

The Unappreciated Career of Semmy Schilt

Written by Steven Wright

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As the news of Semmy's career coming to an end due to a heart issue hits me, I immediately looked to his accomplishments and his place in kickboxing history. I quickly came to the overwhelming conclusion that he is unchallenged, the most unappreciated fighter in the history of kickboxing.

I know there is going to be a heavy dose of write ups were people call him the greatest, or one of the greatest heavyweight kickboxers of all time. Most will quote the easy, he was a four time K-1 World Grand Prix Champion, matching the Legend Ernesto Hoost, the only other man to do it. Many will also credit him with a fifth major kickboxing tournament title, as he won the Glory Series Heavyweight tournament on NYE. Though I would be remised if I did not point out that some place an asterisk on the tournament, due to the first two rounds of the tournament not being full fights. Those like myself who value who you beat over what you've won will give a more in-depth line of logic in remembering Semmy's career. 3-0 verses Remy Bonjasky, the

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other great of the era. 1-0-1 verses Hoost, 4-0 over Jerome Lebanner, 1-1 with Badr Hari, 2-0 against Daniel Ghita, and an admirable 2-3 versus Peter Aerts. Yet these are just wins, they are not legacy.

The truth is, when I look at the history of Semmy Schilt, when I recall browsing the kickboxing forums, looking at all the prediction threads and excitement over new card match ups. When I add it all up, it is clear to me that anyone who calls him a legend, is a liar. No one watching Semmy felt like they were watching something legendary. No one argued him vs Hoost or Kaman like people argue LeBron James vs Michael Jordan or Pele vs Messi. No one looks at his awesome record breaking run through the 2009 K-1 World Grand Prix and says that was the most amazing 5:12 seconds I have ever seen. No one says these things. And I am just as guilty.

I picked Daniel Ghita to win the Glory 16 Heavyweight tournament, but Semmy won it. I picked Ray Sefo to win the K-1 Super Heavyweight title, but despite being knocked down in the fight, Semmy won. Brice Guidon is a good kickboxer, but after having solid moment against Semmy in their first fight, I was bold enough to pick him over Semmy in the rematch, having never picked Brice to beat an elite kickboxer before or since, I choose his match up with Schilt to pick him to get the upset, and Schilt won. I can't remember, but I may have even picked Errol against him, thinking that his explosion would be enough to find Semmy's chin and drop him. Yet again, Semmy won. As I mentioned above, Semmy has 4 World Grand Prix titles, I haven't picked him to win any of them.

Adding to my crimes, I have to admit, the main reason I picked against him is because I didn't want him to win. You will hear a more in-depth run down on Semmy's legacy in my kickboxing Documentary Shin on Shin, (which is coming out later this summer) but one reason I didn't want Semmy to win is because I didn't like his fight style. He is so much taller than his opposition, that his fights usually take from me the thing I like most about fights. I want to see exchanges, or I want to see someone skillfully make the opposition miss. I felt that Semmy was so big, that he just leaned out of the way. Also, due to his size, I couldn't get the exchanges I wanted, making most of his fights look like Koaklai fights with slower people. By that I mean a lot of circling, and hoping to land big shots. As usual Semmy's work rate and length would get past

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the tactics and he would earn the decision or stoppage over time, as the opponents slowed in their attempts to execute this hit and home run tactic. Adding to it, Semmy didn't take being punched well at all. We persecute Ex-UFC Champion Brock Lesner for flinching, ducking, and covering up and though executed a bit differently, Semmy does not respond well to offense. He leans backwards, chin high in the air, reaches out, and fumbles for his opponent, hoping to stop the onslaught by hugging his opposition. These tactics lead me to my other crime against Semmy, which is only giving those who beat him credit.

Whenever I hear people who are critical of Mike Tyson, they usually say that he was so offensively gifted, but he didn't beat anyone. Those same critics will give credit to fighters for beating him, which I feel is unfair. Either he sucks and a win over him is not as good as other wins, or he is awesome and a win over him is great. I have done the same thing to Semmy. When Badr Hari and Alexey Ignashov steam rolled him I gave them great credit, but when he beat them in the rematch I had a "its only because he is tall" feeling about the victories. When Ray Sefo dropped Semmy it was awesome, when Ray Sefo got KO'd, it was a weird shot that saved Semmy. No greater example can be found in this than the five fights with Peter Aerts. Despite the fact that Semmy defeated Aerts twice, I saw one as an injury win, not really counting it. The other win I saw as beating an old man. Yet I saw Aerts as savvy, legendary is his heroics against the giant man. Giving him the combat version of David over Goliath in his 3-2 lifetime series win over Semmy, who he brought the fight to despite his age and beat who everyone had trouble beating.

Yes I have wronged Semmy in his career, and if people are honest, they have wronged him too. Yet I see this write up as a moment to go past the numbers and names on his resume and bring up the thing that really makes a career legendary. I hope to bring up moments. I think the only way of keeping myself from falling in line with the other write ups you are going to read on Semmy is to tell you all about significant moments that you could look up and relive, they alone do justice to how awesome Schilt was.

Moment number on 1, a superior exchange (4th K-1 WGP title)

I remember I use to always joke on fight forums that K-1 gave up Stefan Leko (who returned) and Mirko Crocop to MMA, in exchange for Gary Goodridge and Tom Erikson. What I missed in the Pride - K1 exchange (which is not a real thing by the way, only me looking at who ended up where in the early 2000) is that Semmy Schilt left Pride and became a full time kickboxer. Mirko was so popular with his big left kick and his fight with Fedor, but outside of a Open Weight Pride tournament title, history doesn't bring his name up with the great MMA heavyweights of all time.

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Yet the moment Semmy got his forth K-1 WGP title, reluctant or not, people had to admit that he belonged in the conversation with the greats. But because it was Schilt, they just admitted it without the conversation.

Moment number 2, KO

When Semmy won his first K-1 WGP title, the knee that he landed on Glaube Feitosa was heart stopping. That thing was brutal, not only landing hard, but slow motion sold me on it dragging up Glaube's face as well, as if his knee was wiping Glaube's nose. When Semmy fought Mark Hunt, who I again picked Semmy to lose to, he executed a perfect spinning back kick, knocking the air out of Hunt. It was cool, but what is lost is when one asks the question, HOW IN THE WORLD IS A 7 FOOT 300 POUND MAN EXECUTING SPINNING BACK KICKS? Other notable KO's, Daniel Ghita had his block up in there second bout. He had the fist up, and literally took none of the leg to the head. Yet the timing and force of the kick knocked him down anyways and bad ref stoppage gave Semmy the KO(to be fair to the moment, I had to mention that.) There are other KOs like Paul Slowinski and Bjorn Bregy, but the above captured my imagination in the moment.

Moment 3, the teep

There was a period of time when the K-1 broadcast unfairly thought it was cool to question Remy Bonjasky every time he got stopped, saying that he had no heart, no chin, or just generally feeling he was overrated. When Semmy scored a sharp teep to his body, he went down, to which some on the broadcast said that the shot wasn't very hard and Remy could have gotten up. Five years later, no one said that. Semmy didn't drive his teep, he flicked it, not like one flicks a jab, but like how one would shake something off their shoe. Lebanner, Aerts, Hari, all seemed to breakdown in slow motion after receiving the kick, Errol looked like he was trapped on his feet for portions of the corner stoppage he had with Semmy, where he seemed to be locked in place by them, unable to return fire. If we are making the perfect heavyweight fighter off of technique, than Semmy teep is located on the fighter.

So in conclusion I hoped I accomplished what I failed to attempt during the entire Semmy Schilt career. I hope people recognize that he may not have been what you wanted, but it didn't mean he wasn't great. PS, your lying if you have said he has been legendary this whole time. Not

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putting you on blast, but I don't ever remember reading the great Semmy Schilt thread anywhere.

Steven Wright is a decorated striking coach and trainer, best known for his work as the striking coach at Team Takedown, working with most notably UFC's Johny Hendricks as well as others. You can listen to his podcast, ["Warman's Kickfighting Show" here.](#)