

NO NEED TO FEAR, THE UNDERDOG IS HERE!

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When you ask someone from the Central Valley to name a local mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter, they'll probably say **Casey "The Underdog" Olson**.

With the growth of MMA in the mainstream, Olson has established himself as one of the biggest stars in the Central Valley MMA community (and being friends with the legendary Chuck Liddell helps).

Olson grew up playing a variety of sports. But wrestling would be the sport that garnered him the greatest success. At Clovis High, he won a state championship and achieving other accolades at Fresno City College.

While wrestling at Fresno State, he became a Northern Regional Champion and was a two-time NCAA qualifier.

After he finished wrestling and [nearly] graduated from Fresno State, Casey had become a manager at a local restaurant but something wasn't right. "I missed the competition, I missed the drive, and I missed the training," Olson said.

Through his friend and fellow fighter Antonio Banuelos, he started training with Liddell and

The Pit fight team in San Luis Obispo. "I would go down there on my two days off," Olson said. "He (Liddell) said man, you can do this."

After thinking about it, he decided to leave his job as a restaurant manager to become a full-time MMA fighter. "I had a good advantage," Olson said. "It was new, something challenging to be good at boxing and kickboxing."

Before a fight, Casey goes down to San Luis Obispo for a month to train and prepare. "I get myself away from distractions," Olson said. "It's old-school stuff; I love it, it gets away from the traditional lifting weights and all that stuff."

Casey had wrestled in front of big crowds at Fresno State but being in a MMA fight was a different giant. "I walk in and they shut the cage behind me. I'm like oh my God, I'm really going to do this right now," said Olson. "The nerves were there but just like wrestling as soon as you touch everything is on."

Still keeping with his valley roots Casey has only fought in the valley. "I like where I'm at," Olson said. "I get to do it in front of my friends and family."



His furthest fight away from Fresno was in Stockton, which was also his first loss.

After being sidelined with a blood clot in his head that threatened to put an end to his career, Casey went back to wrestling, becoming an [assistant] coach at Buchanan.

Olson has since returned to the world of MMA after recovering from his injury.

"The Underdog" has amassed a record of 11-2, and is currently on a four fight win streak with three of his wins coming by way submission. "'09 is going to be the year I really push to get a title," Olson said.

His next fight will be in the PFC against Eddie Yagin on Friday, May 8th. This will be his first fight back since the passing of his father Andy at the end of November.

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Photo by Peter Robertson

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