

# RATTLING THE CAGE

**Tony Reid**-Your work ethic and training regimen is legendary. Most guys in the sport work hard and then there's Sean Sherk. Where does that mindset that discipline and that attitude come from?

**Sean Sherk**-I think a lot of it came from my wrestling background. It was just instilled into us at a young age. I was doing three-a-days back in high school. My brother was wrestling in college when I was in middle school and he instilled this work ethic in me. My trainer, Greg Nelson, wrestled Division 1 and he instilled that work ethic even further. He talked about Dan Gable a lot and his work ethic. So I just think, over time, with all the people I was surrounded by constantly preached that kind of work ethic. I wanted to be the best in the world so I put everything I had into it.

**Tony Reid**-You were doing a number of things in your training, lifestyle, etc. that many fighters have adopted over the years. (The Elevation Mask, Pre-cuts, etc.) Do you see yourself as a trailblazer or pioneer in that sense?

**Sean Sherk**-Definitely, yes. I was always trying to look outside the box. I have always tried to figure out ways to make myself better as far as diet, conditioning, training and work ethic. I definitely think I have helped pave the way for a lot of guys. I do a lot of seminars right now and at the end of the seminar I do a 30 minute Q&A. Everyone has questions about what I do and what they have seen me do. It's nice to be able to give back now. It's something I am very proud of, for sure.

**Tony Reid**-Obviously with the UFC "Behind the Scenes" deal, I think that opened a lot of guys eyes and made them say "Oh my God!" It made everyone else step up their game and follow your lead to some degree.

**Sean Sherk**-It's funny, if you go back and watch the build up from when Matt Hughes and I were preparing for the title fight, the camera crew came out and followed me for a few days

then too. It was the same then back then. Workout, workout, workout, workout...I was doing four-a-days getting ready for that fight. So we were doing circuit training, we were grappling, they were at the gym when I was lifting, they were filming me swimming. If anyone goes back and watches that build up they will see I was doing the same stuff all the way back then it just didn't get all the publicity because there wasn't the same level of media coverage then.

**Tony Reid**-We met a few years ago at a seminar in State College, PA. I'm sure you won't remember this but I got there early and you walked in shortly after. I figured I had to say something, we were both kind of looking at the flyer for the seminar and I said something stupid like "Hey that guy looks familiar. He looks like a future UFC Hall of Famer." And you said something to the effect of "Yeah, if he gets that title one more time." So do you still feel the need to legitimize your career by getting the title one more time?

**Sean Sherk**-I would love to do that. The division is obviously stacked; I would have to climb my way back to the top. I don't think it's a far climb, I consider myself at the top right now, but I would still have to win another key fight before being given a shot. Do I think I need to win the belt again to solidify that? I don't think so. I think I have done enough. My record speaks for itself and my accomplishments speak for themselves. I think I have done enough but as a competitor you always want to do more. I have never actually stopped and thought "Wow, I have accomplished this or that" because I'm still living in the moment and I still want more.

**Tony Reid**-What did it mean to you to become the UFC Lightweight Champion?

**Sean Sherk**-I had been fighting professionally for seven and a half years at that point in time. I had fought for the belt against Matt Hughes and I lost. I got dropped by the UFC at one point. I walked away from the sport for a year and I had to go get a full time 9-5 regular, everyday job. I came back and won the belt within a year and a half after coming back. It was a roller coaster ride, a lot of ups and downs. I thought I was done at one point. In my mind I was done. I had no intention of ever coming back. So I came back and won the belt. It was a good feeling, on top of that I completely tore my right shoulder a week before I fought for the belt. I couldn't even move it.

To win the belt and do it with an injury to that extent, it was a great feeling. It was the highlight of my career.

**Tony Reid**-Do you ever stop and think about what you would be doing for a living right now if you weren't an elite mixed martial artist?

**Sean Sherk**-I think about that every day! I was a construction worker for a very long period of time. Everyone in my family are plumbers. I did factory work for a long period of time. I was a machinist for my first 15 fights.

That's a good job, that's a career where you can make \$40,000-\$50,000 a year, which is a respectable income. I was a UFC veteran; I was top ten in the world and still working as a machinist. There was no money in this industry at that point in time. There have been many occasions where I have had to go back and work part time jobs during my MMA career. Even after I fought Matt Hughes for the

world title I was back at work on Monday morning. I worked part time all the way up until I won the belt fighting Kenny (Florian). It was a big change of events winning that belt.

**Tony Reid**-Back to the 9-5 thing, I heard that when you were working as a machinist, that even then, you had to get out, had to train and your co workers were calling you "Rocky". Is that true?

**Sean Sherk**-(Laughs) Yes it is! They used to make fun of me back then. I worked second shift so I would train twice before I went to work. I would get up at 9am and be at the gym by 11am. I would work out, get on the mat and wrestle; I would go to the gym to lift weights, swim and run. So I had about three hours of training by the time I got to work. But during my breaks, I had three every day, the first one I would go and do pushups and pull ups. I had an ab wheel in the back that I would use. During my lunch break, which was the long one, I would go for a run. And my third break I would do the same push up pull up routine. Sometimes when I got home I would lift weights, too. I was totally obsessed with it. Sometimes I would go outside and push dumpsters around the parking lot. If I had a fight coming up real soon, I would do that because that's how I wanted to develop my takedowns. If you get that double leg and you run right through them. People back then would refer to me as Rocky but more to make fun of me than anything else. Nobody knew about mixed martial arts. They all looked at me like I was crazy. Literally, they thought I was crazy, they had no idea what I was doing or that just maybe I had a goal in mind. They just thought this crazy guy was pushing dumpsters around the parking and then is going to fight another guy in a cage. You can look back and laugh now but at the time I'm sure I seemed like an interesting character.

**Tony Reid**-If you could choose one fight from your career that every MMA fan should see which fight would you choose and why?

**Sean Sherk**-The fight that I feel was the highlight of my career was when I won the belt (The UFC Lightweight Championship). As far as fun fights that fans should see and I actually thought about this right in the middle of the fight, was when I fought Tyson Griffin at UFC 90. We were fighting our butts off. We were standing in the middle of the cage and throwing down. We were giving the fans exactly what they paid for. There was not a single person sitting down during that fight. We knew it, as the fight was going on, we could hear the fans going crazy, and they were blowing the roof off the place. I actually remember thinking midway through the fight that it was really having a good time; I was really having fun out there. I was thinking this is what I trained for; this is what I came here to do. That was actually my favorite fight, the fight I had the most fun in.

**Tony Reid**-Is there anything you want to say before we sign off?

**Sean Sherk**-All I have to say is that I appreciate all of the support from the fans. It has been a great ride and I can't wait to come back (to the UFC) and hopefully fight in March or something of that nature. In the meantime, keep your eyes out for The Training Mask, its doing well and the response from the fans has been phenomenal. I appreciate all the support.

