

Total MMA Daily for June 16th

By Jonathan Snowden

Mr. White's is a Familiar Act

When people say comparisons between pro wrestling and MMA don't make any sense, keep things like this in mind: according to Sherdog, Dana White and the UFC will run a show on SPIKE TV on July 19th. This is the same day that Affliction debuts with a star studded card on PPV, featuring Tim Sylvia vs. Fedor Emelienko in the main event.

To long time wrestling fans, this will seem all too familiar. In 1987 Jim Crockett Promotions was excited to air their first PPV, Starcade 1987. They were less thrilled when Vince McMahon's WWF offered a competing PPV on the same day. They were nearly in tears when McMahon informed cable companies they could either carry his show (a brand that had a track record of success) or Crockett's untested show. You can imagine what happened.

The next January, McMahon upped the ante. When Crockett announced his second PPV, Bunkhouse Stampede, McMahon countered with a free special called the Royal Rumble on the USA Network. Crockett would get revenge by broadcasting the inaugural Clash of the Champions for free on TBS in competition with Wrestlemania IV. And so it went, until WCW was finally layed to rest.

Dana White has a history of vigorously attacking the competition in the courts. Now he's bringing his bag of dirty tricks to the television industry. And because the UFC is the only brand with regular access to a significant TV audience, it's not exactly a fair fight. Still, this is dangerous ground to walk for White and the UFC. Boxing promoters are pretty careful about putting on shows in competition to each other. There are enough weekends in the calender year for everyone.

A broadside like this may do irreparable harm to Affliction's chances, but does White really want to open the Pandora's box that could lead to the next Kimbo Slice fight being programmed for free on CBS opposite Chuck Liddell's next pay per view fight? I think White would have been better served letting the market decide whether Affliction could survive the choppy waters of modern MMA promotion. He might have been pleased with the answer.

Elite XC's Next Main Event

Elite XC announced Robbie Lawler vs. Scott Smith as the main event of their next CBS show on July 26th. The two were waging a pitched battle during the promotion's debut show when the doctor stopped the fight after Lawler Chuck Liddell'ed Smith's eye.

Smith and Lawler are perfect for a semi-main event. Both will bring an exciting standup attack to the fight and focusing on bruising standup battles seems to be the goal for Gary Shaw. But Lawler, and Smith especially, lack the charisma it takes to be a main event level star. It's a risky move to go forward without someone that can get in front of a camera and sell a fight.

Adrenaline MMA Debuts to Crickets

Monte Cox wants to be Scott Coker. You haven't heard of Coker and he likes it like that. He's from the school of thought that says the promoter is less important than the fights (kind of a Bizarro Dana White). And his consistent and measured approach to fight promotion has made StrikeForce one of the only profitable UFC competitors around.

But Scott Coker understands that you have to have a star to sell. He's made a mint by putting the Bay Area's best and most popular fighters in the cage. It seems simple. A fight card needs a solid main event. The undercard is where you can count your pennies and scrimp. Cox saved plenty on his debut fight card, but he forgot to provide a main event. Fans demand someone they recognize and no one is going to see Jason Guida fight Mike Russow. Which explains why Cox could only draw 2000 fans to Chicago's Sear's Center.

There has to be a middle ground between the BoDogs and Afflictions and the Adrenaline MMAs. Scott Coker and StrikeForce have found it. I hope Monte Cox can too.

Jonathan Snowden is the author of Total MMA: Inside Ultimate Fighting. The book will be available worldwide in December. You can also find his writing at total-mma.com.

{plug}