

# NORTHWEST HERALD

## Pat Curran ready for title fight despite falling out with cousin/coach

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The pain Pat Curran felt in his calf when he hurt himself in May is still a vivid memory.

Curran, an MMA fighter who lived in Island Lake and trained in Crystal Lake and is currently the Bellator featherweight champion, was training for his first title defense in a rematch against Patricio Freire (21-2). On this particular day, Curran was building his strength by lifting a tire and flipping it over repeatedly.

The first few times Curran (20-5) lifted the tire, there was no problem. But when he went on to the second set of the exercise, Curran's knee hyperextended. The pain shot to his calf.

"It felt like somebody hit me with a baseball and I immediately grabbed my calf and turned around," Curran said. "We have it on film too and it's hard to watch. I know the pain. But, those things happen and I just pushed myself too hard that day."

Injuries do occur, but some take longer to heal than others. After Curran was injured, the fight was rescheduled for this Friday (8 p.m., Spike TV) at the Mohegan Sun Arena in Uncasville, Connecticut. As he prepares, Curran, who won the first Freire fight by split decision, is feeling the lingering effects from the injury.

"Unfortunately, I'm not 100 percent," Curran said. "It takes some time, but I couldn't take any more time off. I had to jump right back into training. I'm able to push through camp. It's not going to be an issue for the fight. I wouldn't have taken this fight if I had thought so."

In his time off, Curran took the time to evaluate his surroundings. Curran, who had been training with his cousin and former fighter Jeff Curran, decided it was time to move on from Crystal Lake, where he had trained for most of his professional career.

Instead, Curran relocated to Arlington, Texas, with a new team of trainers, joining "Team Takedown." Curran, who had trained at the gym for a stint when preparing UFC fighter Chas Kelly before relocating his camp, said that his parents also are close by and has been living with them while he trains.

"[My parents] are going out of their way to make sure that I'm comfortable," Curran said. "I'm really liking it here. That's a big part of training camp, your mental state. I'm in a really good place, mentally here. I'm very motivated and am feeling great about this fight."

The decision to move camp wasn't easy for Curran, either. He said that it led to a falling out with his cousin and later added that the injury had nothing to do with the switch.

Curran now trains with Marc Laimon, Toby Cabello, Steven Wright, Tony Cabello and Adrian Ramirez. Laimon, Cabello and Ramirez will be in Curran's corner on fight night.

“I’ve been with [Jeff] for the past seven years,” Curran said. “This is my first fight he’s not going to be there. There was some drama. I did want him in my corner, but we didn’t see eye-to-eye in the situation. I don’t want to go into more detail than that, but it was a [tough] situation either way you look at it.”

Jeff Curran said he supports his cousin and is rooting for him in his upcoming fight, but acknowledged there were details that the two will have to discuss after the Freire rematch.

“Obviously, I hate not being there, but I had a choice to go, and I chose not to,” Jeff said. “It’s not a situation that is easily understood. The simplest way to put it is that Pat made some choices about his training that he felt like he needed to do. As much as I support Pat, he has to be all in with me if he’s going to get my support.”

“I kind of had to stick to my guns and set a standard for the way my team operates,” he added. “I think people also need to understand that fighting is a business. Sometimes doing business with family and friends is not always a smooth ride. ... I obviously want to see Pat (win) and remain champion. How things end up after that will come down to our communication.”

Pat Curran said he sees his new arrangement as more permanent going forward. He said that he wants to develop further chemistry with his coaches.

“It’s the right decision for me to grow as a fighter,” Curran said. “I just want to keep growing as a fighter. By training and making sure I’m in the right mental state, I feel like this was the right decision.”

Curran knows all about the importance of a fighter’s mental condition in camp. The 27-year-old has battled depression in the past, a factor he said played a role in losing his featherweight championship to Daniel Straus in November.

Before his fight with Straus, Curran said he wasn’t happy in his life. He wasn’t happy with his training, second-guessing himself on whether he even wanted to be an MMA fighter. He thought about retiring.

To seek help, Curran sought out Dr. Jeff Fishbein, a sports psychologist who works with the White Sox.

“I figured I should talk to somebody before making that decision (about retiring), and I decided to suck it up and go see somebody,” Curran said. “It was the right choice to do. I’m still here. I still have a lot in me left, and I want to make a big impact in this sport.”

Moving on, Curran feels back at the top of his game. He avenged the Straus defeat and won back his title with a fifth-round knockout in March. Although he isn’t predicting a knockout against Freire, he hopes to impress again like he did in his last fight.

“I want to make a statement of that I’m the best featherweight in this division,” Curran said. “If you’re going to fight me, know that you’re in for a hell of a fight. Know that I’m not a pushover and I’m not planning on losing my belt anytime soon.”