ending evading Busch's last-ditch attempt to pinch the win-

ning No. 2 Chevrolet into the outside wall at Auto Club Speedway.

And that was just the final stanza of a crazy final lap that saw: 1) Busch slow to a crawl, short on fuel; 2) Daniel Suarez take the lead from his Joe Gibbs racing teammate on the backstretch, only to run out of fuel; 3) Busch regain the lead despite cutting a left front tire on his final lap; and 4) Dillon come from a half-lap down to pass Busch as the drivers approached the finish line.

Dillon led only one lap, but it was the lap that counted.

Busch, on the other hand, led 133 of the 150 laps and

appeared destined to tie Sam Ard's record of four victories in a row.

In fact, Joe Gibbs Racing seemed headed for its third straight 1-2-3 finish before Erik Jones ran out of fuel on the next-to-last lap, Daniel Suarez emptied his tank a lap later, and Busch cut his tire after taking the white flag.

The victory was Dillon's first of the season, first at the two-mile track and seventh of his career.

Darrell Wallace Jr. finished third, and Suarez limped across the finish line in fourth place, maintaining a 10-point lead over fifth-place finisher Elliott Sadler in the series standings.

NEF

Continued from Page B4

building blocks, Ray "All Business" Wood, Bruce "Pretty Boy" Boyington and "The" Ryan Sanders, have gone on to compete on national-level or at least nationally televised MMA cards, including Wood with Bellator MMA and Boyington with the World Series of Fighting.

"Maine in general and Lewiston specifically will always be our home base of operations," Peterson said. "But as athletes continue to develop, as the talent pool deepens and as the fan base grows, as a result our schedule of events will expand in proportion to meet the growing demand.

"You can expect to see more growth in the coming months as NEF broadens its reach in an effort to showcase new talent and provide a quality evening of fight sports entertainment for fans all across New England."

Tourney

Continued from Page B4

made it past the second round.

Sure, it has been demonstrated that just about anything can happen, on a given day, under the right circumstances. But the reality is, barring a team of unprecedented talent, superior coaching and a little luck, postseason tourney success is likely to be limited.

Thus, fans of UMaine women's basketball will have to continue to gauge the program's success in terms of regular-season prowess and conference championships (the last came in 2004).

There's nothing wrong with those outcomes, especially given the abysmal years Black Bear Nation endured prior to the arrival of coach Richard Barron five years ago.

Led by a diverse group of eight seniors led by Liz Wood, Bella Swan and Mikaela Gustafsson, and a junior star in Sigi Koizar, UMaine women's basketball gave its faithful fans much about which to cheer.

However, sustained success can be difficult to achieve.

Albany has been a recent exception to the rule, as were the UMaine teams of the Joanne Palombo-McCallie era and the Hartford squads of the last decade.

Barron revamped the Black Bears largely with one recruiting class and will need significant contributions from this year's incoming freshmen to reprise their role as America East championship contenders.

UMaine fans will look back fondly on 2013-2016 as a time of prosperity at UMaine. Yet with the exception of winning perhaps one or two more games, it isn't ever likely to get much better.

UMF baseball team gains Saturday sweep

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

LYNN, Massachusetts — Sophomore righthander Nate Pushard allowed only three hits and didn't walk a batter to lead the University of Maine-Farmington by Fisher College 2-1 in the first game of a baseball doubleheader Saturday at Fraser Field.

COLLEGE ROUNDUP

UMF won the second game 6-4, but dropped an 8-4 decision to Fisher on Sunday.

In Saturday's first game, Pushard (1-0) struck out three and was backed up in the second inning by Jordan Croteau's RBI single. UMF's second run came across on an infield error in the fourth.

Croteau also doubled for UMF. Nelson Lopez singled and drove in a run for Fisher.

In the second game, Kyle Peterson scattered seven hits and four runs over six innings to help UMF notch the win. Mark Leahy pitched a scoreless seventh to earn a save.

Jimmy Parks sparked the Beavers with two singles, a sacrifice fly and two RBIs. Trevor Hisler and Ben Keene each added a single and an RBI.

Cody Mercier doubled twice and drove in two runs for Fisher.

On Sunday, Grayson Weber held the Beavers to one hit in eight innings to record the win for Fisher.

Weber (2-0) struck out nine and walked two for Fisher (9-12) before UMF reached reliever Zach LeBlanc for four runs.

Reinaldo Moreta singled twice and drove in two runs for Fisher while Kyle Anulao added two hits and two RBIs.

Riley Chickering hit as two-run double for UMF (2-1). He was also the losing pitcher after scattering four hits for two runs in six innings. He didn't walk a batter and struck out six.

UMPI, Anna Maria split

At Northborough, Massachusetts, Matt Cauchon raced home from third to score the winning run in the top of the ninth to give the University of Maine-Maine Presque Isle Owls a 10-9 victory over the Anna Maria AMCATS in the second game

of a doubleheader Saturday.

The AMCATS won the first game 5-1.

In the second game, Cauchon drew a one-out walk in the ninth, stole second, advanced to third on Brady Rowe's single and scored when Matt Curry reached on an infield error.

Solomon Fast and Jesus Garcia each drove in two runs to spark UMPI (3-9) with Fast notching a double. Saul Nunez gave up a run and three hits in two innings of relief to earn the win.

Joseph Fahey led the AMCATS (1-12) with a triple, two singles and an RBI while James Marcello drove in two runs with a double and single.

In the first game, freshman righthander Callan Finn-McMahon held the Owls to four hits and five walks while striking out three to earn the victory.

Marcello doubled and drove in two runs while Tanner Jakola also had two RBIs.

Rowe recorded an RBI single for the Owls and Matt Curry doubled.

Women's Lacrosse

Salem State 15, UMF 15

At Salem, Massachusetts, Erin Riley scored four goals to lead Salem State by UMaine-Farmington on Saturday.

Courtney Smith, Carolyn Woodin and Kristina Conlon each added three goals for Salem State (1-1) and Jen Toussaint made 13 saves.

Mara Balboni sparked UMF (1-1) with three goals. Carly Raymond added a goal and an assist while Alaina Shorey and Jaclyn Langevin each added a goal. Alyssa Arsenaault made seven saves.

Men's Lacrosse

Regis 5, Husson 4

At Boucher Field in Bangor on Saturday, Alex Ferran's unassisted goal with 7:41 left in the game gave Regis the winning edge.

Ferran finished with two goals to lead Regis (4-1) while Danny Rancano and AJ Karofsky each added a goal and an assist. Colin Spillane also scored a goal and D.J. Barrie made 16 saves.

Brandon Corbo recorded two

goals and two assists to spark Husson (0-4). Jack White and Brooks Gay each added a goal and Matt Martin made nine saves.

Wheelock II, UMF 4

At Brookline, Massachusetts, Eddie Romero scored five goals to propel Wheelock by the University of Maine-Farmington on Sunday.

Keenan Brown added three goals for Wheelock (4-3) while Brendan Nardone added two and Brian Peatfield had one. Noah Horning made nine saves.

Casey Wrigley scored two goals to lead UMF (0-3) while Travis St. Pierre and Cameron McAllister each added one. Caleb Carr finished with 17 saves.

Softball

UMPI sweeps Wheelock

At Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, on Saturday, Sara Packard drove in four runs in the first game and Dinah Bilodeau had five RBIs in the second game as the UMaine-Presque Isle Owls rolled to a doubleheader sweep of the Wildcats 14-4 and 18-0.

Packard also picked up two pitching wins.

In the first game, Packard cranked a two-run homer to left center in the third inning and added a solo shot in the fifth to lead the Owls (5-1). She also singled.

Katie Patenaude chipped in with a three-run double while Bilodeau and Jordi Legassie each added a double and single. Amanda Allen also had two hits.

Maggie Doyle drove in two runs for Wheelock (0-6).

In the second game, Bilodeau hit two, two-run singles to spark the Owls. Nicole Marucci added a double, single and two RBIs while Allen contributed two hits.

Samantha Leahon had two hits for Wheelock.

Men's Hockey

Northeastern 3, UMass Lowell 2

At TD Garden in Boston on Saturday night, for the first time in nearly three decades, the Northeastern Huskies won the Hockey East title with the win over UMass Lowell in front of 14,018 fans.

The title is Northeastern's first since 1988 and its second all-time.