After Anderson Silva's devastating front kick knockout of Vitor Belfort at UFC 126, many are wondering what kind of success The Spider would have in a pure kickboxing format. Hardcore fans have contemplated this idea for years but after millions witnessed Anderson's technical display that dropped the MMA world's collective jaw, the subject has garnered even more attention. Let's look at Silva's history in fighting as well as some important factors involved in his theoretical transition to kickboxing.

In reading Fraser's recent article on Silva's history in Muay Thai, you can see that Anderson trained extensively in the art before he entered the UFC. While training with legendary strikers such as Wanderlei Silva and Mauricio Shogun Rua at Chute Boxe in Curitiba Brazil, Anderson developed a terrifying arsenal of physical weapons including knees from the Thai clinch, elbows, soccer kicks, and stomps; all of which are hallmarks of the Chute Boxe style of Muay Thai. I hesitate to call it traditional Muay Thai because there really aren't a lot of similarities. Use of the clinch is prominent in both styles but the parallels end there. Watch Anderson and you'll see he is very active on his feet, uses kicks mostly to set up combinations, and he doesn't employ knees to the body to a large degree. The Chute Boxe style of Muay Thai is all about brawling and going right at your opponent with a barrage of punches and in doing so, hoping that enough of them land to knock your opponent senseless, or to the mat to employ your ground game. It's not always the safest way to win a fight but it's exciting and can be quite effective. Both Wanderlei and Shogun have built legendary careers on that style. Contrast that method with a pure Thai style fighter such as Buakaw Por. Pramuk and you'll see the differences quite readily.

Anderson Silva debuted for the Ultimate Fighting Championship at Ultimate Fight Night 5 on June 28, 2006. His opponent that evening was Ultimate Fighter Season 1 standout Chris Leben. The Crippler was enjoying a 5 fight win streak and had all the confidence in the world which led him to declare that he would knockout the Brazilian. Less than a minute into the fight, it was Leben who had been knocked out and the MMA world suddenly saw what this Anderson Silva guy was capable of. Brutal striking, pinpoint accuracy in not missing a single strike, and the Chute Boxe Muay Thai style which overwhelms fighters that wilt under its onslaught. Joe Rogan declared that Silva was a different kind of striker. He was indeed.

We now know that Anderson is undefeated in the UFC and resets records with every fight. He's one of the very best in the sport and there's no denying that. But enough about MMA, we're

here to talk kickboxing.

K-1 and IT'S SHOWTIME, the two premier organizations in the sport of kickboxing, have rules in place that incorporate all of the major striking-centric martial arts. This works well for Anderson because as we saw earlier, he is a hybrid in his approach which allows him to be flexible and fight opponents with different backgrounds and strengths. Silva doesn't have to fight Muay Thai fighters to be comfortable. One thing to remember, K-1 doesn't allow multiple knee strikes from the clinch. Something Anderson uses quite often if given the chance.

Knowing that SIlva possesses the skills to hang with the sports elite, there is the other big issue -- size. With elite heavyweight kickboxer's getting bigger all the time, does Anderson have the size to hang with such large heavyweights? While Silva fights at 185, he has often fought at 205 with great success and is a good deal larger than that in-between fight camps. If Anderson adds bulk to his long frame and adds it in the correct way, I believe he could have the size to compete with many of the sports elite.

With the size and skills issues addressed, it's time to look at three potential opponents for Anderson Silva.

Tyrone Spong: King of the Ring normally competes at around 230 pounds which physically makes him a great match for Anderson. Stylistically speaking, this fight is somewhat of a toss-up as both fighters prefer to counterstrike. Both are technically sound and have a variety of strikes to choose from because of their significant experience. With only 3 KO losses in 73 fights, Tyrone has the chin to stand up to Anderson. This fight would be about timing your shots and not getting overly aggressive as both have the power to end a fight quickly. I would predict that if this fight were to happen, it would be more technical than brawling and probably go to a very entertaining decision.

Gokhan Saki: How fun would this fight be? Gokhan Saki is just a wild dog and has the fastest punch/kick combinations that I've ever seen in combat sports. Anderson would have to employ a lot of movement and try to knock Saki out of his rhythm while throwing precision strikes. Something Anderson is very good at, by the way. Saki and Silva would be a close matchup in size as well. This fight comes down to the sheer ferocity and quantity of Saki's strikes versus Anderson's ability to counterstrike and move in the pocket. I would predict a KO ending in this fight as I don't believe that the style of Saki combined with the killer instinct of Silva would allow it to go to a decision.

Ruslan Karaev: Ruslan could be called the Wanderlei Silva of K-1. His knockout or be knocked out approach is not always the most precise but his strikes come in bunches and often find their mark. Only problem is, a style like that is tailor made for a fighter like Silva. We've seen it many times before. If you wade in with punches hoping to overwhelm him, he uses his uncanny head movement to evade those strikes and somehow knocks you out in the process. This fight comes down to Ruslan trying to overwhelm Anderson's ability to move and counterstrike. I would predict a KO ending for this fight as Ruslan's style would batter Silva or allow Anderson an opening to land precise punches on the Russian.

While all the perks of fighting in the UFC may be too good for Anderson to leave behind, if he ever chooses to, I would love to see him go for a career in kickboxing. He may not be big enough to hang with the largest heavyweights but I do think he could be very entertaining in the right fight.

What about you? Who would you like to see Anderson fight in the kickboxing world? How do you see the fight going?