**UFC 241 DraftKings & Fight Breakdowns**

Heavyweight Daniel Cormier (c) vs. Stipe Miocic

A rematch that took place over a year ago where Cormier won via first round KO. I still like Cormier in this bout. It actually makes me more confident picking him in this bout than it did the first bout knowing that he has the power in his hands and proper strategy to beat Miocic. I expect Cormier to have the better cardio, better striking defense, better wrestling, and better durability. Miocic does have a size advantage and reach advantage in this bout, but if Cormier continues (which I expect him to) clinch with Stipe, the height and reach discrepancy will not be to Stipe’s advantage. Miocic has not fought in an MMA match since the first bout with Cormier took place. His motivation (like Cormier) appears to be there, but stylistically I believe Stipe needs to finish Cormier early in this bout if he wins. As the fight progresses, I favor Cormier.

**For DK: Cormier is my preferred play. Though I will be all-in on this fight as I do believe the winner of this bout is on the optimal lineup.**

Welterweight Anthony Pettis vs. Nate Diaz

An anticipated grudge match between two of the more exciting fighters in the sport. Nate Diaz has not fought in about three years since his second bout with Conor McGregor, but has been actively training. Pettis looked great in his first Welterweight bout by knocking out Stephen Thompson in the second round. Despite the layoff, I still believe this is a strong spot for Diaz to excel. This fight should play out on the feet where Diaz will most likely look to pressure as he usually does, land a lot of volume, have a reach advantage, and cardio advantage. Diaz’s kryptonite has been his takedown defense against superior wrestlers with good BJJ including Benson Henderson and Rafael dos Anjos, but Pettis much rather prefers to strike than wrestle so I am not expecting many (if at all) takedowns from Pettis. When Diaz is in striking battles, he has a ton of success (i.e. McGregor, Johnson, and Cerrone). Pettis is definitely a good opponent versus Diaz though. I just do not think it’s likely he knocks Diaz out (Diaz has only been finished by strikes once in his career) nor submits him (Diaz is a 2nd degree BJJ black belt). This fight comes down to volume and aggressive and that’s why I favor Diaz in this matchup.

**For DK: I will fade Pettis. I expect him to be pretty popular being in the co-main event on coming off a great performance. I do not see his upside for his price. However, Diaz, I like a lot as he is a very live underdog that can score well even in a decision.**

Middleweight Yoel Romero vs. Paulo Costa

A great middleweight bout between two very heavy hitters. Romero continues to give every opponent he faces trouble. He received a Silver Medal in Olympic wrestling, has very heavy hands, is explosive, manages his cardio well, unpredictable, and fights smart. Costa has looked great in the UFC thus far too. Costa to me seems to excel in the fights he’s had because he has been in control the majority of the time. When his opponents attempted offense against him, he’s struggled a bit (i.e. Uriah Hall was consistently landing a jab over and over again & even hurt Costa at one point and he was taken down twice by Bamgbose). Also, the thing that concerns me as it pertains to Costa is that he’s never been past the 2nd round 2:38 mark (his most recent fight). He has slowed down in fights and since Romero manages his cardio well and limits the damage he takes well (Romero keeps his hands up and stands out of pocket boxing range a lot). I expect this fight to potentially go to the 2nd or possibly 3rd round. I like Romero here. Costa is not defensively sound when he walks down his opponents and I believe that Romero can either counter him with a big shot OR Romero can even wrestle in this bout. Romero does not use his wrestling often, but when he has, he’s had success (i.e. landed 6 takedowns versus Tavares). I like Romero here as I believe he has more paths to victory, fought the better competition, and hits harder.

**For DK: Overall, this fight should be very popular and I agree with it in that the winner should put up a good score especially relative to their prices. Ultimately, I will be heavier on Romero as I believe Costa will be very popular (possibly more than Miocic) because he’s never lost and his statistics look good.**

Featherweight Gabriel Benítez vs. Sodiq Yusuff

In what should be a standing bout, Sodiq Yusuff faces his arguably (other than maybe Moraes) toughest test working through the featherweight rankings when he takes on Gabriel Benítez at UFC 241. I think both fighters are overall good. Benítez is very durable, has a good guillotine choke, solid cardio, and solid technical striking. Yusuff is a bright prospect that is very technical, defensively sound, powerful, and well-rounded. I expect Yusuff to out strike Benítez over the course of three rounds and win a decision. I could see this fight being competitive, so for that reason, I would rather target Benítez on DK, but I’d rather pass on the fight all together as I think Yusuff wins this bout.

**For DK: I am fading this fight in tournaments. Yusuff needs an early KO to hit his tournament upside and Benítez is very durable and defensively sound so I am predicting this fight goes to a decision which Yusuff wins. I’d rather target other fights on this card, but Benítez at $6,900 should have a safe floor. I prefer this bout for cash games.**

Middleweight Derek Brunson vs. Ian Heinisch

Two heavy hitting wrestlers square off in the PPV main card opening bout. Heinisch gets to face his first opponent that will not attempt to submit him in the UFC. I believe both fighters have good enough wrestling compared to each other that we see a striker’s battle primarily. I could see it being competitive. Both fighters strike at a lower output with Heinisch being more aggressive. I expect Heinisch to be pushing forward more and throwing more strikes with Brunson looking to counter. Brunson will be at a notable reach advantage (5 inches) in this bout and has fought the better competition. The thing that worries me about Brunson is he’s been finished via strikes in five of his pro MMA bouts and he is taking on Heinisch who also hits hard. Also, Brunson is very tentative and closes distance recklessly at time. Both fighters need a KO to hit their GPP upside (early KO is better for Heinisch). I favor the durability, aggression, and composure of Heinisch in the striking department so I am siding with him in this one.

**For DK: I believe Heinisch will be overlooked in tournaments. He’s priced above Sandhagen, Cormier, Romero, and Bermudez. I do not expect him to be popular and for early KO upside, I will certainly have Heinisch in some lineups. Brunson’s odds to win are getting better, but I am not sure why. I believe he is KO or bust to not only to put up a good DK score, but to also win the fight and I am not going to predict that will happen as Heinisch has never been KO’D in his career. I will fade Brunson and target other underdogs (i.e. Miocic, Costa, Diaz, and Kenney).**

Preliminary Card (ESPN)

Lightweight Khama Worthy vs. Devonte Smith

Two friends fight each other on the headliner of the prelims when Devonte Smith takes on his buddy, Khama Worthy. Worthy on tape seems like a striker that can grapple a little, but his main game plan his to keep the fight standing. Smith is the heaviest favorite on the card (-1000 per 5Dimes) with a great ITD prop (-380 per 5Dimes). I believe Smith gets an early KO. Worthy has been finished by strikes 5 times in his pro MMA career. The short-notice, UFC debut, combined with the fact Worthy has been finished via strikes several times, and Smith being a heavy hitter, I believe Smith will get an early KO.

**For DK: Smith is going to be extremely popular on DK. Why wouldn’t he be? He’s the heaviest favorite, best ITD prop, and has good-looking DK fight logs. For that reasons I believe Smith makes for a much better cash game and smaller-field (200 entrants or less) GPP play rather than a large field GPP play. Even if Smith wins via first round KO and say gets 110 points, he is still only on the optimal lineup if a lot of cheap fighters win and score sufficiently. And on this card when we have great fights and fighters to target in the mid-range, I will be passing completely on Smith. Note: I am mainly play large field GPP (tournaments) this week.**

Bantamweight Raphael Assunção vs. Cory Sandhagen

This matchup is the classic case of up-and-comer of the division versus seasoned-veteran. My analysis leads me to Sandhagan winning this bout by being more aggressive, throwing more volume, being a more varied striker, and utilizing his reach advantage. Assunção is arguably Sandhagen’s toughest UFC test to date (with the other being Lineker), but I just do not see Assunção being active enough or land takedowns enough to win this fight. Assunção is more technical and more experienced, but those advantages do not make up for all the disadvantages he has versus Sandhagen in my opinion.

**For DK: Assunção is a pass. Even if he wins, I do not expect a big score. I do not expect a KO from him as Sandhagen has proven to be durable and defensively sound nor a submission as Sandhagen is a Brown Belt in BJJ. I’m rostering Sandhagen or passing on this fight completely. Sandhagen has historically scored well on DK in the past and for that very reason combined with the fact I believe he wins, I will roster him, but I do see some scenarios where he does not put up 100+ which is why I believe Kang and Heinisch will be solid plays or pivots in general because they have high upside too. Assunção is very defensively sound, but is coming off his first finish loss in a while so it’s hard to tell exactly how he’ll fight/look here. I like Sandhagen though overall.**

Catchweight (140lbs) Manny Bermudez vs. Casey Kenney

Manny Bermudez has proven to be a true expert when it comes to BJJ. He’s submitted his first three UFC opponents. Other than his BJJ game, are areas that can be much improved. He was dropped briefly in his debut by Morales and I’ve seen him get dropped prior to entering the UFC. He is a bit slow & not defensively sound on the feet and his wrestling is not on the level of Kenney’s that comes from a good wrestling background. Kenney looked good in his debut defeating former title challenger, Ray Borg. Kenney is a very well-rounded fighter. He is also fast, has good cardio, good scrambling ability, and proficient grappling ability too. I believe Kenney wins this fight comfortably.

**For DK: Kenney in tournaments is very sneaky because his priced right below Diaz and above Costa and Miocic. Also combined with the fact I believe Bermudez will be popular, I love this leverage spot with Kenney who I believe is live to earn the KO/TKO finish. I will have no Bermudez. Yes, he has good-looking game logs, but this is not a good stylistic matchup for him.**

Lightweight Drakkar Klose vs. Christos Giagos

Two fighters with very similar skills sets are Drakkar Klose and Christos Giagos. Both come from solid wrestling backgrounds and are well-rounded. Giagos is much more experienced, the better grappler, and has fought the better competition. While Klose has had more success winning in the UFC. This fight is very KLOSE (see what I did there? LOL). I do not expect a finish to come either way as both guys have proven to be durable and don’t holding any UFC knockouts.

**For DK: I am passing on Klose. Even if he wins, I do not expect a big score. He does not wrestle much and Giagos is a solid wrestler. Also, Klose is not a KO threat and Giagos has proven to be durable. If there is a play on DK in this fight, it is Giagos in cash games. Giagos is super cheap, can win, can grapple and wrestle a bit if he wins and go the full three rounds (-265 per 5dimes fight goes to decision). I would not expect a massive score from him if he were to win, but I believe 70-75 points is reasonable for cash games in a win scenario. I do not have any interest in this fight in GPPs (I am making 8-12 lineups)**

Early Preliminary Card (UFC Fight Pass)

Women's Strawweight Hannah Cifers vs. Jodie Esquibel

Similar to Klose vs. Giagos, I expect this fight to be more competitive than the odds currently indicate (-280 Cifers vs. +240 Esquibel). I do not expect a finish on either side either or much wrestling. If one of these two women were to wrestle, I would guess it’s Esquibel training at a good camp in Jackson Wink MMA. Esquibel needs a win here and has not had much success striking with her opponents in the UFC so far. I could see her and her corner coming in with a different game plan.

**For DK: I prefer to target Esquibel in cash or pass on this fight completely. Esquibel can make this fight competivie (I expect it to be) and she is only $7,000 on DK with the fight expect to go to the cards (-450 per 5Dimes). I will have no Cifers lineups.**

Bantamweight Kyung Ho Kang vs. Brandon Davis

Two big bantamweights in this striker versus grappler bout. Davis’ takedown defense at a glance appears to be a question mark. Has he been taken down multiple times in the UFC? Yes. Who were those bouts against? Zabit (a beast), Barzola (a takedown machine), and Bochniak (Davis had in injury during the fight). Maybe Davis against a lesser wrestler (or better injury circumstances) would show good takedown defense. However, the evidence that I’ve seen shows he can be taken down multiple times. Kang does not come for an elite wrestling background, but he has had success in the UFC via wrestling and grappling. The thing that concerns me a bit about Kang is his cardio. It’s not that he’s in bad shape, he’s just a guy that likes to grapple a lot which is an exhausting fighting style. Davis does not have elite cardio either. Davis is a mainly a volume striker. Kang has been rocked in fights before, but has recovered (never been finished via strikes) and Davis does not appear to be a one punch KO threat. I am siding with Kang has he should have a major advantage if this fight hits the mat were, he has potentially to earn a submission. When this fight is playing out on the feet, I expect Davis to have an advantage, but not nearly the advantage Kang has if the fight hits the mat. Kang also does not exchange much when striking so I am not expecting a high output performance out of Davis is he manages to win a decision like he did versus Peterson (landed over 100 significant strikes).

**For DK: I prefer Kang. He is a grappler and I do not expect him to be very popular at all. He can score well in a decision via wrestling and grappling and also has a chance to earn submission. Davis I do not expect to put up a big score in a decision win due to Kang not exchanging much via striking. I’d say Davis’ range if he were to win would be 60-70 points.**

Women's Flyweight Sabina Mazo vs. Shana Dobson

The opener on the exciting and action-packed (couldn’t resist. I seriously did not know what else to put here lol) UFC 241 card will be between two women that have fought in the UFC a combined 3 times. Dobson was a contestant on TUF and lost to the eventual runner-up in Roxanne Modafferi in the first round. I think Dobson is a solid boxer, she moves well, is a fluid striker, and knows the striking fundamentals. Her weakness is her ground game. Sabina Mazo is coming off of her first MMA loss after facing Moroz in her UFC debut. On tape, Mazo is primarily a striker too. I heard an announcer on one of her pre-UFC fights say she is well-credentialed in BJJ. I did not see her use BJJ offensively, but when Moroz got on top of her she defended well so I am led to believe her ground game is at least at par (or most likely better). However, Mazo’s main game plan is to strike. She is a higher credentialed striker than Dobson, but my eyes to not see a huge gap in striking talent in this matchup. This fight could realistically go either way.

**For DK: I did not think I would end up of any of this fight, but I have some due to how its priced ($8,200 and $8,000). It should stay standing the majority of the time and I expect the winner to score okay relative to how the DK prices are. I prefer Mazo of the two due to the potential to grapple (although I do not think very likely, but it’s there) and her odds value (-130 currently on 5Dimes).**

**AJ’s DK Flash KO Picks:**

**Fades:**

~~Hannah Cifers $9,200~~

~~Drakkar Klose $9,100~~

~~Anthony Pettis $8,300~~

~~Sodiq Yusuff $9,300~~

**GPP targets:**

***Low-owned:***

* Kyung Ho Kang $8,900
* Ian Heinisch $8,800

***Underdogs:***

* Casey Kenney $7,800
* Nate Diaz $7,900

**Cash Games:**

***Lock ‘em in:***

* Devonte Smith $9,500

***Undervalued underdogs:***

* Gabriel Benitez $6,900
* Jodie Esquibel $7,000
* Christos Giagos $7,200