

FROM SMALL TOWN TO GLOBAL DOMINATION

"My father used to say, 'You know you're successful when you have a custom-made suit.'"

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CHAPTER 1: THE EARLY DAYS

CONOR MCGREGOR RELAXES
AT HOME, SPORTING HIS
SIGNATURE CUSTOM SUIT BY
DAVID AUGUST
WATCH: HUBLOT KING POWER
UNICO 48MM WITH FACTORY
DIAMONDS

Just days before UFC champion Conor McGregor faces off against rival and professional smack talker Nate Diaz, Haute Time landed an exclusive interview with the Irish native to find out what makes him tick. We learned all about his backstory, as well as his penchant for custom-made suits and fine timepieces.

Growing up in the small town of Crumlin, Ireland, McGregor — now a self-made multimillionaire — comes from a humble beginning. But his father, a lifelong taxi cab driver, instilled in him a fiercely strong work ethic that has stuck with McGregor and contributed to his success today. He’s a no-nonsense type of guy and isn’t shy about telling anyone exactly what he’s thinking, but he has become well-adept at treating his career as a business, which has contributed to his huge success.

Besides his skills in the arena, McGregor stands out amongst a crowd of poorly dressed competitors whenever he speaks to the press. “My father used to say, ‘You know you’re successful when you have a custom-made suit,’” recalls McGregor who, in addition to his kickass fighting ability, is known for his distinctive, custom-made David August suits. “Before I came along, you’d see a UFC press conference and you’d see a guy wearing shorts and a baggy tee and a baseball cap. And I always look at it as: That’s a press conference. It’s a business situation. You’re supposed to handle it like a businessman, like a professional.”

And just like that, he changed the face of the UFC and, as a result, people began to take the sport much more seriously.

But life for McGregor wasn’t all dapper suits and gold watches. He recalls a time when he was younger, growing up in the suburbs of Dublin, and taking pride in his outward appearance. But back then, the distinctive “polished” look that the well-dressed kids strived for was a good track suit and clean runner’s sneakers. That pride is what initially drove McGregor to crave success.

It was at the tender age of 12 that McGregor first took up boxing at Crumlin Boxing Club, where his coach was none other than two-time Olympian Phil Sutcliffe. While he saw much early success then, it still wasn’t his decided future. That happened after moving to Lucan, Ireland, where he met Tom Egan — who would also go on to become a UFC fighter — and from there, the rest is history.

In 2007, at 18 years old, McGregor first competed in amateur mixed martial arts for the Irish Ring of Truth. His win in that match led him to go pro. For years he continued to win fight after fight, including an eight-time winning streak that resulted in his simultaneously winning both the CWFC Featherweight and Lightweight championships, making him the first-ever European to hold both titles. In 2013, he landed his contract with UFC.

CHAPTER 2: BUILDING A BRAND

McGregor, as the second Irish native to sign with UFC, saw success as soon as he started competing. His first fight with the company took place on April 6, 2013, when he faced off against

Marcus Brimage. The fight barely lasted a minute, resulting in McGregor being on the winning side of a TKO. It was the first of many wins with UFC, with McGregor showcasing himself as the best of the best, a title he would defend repeatedly over the years.

His no-lose attitude and proclivity for brash cockiness certainly put him on the receiving end of a lot of attention from fight fans. But they also noticed the way he presented himself. In a world where just about everyone shows up wearing jeans and t-shirts, McGregor stood out in the crowd, donning perfectly fitted suits. More specifically, suits designed by David August. He first learned about David August, and then met him, after a meeting with UFC owner Lorenzo Fertitta.

“I met David August there [in Fertitta’s office] and David had a whole order of suits lined up for me. I had never seen material like that. And then we got the fit right and that was the start of a good relationship with David. He’s been phenomenal,” McGregor told us about his first foray with the notorious designer. “I mean, the patterns, the designs, the colors...I have so many David August suits now and each is better than the last.”

CHAPTER 3: AN EMPIRE TO WATCH

Beyond suits and fighting, another telltale McGregor characteristic is seen in the form of a bold, beautiful, expensive watch on his left wrist. “Watches have always been something that just appeal to me. There’s something about having a really nice, quality watch on your wrist. Especially on my left wrist. When I feel the weight of it, I feel like...it takes you back to the caveman days, when you’d kill an animal and you would take something and put it around your neck as a symbol of what we have done. ‘We have conquered this.’ When I have won a big fight and collect a big check, I’ll purchase a beautiful watch and I’ll put it on my left hand. My left hand that I have cracked on my opponent. That hand has got me my fill. It feels like I’ve earned it.” His left hand being his dominant hand in the ring, this is a symbolic gesture.

McGregor’s first major watch purchase, showcasing that he had finally started to make it in the world, was a gold Rolex. Since then, the collection has continued to grow so much that he has a dedicated drawer for them in his walk-in closet. “I have a nice collection now. I have some Audemars. I have some Hublots. I have some Rolexes. I’ve been looking at Richard Milles. They’re a big purchase, the Richard Milles, so I’m not going to jump into it.”

McGregor also joked around about having a friendly “competition” with Fertitta in the watch collecting game. “I have the 50-year anniversary Rolex with the green face. It’s a beautiful piece. I was looking around to see if Lorenzo has the same watch as me; I think he was copying me,” said McGregor. “Every time I see him, he has a new watch. I took a picture of the money-green Rolex and he said, ‘That’s my new favorite.’ And then at UFC 200 he shows up, ‘Hey look,’ and he had the same watch as me.”

As lavish a watch collection as he has, McGregor also knows the importance of fiscal responsibility, so he isn’t just running around town spending recklessly, operating his fighting career



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SUIT DESIGNER DAVID AUGUST PUTS THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON THIS LOOK.



"THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT HAVING A REALLY NICE, QUALITY WATCH ON YOUR WRIST."

IN MCGREGOR'S WALK-IN CLOSET, WHERE HE IMPECCABLY STORES HIS WATCH COLLECTION.



"YOU'VE GOT TO BE SMART. YOU'VE GOT TO MAKE WISE INVESTMENTS. YOU'VE GOT TO ALIGN WITH THE CORRECT PEOPLE"

OUT OF THE RING, AND INTO A BOLDLY COLORED, STATEMENT-MAKING SUIT.

I COVER · STORY I

as a business. "I've studied many fight careers. You've got to be smart. You've got to make wise investments. You've got to align with the correct people. And you've got to have your mind on your money at all times. And that's it. It's important to be switched on," said McGregor. "To be a billion-dollar athlete, it ain't just showing up and competing. There's a whole lot of stuff that comes with it. That's why structure is very important. It's vital. I look at successful people. I look at the billionaires. I look at Lorenzo. They have true structure in their life."

CHAPTER 4: REMATCHING NATE DIAZ

On Saturday, McGregor will once again face bitter rival Nate Diaz. The two fought — unexpectedly, after McGregor's intended opponent pulled out of UFC 196 — earlier this year and, despite Diaz being two weight classes ahead of him, McGregor did the unthinkable and rose to the challenge of going up in weight, rather than having Diaz drop down, as is customary.

Leading up to the fight, the two outspoken fighters threw myriad insults back and forth at each other. Nothing was off-limits: intelligence, abilities in the ring, and even wealth. During the fight, it looked to be going in McGregor's favor at the beginning, but around 10 minutes in, he finally submitted to Diaz.

That could have been the end of it, but McGregor doesn't quit without putting up a fight. Literally. And so he challenged Diaz to a rematch.

"Why go through life if you're not going to challenge yourself? Life's a rollercoaster. You're up one minute; you're down one minute. But who doesn't like rollercoasters? I mean, you want them challenges. You might win some, you might lose some. But you go in, you challenge yourself, you become a better man, a better individual, a better fighter," said McGregor.

When asked what it is about fighting someone like Diaz that appeals to him, McGregor said that there's no fun in going up against someone he could easily knockout in a minute or less. "It's hard to get out of bed for that. It's not hard for me to get out of bed and work very, very hard when I'm facing challenges. That's what I want to do. I want to seek challenges. And that's what the fans have latched into."

McGregor notes that nowadays, most champions don't actually challenge themselves. In the

fighting world, there are so many belts and divisions out there, champions can be selective, opting to take on people they can relatively easily beat, valuing an undefeated track record instead of taking a risk. That's not the legacy McGregor intends for himself. He thrives on pushing himself to the limit.

"If you look back at the history of the fight, the best fought the best. There wasn't a million different belts...a million different organizations. It was simple. You were the best. You fight and find out who the best is. But in this age where there's so many organizations, so many belts, so many stipulations, so many business plans...the best don't fight the best anymore. The best fight the worst."

"A true champion can overcome adversity. A true champion believes in himself when nobody else does." As far as athletes he admires, McGregor said, "It's hard not to look at Ronaldo. He's a hard-working athlete. You see the shape he's in. You know that man puts in the hours. A guy like Lebron, as well. He overcame defeat, y'know."

When asked about getting the opportunity to meet with Ronaldo, he said, "There's not a day goes by that I don't wake up and pinch myself. I mean, I'm living the dream. I have the freedom to do as I please."

Saturday's match is set to be one of the biggest fights in UFC history, and McGregor pulling out all the stops. He had more time to prepare this time around, and wants the conditions of the fight, as far as weight class, to be the same as the first. But this time, he's got a training camp on location that he has been working with daily.

"I have enjoyed the preparation, preparing for that. And all that weight against me, all that power on me. And that's been an enjoyable experience, preparing for that. It's something that motivates me. It gives me energy. It's something that I want to do."

CHAPTER 5: THE RESULTS

The rematch UFC 202—which took place Saturday, August 20, in Las Vegas, Nevada—lasted for five intense rounds, with many of the fans agreeing that it was the greatest fight ever. And in the end? McGregor was declared the winner, taking three of the five rounds on the judges' scorecards.