

Rumors of Glory heading to Chicago has emerged, their third event in the US this year, and they are focusing on a four man heavyweight tournament. No sooner than the names emerged that I start seeing a small sect of grumbling on my twitter news feed and in fight forums. The issues is over Daniel Ghita and Gohkan Saki, the two favorites in the field, meaning there will be a high possibility that they will meet for the second time this year. As Saki was successful in a one sided stoppage earlier this year in Turkey, people would rather not see the fight again. To that I say "Nonsense!" Kickboxing is a rematch sport.

This thinking is birthed from a new found collection of kickboxing fans who are use to the new age boxing and UFC model. It is extremely unusual to see high level boxers or UFC fighters rematch one another in the same year due to fighter activity and audience demand. As both are under the single fight system, the amount of fights one can have in a single year is low. A UFC contract offers 3 fights in a 365 day year, and with a roster of 300 plus athletes, they must mix

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and match to the best of their abilities, pushing careers forward, no time to allow for verbal inspired rivalries to warrant a rematch on their limited card space. And with one recognized title in each weight class, the chance that one could fight for the title multiple times is almost impossible.

Boxing has the same issue, but in a different way. Promoters are positioning their athletes for premium channel opportunities and sanctioning body title shots. If they run into a fight that was close on the score cards, but their fighter got his hand raised, then its on to the next one. No use in finding out if their athlete was exposed. They would rather the media say what their fighter can and cannot due with a zero in the loss column, than with a 1 there. Not to mention, if the fight wasn't exciting, then who cares if the fighter almost lost. The demand is for the athlete to win a title, and then defended it several times while looking to fight other title holders. That is the dream of every fighter and promoter, and it is the reason why you won't see to many rematches in boxing. Add the fact that there are four recognized major titles, and opportunities for high level premium channel fights expands to three in your weight class if your a title holder, four if not, and four in the weight classes above and below yours. It just makes more sense that rematches don't happen as much in boxing.

There are of course ways in which rematches can happen in a calendar year. If the champion loses and he was a star than people would like to see him again or even if he was a long standing champion, than people would feel like he or she earned a title shot. Anderson Silva in MMA is an example of this. Bernard Hopkins got a rematch after the Jermain Taylor loss in boxing. Also, if the fight has riveted the audience enough to demand to see it again, than that could lead to a desired rematch. My favorite boxing fight of all time Diego Corrales vs Jose Luis Castillo had audience demand after the first one, along with Arturo Gatti vs Micky Ward. Injustice is another reason. Anthony Johnson lost a fight he was winning due to an accidental eye poke by Kevin Burns and a stupid rule that allowed him to win anyways. In the rematch Johnson kicked Burn's head off. Nam Phan won an easy, no brainer decision over Leonard Garcia, but lost on the cards. He had to wait one fight, but he got and avenged the loss in a rematch. And finally there is the best fight available, which happened to Brandon Rios who rematched Mike Alverado due to the fact that Pacman had lost and no one else under the top rank banner was interested, so he rematched Mike who fought him close in an epic fight, before being stopped. He one part two of the rivalry.

Yet the above examples are the opposite of the kickboxing model which is, and will be for a long time, based off the tournament model. Kickboxing entered its prime in the nineties, where the K-1 promotion wanted to see who the best of the best was, by collecting an 8 man field of heavyweight world champions from around the world. K-1 knew, what everyone knows now and should have already known, there is a title holder in every gym. The title of world champion kickboxer or Muay Thai fighter is less than that of any combat sports title and most sporting

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titles. In fact, the Dutch Champion would probably handedly beat the majority of World Champions in other parts of the world. The K-1 tournament model allowed for the best to emerge from amongst their peers and compete for the best in the world on the highest stage, the K-1 shows in Japan. This allowed for a 16 man field to be dwindled down to 1, meaning that every year the best wouldn't just have to win one match, he at minimum had to win 4.

Due to the K-1 brand also attempting to develop stars, they would leave rosters spots for those who won their way into the final 8 tourney the previous year. This meant that if the final 8 defeated the rising star, they would return to the field of 8 with another shot at winning the World Grand Prix title and a return ticket to next years field. As the top guys were so good, this was the norm. You would always see names like Masato, Buakaw, Aerts, Bonjasky, Hari, etc, because they were superior to those they were matched up against in the round of 16, thus earning their place back, and developing them as stars. Having defeated the rising challengers, the elite were left to fight one another year after year, each giving their best effort for the highest crown and running into one another on a regular basis. This is the foundation of which kickboxing attained its highest success.

The baby promotions look to the mother. Not only did the regional tournaments provide opportunities to the big show, but it also gave ample opportunities for people to see they're local stars compete. For example, there is a youtube clip of Swedish champion Larry Lidwall winning a regional tournament in front of a home town audience. He wins all three fights in about 9 minutes, allowing the audience a buzz worthy experience where they leave the card thinking of two low kick stoppages and a head kick KO. It is also much cheaper for the promoter who gets 7 fights from eight guys and needs only to add three super fights to fill a card, not to mention what he can do with amateurs bouts. Even amateur cards are tournament based. Where most boxing rules don't allow several fights in a day, almost every Muay Thai and kickboxing tournament is a two day mutli fight system. It is normal for us.

The other notion expressed is that the rematch is bad because we just seen it, suggesting that it will be the same every time. Based on kickboxing history, this is a ridiculous theory. Just google any K-1 Heavyweight legend or watch any K-1 Heavyweight highlight. You are going to see Mike Bernardo knock out Andy Hug, then you are going to see Hug stop Bernardo with a spinning low kick. Peter Aerts is going to get Knocked out by Jerome Lebanner, than Jerome is going to get knocked out by Peter. The best kickboxers in the world will not just lay down because of what happened last time. In fact, the very fight people are complaining about, Ghita vs Saki, was completely different this time than it was in their first encounter. This works for the stadiums as well, despite having a single fight system. No where in the world will you see the best compete with each other on a regular basis as much as the champions of Lumpinee compete, not in any sport. There are no undefeated records because it is impossible to have it be your night every month. Having a hand full of fighters compete once a month means no

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tournament needed, they will fight each other by default. Only the elite get to the stadiums and that hand full beat one another, which is why a solid Yodwicha type win streak is the stuff of legends. Heck, in the stadiums, a close fight pretty much guarantees a rematch the following month.

My closing thought is that of history. I like that I get to go to Mike Bernardo's wiki page in search of how well he fought the guys of his era and see that there is ample resume for me to judge. Floyd Mayweather Jr is an amazing fighter, the best in the world, but I favor guys who give me greater resume when I ranking the best of all time. Sugar Ray Robinson fought Jake LaMotta 6 times and beat him 5, I got no doubt whose better. Aerts is 3-2 against Schilt, and he did it past his prime, his legacy grows because of it, and each fight was different. Pornsanae lost to Sam-A 3 times, but his one win over him is his favorite of his career, as it speaks to how difficult it was for him to attain it and how great Sam A is. Seriously, if you have a problem with seeing a rematch between the best a sport has to offer, than for sure, kickboxing is not the sport for you. We beat each other up on a regular basis in this game.

As always, disagreements and rebuttals to twitter.com/steventhewarman