Written by Sam Sattler
Wednesday, 14 November 2012 20:34 -

In the absence of FEG's K-1, Krush has really taken the reigns as the top Japanese promotion, especially with the steady flow of European talent they have been bringing in over the past year. Today, they held a press conference to announce yet another big international fight, pitting one of their top stars against a top European fighter, as well as announcing two more big names for their 67kg tournament.

Starting with Krush.25 on December 14th, Krush has announced that former It's Showtime 61kg champion and LiverKick #4 ranked Lightweight Karim Bennoui will be facing recently crowned 2012 Youth GP champion Koya Urabe at 61kg. Urabe (24-4-0, 4 KO) is coming off of the first tournament win of his career, after losing in the finals of the 4 previous tournaments he entered and being snubbed in K-1 in 2010, winning this year's Krush Youth GP with wins over Hisaki Higashimoto, Hiroto Yamaguchi and Kengo Sonoda. He is 6-1 on the year, but will be looking for the biggest win of his career here. Bennoui (37-7-3, 13 KO) burst onto the scene in 2011, defeating Sergio Wielzen for the It's Showtime 61kg title, but promptly lost it 3 months later when he attempted to make his first defense against Javier Hernandez. Since, he has fought just twice, winning a disputed split decision over Krush 63kg champ Thomas Adamandopoulos and drawing Pajonsuk Por Pramuk in January this year. He is scheduled to fight Adamandopoulos again at La Nuit Des Champions on the 24th, so hopefully he comes out of that fight without any injuries, as this is a big fight for the division with Urabe sitting just outside of the top 10.

Also announced for the card is a 63.5kg fight between former Krush champ Ryuji Kajiwara and former NJKF champ Ikki. This is Kajiwara's first fight since losing his Krush title to Thomas Adamandopoulos in August while Ikki has won two in a row, most recently over Taito at

Krush.24. Krush 63kg WILDRUSH League winner and current #1 contender Hideaki Yamazaki will also be facing a foreign opponent, as he squares off against 2011 Savate champion Gagny Baradji. Yamazaki went 5-0 (1 KO) in the league to earn a shot at Adamandopoulos. The card will also have a pair of interesting 55kg matchups as Takumi faces Ikki Tanaka and Katsuki Sasaki fights Takeru. Takumi fought Shota Takiya for his Krush 55kg title, but lost via decision while Tanaka has won 2 straight. The two faced each other once before last April, with Takumi winning by 3rd round KO. In the other matchup, Takeru has won 2 in a row, most recently scoring a KO of Yuya Suzuki while Sasaki hasn't fought since losing his #1 contender bout against Takumi back in June.

The other big announcement by Krush was that they would be adding to their already impressive 67kg tournament field with Yuya Yamamoto and Shintaro Matsukura. Once a K-1 MAX Semifinalist, Yuya Yamamoto has fallen on hard times recently, losing 3 in a row with knockout losses to Yuji Nashiro and Xu Yan while being upset by Asami Zaurus at Krush.20 in July. While Yamamoto made his name at 70kg, he started his career at 67kg in AJKF and this move back down should be a good move for him as he will retain his power. Since his upset of Yamamoto in the Krush 70kg tournament, Matsukura has struggled to find success against other top 70kg fighters, losing to Yutaro Yamauchi, Yasuhiro Kido, TOMOYUKI and his rematch against Yamamoto, although they were all very close decisions with the exception of a knockout loss to Kido. He most recently won the Krush 70kg Youth GP with wins over Kazuya Akimoto and Taisei Kondo, stopping Kondo in the extension round of their finals matchup. These two join Yuta Kubo and Yuji Nashiro with 4 other fighters still to be chosen and with the 4 names already selected, Krush could have something big up their sleeve, possibly top foreign names. It is also interesting to note that although Yamamoto's success is tied to his time in K-1, he is the only one of these 4 without a K-1 tournament win.

One final note about the January 14th card that will host the opening round of the 67kg tournament is that Krush event producer Mitsuru Miyata stated that he wants to find a top Japanese fighter to face Masaaki Noiri at the event. With Koya Urabe fighting at Krush.25, I doubt he will rematch Noiri, but possible options include Masahiro Yamamoto who fights on December 2nd, Keijiro Miyakoshi who fights on November 25th and Kosuke Komiyama who fights on November 17th.