**UFC 243 DraftKings Breakdown**

Middleweight Robert Whittaker (c) vs. Israel Adesanya (ic)

A great main evert here! Glad to see Whittaker healthy and fighting again! As you know, I like Adesanya here. I.A. has a ***6.5-inch reach advantage and fights tall/at range the best in the UFC EXCEPT for Jon Jones.*** Also, I.A. is the better striker in my opinion as he is ***more varied and technical*** than Whittaker and comes from an extensive kickboxing background. Whittaker (“Bobby Knuckles”) has more punching power than I.A., but he will need to close distance enough and be effective with those opportunities enough to win rounds or win by TKO/KO and I do not believe that happens due to I.A. ***above mentioned advantages***. Whittaker is a great fighter, but I believe I.A. is the only fighter in this division that is a tough matchup for him.

**For DK: This is a great fight to target both sides. Whittaker ($8,200) will very likely in my opinion make the optimal lineup in a winning scenario (even in a decision) as will Adesanya ($8,000).**

Lightweight Al Iaquinta vs. Dan Hooker

If Al fights Hooker the way he fought Cerrone, it’s tough for me to picture him winning. Al was content to stay at range against Cerrone and not be aggressive enough at closing distance & use his boxing to win rounds and as a result he lost a clear decision where he was getting beaten up at range (was knocked down twice). I am more hopeful that in this matchup against Hooker he will close distance MUCH more consistently. Hooker will have a 5 inch reach advantage and I believe he is the better range striker and more varied striker (Al primarily just boxes with his striking technique), but his striking defense is not great (his hands are kept pretty low and his chin is in the air and backs up when his opponent attempts offense). Hooker’s striking defense was exposed versus Barboza were he was badly beaten up and finished in the third round (BUT SHOWED EXTREME TOUGHNESS). That being said, Iaquinta does not have the same striker arsenal nor threatening kicking game of Barboza, but if Iaquinta closes distance enough and is effective with it enough there is potentially for him to hurt Hooker although I do not think a TKO/KO finish materializes regardless. I favor Hooker here, but if Al comes in with a game plan that involves closing the distance more frequently, I could easily see him winning.

**For DK: I will fade Hooker ($8,500) has I believe he does not have enough upside relative to his DK price. I do not think he will wrestle nor finish against Iaquinta ($7,700). Even in a scenario of landing 110 significant strikes (I do not think this happens, but showing for example why I do not believe Hooker is a good DK play on this slate) AND a decision win he will score 85 points which is not enough for GPPs in my opinion. I do have some interest in Iaquinta as he is a live underdog.**

Heavyweight Tai Tuivasa vs. Sergey Spivak

Tai Tuivasa looks to bounce back after a 2-fight skid and I believe he does here as a big favorite against Sergey Spivak. Tai throws heavy and often when he has his opponents hurt, he has also shown to be tough and aggressive. Tai’s weakness is his defensive grappling (i.e. vs. Dos Santos and Ivanov) which is what Spivak can test IF the fight goes to the mat, but I do not believe that happens as Tuivasa has shown good enough takedown defense combined with the fact I do not believe Spivak is a good wrestler. In Spivaks’s debut he was finished in under 1 minute versus Walt Harris upon Harris walking him down and landing significant strikes and I believe something similar to that can happen here against a hungry to get back in the win column Tai Tuivasa.

**For DK: I much rather prefer to play Tuivasa ($9,300), but he is very expensive on DK. I will play him in lineups where I can, but I will not have a ton of exposure due to the fact that I am not confident in the really cheap underdogs ($7,500 and below) winning in order to pay for Tuivasa. Spivek ($6,900) I would only play in large field GPPs if making 50+ lineups (which I will not on this slate).**

Welterweight Luke Jumeau vs. Dhiego Lima

This is a tricky fight. Both fighters have been staggered back, rocked, and/or knocked out in their respective UFC bouts, but combined they only have 1 KO/TKO victory (by Lima vs. Laprise) amongst both of them in the UFC. I could see either fighter hurting the other and finishing, but I am siding with Lima because I believe he is the more well-rounded MMA fighter. Jumeau primarily is a counter striker with some power. I favor Lima to win rounds, but would not be surprised to see Jumeau counter Lima and finishing the fight (Lima has been finished via strikes 4 times professionally).

**For DK: I like both sides of this fight. This is a fight I prefer to end my lineups with versus start due to the fact that this very well could be a 60-65 point decision victory for the winner OR would be a KO/TKO finish for the winner.**

Heavyweight Justin Tafa vs. Yorgan De Castro

I am excited to watch how this fight goes down. Both of these heavyweights throw wild, heavy strikes, and proven finishers. This is a very high variance fight in my opinion due to the stylistic matchup combined with the fact this will be a heavyweight bout. My very slight lean as a pick is De Castro as he is more MMA experienced and has been past the 2nd round in his pro MMA career.

**For DK: I will 100% on this fight. The winner is very likely to finish and as a result put up a huge DK score for a very reasonable price ($8,300 for Tafa and $7,900 for De Castro).**

Welterweight Jake Matthews vs. Rostam Akman

From the eye test, Jake Matthews should win this matchup versus Rostam Akman. What makes me not super confident in that outcome is that ***Matthews has fought competitively (and even lost) to inferior competition in previous bouts (i.e. Holbrook and Bojan).*** In my opinion, Jake Matthews’ best skillset is his submission grappling and wrestling and I believe that will lead him to victory here. Akman can win based off what I mentioned ***above***, but I am not going to predict that as I believe Matthews is the superior wrestler, grappler, and striker (Akman does not move his head much in striking defense nor keep his hands high).

**For DK: I like a little bit of exposure to both sides if making multiple lineups (10+). Matthews ($9,100) is one of the few higher priced ($8,500 and above) fighters on this card that can score well in a decision (via wrestling). Akman (7,100) I would just like a little bit of DK exposure to (in 10+ lineups putting him in 1) based off the fact Matthews has lost to inferior competition in non-fluky scenarios before.**

Welterweight Callan Potter vs. Maki Pitolo

As you know, I like Pitolo to win this fight as I believe he is the much better MMA fighter than Potter. Pitolo is the superior wrestler, striker, and finisher in my opinion. Potter’s best skillset is his submission grappling, but his wrestling is not adequate in my opinion and Pitolo’s takedown defense looks strong enough to keep the fight standing where he can earn a KO/TKO finish over Potter (Potter was knocked out in his UFC debut vs. Jalin Turner). Even if the fight hits the mat, Pitolo has shown enough capable submission grappling that makes me confident he will not get subbed quickly (at the very least). Pitolo should win this fight comfortably via TKO/KO finish.

**For DK: I prefer to play Pitolo ($9,000) in this fight. He will be popular in GPPs, but that will not discourage me from playing him as I believe he makes for a great play at a reasonable price (cheaper than Tai and Megan). I do not have interest in playing Potter ($7,200) on DK. There are other underdogs I prefer to play instead.**

Lightweight Jamie Mullarkey vs. Brad Riddell

Seems weird to state, but this fight to me is the only classic striker vs. wrestler/grappler bout on this card. Mullarkey is an adequate striker, but Riddell is experienced in professional kickboxing and looks to be the better striker from the eye test. Mullarkey looks like an adequate wrestler and I believe he can take down Riddell (I’ve seen Riddell taken down on tape multiple times) and win rounds with the potential to earn a finish on the ground (Riddell was submitted in his only pro MMA loss). Riddell should win this fight as long as he can keep the fight standing enough to win rounds or KO/TKO finish Mullarkey (was finished via strikes in both of his pro MMA losses). I believe Riddell has the power to finish Mullarkey via strikes, but I am not sure if he will have enough opportunities (and be effective enough with them) to beat Mullarkey striking. This is a toss-up in my opinion.

**For DK: I like both sides of this fight. I do not expect this fight to be popular either because both fighters are making their UFC debuts. Mullarkey ($7,600) is a live underdog that can wrestle and score well in a decision. Riddell ($8,600) can earn a TKO/KO finish which will mean well for his DK salary. A decision victory for Riddell would be the scenario where I do not see the winner (Riddell) of this fight scoring well.**

Women’s Featherweight Megan Anderson vs. Zarah Fairn dos Santos

Anderson will be facing her first UFC opponent that will most likely not attempt to take her down. Anderson is a solid striker. She has power, has a long reach, and is pretty aggressive. Fairn dos Santos is a striker too that is aggressive. I favor Anderson in the striking department because I believe she is more measured, more varied, more defensively sound, but I can see this fight being competitive if it goes to a decision because Fairn dos Santos is an aggressive and powerful striker herself.

**For DK: I will not have much exposure to this fight. Anderson ($9,400) can finish, but I believe Tuivasa ($9,300) and Pitolo ($9,000) are more likely to finish at cheaper DK salaries, so I will prioritize them over Anderson. Fairn dos Santos ($6,800) is an okay punt as I believe this fight could go to a decision and be competitive. I prefer playing Fairn dos Santos on DK over Spivek, Potter, and Kassem.**

Women’s Flyweight Nadia Kassem vs. Ji Yeon Kim

As you know, I like Kim in this matchup. She is the superior striker by a good margin because she has much better technique and has a 6-inch reach advantage. Kassem can threaten with submissions off of her back, but I believe this fight is a striker’s battle where Kim will win a decision victory.

**For DK: I will be fading this fight. I do not see DK scoring potential for either fighter. Kassem’s odds are reasonable, but I’d much rather look to the majority of the other underdogs in her DK salary range.**

Bantamweight Khalid Taha vs. Bruno Silva

A striker’s battle to kick off the card! Taha to me is the better striker as he is more technical, more durable (never been finished via strikes), and more defensively sound than Silva. Silva is live to win this fight though in a striker’s battle as he is quick, pretty aggressive, and throws hard. Overall, I am favoring Taha, but I can see this fight being competitive if it goes to a decision. Also, sneaky FOTN candidate potential here if Silva fights his typical aggressive style.

**For DK: I prefer to play Taha ($8,900) as he has a reasonable chance to win by TKO/KO (Silva has been KO’D before and is open to being countered), but I will have a little DK exposure to Silva ($7,300) as he is an underdog that can win if this fight goes to a decision at a low ownership.**

AJ’s Flash Knockdown Picks:

**Lock ‘em in (cash games):**

* *Maki Pitolo $9,000*

**High priced fades:**

* *~~Ji Yeon Kim $8,700~~*
* *~~Dan Hooker $8,500~~*

**Low-owned live underdogs:**

* *Jamie Mullarky $7,600*
* *Yorgan De Castro $7,900*

**Underdogs (relative to DK pricing 🡪 below $8,100) to consider in cash games:**

* *Israel Adesanya $8,000*
* *Zarah Fairn Dos Santos $6,800*

**Low-owned tournament plays:**

* *Justin Tafa $8,300*
* *Brad Riddell $8,600*