

UFC sold to Hollywood talent agency for \$4 billion

BY LANCE PUGMIRE
LOS ANGELES TIMES

The \$4 billion sale of UFC to Hollywood talent agency WME-IMG was made official Monday.

“We’ve been fortunate over the years to represent UFC and a number of its remarkable athletes,” WME-IMG co-CEOs Ari Emanuel and Patrick Whitesell said in a prepared statement.

“It’s been exciting to watch the organization’s incredible growth over the last decade under the leadership of the Fertitta brothers, Dana White and their dedicated team. We’re now committed to pursuing new opportunities for UFC and its talented athletes to ensure the sport’s continued growth and success on a global scale.”

UFC Chairman Lorenzo Fertitta and his brother Frank purchased the company in 2000 for \$2 million and grew it from a no-holds-barred niche sport into an empire. Mixed martial arts is now regulated in all 50 states, with a New York debut coming in November, while UFC stages worldwide events and counts Ronda Rousey and Conor McGregor as mainstream sports stars.

The Fertittas will retain a “passive minority interest” in the company, Beverly Hills-based WME-IMG said.

WME-IMG has aggressively pushed to expand its digital media muscle. The company also represents Rousey.

“As far as the business goes, our goal was to always take this sport to the next level, and Ari and WME-IMG are the guys to take it from here,” UFC President Dana White, a 1987 graduate of Hermon High School who owns a home in Levant, told The Times late Sunday night.

White cashed out an undisclosed sum for his percentage of the company, then repurchased an undisclosed percentage with WME-IMG and told The Times he will serve as “president, owner and day-to-day [promoter]” for the new ownership group.

White said “nothing will change” regarding his promotional style.

In announcing the deal, WME-IMG revealed Silver Lake Partners and KKR will join it as “new strategic investors,” along with MSD Capital L.P. and MSD Partners L.P., which will provide preferred equity financing.

“WME-IMG, which has a proven track record of building leading sports brands, will focus on accelerating the sport’s popularity and presence around the world,” according to the statement.

UFC marked UFC 200 at Las Vegas’ T-Mobile



MARK J. REBILAS | USA TODAY SPORTS
Conor McGregor (left) is held back by UFC president Dana White during weigh-ins for a UFC 196 fight against Nate Diaz at MGM Grand Garden in Las Vegas in March.

Arena on Saturday, generating a company-record live gate of \$10.7 million. It produces more than 40 live events annually and is the largest pay-per-view event provider in the world, with broadcasts in more than 156 countries and territories to nearly 1.1 billion television

households worldwide, in 29 different languages, according to the statement.

“We’re confident that the new ownership team of WME-IMG, with whom we’ve built a strong relationship over the last several years, is committed to accelerating UFC’s global growth,” Lorenzo Fertitta

said in the statement. “Most importantly, our new owners share the same vision and passion for this organization and its athletes.”

The deal separates the passionate White from his calm-headed close friend and chairman, something White said tugged at him all

weekend, when the deal was completed.

“Lorenzo was worth \$1.5 billion and there were many times he’d put in longer hours than his staff in our offices,” White said. “I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t emotional, a little bummed out.”

What Fertitta, whose family operates the Station Casino business in Las Vegas, will do by cashing out is yet to be seen. Possibilities include his interest in participating in ownership should an NFL team move to Las Vegas, or expanding his casino/Las Vegas building empire.

“Lorenzo, for now, is going to chill, spend time with his family,” White said.

Fertitta relinquishes control to a company that “produces more than 52,000 hours of sports programming and arranges to distribute an additional 32,000 hours on behalf of more than 200 clients, including major sports leagues and associations like Wimbledon, the NFL, Premier League, Major League Soccer and Euroleague,” the statement said.

WME-IMG purchased Professional Bull Riders last year. The statement noted that the “PBR ... has broken 10 event attendance records and increased television viewership over 20 percent in 2016.”

Duncan

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a HUGE honor to have played with him for 14 seasons! #ThankYouTD.”

The Spurs tweeted: “#ThankYouTD, for everything.”

Duncan spent his entire career with the Spurs, leading the team to titles in 1999, 2003, 2006, 2007 and 2014.

The Spurs posted a 1,072-438 regular-season record since drafting Duncan — the best 19-year stretch in NBA history.

“More cutthroat than people give him credit for,” Los Angeles Lakers legend Kobe Bryant, who also retired after the 2015-16 season, told ESPN’s Marc Stein on Monday upon learning of Duncan’s retirement. “I loved everything about him on the court.”

Shaquille O’Neal told ESPN: “Greatest power forward of all time. Unbreakable power forward. No ‘bow could break him. No loss of a championship could break him. Nothing could break him.”

Duncan’s final game was a 113-99 loss to the Oklahoma City Thunder in Game 6 of the Western Conference semifinals on May 12. In his career finale, he scored 19 points, with five rebounds and a block in 34 minutes.



SOOBUM IM | USA TODAY SPORTS
San Antonio Spurs power forward Tim Duncan shoots the ball against the Oklahoma City Thunder during the NBA Playoffs at AT&T Center in May.

Duncan finished his career with averages of 19.0 points, 10.8 rebounds, 3.0 assists and 2.2 blocks per game. He ranks 14th all-time in points (26,496), sixth in rebounds (15,091) and fifth in blocks (3,020).

Last season, Duncan was hobbled by a sore right knee and played in only 61 games, averaging 8.6 points and 7.3 rebounds.

Popovich will discuss Duncan’s retirement decision at a news conference Tuesday.

Duncan and Popovich have the most wins by a player-coach duo in NBA history (1,001).

“Timmy’s never been a very outspoken or emoting sort of individual on the court,” Popovich said earlier this year. “Everybody does it differently.”

Golden State Warriors coach Steve Kerr, who played with Duncan for four seasons, said it will not be the same without Duncan on the court. “When you think of a

Spurs game, you think of the opening tip and Timmy cradling the ball and looking down at Pop and Manu and Tony,” Kerr told ESPN. “The four of them really kind of define who they are. But Tim is the main guy obviously.”

“They’ll still be the Spurs based on what they’ve built. And maybe that’s Timmy’s lasting legacy. He helped build something so strong that’s still going after he leaves.”

Red Sox

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far as the standings go, but a lot of important baseball left ahead.”

Asked about his job security, Farrell, who may well have been fired last August had he not gotten sick, said, “I don’t pay a whole lot of attention to it. Honestly, my focus is always going to be remaining inside our walls with the guys in our clubhouse, their needs, what our staff presents to prepare them each and every day. I think anything that might be said outside of Fenway can only be a potential distraction, and I just love the way our guys continue to go about their work.”

The Red Sox, 49-38, resume their season when they open a three-game series at 7:05 p.m. Friday against the Yankees in New York.

Here’s a breakdown of Boston’s season thus far:

— **FIRST-HALF MVP:** You can make the argument that David Ortiz and Xander Bogaerts should rank 1-2 in the American League MVP picture. But make no mistake — Ortiz is the MVP. Playing in his final season, he hit his 22nd homer of the season, three of them in the last four games. He has 72 RBIs — the most ever by a 40-year-old at the break — and his Sunday homer was his club-record 57th extra



KIM KLEMENT | USA TODAY SPORTS
Boston Red Sox manager John Farrell looks on during the third inning against the Tampa Bay Rays at Tropicana Field in June.

base hit before the break. “The lists he continues to elevate himself, on that all-time lists, it’s pretty amazing to see what’s going on,” Farrell said.

“He’s been doing it all. He’s probably the biggest asset to the team,” Bogaerts said.

Batting .332, Ortiz leads the major leagues in doubles (34), slugging percentage (.682), OPS (1.108) and extra-base hits. Added David Price: “He’s done everything, even with a couple of triples and stolen bases. It is pretty special. Even when he gets out, he hits the ball hard. It’s been fun to watch. We just hope he keeps it going.”

— **FIRST-HALF GRADE:** B-plus — Las Vegas thought the Red Sox were going to win the American League

East, and while they don’t sit in first place at the break, they are close enough and have overcome plenty of adversity. Coming off two straight last-place finishes, it’s hard not to appreciate what’s already been done — with more work to do.

— **PIVOTAL POST-BREAK PLAYER:** Second-year lefty Rodriguez was 10-6 last year and, despite some problems he experienced from tipping pitches, he was being counted on to win more than last year’s 10. But a spring training knee injury set him back and he never rebounded — winding up back in the minor leagues. He is being given the ball Friday to start the rest of the season and it’s no secret what a Rodriguez contribution

could mean the rest of the way.

— **BUY OR SELL:** Dombrowski made three trades in three days on the final weekend before the break. The Red Sox are stacked with prospects who could go in a deal for a starting pitcher and the Red Sox, who also have the money, will be buyers at the deadline. If Dombrowski can add a big name (or even a Jeremy Hellickson) to Price, All-Star Steven Wright and Rick Porcello, then getting something for Rodriguez or even Buchholz would make for a solid No. 5

— **INJURY STATUS:** Rodriguez was hurt in drills in spring training and the same thing happened to new closer Craig Kimbrel (slated to be out 3-6 weeks) on the final weekend before the break. He was hurt the same night Brock Holt, who had already missed six weeks with a concussion, went down with a sprained ankle, and Hanley Ramirez suffered a bruised shin that kept him out of the last two games — and Junichi Tazawa was unavailable because of a shoulder issue. Reliever Carson Smith was also lost the season because of Tommy John surgery. The injuries kept piling up, but the lineup didn’t lose its four All-Stars and any time the Red Sox can put Ortiz, Bogaerts, Mookie Bradley Jr. and Mookie Betts and near All-Star Dustin Pedroia on the field, they should be fine.

Searsport boxer seeks sixth straight victory

BY ERNIE CLARK
BDN STAFF

Two young prospects from Wyman’s Boxing Club in Stockton Springs will be back in action Saturday night during an amateur boxing card at the Longley Elementary School in Lewiston.

AMATEUR BOXING

Ashten Wells of Searsport, who will be a sophomore at Searsport District High School this fall, will attempt to score her sixth straight victory when she competes in a 119-pound women’s bout against Lewiston teen Emily Mousseau.

The bout will be a rematch of a fight earlier this year that the 15-year-old Wells (5-1) won by unanimous decision.

“I think Ashten will have too many guns for her again,” said trainer Ken “Skeet” Wyman of Wells, who competes in soccer, basketball, softball and track at Searsport High. “She’s running, she’s sparring, and it’s all real constructive.”

Christian Fisk of Rockport, a recent graduate of Camden Hills Memorial High School, will face Juan Perez of Nashua,

New Hampshire, in a 132-pound contest.

Fisk last fought on April 30 in Newton, Massachusetts, and edged local favorite Elias Valdez by split decision to improve his record to 4-1.

Perez is coming off a three-round loss by unanimous decision to Lincolnville’s Jack Simpkins during an April card in Lewiston.

“Christian’s in wicked shape, and he thinks he wants to pursue a professional career and I told him that this is when you prove all that, in these amateur bouts,” said Wyman. “I said this is when you’ve got to go out there and do your business and he said, ‘Watch me.’”

Two competitors from Thunderpig Boxing, based at Young’s MMA in Bangor, also will be on the Lewiston card.

Both Jayda Bailey, a 16-year-old from Levant, and Rick Miles, in his mid-30s from Brewer, will be making their amateur boxing debuts, according to trainer Levi Sewall.

Bailey, a student at Hermon High School, has been active in wrestling and grappling in recent years, while Miles took up the sport approximately a year ago.

MMA

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streak when he takes on Floridian Josh Samman (12-4) in a three-round middleweight matchup on the main card of UFC Fight Night 91 at the Denny Sanford Premier Center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Boetsch has not won since his return to Maine in August 2014, and consecutive losses to Thales Laites by second-round submission at UFC 183 in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Jan. 31, 2015; Dan Henderson by one-punch knockout 28 seconds into their main event in New Orleans, Louisiana, on June 6, 2015; and Ed Herman by second-round knockout (knee) this past Jan. 17 in Boston, Massachusetts, has left “The Barbarian’s” UFC status in a perilous position.

Boetsch moved up to light heavyweight to fight Herman but will return to the 185-pound middleweight division to face Samman, whose own three-fight winning streak was halted by a third-round submission loss to Tamdan McCrory last

Dec. 19 in Orlando, Florida.

Samman’s prior winning streak included two \$50,000 performance bonuses, and he hopes to use similar aggression against Boetsch, who earned similar bonuses in his win over Tavares and in his loss to Laites, a fight-of-the-night selection.

“Tim has a wealth of experience and can’t be overlooked,” said Samman on UFC.com. “Still, he has defensive liabilities that have been exploited in recent fights, and I plan to do the same as his last two opponents. He will crumble under my precision and power.”

The 28-year-old Samman, at 6-foot-3, will have a 3-inch height advantage over Boetsch, who had trained for his last four fights at Team Irish MMA Fitness Academy in Brewer under former UFC contender Marcus Davis.

Boetsch has teamed up again with Davis for this fight, but this time the training camp was in North Carolina, where Davis and his family moved earlier this year.

The UFC Fight Night 91 main card will be televised live on FS1 beginning at 9 p.m. Wednesday.