I want to start this off with a question; is Japan still a viable market for combat sports? No, that isn't a joke, it is actually a very serious question. UFC saw a modicum of success running a one-off event in Japan this year that reports on the ground from Western media was that it "rejuvenated the Japanese MMA scene." The truth seems to be a bit less extreme than that, honestly, as there has been no marked uptick in activity in Japan on a large scale in MMA.

Of course, it seems like no one is trying, right? Up until this week there was literally nothing in the public eye when it came to happenings in Japanese MMA, and then all of a sudden Sadaharu Tanikawa is talking about crowdfunding his new combat sports venture while doing press for his upcoming book and then DREAM has a big announcement that with the help of

Bas Boon and the newly-formed GLORY Sports International, there will be a DREAM New Year's Eve show this year. As someone who has long seen those NYE MMA events as a staple and found them wildly entertaining, it is a bit odd that my first thought was to let a string of expletives escape my mouth instead of being elated.

Think of it more of an act of someone who is tuned in to the Kickboxing world and wants it to survive than someone just being negative and brushing off an idea he doesn't agree with. In a word, Kakutougi in Japan is in dire straits and might not be able to be revived. Victor Cui's One FC has all-but made the notion of Japanese MMA in 2012 and onward look silly as One FC has taken a majority of the top talent from Japan and worked on integrating them with some of their homegrown stars to rewrite the agenda from "Japanese MMA" to "Asian MMA," and to an extent, it has worked. The "PRIDE NEVER DIE" fans have found a comfortable new home in One FC and can type "WAR _____" for whatever fighter they are hyped about fighting in One FC.

That is what happens when things go wrong and show no signs of life, people move on. There are a few very important factors in making combat sports work in Japan again, and the first will always be broadcast television. Without a broadcast television deal in Japan, there is little hope of gaining any traction with Japanese fans. It doesn't even have to be a particularly good deal to work, as K-1's past deals involved brief prime time exposure and full events aired on late night television, the same with DREAM. That was enough to make them a success, though, as the network sunk in a certain amount of money to help with the production, the network helped attract sponsors and the rest is history.

The truth is this, K-1 returned to Japan just weeks ago now and it was to mixed results. There is no sign of a television deal, most of the arena was taped off and a lot of it felt kind of flat. It got little-to-no press in Japan and really felt like an "outsider" show masquerading as a Japanese kakutougi event. I'm not saying that GLORY or DREAM will fail in Japan, but I'm not saying that they won't have an incredibly hard road to find success there. It would probably be an easier sell to build Kickboxing's popularity in the United States than it would be to try to rebuild Japan's fractured combat sports scene.

That is the thing, though, there still is a scene in Japan, and on its own level, it thrives. Smaller Kickboxing organizations like KRUSH, RISE, M-One Muay Thai and Rebels do alright for themselves, just like smaller MMA organizations still exist and do reasonable business. The truth is, none have any traction beyond what they are doing, nor do they wish to overreach and try to become something more when they know how stacked the odds are against them. GLORY has confirmed that this will be a one-off event under their Japanese sub-division Glory

Sports KK, but have also stated that they want to help Japan's fight scene return to what it once was.

I think the big test will be Glory's World Series Grand Slam Tournament coming up in December, featuring the world's best kickboxers squaring off in a tournament a la the K-1 World Grand Prix of the past. That will be the true measuring stick of what to expect from Japan in the future and if Japan's combat sports landscape can be reshaped or if it is now simply history. It is odd living in a world where Japan isn't the mecca for fight sports, and hopefully that can happen again, but for right now it does not look good.