

Jeff Xilon has thoughts on last night's K-1 show

I've been a member of the website since the summer (I guess basically since the merger) and it has been fantastic, I listen to most of the shows, read the newsletters and features and love it all. I'm especially a fan of the B&V Show, Wrestling Observer and F4Ds with Lance Storm. Anyway, on to the point: I'm a Canadian, but I live in South Korea. Which means that unlike folks in North America I had K-1/Dreams New Years Eve show on my TV. I was planning to watch it anyway as this being my first New Years Eve since my son was born I wasn't exactly going out to party and drink. I figured if I was watching it anyway I'd take some notes and send THE EMPIRE a report.

Unfortunately, I was unable to see the entire show. I missed the first hour due to work and the Korean stations didn't show Sakuraba's fight. The reason for this is that the stations, being Korean, marketed the Hong-man fight as the main event. It went on last of the fights I saw and when it was over they simply dropped the feed. The real pisser was that they had another hour of TV time blocked for the special and decided to just fill it with commercials. I'm not kidding. They showed an hour of commercials instead of the last fight, I guess so that they could pretend Hong-man was the main event. I mean, he was for Korean fans, but still. Guess I should be happy I got to see most of it. Here then, is a rundown of what I saw and the order they showed it:

Bob Sapp (didn't weigh in) vs Kinnuku Mantaro (225.1) in MMA rules

The Mantaro character's outfit included a mask and full body suit, with short sleeves. Sapp came out with his white robe and threw it off on the ramp. He got a good pop from the crowd and looked in good shape. The comic character started this thing in dominant control. He got a good single leg takedown and kept Sapp down on his back for awhile. He got a trip takedown after Sapp finally got up and again seemed to manhandle Sapp on the ground. This all looked quite shocking given the size difference but Sapp seemed to have nothing off his back and I thought 'Mantaro' was going to ground and pound out a victory. Eventually Sapp got to his knees though and back to his feet again and then things went off a cliff if you're a fan of Kinnuku Mantaro comics. Sapp hit him with a big shot that spun him onto the ropes and then a few more for good measure before the ref waved it off. Each punch made 'Mantaro' flop like a rag doll and suddenly the new most popular saying in MMA went dancing around in my head's size matters. Time 5:22 of round 1.

Semmy Schilt (285.1) vs. Mighty Mo (300.5) in MMA rules

Standing at 212cm (about a ½ inch shy of 7ft) Schilt always provides a startling size contrast. Against Might Mo the height advantage was 27cm (about 11 inches). Weird they'd have these two kick boxers go MMA but interesting. Schilt started off looking for a K-1 fight which is not surprising given he won the World Grand Prix 3 years in a row, 2005-2007. Mo clinched quickly though and after a few moments they went to the ground. Mo stood in his guard looking for shots and Semmy kept busy trying for triangles and armbars and tossing in the odd up-kick. It didn't take long and he got a triangle on Mo at 5:31 of round 1.

Hayato Sakurai (175.3) vs. Katsuyori Shibata (175.6) in MMA rules

I missed the first 2 mins or so of this fight but the after fight replays told me that Shibata started strong and intense and there was even a mid-air collision near the ropes. When I came in Sakurai was cut with a bunch of blood on his face but on-top on the ground in side control and dominating. There was a bit of a crowd chant for Shibata but it didn't help. Sakurai stayed on top and in control, eventual gaining the mount and punching his way to a ref stoppage at 7:01 of round 1.

Tatsuya Kawajiri (154.0) vs. Kozo Takeda (153.8) in kickboxing rules

I haven't seen Kawajiri before that I remember but I'll remember him now. He came in fast and hard and just murdered Takeda. He took him down with an early left. Takeda got back up. Kawajiri dropped him with a right. He got back up. Kawajiri took him out with a flying knee that was just perfect. That will be on this man's (and probably K-1's) all time high-light reel. BUT he got back up. The last one though he didn't get back up. KO at 2:37 of round 1. Kawajiri was very humble and respectful after. Takeda's nose and lope were all busted up.

Alistair Overeem (253.4) vs. Badr Hari (didn't weigh in) in kickboxing rules

You know, I was a big fan of Badr Hari up until his performance at the grand prix. It is almost impossible to believe this fight even took place. To think that a man could get himself disqualified from a company's most important match of the year, the culmination of a year-long quest for the crowning of their world grand prix winner and then, just 25 days

later, the same company would use that man again is simply astounding. However, maybe someone in the matchmaking office knew something about what they were doing because Overeem murdered Badr Hari. A big early left rocked Hari and a great knee, left combo dropped him. Seconds later a straight left in the middle of the ring ended the contest. KO at 2:07 of round one. After the match Overeem said that "for everyone who thinks respect is important; there you go. Hari is heel for life.

I have a question here for Dave, or anyone else who might now. Has there ever been a comparable situation in boxing to what Badr Hari did in the ground prize? I mean, stomping a guy you've knocked down is pretty much as taboo in K-1 as it is in boxing. I'm just curious if there's ever been anything like the insanity Badr Hari showed in that fight.

Gegard Mousasi (215.2) vs. Musashi (228.4) in kickboxing rules

This fight provided some unintentional amusement for me. As Mousasi and Musashi basically sound the same and, in the Korean alphabet, are written the same, the Korean announcers clarified things for the audience by referring to Musashi as "Ilbon Musashi" which literally means "Japan Musashi" with a better translation probably being "The Japanese Musashi". I shall keep to their distinction. This was an intense fight but The Japanese Musashi was pretty much dominated by Gegard Mousasi, the dream middleweight champion, who is another fighter I'll not be forgetting anytime soon. The Japanese Mushashi tried to put up a fight but Gegard basically was just teeing off on him. It seems like the K-1 refs do a good job of stopping things when they should be stopped and not waiting for someone to be killed before calling it. A second bout of unintentional comedy came watching Mousasi's people struggling to get the mic stuck in his K-1 glove in such a way as he could hold it without dropping it. They shouldn't have bothered; he's a bad promo but wisely kept it mercifully short. Time was 2:32 of round 1.

Mark Hunt (286.9) vs. Melvin Manhoef (didn't weigh in) in MMA rules

This has to be the upset of the night. Hunt tried to bully Manhoef and rushed him. Manhoef caught him and dropped him and followed up with a couple punches on the ground that probably weren't needed because Hunt was doing nothing to protect his head/face. To his credit the ref threw himself in as fast as he could after the first punch. Manhoef KO's Hunt in 18 seconds. Just...wow. Wikipedia and Sherdog tell me that is Hunt's first KO in MMA and second ever with his first coming courtesy of Semmy Schilt in April. Add another to the count of fighter's who got old in "08. Oh, and after the fight Melvin claimed he was 88kg (194lbs).

Shinya Aoki (153.8) vs. Eddie Alvarez (152.2) in MMA rules

This was somewhat disappointing given the pedigree in the ring. Not because it was bad, just because it was one of those fights you'd like to see really go but actually ends quickly. It started with Aoki scooting around on his ass chasing Alvarez all over the ring. Just weird and the ref eventually stopped it. They got down to business and there was a quick series of clinch and standup grappling with go-behinds and a judo-style throw takedown. Quickly they were competing for leg-locks but Alvarez gave up his attempt to try and get free. To no avail unfortunately as Aoki forced him to tap at 1:32 of Round 1. The submission seemed to hurt Alvarez's knee as he was looked at immediately and they strapped a big bag of ice to his leg and had to help him hobble out the ring and to the back. Oh yeah, and I guess that makes Aoki the new and first ever WAMMA lightweight champ.

Mirko Cro Cop (didn't weigh in) vs. Choi Hong-man (326.7) in MMA rules

And this was the last match for me. Yeah, that's right. Despite the fact that everything I've found online tells me this match was actually before Mousashi v Mousasi, Manhoef v Hunt and Alvarez v. Aoki. The Korean stations though know their market and tacked the fight on to the end of their presentation to make this their "Main Event". This, of course, turned out to be a terrible idea because this was a boring way to end the show. Probably the match seemed worse than it was because so many of these fights had been fast and furious. This was slow and ponderous. Choi stalked around after Crocop who backpedaled and circled sending in vicious low-leg kicks. Turns out this was a good plan, but boring. He tried one high kick and it got a big pop from the crowd but missed. At one point Choi caught Crocop but seemed surprised and didn't so much run in as scurry awkwardly. Crocop got away though. The hard leg kicks seemed to piss Hon-man off something fierce but his angry flailing was largely ineffective. I'm guessing the savage low-blow Mirko delivered to him made him even angrier, but he was too busy wincing to retaliate ineffectively. When the match restarted Crocop immediately delivered a powerful inside leg kick to Hong-man's knee that dropped him in pain and ended the fight. Oh ya, and somewhere in there both fighters were given yellow cards for boring us, which was terribly unfair to Hong-Man who was trying to engage but being thwarted by his more mobile opponent. I must point out that during his walk to the ring Choi's facial expressions and body language made him seem uncomfortable, nervous and even sad. It is like he had a premonition that he was going to lose, get hurt doing it

and get kicked in the nuts and lose some of his purse (assuming a K-1 yellow card is a purse deduction). I kinda feel sorry for the guy.

Overall, a thumbs-up show with a really interesting lineup of fights.

The worst fight I saw was Crocop vs. Hong-man

None of the others really stood out as better than any other for me but they were all good in their own way.