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By Jordan Newmark | September 24, 2012

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"The fans should expect to see a completely different fighter. Improved, upgraded, updated. I'm a machine now." - Akira Corassani



UFC featherweight Akira Corassani

Each and every debuting **UFC** fighter has a myriad of agents possibly working against him heading into that first scrap inside the Octagon. Besides the very real "jitters" of tangling in front of a raucous and demanding UFC crowd, a fighter could be coming off a long time on the shelf or could be battling in their opponent's home territory, which can only add to the pressures of performing in MMA's one act play. While these mentionables are all present for featherweight first-timer **Akira Corassani's** upcoming debut, there are two factors in his corner keeping him centered and ready for some four-ounce gloved fisticuffs.

"I'm ugly and I have a girlfriend, so I'm set," boasts Corassani.

The Garden State's Energizer bunny of singer-songwriting Bruce Springsteen said it best, "Nothing matters in this whole wide world, when you're in love with a Jersey girl." Minus a few sha la la's, Corassani knows exactly what The Boss means as the born and raised native of Sweden moved to New Jersey all for his new girlfriend and love. As [The Ultimate Fighter](#) season 14 alum prepares to finally make his anticipated UFC debut, Corassani wants to entertain the rabid crowd with his come forward and often style, which sometimes allows for little regard to his looks. Thankfully, Corassani knows

his **UFC on FUEL TV** opponent **Andy Ogilvie** has the same mindset, which should produce a fan friendly fracas for the fans in attendance.

"I know his team," asserts Corassani. "He's training with my old team. I know where he's coming from. I don't know him, but I know the team and I know those other fighters. He's new to that team. But I know if you look at him, he's not that very good looking of a guy. I'm not very good looking either. There's not so much to lose, and we love fighting and we're both entertainers. If you mix that together, that recipe is priceless. I think the fans will understand what I'm talking about. We're going to both go in and have super fun and be our best. The fans should buckle up. It is going to be a good one. That's how I always fight; I'm never boring."

The 30-year-old of Iranian descent began his foray into caged combat as a fan of the sport who just wanted to fight. In his youth, Corassani trained karate and taekwondo, but, eventually, substituted in soccer and school for the trading of fists and feet. While at university, Corassani felt something was missing, which turned out to be the adrenaline rush of mixed martial arts. Well before the Jersey shore or the TUF house, Corassani made his professional debut with little more than guile and tenacity as his strengths against **Dion Staring**, a former sparring partner of former **Strikeforce** heavyweight champion **Alistair Overeem**.

"I didn't understand anything," remembers Corassani. "For my first professional fight, I really didn't understand what it was still. I just went in and fought. My first fight, I fought at heavyweight. I was weighing in at 170 pounds. At the weigh-ins his opponent dropped out, somehow this whole fight turned into a freak show. The promoter made it into an open weight fight and that was my debut. I gave up at least 45 pounds to my opponent. That was my first fight and we fought. Then a guy gave me an envelope, there was money in it, and I didn't understand what was going on. But I was hooked! The crowd and all that. I knew nothing about techniques. It was just crazy. We just went in there and fought. There was no science behind it. No technique, no training. It was just 'eye of the tiger', just go in there and bang."

Four years later with a pro record of 11-4, Corassani decided to take a vacation to New York City after a disappointing loss in February 2011, which was his first loss in his last eight fights. While visiting the Big Apple, Corassani found out TUF tryouts were taking place in Newark, gave it a shot, and, soon enough, the charismatic Corassani was in the house. Although a memorable personality, Corassani is unimpressed with his showing as a member of Team Bisping, which in part was due to some nagging injuries mixed with the rigorous shooting schedule. With a potential finale spot looming, he kept grinding in the gym, making his small injuries become big ones, and Corassani found himself sidelined for the better part of a year.

"I had injuries going into the house to begin with, small ones," reveals Corassani. "Small ones that needed rest to take care of. But you get into the house and the regimen is training two times a day and I fought three times in six weeks. That's a lot of fights in six weeks. A lot of people only fight three times in one year, not six weeks. When I got out of the house, I needed rest, but I knew I had to train because there was a chance I can fight on the finale. It was just me not listening to my body at all and

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my body gave up on me. One injury after another and I was walking around with three big injuries at the same time. I was training with them and not resting and not taking care of myself physically and it backfired on me. But I'm back now."

Up next for Corassani is a double debut date with British slugger Ogle on September 29th at UFC on FUEL TV in Nottingham, England. At 23 years old with an 8-1 pro career, Ogle will be entering the Octagon for the first time since leaving the TUF 15 house. Now a member of Team Kaobon, "The Little Axe" has a penchant for throwing heavy leather and pushing the pace in his matches. As far as Octagon dance partners, Ogle is a young and dangerous one who likes a lot of action, which is music to Corassani's ears, as he wants a tough fight to show off how much he's improved.

"He's real decent, he's real decent in every area," affirms Corassani. "His striking is decent, his wrestling may be his weaker point, but his ground is decent. I think the way I've been training, the people who I've been training with, I really don't think he is going to be able to surprise me in any way. Nothing he will do will be able to surprise me. At the end of the day, I'm focused on what I'm going to do. You train so hard. You're training to sharpen your tools, your techniques. You're training to always be the best you. And you're matched up against someone who is at their best. It's like a fun video game. I think this is a good fight for me and I'll win."

New Jersey isn't only for finding significant others, it's home to some of the best MMA talent the sport has to offer, like former UFC lightweight champion [Frankie Edgar](#). When Corassani changed residence, he fully admits he didn't know much about the insane level of training Jersey had in store for him. Corassani fell backwards into good fortune by joining Edgar's team, which is filled with highly notable coaches like former UFC fighter [Ricardo Almeida](#) and boxing coach Mark Henry. If one state wasn't enough, Edgar/Almeida and company train at [Renzo Gracie's](#) Academy in New York City with Gracie and the ever-enigmatic John Danaher.

"I didn't know anything when I came to New Jersey," admits Corassani. "I didn't know Renzo Gracie existed in New York. I thought Renzo Gracie was in the underground in Brazil. I knew that he had a gym, but I didn't know it was him and not just his name. I feel blessed. New York is New York. MMA isn't even legal here. From New Jersey, just an hour drive out, you have animals to train with. And jiu-jitsu wise? Let's not even go there. Everything is happening here. I feel blessed. Sometimes you don't even realize how blessed you are until you really think about it. Before I got into the house, I had only been here for a few weeks. I wasn't training with these guys and I wasn't training anywhere like these guys. I hadn't explored training in this way. I'm not even 1% of the guy I was. I would beat that guy in 10 seconds now. The version of me on The Ultimate Fighter, I would destroy that guy. It is comedy watching myself fight back then. I laugh. I laugh at myself. The fans should expect to see a completely different fighter. Improved, upgraded, updated. I'm a machine now."

It's been 19 months since Corassani has taken to the cage for a professional bout and almost a year since UFC fans have seen hide or hair of the featherweight on the reality show. In the downtime, Corassani has healed and began anew with a top tier training camp filled with excellent coaches and fighters who he believes with an unflinching confidence has remodeled him into that of a much greater mixed martial artist. The payoff for all this hard work is showing it off in the Octagon in a knockdown, drag out fight with Ogle. For Corassani, the gym is for adding more weapons to your arsenal and the cage is for adding more highlight reel material to your career.

"I want it to be a good fight to begin with - a spectacular fight," states Corassani. "I'm not a fan of guys pushing each toward the fence or guys just laying on each other and being inactive. It might be technical sometimes, but, at the end of the day, there has to be some entertainment. If you don't agree then you must be lying to yourself or the fans. When we train, we go through Hell, which we love, but that's the sport. That's how we prepare ourselves for the entertainment part of it, which is the fight. It's entertaining and fun for us and it's naturally entertaining to the fans. If you listen to the crowd, they don't go nuts when two people are grappling. That's a fact. They go nuts when two people are going at it. I don't like slow fights."

This Saturday at the Capital FM Arena in Nottingham, England, a slobberknocker showdown between Ogle and Corassani has potential bonus winner written all over it. "You put two ugly guys in a cage, it's going to get interesting," explains Corassani, who is willing to risk his looks for Octagon immortality and betting that his girlfriend will still be attracted to his mug. "You look at all the fighters, all the ugly fighters, and you get two of them against each other it will turn into a Fight of the Night. It's the recipe for a great fight."

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ogle better whoop his ass.

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