



## **EVO COMBAT'S GREG COSTELLO SAYS COVID-19 PANDEMIC A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY FOR FIGHTERS TO REJUVENATE**

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Rest, stay in shape, and stay positive

The current COVID-19 pandemic is unquestionably a serious situation to wade through, but the way EVO Combat managing partner Greg Costello sees it, it's also a unique opportunity for fighters to hunker down, replenish, and prepare themselves for when the economy eventually recovers.

With even the UFC and other organizations postponing events and pay-per-views, it's obvious that everyone – including combat sports athletes – need to continue to take COVID-19 seriously.

"I think one of the things that needs to be brought up at this time about athletes is that this is a lung disease," Costello said thoughtfully on the phone from Las Vegas. "Some of the things that we've heard is that this could affect your lung capacity going forward if you get this. Obviously, this could set the athlete back substantially when you're in a combat sport, or any sport for that matter. Lung capacity is probably the number one thing in all athletics.

"This is something I think that the MMA world, the combat world needs to take seriously. These athletes, their CO2 output is a huge standard for endurance in this sport, so it's something they need to take very seriously.

Fortunately, not much has been heard in the way of combat sports athletes contracting COVID-19, but that could obviously change at any time, and quickly.

Meanwhile, cities like Las Vegas – where the UFC is headquartered – and usually bustling with tourists and activity, have been locked down with travel restrictions that have forced all of the major sports to postpone or modify their schedules.

“That’s obviously come to a grinding halt,” Costello said. “The athletes can’t be in gyms with other athletes close by, unless they’re training in a private gym or at home, it’s very hard to evaluate athletes at this time.”

EVO Combat helps fighters by providing athletes with the top coaches, training and sponsorship, allowing them to focus on their craft of MMA, boxing, or kickboxing. Based in Las Vegas, they also work with with racing drivers and golfers.

So Costello is in a good position to notice trends and share some advice.

One thing taking off online that is fighters sharing quick workouts via social media. For example, the UFC has showcased on their Facebook page quick Michelle Waterson and Holly Holm home workouts that fans can follow in the comfort of their homes.

“I think that’s great,” Costello said. “Everybody wants to be like them, so why not get out on your YouTube channel and figure out a way to prosper during this time or share workouts with other people and make someone else’s life better, because they’re not just sitting down eating bonbons and watching TV.”

The financial reality is also very real for fighters. Not everyone has the multi-million dollar sponsors and contracts top fighters like Khabib Nurmagomedov and Conor McGregor enjoy.

“Unless you’re at the elite level, you’re probably having a second job,” Costello explained. “I know a lot of them that are security guards at the night clubs or hotels here in Las Vegas. They’re not getting to train full-time; you have to be elite or have some kind of financial backing and that’s basically what EVO is coming in to do. Take these athletes and give them the top trainers, facilities, doctors, dieticians, all the things that the elite athlete has so they can perform to the best of their abilities. I think this (COVID-19) is obviously affecting all of that.

“And the UFC has done, like everybody else, is looking out for their athletes while making sure their bottom line doesn’t fall out so that there is a place for these athletes to come back to at the end of this.

“Because without the major promoters and the circuit, they’ll be fighting in the streets to make money, so they need that and everyone needs to have that business going forward.

“These are postponements when we get back, so every athlete is going to handle that differently depending on how they trained, but I don’t think it will detract from any of their abilities going forward,” Costello said. “I think the postponement gives time to heal. Most of these guys are playing hurt when they’re playing so it gives them some time.

“From the financial point of view, obviously that’s a setback. There are numerous things that the U.S. is doing with passing financial measures to help out. But at the end of the day, it is a postponement. so hopefully they can work with these measures that are taken place and be back in the same financial place they were before it happened. Like anyone across the world, everyone is taking a setback at this time and the fighters are no different.”

In these lean times, Costello’s advice for fighters is very simple: Stay in shape.

“They should be trying to stay in shape, whether that’s working out at home, going out for runs if their city hasn’t been locked down, doing all of things they would do on a normal basis without sparring or being in

the gym around other people,” Costello said. “There’s a lot of in the combat world, there’s so much more of the training that’s done by yourself, whether its roadwork or keeping up with your physical training. Most of the guys at the level where they’re fighting, they have the techniques. Of course they need to stay sharp and you’re only sparring hard up until the time of the event and even then you’re taking weeks off beforehand to make sure your body is in top physical condition.

“So staying in that physical condition which of course is hard, it’s not just athletes,” Costello elaborated. “Everybody is having trouble finding ways to spend 24 hours inside their house without raiding the refrigerator and doing all the things that everyone else is doing, Boredom is hard to combat and when you’re bored I know a lot people end up snacking or watching TV, so its a matter of staying in shape and that what this time should be all about.

The pandemic been hard on Costello as well. He’s resorted to doing what most deprived fight fans are doing to stay engaged.

“I am actually going back and watching past fights I may have missed,” Costello laughed. “That’s how I am getting my fix and I think that’s what probably what most fans are doing as well. If they’re not, I would suggest that. I know that ESPN has been putting on old UFCs and that sort of thing. I think that’s great at this time. It educates the fans too, from ten years ago to now, how much better the sport is.”

Things are going to get better. But until they do, Costello summarizes three things fighters should be focusing on.

- “Take care of your health. There seems to be some evidence there could some kind of scarring or affects to your lungs for a long time, so do not get this.”
- “Stay in shape, the best that you can. But these athletes have been self-driven since the time they’ve taken up the sport as individuals since the time they’ve taken up the sport.”
- “Understand that we’re going to get back to doing all of the same things. Your opportunities are not lost, they’re just postponed a little bit. Keeping that positive attitude and making sure when it come back that they are at the best of their abilities and they can be during this time. Soon they’ll be right back training with their fellow athletes and getting ready for the next big fight.”

It’s important not to lose sight that things will eventually return to normal, Costello emphasized. Keeping a positive attitude is critical to riding things out.

“There will be great opportunities for these athletes to get back into the game going forward.”

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