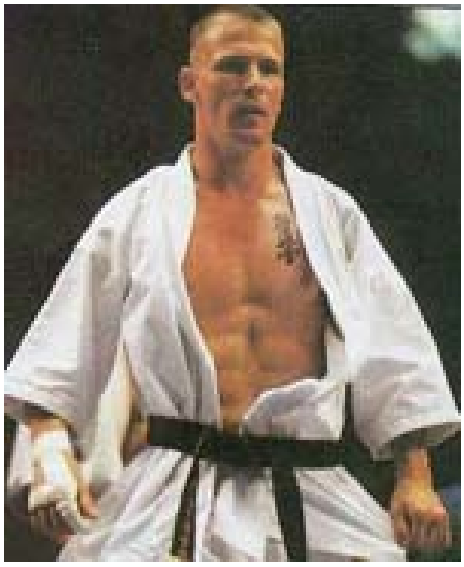

There were a lot of famous K-1 and GLORY stars I could have featured in the second installment of this series. I considered Francisco Filho, Andy Hug, Semmy Schilt, and Ewerton Texeira, but eventually I decided on two names that most kickboxing fans probably won't recognize: Gary O'Neill and Piotr Sawicki.

Before joining Kyokushin, Gary O'Neill was a skinny kid from Australia that went on to become one of the most famous Aussie karatekas of all time. He was reknowned for his spinning kicks, speed, and timing. In the last article, I introduced the Japanese Kyokushin icon, Hajime Kazumi. While most combat sports stars become famous for defeating big names, Gary O'Neill found his place in history for losing to one. Two years in a row O'Neill battled his way to the finals of the All Japan Championships, and both times he lost Kazumi. Despite failing to capture a major title, O'Neill's exciting's fights made him a sensation with fans worldwide.

From Poland, Piotr Sawicki was just as thrilling as O'Neill. While not as technically gifted, Sawicki had an iron body and was able to withstand serious punishment. Sawicki is the only non-Japanese fighter to win the Tokyo World Cup (1997) and captured a slew of championships across Europe as well.

The two met in the first round of the 1998 All Japan Championships and put on a fantastic technical performance. While neither O'Neill or Sawicki went on to have an extensive kickboxing

career, they were both without a doubt two of the most dynamic strikers of the 90's.