

Lincolnville fighter on UFC card in South Dakota

BY ERNIE CLARK
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Tim Boetsch scored one of the most satisfying victories of his career two summers ago when he helped the Ultimate Fighting Championship bring the world's top mixed martial arts promotion to Maine for the first time.

MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

The 35-year-old Lincolnville native will be seeking a similar result when he helps the UFC make its South Dakota debut on July 13.

Boetsch will fight on the main card of UFC Fight Night 91 at the Denny Sanford Premier Center in Sioux Falls in a middle-

weight battle against Josh Samman.

The bout will be nationally televised by FS1.

Boetsch, who lives in Pennsylvania, was scheduled to begin his formal training camp Wednesday with Marcus "The Irish Hand Grenade" Davis. The camp will be in North Carolina where Davis and his family relocated earlier this year.

Boetsch (18-10 overall with eight knockouts and five submissions) scored a dramatic, second-round technical knockout victory over Brad Tavares when the UFC stopped at the Cross Insurance Center in Bangor on Aug. 16, 2014.

Along with a come-from-behind victory two years earlier over Yushin Okami

that vaulted the former four-time wrestling state champion from Camden-Rockport High School into the top five of the UFC's middleweight division, the Tavares win was one of the signature moments to date for Boetsch since he turned professional in 2006.

But Boetsch is winless since, leaving some national MMA reports to suggest that he needs a win over Samman in order to maintain his spot on the UFC roster.

Boetsch lost via second-round submission to Thales Leites in a battle of top-10 middleweights at UFC 183 in January 2015 — a bout that landed each fighter a \$50,000 bonus for performance of the night.

Boetsch then fell to MMA legend Dan Henderson by a stunning 28-second knockout in the main event of a UFC Fight Night card in New Orleans five months later.

The fighter known as "The Barbarian" moved back up to light heavyweight (205-pound limit) for the first time in several years for his most recent bout at the TD Garden in Boston on Jan. 17, but after a solid first round, Boetsch got caught with a knee to the jaw by veteran Ed Herman that ended the bout with a second straight knockout loss.

The 28-year-old Samman, from Tallahassee, Florida, takes a 12-3 record (seven KO's, four submissions) into the fight. He had a four-fight winning streak halted in his

most recent bout, a third-round submission loss via triangle choke to Tamdan McCrory in Orlando, Florida, last Dec. 19.

Familiar faces on WSOFC card

There will be a distinct New England Fights flavor on the undercard of the World Series of Fighting 31 show scheduled for June 17 at Foxwoods in Mashantucket, Connecticut.

In addition to former NEF professional lightweight champion Bruce Boyington (13-8) seeking his second straight WSOFC win when he takes on Saul Almeida (18-6), two NEF title holders will be fighting that night.

Devin Powell (6-1) of South Berwick, who recent-

ly replaced Boyington atop the NEF pro lightweight ranks with a first-round stoppage of Jesse Erickson at NEF 22 in Lewiston, takes on Tommy Marcellino (7-4) of Amsterdam, New York, on the WSOFC card.

And Tyler King (10-4) of North Attleboro, Massachusetts, the NEF pro heavyweight champion, faces Lorenzo Hood (9-3) of Chicago in the featured undercard bout.

King won the NEF heavyweight belt in May 2013 with a first-round submission of Travis Bartlett, then successfully defended the title in February 2015 with a first-round stoppage of Terry Blackburn.

The WSOFC 31 undercard bouts will be streamed live on WSOFC.com.

Chasse

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crazy thing is when he came into high school for the first time he was torn between baseball and tennis. Thankfully tennis won him over, and he's had quite a successful career with it."

Chasse, a right-hander who uses a two-handed backhand, debuted on the state singles scene last spring as an unseeded qualifier and scored straight-sets victories over Chris Laverdiere of Saint Dominic of Auburn and Thomas Brent of Gorham — this year's No. 12 seed — to reach the Round of 16.

"I really went in with no expectations, I didn't really know what I was going to see," said Chasse. "I was able to practice with my coach to prepare for the players I was going to see downstate, and I really just played my game and was able to win a few matches. It was a good experience."

Chasse's tournament run ended the next day in a 6-0, 6-0 loss to No. 1 Nick Mathieu of Mt. Ararat of Topsham, who went on to become the state runner-up for the second straight year.

"I think that match just offered him the perspective that there's always that next level of play, there's always someone better, and there's always the opportunity to get better as a player," said Anderson.

"Having pretty much won convincingly throughout his high school career and then to step into a match and have those tables turned on him, I think that was healthy for him," he said.

Chasse used that reality check as the impetus to work on his game during somewhat limited off-season opportunities. His summer was spent playing tennis and golf and the first two sports seasons of the school year devoted to soccer and basketball. He was a Northern Maine State Team honoree in soccer last fall and a McDonald's East-West Senior All-Star in basketball.

"I've been working a lot on my serve," said Chasse, who has lost just six games this spring while compiling a 14-0 record. "My serve was really a weak point last year. I switched rackets, and my overall game is better, my forehand and backhand are better and now I can place the ball better."

"The difference from last year to this year is now I know what to expect. I know the level the players can play at downstate, and I'm preparing myself now, practicing three or four hours every day trying to get ready for that level," he said.

As a seeded player, Chasse drew a bye directly into the Round of 32 and is scheduled to face the winner of a Round of 48 clash between Alec Cyr of Caribou and Drake Janes of Mount Desert Island of Bar Harbor at 6 p.m. Friday.

"I'm going to go in looking to win my first-round match and if I get to the Round of 16 I definitely want to make some noise there," said Chasse, who plans to study business at Thomas College in Waterville this fall. "Once you get to the Round of 16, the competition is so tough that there will definitely be some good matches, but hopefully I'll go far."

Softball

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members of the field hockey and softball teams are involved in fundraising projects.

Espling said Plourde has done a "nice job coordinating this event" and that Plourde came up with the idea of playing the game in Orono.

"They had already done some [fundraising] things for Emily so I thought it would be good to have it there," said Plourde.

"This is going to be pretty special," said Espling. "It's

nice to be able to dedicate this day to Emily and Gabby."

Both coaches are also looking forward to the game.

Old Town is currently 9-3 and ranked fifth in Class B North while Orono is 9-4 and seventh in Class C North but knocked off previously undefeated Bucksport 7-6 last week.

"We're pretty amped up," said Espling whose Riots lost their season-opener to Old Town 13-1 on April 19 but will bring a six-game winning streak into the game.

"It should be a real good game. They beat Bucksport and are on an upswing," Plourde said.

Stevenson

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Stevenson also has made just three errors defensively this year.

"Kyle certainly knows what hard work is because he's worked as hard as anybody, he's very similar to [UMaine-bound Bangor pitching ace] Trevor [DeLaitte] in that respect," said Fahey. "As a freshman he was kind of forced into the starting lineup out of necessity for us. We basically told him he was going to be our shortstop and we were going to live with however he played."

"He got a little better defensively each year, and this past year he's made huge leaps as far as his arm strength, his range, his accuracy, his hands, everything, and I think that's a credit to how hard he's worked in the off-season and the summertime."

Stevenson has had a similar influence on the city's Coffee News American Legion team, which also has won state championships each of the last two years.

And he was part of Bangor's 2014 Senior League team that advanced undefeated through pool play and reached the tournament's semifinal round.

"Playing for Bangor in high school and Legion and Senior League, it's always been a high level of baseball, and we've seen a lot of success," said Stevenson. "It's really taught me how to compete and how to win, and I really think it's prepared me to play at the next level."

Stevenson originally was planning to continue his baseball career at Husson University in Bangor before his strong play this spring caught the attention of UMaine coach Steve Trimper.

"Coach Trimper reached out to me about a week ago and told me he likes how I'm playing and thinks I've gotten a lot better and asked me if I was still interested in playing for him," said Stevenson. "It was a pretty instant decision."

Stevenson will join former Rams DeLaitte and UMaine sophomore pitcher Justin Courtney on the Black Bears' roster next season. Peter Kemble, a junior pitcher at Bangor, also has verbally committed to play at UMaine after in the fall of 2017.

Trimper was not immediately available for comment, as he and his team opened

play Wednesday afternoon at the America East baseball tournament in Lowell, Massachusetts.

But Fahey, whose Bangor

High teams have compiled a 61-10 record with Stevenson in the lineup, sees a potentially bright future for his shortstop at the next level.

"I think there's a big upside for Kyle," he said. "If he continues to improve the way he has in the last year, I think he can play there."



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