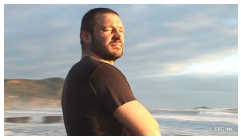

Fame, like many things in life, has its pros and cons. It can be a blessing and a curse; bringing opportunities into ones life that they otherwise would never have had. It's up to that individual to dictate where a lifestyle of fortune takes them. Often times, that task is too heavy for one to bear and tragedy soon follows. No one knows that better than Alexey Ignashov.

Alexey was born in Minsk, Belarus on January 18th, 1978. He developed a passion for combat sports early in life. Muay Thai is where the Belarusian would get his start. Training at Chinuk Gym, The Red Scorpion, as his fans call him, would go on to win two Muay Thai titles in less than a year, defeating future K-1 legend Remy Bonjasky, in the process. It was clear that Ignashov had the talent to compete at an even higher level as he soon moved to K-1 to try his hand at fighting the worlds best kickboxers.

Picking right up where he left off, Alexey was the victor in his first three fights in K-1 and in the process, won the K-1 Belarus 2000 Grand Prix which qualified him for the World Grand Prix in Yokohama. Alexey would lose to Matt Skelton in the quarterfinals but it was apparent that a star was quickly rising on the global kickboxing scene.

Between 2000 - 2004, Alexey would go on to defeat such K-1 luminaries as Peter Aerts, Badr Hari, Semmy Schilt, Mike Bernardo, and Paul Slowinski, among others. Quite an accomplishment for the young Ignashov. With this amount of success comes great acclaim and all that goes with it. Alexey took full advantage.

Partying and alcohol abuse replaced time in the gym for Ignashov, triggering a downward spiral in his career. Alexey would lose four straight fights in 2005, failing to qualify for the prestigious K-1 World Grand Prix in the process. His lack of dedication was apparent. Ignashov was now the victim of fighters that were climbing the ladder of the K-1 world. A stark contrast to where he was just two years earlier.

Though he made it to the semifinals in the K-1 Amsterdam 2006 Grand Prix, Alexey would go on to lose to Turkish superstar, Gokhan Saki. A blow to the psyche of the fragile fighter.

Ignashov would toil in smaller promotions for the next three years. During this time, Alexey transplanted himself to Auckland, New Zealand to train at Balmoral Lee Gar Gym under Lollo Heimuli. It was then that he would become sober and work on returning himself to the prominence he once enjoyed - even though it must have seemed like so long ago that he was there.

After preparing himself to the point where he felt ready to enter the K-1 ring once again, Alexey approached K-1 president, Sadaharu Tanikawa to give him his shot. Tanikawa was hesitant but granted him the chance at one more go around.

Not drawing the easiest of fighters, Ignashov was given a fight with K-1 superstar Badr Hari on April 3rd, 2010 at the K-1 Yokohama Grand Prix. You could tell that Alexey had been out of the spotlight for many years as he looked sluggish and unambitious while Badr Hari took the unanimous decision win.

Some thought that we had seen the last of The Red Scorpion but he found himself in the K-1 Bucharest Grand Prix a month later. Scoring a knockout win over Mindaugas Sakalauskas and a decision win over Freddy Kemayo, it looked like Ignashov was going to finally return to the dominant fighter of old. But it was not to be - Alexey was injured during his fight with Kemayo and could not continue. Another setback.

It's hard to know if Alexey will ever return to being the superstar fighter of his youth. At 32, he is certainly young enough to continue fighting for years to come but it's more than age that determines your success as a fighter - it's winning the mental game. It looks as though Alexey has won the battle over alcohol and the vices of this world. Now, he must win the battle over self-doubt and be willing to stand at the bottom of the mountain and work his way back to the top.