

If there is one reason why I will never leave the kickboxing sport, it is because the product rarely fails to deliver. This was accomplished once again in New York, as the best kickboxing promotion in the world made its way to the States for the first time. Glory 9 featured a 8-man Light Heavyweight tournament, bringing in a lot of the best 209 pound (95kgs) kick boxers from around the world. They also filled the super fights with top ten heavyweight competitors and a chance to look at several of the Road to Glory products on the biggest stage. The main Glory card used a representative from each US Road to Glory tournament, with the exception of the recent Super Heavyweight tournament done a week earlier.

As I mentioned in the opener, and despite the black eye left by the Ref decision in the last bout of the night, the product delivered. A fighter announced himself to the world, as Wayne Barrett, 1-0 into his pro career, took out middleweight Road to Glory winner Mike Lemaire. Wayne introduced an awkward style and exceptional athleticism, making himself one to watch moving

Glory Moving Forward After GLORY 9 New York

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forward. We got confirmation; Joseph Valtellini performing as advertised with his dominate low kick win, Rico Verhoeven overcoming a mental lapse to out-kickbox Errol Zimmerman, and Danya Illunga showing why he was so hittable, yet incredible in his run to the top of 95kgs. The stars performed, Daniel Ghita delivering a multi shot combo KO, just a few months removed from being on the other end of one. His win showed the crowd just what an elite top 3 fighter in the heavyweight class looks like. Finally, they had their moment, as tournament favorite and kickboxing super star Tyrone Spong was dropped ten second into the bout as a right hand caught him while he was firing an inside low kick. After seeing several "WTF" tweets dominate my twitter wall, Spong got up, measured with his left while loading up his right hand, then sent a bomb that dropped opponent Michael Dutt. Adding to the legend of the moment, Dutt got up, beating the count, but then feeling the concussion roll over him, returned to the mat. You couldn't have scripted a better opening moment.

So night complete, how does Glory move forward? As the event ended, a flood of ideas went through my head. Most of those thoughts were about the bad stoppage at the end of the final bought, but the other ones were solid to the subject of moving forward.

Final destination should be Barclays Center, not Madison Square Garden

It is rumored that the house that ECW built, the Hammerstein Ballroom was fitted for 1700 people and they filled every seat. Solid first step. When you consider that the "Muay Thai at the Mecca" promotion did 3000 in the Theatre at the Garden on a predominately local card, you can see that there is opportunity for solid growth. However that growth should finish with a relationship with Barclay's, who like Glory is the new kid on the block. As Barclay's is beginning its history now, so is Glory. Barclays Center had another great draw for the Adrien Broner Welterweight title win over Paulie Malignaggi. I think the combination of connecting with the future of events in New York and the future of kickboxing should start now, as both are about the same age. The Garden is a dream, but outside of the Knicks and the Rangers, no sporting event has a lasting relationship with them. Concerts and various other events show and go, but I think Glory would be best served by developing something lasting. Its now perceived as laughable, well it was perceived as laughable when it was announced too I guess, but the idea that K-1 was going to the Garden big room on the 'show and go' theory was destined to fail.

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Glory has already avoided that mistake, now to do it the right way, which means a relationship with a venue.

Getting Live TV down

Having the replay on CBS Sports is a good start, but live has to be the final goal. Whether its Fox Sports 1, or NBC Sports, revisiting Spike: who had K-1, but failures in management led to the termination of that relationship, whatever the final destination, the goal is clear. They must get live. I do not see the pay-per-view model providing long term stability, in particular in the states, and especially online pay-per-view. Yet if they can get of Eurosport, Sky Sports, Fuji TV, Spike, etc. all live at the same time, then they will really excel at getting the Glory product out there. This is not to overlook that they have gotten themselves on TV in over 180 countries, but to focus on locking down the american audience with a live product. Right now, Showtime and Spike would be the two I would really pursue, both are looking to grow in the 18-35 male demographic. Kickboxing would go well with the "man channel" theme Spike has pursued over the years. Showtime has been looking for a replacement for Strikeforce, and a lot of the MMA audience is familiar with the kickboxing brand, so I think that would be a great place to start. Plus, Showtime has a relationship with Barclays...see what I did there.

Tournament field

Tyrone Spong was clearly the best light heavyweight so him being there and winning made sense. Danyo's resume makes sense of his inclusion as well. You can make the case for a few others in the field also. Yet this was not the best 95kg field they could put together. I know Nathan Corbett is tough to get, because he calls the shots and makes a lot of money to kill guys we have never heard of on the Gold Coast. Yet if we are going after the best, he should have been in this field. If we remove him from the equation, there are still some top level names I would have liked to see get that spot. Fellow writer Rian "Stream Master" Scalia and I tweeted about Ondej "Spejbl" Hutnik during the card, winner of the Enfusion 95kg show. I am bias here, but as a huge fan of Russian Vladimir Mineev, I'd love to see him in the field as well. Zabit Samedov, coming off the biggest win of his life over Badr Hari three weeks ago. Either or both of the Stoica brother's Bogdan and Andrei. I could really go all day with the names. Yet this is an easy fix. Like the 70kg tourney last year, there must be an Elimination round. That would give 16 fighters the opportunity to compete and thus eliminate names that were excluded for the limited 8 man field. Really, kickboxing is of a level that every weight class warrants at least 16 man field.

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Overall, Glory just did a sold out show in the states, which had a good portion of the MMA community talking about it, as most flocked to the Glory card in hopes of filling the void left by the lack of MMA events last night. Sure a local MMA show can fill more than 1700 seats, but Glory is on the right track, and Pierre Andurand, who loves the sport, is making great personal decisions. Bringing in Andrew Whittaker, the man who took WWE global is brilliant, despite the fact that he is doing the opposite job with Glory, making a international product domestic (Can't be credited with that connection, I read it on SB Nation) Glory is definitely moving in the right direction...now about that bad stoppage...

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.