

## Discussing the Future of K-1 With Ned Kuruc

Written by Dave Walsh

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K-1 has seen some tumultuous times over the past few years, as we saw the FEG era come to an end in 2011 and saw former EMCOM/Jaleco bigwig Mike Kim step in and purchase the assets to K-1, creating K-1 Global. It has been an interesting ride since then, as we've seen the formation of GLORY, the absorption of It's Showtime into GLORY and seen regional promoters like Eduard Irimia try to break through with brands like SuperKombat. In a way, the market is wide open while still living in the shadows of K-1's past.

K-1 Global is probably the one who has the most work to do when it comes to overcoming the shadow of K-1's past, as they are carrying the torch for the K-1 brand and for the sport in general after there were some major issues with K-1's former management. Then, to top it all off, K-1 Global has seen a revolving door of failed partnerships, which shows how unstable the Kickboxing world can be as well as how K-1 Global boss Mike Kim is not looking to accept subpar deals or excuses, he just wants to put on good shows.

We sat down with a guy whose name you might not know -- but you should -- in Ned Kuruc, who serves as the Director of Regional Development & Fighter Acquisition for K-1 Global, which is a fancy title for saying that Ned works on developing events and signing fighters. If you stop to think about what goes on with the fight world, that is a pretty hefty job. Who better to talk about K-1 Global and where things are headed?

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According to Ned, the focus right now is on their WGP Qualifier events, a brand which they are working to build around the globe. "Right now we are running the World Grand Prix Qualifier events and that is our focus. We are working on going to countries that have a lot of interest in K-1, a lot of talent that is still undiscovered, and we are developing partnerships with these events." The World Grand Prix Qualifier events have been local, regional events done in partnership with local promoters and featuring local talent, also airing locally, but not globally. For the time being it is keeping the K-1 name active.

"We have some big things coming up that we can't really talk about yet, but there are some big shows that we are working on and will hopefully be able to talk about in the coming months," he added. "We are working with partners in China, Korea and other countries looking for what would be the best fit for the Finals -- the Final 8, the Final 16 or any of those bigger shows. People keep asking for dates and when our next big show is, but we aren't going to make the same mistakes that other people have made in the past and just run shows and lose money. We are doing this smart, we are going to do it when we are ready, when we can put on a great show for fans."

When you consider not only the history of K-1, but the history of fighting sports in general, this seems like a vital way of looking at the business. We've seen promoters come and go with big ideas putting on big shows only to fall to the wayside quickly. K-1 Global are looking to build a bright future for K-1 as well as the sport in general, even talking about launching the K-1 World Amateur Federation later on this year.

"We will be later on this year launching a K-1 World Amateur Federation, we'll be looking for representatives in every country to represent K-1. We know that there are fans of K-1 all across the world and that no matter what, the K-1 name means something to a lot of people. We are looking to bring that to countries all around the world and to give up-and-coming fighters a clearer path in their career to get to the K-1 level."

What's clear is that K-1 is going to continue on and that the folks behind K-1 Global have a bit of a different vision when it comes to the future of K-1. They aren't looking to go head-to-head with GLORY right now or anything like that, they are just looking to start running more and more events when they are comfortable with it and to do it right. Things might have been off to a bit of a rough start and there might not be a clear schedule to come out of this, but fans around the world won't mind waiting a little bit longer if it means getting solid shows without the drama and problems that we've seen in the past.

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K-1's next event is in Brazil in cooperation with WGP Kickboxing and will serve as a WGP Qualifier event for the World MAX field.

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