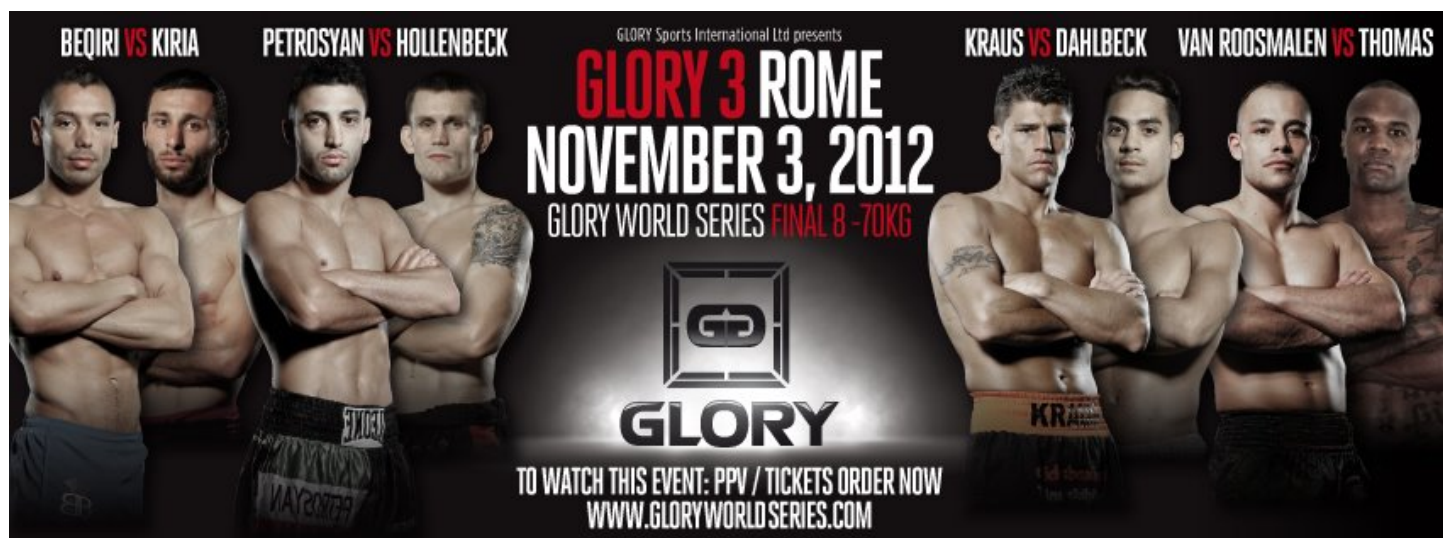


GLORY 3 Rome - Final 8: The Fighters

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GLORY 3 Rome - Final 8 takes place this Saturday, November 3 in Rome, Italy, with the main attraction obviously being the GLORY's 70kg Final 8 featuring eight fighters that qualified from the First 16 back in May.

The purpose of this post is to highlight each fighter, going into Saturday's event. This field of fighters features some of the best 70kg fighters in kickboxing, with long time veterans, a universally recognized number one, up and comers looking to make a name for themselves on the world stage and "new blood" amongst the upper echelon of the 70kg division.

Giorgio Petrosyan (Italy/Armenia)

Giorgio Petrosyan is LiverKick's #1 ranked middleweight fighter and he's pretty much universally recognized as the best fighter in all of kickboxing. He's beaten and faced almost everyone there is to fight and has rarely even been close to losing. He hasn't lost a fight since early 2007 to Nonthanan Por. Pramuk in Muay Thai in Thailand, with that being the only loss of his career. Petrosyan is without doubt the favorite to win the whole tournament. Him not winning the tournament would be a big upset, that's how good he is. He'll be fighting Ky Hollenbeck in the quarter final.

Ky Hollenbeck (United States)

Hollenbeck is the lone American in the field, faced with the tall task of fighting Giorgio Petrosyan. Hollenbeck is quite an unorthodox fighter, throwing a high variety of strikes in many different manners; spinning, jumping, you name it. He normally fights Muay Thai, but got to try his hand at kickboxing in the First 16, where he stopped Michael Corley in the first round. The one thing that troubles a lot of Hollenbeck's opponents is his ability to be unpredictable with his unorthodox rhythm that isn't typical at all of most kickboxers. The one thing that Hollenbeck and Petrosyan have in common is that they both only have one loss, with Hollenbeck's coming to Nieky Holzken a year ago.

Shemsi Beqiri (Switzerland/Albania)

Beqiri finally got his shot on the big stage at GLORY's First 16 in May and made the most of it with a hard fought, close win over Yoshihiro Sato, defeating him in the same fashion that Sato defeated him in early 2011, by split decision. Since then, Beqiri took a tune up fight in September where he dominated Steeve Valente to a unanimous decision win, showing new improvements in his kicking game and a much more aggressive display. His main facet is his use of punches, where he can either act as the aggressor or work as a counter fighter as he did in the second fight with Sato. Though he usually wins by decision, he does seem to be packing more power in his punches as of late. Shemsi is only 26 and seems to be at or reaching the prime of his career. He fights Davit Kiria.

Davit Kiria (Georgia)

Kiria was a surprise addition to the Final 8 when he upset Kem Sitsongpeenong at the First 16. He was a late replacement and was expected by most to get beat up by Kem, shocked everyone by knocking the Thai down in the first round with a high kick and then fighting well for the rest of the fight. Kiria is another fighter like Beqiri that has improved a lot and is even getting better, probably not even having reached his prime yet. Coming from an Ashihara Karate background, he isn't the typical kickboxer either, though he trains in Holland at a Dutch gym and fights in a similar manner at times as the Dutch. His win over Kem was his coming out party and any kind of success for him, even in a loss, at this event will further establish his name among the better 70kg kickboxers.

Albert Kraus (Netherlands)

Kraus is the oldest fighter in the tournament at 32 years old, having really been around the block and having fought pretty much everyone there is or was to fight. He was the first ever K-1 MAX tournament champion back in 2002. To many, Kraus' best days are behind him but this tournament gives him the chance to prove everyone wrong. He's had mixed results for the past few years, with a few surprising losses to Yuji Nashiro and Batu Khasikov along the way. He recently won his debut in pro boxing in September to stay active. Kraus' game is all about boxing, as he favors punches much more than anything else, making up the brunt of his offense. He'll fight Sanny Dahlbeck, a much different fighter in a much different career position.

Sanny Dahlbeck (Sweden)

Dahlbeck comes in as the youngest fighter in the tournament at 21 years old. Like Kiria, his coming out party was at the First 16 when he dominated Warren Stevelmans. A loss here wouldn't be the end of the world at all for him, and he has a bright future in the sport regardless of the result. Dahlbeck is a southpaw that comes from a Muay Thai background, indicative of the punching and kicking range that he favors. His game is pretty well rounded and like Beqiri, he can be the aggressor or the counter fighter. The Stevelmans fight definitely showcased the power he possesses, as Stevelmans is one tough fighter to even knock down. I think Dahlbeck might cause some surprises on Saturday.

Robin van Roosmalen (Netherlands)

Robin van Roosmalen, our LiverKick #2 ranked middleweight fighter (not updated after the Hafid El Boustati cut loss) is one of the top 70kg fighters despite being 23 years old and still a rising star. He's shown significant improvement in the past two years, with his breakout wins all coming at the It's Showtime Fast & Furious tournament, which saw him stop the heavily favored Artur Kyshenko in the first round. He did lose to Hafid El Boustati in June via cut, but he was handily dominating the fight with hellacious kicks and thudding punches. Murat Direkci was the fighter that really gave Robin a lot of trouble, utilizing a range-based attack with the teep being one of the central weapons to keep him at bay. van Roosmalen can get the bad taste of the loss to El Boustati and even more with a tournament win here, starting off with Tim Thomas in the quarter finals.

Tim Thomas (England)

Tim Thomas is probably the fighter who people least expected to be here. That's due in part to the fact that he took the fight with Dennis Schneidmiller at the First 16 on a few days notice but still managed to win. Thomas will have had a full training camp for this tournament. He also comes from a Muay Thai background and usually fights a bit below 70kg, around 67kg, but the weight wasn't an issue at all at the First 16. Like a lot of Muay Thai fighters, he usually takes the first two rounds to feel out his opponents and utilizes round kicks but in his fight at the First 16, it was noticeable that he was adjusting on the fly to fighting kickboxing, stepping up his workrate. He hits hard, and with a full preparation period this time out, he shouldn't be written off.