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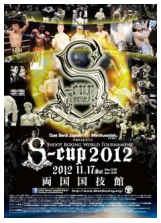

After a confusing week that left us with a myriad of different S-Cup competitors, the dust has settled and we are left with an official final 8: Andy Souwer, Henri van Opstal, Kem Sitsongpeenong, Hiroaki Suzuki, Hiroki Shishido, Bovy Sor Udomson, Joachim Hansen and Gesias Cavalcante. Warren Stevelmans, who qualified with a win over Hinata in September, will not participate, likely because of his sudden participation in GLORY 3 Rome this past week, filling in as a late replacement for Yoshihiro Sato, who replaced Albert Kraus. The finalization of the tournament field also came with the quarterfinal matchups. In the upper half of the bracket, Shootboxing Lightweight champion Hiroaki Suzuki takes on former DREAM Lightweight champion Joachim Hansen while 2010 S-Cup semifinalist Henri van Opstal fights Bovy Sor Udomson. In the lower half, 2004 S-Cup finalist Hiroki Shishido fights K-1 HERO*S 2x Middleweight GP winner Gesias Cavalcante while the most intriguing quarterfinal pits 3-time S-Cup winner Andy Souwer against Kem Sitsongpeenong.

In the first half of the bracket, I expect a Suzuki-van Opstal semifinal as Suzuki will likely be the better striker against Hansen and with Suzuki's entire pro career coming in Shootboxing, Hansen will have trouble exploiting throws and standing submissions. I favor van Opstal as he is the better fighter at this point in their careers. In the other half, I give Gesias Cavalcante the best chance to score an opening round upset as Shishido is slowly approaching the twilight of his career and is just 2-4 since losing in the opening round of the S-Cup in 2010. The final quarterfinal is very hard to call, but it's hard to pick against Souwer in this case as he has a size advantage, as well as a huge experience advantage under this ruleset, as it is something Kem is foreign to. That being said, I give Kem the best chance to beat Souwer in this tournament and stop him from winning a 4th S-Cup.

On the reserve side of things, Akihiro Gono will fight Satoru Suzuki in one reserve fight while Hinata is set for the other reserve fight with a yet to be named opponent. During the past week of confusion, one of the names tied to this event was Andy Ristie and it looks as though that is more than just a rumor, as Shootboxing has added him as an expected participant. If he does compete it would likely be in a reserve fight. That's probably not the best news Hinata would want to hear as the two fought at It's Showtime 55 in January, with Ristie dominating Hinata en route to 3 knockdowns and a stoppage just under 2 minutes into the first round.