UFC PPV Breakdown

Introduction

The goal of this is to look at UFC PPV numbers over the years to look for trends. The question that will aimed to be answered is which two fighters would be the best to pair up to sell the maximum number of PPVs. One of the pairings will be a semi realistic one and will take into factors such as weight class, while the other won’t be realistic and won’t include factors such as weight class. The dataset goes from 2001 to 2017 and can be found at: https://www.kaggle.com/daverosenman/ufc-ppv-sales

Workbook Breakdowns

*PPV by Year:* This looks at how the PPV numbers have changed over time and includes a trend line to get a more general idea and potentially allow for some extrapolation going forward. The main takeaway is that overall the PPVs for a fight seem to be increasing. There is a dip in the years 2014 and 2017.

*Months with Highest PPV Buys:* This looks at which months tend to have the largest number of

PPV buys. July and December are the months with the most buys. Generally in order for a card to generate a lot of PPV buys it needs to be a card with well-known fighters in anticipated matchups. It makes sense July and December would be months with good cards on them since one is in the middle of the year and one is at the end. So the UFC makes cards in these months strong since it has been 5 and 7 months between stacked cards. July is also when International Fight Week is which a big promotional week for the UFC so it would make sense that they would put strong cards on during July to maximize their promotion. December also makes sense since it’s the end of the year and the UFC wants to end it on a high note.

*Top 5 PPVs with Opponents:* This shows the 5 highest selling PPVs of all time. This gives us a baseline of how many buys a really good card can generate. This workbook also shows the fighters in the main event and the card number. The main takeaway here is that Connor McGregor was a participant in the main event in 3 of the 5 cards shown.

*Top 10 Fighters in Terms of PPVs Sold:* Looks at the 10 fighters who have been the main event on PPV cards that generated the most buys. The lower graph shows the average buys a fighter generates. This is an important distinction to make because based solely on the first workbook it looks like Anderson Silva would be a good bet to select for the theoretical bout. However when we look at the averages we can see he is not one of the best options. The fighters in the top 10 have participated in various numbers of fights so someone like Anderson Silva has been in a lot of main events that sold pretty well so his total amount of PPV buys is high but his average is low. For Connor McGregor the inverse is true. In 2017 he hadn’t been in ton of main card fights but the ones he was in generated a ton of buys giving him the highest average of all fighters.

*Top 10 Fighters and Their Opponents:* The next 10 workbooks look at how many main event fights on PPV cards each fighter in the top 10 has been in as well as who they fought, the number of buys each event generated, the fighter’s record, and the average PPVs they generated on the cards they were a part of. This lets us look a little deeper into which fighters could be good potential options for our theoretical bout.

Conclusion:

*Realistic Matchup:* The realistic matchup based on this data would be Conor McGregor vs Georges St-Pierre. This one is semi realistic in that McGregor fights at 155 lbs and has fought at 170 lbs. St-Pierre has primarily fought at 170 lbs but has fought as high as 185. So in theory these two could fight at 170 lbs. St-Pierre is currently retired but has hinted at the idea of coming back and McGregor is actively fighting. These two would make a lot of sense to match up in this scenario and would sell a huge number of PPVs based on the data.

*Unrealistic Matchup:* This matchup would never happen as they are so far apart in terms of weight and is just for fun. But just based on this data Conor McGregor vs Brock Lesnar would also do huge numbers in terms of PPV buys. Lesnar has exclusively fought at 265 lbs and as mentioned before the highest weight McGregor has fought at is 170 lbs. The weight gap between them is just too big for this fight to ever happen but its’ a fun thought nonetheless.

Other Notes:

It is important to note that this dataset only goes up to 2017. Since then the PPV record for one fight has been broken. The fight that broke it was when Conor McGregor and Khabib Nurmagomedov fought and the card sold 2.4 million PPVs (https://www.bloodyelbow.com/2018/10/11/17964814/ufc-229-khabib-nurmagomedov-vs-conor-mcgregor-ppv-buy-record-mma-two-half-million-new-high-mma-news). There are rumors that these two could fight again in the future and that fight would probably break the PPV record again. This also solidifies the idea that for any dream matchup where the goal is to sell the maximum number of PPVs one of the fighters should be Conor McGregor.