

Alistair Overeem And The Weight Of The World

Written by Bernie Connors

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Like Atlas, I believe Alistair Overeem is holding the weight of the world on his shoulders. At least, the combat sports world.

Though he isn't Greek and may not be a Titan (mythologically speaking), Alistair Overeem does have much significance for the three organizations he is currently champion of: Strikeforce, K-1, and DREAM. Here is why.

Strikeforce: On June 26th of 2010, the heavyweight landscape in MMA, changed forever. Fedor Emelianenko suffered his first legitimate loss. Pundits were amazed, bloggers were being pulled off the ledge and even Fabricio Werdum, the man who just dethroned The Last Russian Emperor, had to take a second and make sure it was all real. For Scott Coker, founder and CEO of Strikeforce, victory could not be more bittersweet. On one hand, a fighter just made history and it was during your event. On the other, he completely gutted the future of your marquis division. Everyone expected Fedor to win and go on to meet Overeem in his next fight. Alistair, fresh off a first-round drubbing of Brett Rogers, even made the flight to sit cage-side and challenge Fedor when he won. He should have saved the frequent flyer miles.

I believe this can work in the favor of Alistair and Strikeforce. The Reem is the most marketable heavyweight that Strikeforce has access to. He speaks great english, is endearing to the fans, has a herculean physique, and holds two other championship belts. You can put Alistair on ESPN for an interview without having an interpreter butcher the translation. Certainly not the case with Fedor, as we've all seen.

With Alistair leading the charge, I believe that Strikeforce can enjoy success with their heavyweights. They need to bring in quality opponents that can give credence to the division which validates their opportunity to face the champ. Also, Strikeforce must learn to market and publicize their star fighters like Alistair. All the talent and media acumen in the world is of no good if the fans never see it.

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The possibility for a match with Fedor Emelianenko is there and though it may not carry the importance it once did, it would still be a blockbuster fight.

K-1: Raise your hand if you're a Semmy Schilt fan. Anyone? That's what I figured. The four-time K-1 World Grand Prix Champion is arguably the least-liked champion in the sports history. He's viewed as a boring fighter by many and generally not an amicable person. With Semmy holding strong as the champ and Badr Hari mired in legal trouble, it seemed as if Hightower would reign over the K-1 heavyweight ranks as long as he chose to much to the chagrin of fans that were growing tired of seeing Semmy as champion.

It's always darkest before the dawn, is how the saying goes and that proved to be true as Peter Aerts made history and became the first man to ever defeat Semmy in the K-1 World Grand Prix. That accomplishment, now among so many others by the legendary Aerts, opened the door for Alistair to eventually meet Peter in the finals. Overeem went on to defeat Mr. K-1 and become the most exciting WGP champion the sport has seen in its recent history. The timing could not have been better as Alistair is on top of the combat world and soon, the entertainment world in Japan. He recently signed with Yoshimoto Creative Agency to have them handle his affairs that lie outside of the fight game. With clients such as Kousuke Fukudome, YCA has the ability and resources to make Alistair a huge star in Japan. Combine that with the fact that Fuji TV, broadcast partner with FEG, is very happy with Alistair and you have a recipe for longterm success.

DREAM: While K-1's TV future seems to be in good hands, DREAM is another story entirely. It's been well documented that Dynamite!! 2010 didn't do so well on TBS.

There is hope, though, as Alistair Overeem is set to become the next Bob Sapp in the eyes of Japanese fans. Bob has always been a big draw in Japan as he's all over the media. What Alistair has that Bob certainly doesn't is the credentials to go along with his place in the Japanese media. He has all the talent, and now exposure, to help DREAM recapture the indigenous fans along with broadcast companies, and prove they're still a player that's relevant in the fight game.

That's a lot of responsibility for one man. But just as Atlas bore the weight of the heavens as his punishment, Alistair bears the weight of his own success. A weight that I'm sure he's proud to

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carry.