

# Tim Hague thinks smaller in UFC return

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KILLEEN, Texas -- Tim Hague knew he needed to do something to show the UFC it made a mistake when it cut him following a three-fight losing streak in May. So, the Canadian heavyweight went out and posted back-to-back first-round finishes outside the organization and -- more importantly -- lost about 30 pounds.

"My last UFC fight, I cut from about 280," Hague told ESPN.com. "Right now, I'm walking around 256. I'm nice and lean and I'm ready to push the pace wherever the fight goes."

Hague (12-4) will start his second life in the UFC on Saturday when he meets Matt Mitrione (3-0) at the "Fight for the Troops 2" show in Killeen, Texas.

Whereas it takes years for some fighters to earn their way back onto the UFC roster, Hague was able to do so in just seven months.

He did it by texting UFC matchmaker Joe Silva after each of his two wins and devoting a large part of his focus to cutting weight and improving his cardio. Despite a 1-3 overall record in the UFC, Hague said he never felt outmatched in any of those fights -- just fatigued.



*Josh Hedges/Zuffa LLC/Getty Images* Tim Hague has always had the size and strength. Now he feels he also has the cardio.

"My biggest problem was my cardio," Hague said. "For the fights against [Chris] Tuchscherer and [Joey] Beltran, I was doing a lot of kettle bell training. I was strong as an ox but my cardio wasn't there.

"I felt gassed. I didn't feel like I could push them and I let them bring the fight to me. It showed when I lost two decisions. The judges saw them bringing the fight to me and it's an easy decision when that happens."

In his last three fights in the UFC, all losses, Hague weighed in at 263.5, 263 and 266. This Friday, he's expecting to weigh in closer to 255.

Deserving much of the credit for Hague's improved cardio is his strength and conditioning coach Shara Vigeant, who he's known since 2009 but briefly parted ways with during his last two fights in the UFC.

Vigeant is responsible for the drop in Hague's weight and, hopefully, his ability to maintain a high pace throughout an entire 15-minute fight.

Instead of focusing most on increasing his strength, Hague has bought into Vigeant's intense circuit training, which includes a lot of minutes on the VersaClimber -- a machine that Hague is both grateful for and now fearful of.

"It's basically hell," Hague said. "It's a stationary machine with two hand pedals and two foot pedals. It's like climbing a very annoying ladder for as long as she tells me to. I train hard six days a week and leading up to the fight, I went four, five-minute rounds doing eight different exercises.

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"I feel awesome. I got myself in proper shape and showed the UFC brass I really wanted to be back here."

Hague's new walking weight has already garnered attention from Mitrione, who is expecting him to be more prepared in the cardio department than he was in his first run with the UFC.

After enduring a tough, three-fight losing streak, Hague admitted he's seen the lowest of lows. The kind of lows that Mitrione expects have an impact on a person.

"Tim knows this is probably his last chance [in the UFC]," Mitrione said. "He's down to 255 pounds. He's no longer the biggest guy in the UFC, which he probably was for awhile. He wants to stay here, he wants this to be his paycheck and I expect him to be in his best shape."

Hague is so happy with the work he's done with Vigeant, he's invited her to be in his corner for the first time Saturday. Vigeant has been told she's not the first female cornerman in UFC history, but quite possibly just the third and definitely the first from Canada.

The two have certainly put in the work and sacrifice it takes to be inside the UFC Octagon this weekend; now they're hoping it will be enough to keep them there.

"He's a lot more calm and confident this time," Vigeant said. "I've trained him for the last three fights and you can see he's getting into a rhythm out there. His Christmas present to me was inviting me to be in his corner."

*Brett Okamoto covers MMA for ESPN.com. Follow him on Twitter at [bokamotoESPN](#).*