

CHAMPION OF FITNESS

Casey “The Underdog” Olson

> By Brandon Segura

Casey “The Underdog” Olson has built a record of 8 wins and only 2 losses in just three short years as a professional Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) fighter. He has proven himself to be a serious contender in a sport where many of his opponents have had much more experience in the ring. What seems to make Casey “The Underdog” Olson a true champion, however, is what he brings to the “ring” in his daily life.

Casey began wrestling as a sophomore at Clovis High School. Even though he participated in other sports, including baseball and football, it was wrestling he loved best. “I loved that the pressure was all on me,” he says of wrestling. “If I made a mistake, I couldn’t blame anyone but myself.” This competitive mindset and sense of personal accountability enabled Casey to overcome many obstacles in those early years. At the end of his sophomore-wrestling season, Casey broke his arm, causing his junior year to be what he calls, “one of my worst seasons.” And, during his senior year, at the California State Championship semi-finals, Casey was winning a match 7-3, with just seven seconds left on the clock when his ankle broke. Because of this injury, he lost his acceptance to wrestle at several prominent colleges including Purdue and Nebraska.

But Casey never gave up. Despite two injuries and having to undergo rehabilitation for his ankle, Casey decided to wrestle at Fresno City College before transferring to California State University Fresno (CSUF). While wrestling for Fresno State, Casey was team captain twice, won the California State Championship twice, and was an All American twice. At the end of his fifth year at CSUF, Casey nearly completed a degree in recreation management.



PHOTO BY: Steve Collins

Casey Olson

By 2005, Casey was putting his education to good use managing a popular Fresno restaurant when he had a chance to compete professionally in Mixed Martial Arts. Although he was working full time at the restaurant, he used his days off to combine his wrestling knowledge with the practice of martial arts. He was approached by UFC’s famous fighter Chuck “The Iceman” Liddell. Chuck told Casey that he thought he had what it took to be great in this sport. And if Casey were willing to commit to full time training, Chuck Liddell would train him out of his San Luis Obispo training camp, “The Pit.” Casey ultimately decided to give up a solid job for his chance in the world of MMA fighting. He actually fought his first match that same year, winning by a knock out. Casey tells us that he had to take this chance and that, “I never wanted to think, ‘what if,’” knowing that he could always come back to the restaurant industry. Casey is humble too, and always makes sure to thank his support team, also known as “Team Underdog” and especially his family who, “Have been with me since day one.” He wants to remind us all that, “When I win, it’s not just me who got me there.”

After several setbacks at a young age when many athletes don’t have the mental fortitude to push through injury and reha-

bilitation, Casey already possessed the heart and dedication of a world-class fighter. When most people would have quit, Casey's perseverance and faith kept him going. We know the term "Underdog" is used for someone who is not expected to win, hence Casey's choice for using it as his MMA fighter nickname. In addition to his injuries, Casey was told many times that he was "too small" or "couldn't do it" and that maybe sports just "wasn't for him." However, he loved being told this because it made him work harder to succeed, to overcome, and become the person who, "always wanted to be the one to take the shot." Casey also says, "I loved when people doubted me because it motivated me to become more successful." And winning is exactly what Casey has been doing.

He tells us what gets him through life is, "The spirit of God, belief in patience and that you can't rush things." He also wants us all to, "Remember, God has a plan for you. Just remember to keep your head up and moving forward." This is the message he shares as a motivational speaker to many kids. He has spoken to students at Clovis, Roosevelt, Fowler, Hoover and Buchanan High Schools, sharing with them messages of perseverance, goal setting and also making good impressions. Casey advises these kids to never quit, set goals, and make good impressions because, "You never know who you're going to meet, when you're going to meet them and the first impression you'll make on them." He wants to help these kids be better and feel better about what they're accomplishing. He participates with the Clovis Police Activities League, Cornerstone Youth Group, and has served as an assistant coach for Buchanan High School's wrestling team. You can catch him fighting for The Pit team at event fights taking place at the Palace Fighting Championship at the Tachi Palace. Don't miss his next fight: Casey "The Underdog" Olson vs. Aaron Miller, "Rumble at the Park," Saturday, August 23rd. ■