

CATM Previews UFC 199: Rockhold vs Bisping

When: 7PM (PT) Saturday, June 4th, 2016

Where: Los Angeles, CA

Welcome to our inaugural UFC main event preview! At CATM, we are looking forward to analysing upcoming fights and other UFC related issues through a combination of some data-grappling and intellectual-strikes. We hope these articles help you gain some insight into future fights and (most importantly) that you enjoy reading these!

How they match-up against each other

Rockhold has the physical advantage. He is younger (31), has better strike-reach, and seems to be in peak form while Bisping (37) is older and entering this bout on short notice after a tough fight. Bisping fought and won a tough 5 rounder against the legendary Anderson Silva less than three months ago. It's tough to say how the Silva fight will impact Bisping; only Bisping knows how fight-ready he is. What we know for certain is that Rockhold is rested, prepared, and ready to fight.

Using data collected by FightMetric.com¹, I've compiled a comparison of Rockhold and Bisping's basic fight stats:

	Metric	Rockhold	Bisping
Striking	Strikes Attempted per Min.	8.6	11.6
	Strikes Landed per Min.	4.2	4.4
	Striking Accuracy	48%	38%
	Strikes Attempted Against per Min.	3.3	3.9
	Strikes Absorbed per Min.	2.0	2.6
	Defense	60%	66%
Grappling	Takedowns Average/15 min.	0.6	1.2
	Takedown Accuracy	40%	43%
	Takedown Defense	69%	64%
	Submission Average/15 min.	1.5	0.4

Data indicate that Rockhold may be the superior striker. He attempts less strikes² per minute (8.6 as opposed to 11.6) but still lands the same number of strikes (per minute) as Bisping. Defensively, opponents attempt and land less strikes on Rockhold. Those two striking metrics combined tell us that

¹ <http://www.fightmetric.com/fight-details/812ff38foed409ca>

² An explanation of significant strikes: <http://blog.fightmetric.com/2011/01/ufc-leaders-significant-strikes-landed.html>

Rockhold lands 2.2 more strikes than he absorbs per minute while Bisping lands 1.8 more strikes than he absorbs. In my opinion this is a very basic and important metric to judge a fighter by: does the fighter dish out more punishment than he gets served? In this case, both fighters hit more than they get hit, but Rockhold has the superior net striking stats³.

It's harder to tell who the better grappler is. Bisping does attempt and succeed more often at takedowns than Rockhold. But we should be cautious before declaring Bisping the better grappler for three reasons: (1) Rockhold has a much superior submission rate, (2) Rockhold probably needs to attempt less grapples as he is a superior striker, and (3) both fighters have similar takedown accuracy.

The tale these numbers tell is that Rockhold attempts less strikes and grapples, but he gets more out of what he attempts. That is a sign of a strong, patient fighter who doesn't let his guard down often.

What happened the last time they fought

When predicting an outcome of a fight it's important to study how the fighters performed against similar opponents in the past. This analysis can be hard to conduct and can end up being a little opinion driven. In this case, we are in luck as these two fighters have fought before. ESPN.com⁴ nicely sums up that fight:

"The last time these two men fought, Luke Rockhold closed as a 5-to-1 betting favorite and he defeated Bisping convincingly," Kalikas said. "Most of the betting action was on Rockhold at the time. The stylistic matchup hasn't changed and now Bisping is on short notice.

"Rockhold should be able to have success on the feet and will have a huge advantage if the fight hits the canvas. I have a ton of respect for Bisping and he's on the best run of his career, but Rockhold is untouchable right now."

What our in house experts say

Ja Shia is picking the underdog! According to Ja *"Luke Rockhold has been training to fight Chris Weidman, who's a wrestler/striker combination fighter. Bisping is a pure striker and I think that because of his fighting style, Rockhold is on short notice as well. Against Anderson Silva Bisping displayed an ability to stand with the greatest of all time and win on striking points while keeping the fight from the ground. Historically, Bisping gets his wins from decisions, and I think this will be a 5 round striking match, where Bisping comes out on top"*

Bret is picking Rockhold on principle because he *hates* Bisping.

³ Do note that the type of fighters these guys have fought against in the past have a significant impact on the numbers we are looking at, but we are assuming that both fighters have fought enough battles that their numbers tell a somewhat believable story.

⁴ http://espn.go.com/blog/mma/post/_/id/23114/rockhold-to-open-a-massive-betting-favorite-in-bisping-rematch

I am picking Rockhold to win in either round 1 or round 2. I agree with what blogger *lootmeister*⁵ has to say: *“I’m suspecting an early night. I think Bisping is a good story, but one that is due to end soon in somewhat violent fashion. I’m taking Rockhold in rounds one or two.”*

That being said, we watch fights for a reason. One mistake from Rockhold is all the opportunity that Bisping requires. Bisping is very experienced and will have to use all his fight-wisdom to pull off a win against an in-form Rockhold. The last time Rockhold lost was 3 years ago courtesy a nasty kick in the head by an aggressive Vitor Belfort. I bet Bisping’s watched that tape a few times.

What Vegas says

Rockhold is favored at -900 and Bisping is the underdog at +600. These numbers are approximate; different sources list Rockhold as favored at anywhere between -850 and -1050. This implies that if you bet \$100 on Bisping and he won, you would win \$600 (plus get your \$100 back). If you bet on Rockhold, you would have to bet \$900 to win \$100.

Keep in mind, the vegas odds don't necessarily mean what bookies think will happen. Their job isn't to predict a winner, but to put betting lines at a point where half the money will be on each side so that the Vegas doesn't lose any money⁶. So, if people are mostly betting on Rockhold, Vegas may change the odds to make bets Bisping seem a little more enticing. That being said, our take-away here is that Rockhold is the overwhelming favorite.

⁵ <http://www.lootmeister.com/mma/ufc-199-predictions.php>

⁶ Credit: Reddit user *acekingoffsuit*

(https://www.reddit.com/r/explainlikeimfive/comments/1qvnw4/eli5_what_do_vegas_odds_in_mma_ufc_fights/)