



Hello all, in my continued attempts to get the sport of Muay Thai and kickboxing to the masses, I decided to do a segment called promoters and promotions to watch. My goal; to introduce the kickboxing public to new talent and ways to watch them, to encourage fighters, managers, and gyms to contact the promoter in hopes of creating opportunities for their athletes to compete, and finally, I hope to introduce the back bone to the sport, which is the local shows. Long before Giorgio Petrosyan, Jordan Watson, Andy Ristie, and Gohkan Saki were watched on Glory and K-1 cards, there were local promoters that gave them the opportunity to develop there skill set. I hope to tell people about such promoters and give them a forum to get their product out. First up, Vinnie McWilliams of the UK .

First question, what got you into fight promotion and how did Extreme Stand Up (ESU) start?

A- I promoted my first show at the age of 18 long before ESU was developed. I was always fascinated with the sport but soon realised fighting myself wasn't for me after a few interclubs and being on the wrong end of a few kickings. ESU was introduced in 2010 as an amateur series of events and we have slowly developed it into the premier professional fight show in Scotland. My business model for the events has really captured the whole nation and it continues to grow from day to day. ESU prides itself on the motto of 'FightersFirst' and I think that's what is so appealing to our national fighters.

Q- Is there opportunities for international fighters at ESU Promotion? Do you bring in guys from Canada, US, Thailand, etc?

A- Every single ESU promotion has had some sort of International fight on it. I think its important to bring in foreign fighters not only for the crowds pleasure but to test the skills of our home grown national talent against that of fighters from other countries, not only that, some of our fighters are at the stage where they are challenging for European and World level titles. So far we have had fighters from England, Italy, France, Germany, Holland and we are currently working on bringing opponents from Spain, Sweden, Portugal, Mexico and NewZealand for our next run of events.

Q- What would you say is your biggest event?

A- Our Biggest events at present are held in the Lagoon Arena in Paisley where we can see anything up to 2,350 spectators gather! However next year we are branching into the English market and look set to promote shows in the Glow Arena in London, which we hope to attract in the region of 4,500 spectators. Small potatoes to some of the other big KickBox promotions out there but its mega news for the UK scene.

Q- What would you say your promotions roll is in fight sports? (For example, I spoke to a promoter in China once who told me it was very important that people realize that he puts on a competition, not a show. Simon Rutz on the other hand said "Everyone thought he couldn't mix the show and fighting together but he did it with Its Showtime)

A- I think my role as a promoter has two goals, firstly I want to help take the sport in the UK to the next level and try and get as many new people involved in the sport as I can,. I know if this sport is marketed properly it has the potential to be as big as the UFC and I hope to be here when it does, and hope to be a part of it when it does! Secondly I think I have a responsibility to start making it better for fighters to compete and by that I mean start getting them paid properly, at the end of the day there would be no scene at all if their where no fighters and I cannot wait till the day that we can start seeing fighters take up this sport as their full time occupation!! Then things can start get serious.

Written by Steven Wright
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Q- What are some of the rising stars you see coming up in Scotland?

A- Scotland has a abundance of rising talent and without sounding pig headed I really would be here all night telling you about them all!! Some names to look out for off the top of my head - JR Morrison, Stevo McCulluch, Stevo Lochhead, Tam McCourt, Brian Totty, Adrien Wedolowski, Keith McLachlan, the list goes on!! These are all fighters that are signed to the ESU promotion so I might be guilty of being slightly biased there. I will give special mention to another signed fighter of ours and I do believe you are going to here about him at the highest level pretty soon - Chris Shaw, the last 2 years have seen in gain Scottish, British, European & World titles and with only one defeat to his name which was due to an unfortunate cut. He really does look unstoppable!! Another year or two and I will confidently predict that he will be undisputed World No1 at the 61kg division in both muaythai and K1 styles of fighting! Pretty bold statement to make but I have every faith in the Lad.

Q- Who are some of your favorite fighters in Muay Thai?

A- My favourite International fighters, lets see, the usual suspects - Buakaw, although I would like to see him fight more Thai opponents to be honest. Yodsanklai is pretty awesome as well and I like Sudsakorn Sor Klinmee out of sheer entertainment value. He is a great fighter as well. Favourite fighters from the UK - Liam Harrison, Jordan Watson, Tim Thomas, Andy Howson, all smashing it at the highest level!! Looking forward to seeing how Salah the Beasts career pans out as he is another star in the making, and of course my own stable of fighters as previously mentioned.

Q- Do you put on female fights?

A- We have had one or two amateur female fights at our shows before, from a professional point of view I haven't really had the chance to promote any chicks, however I am looking to secure a World title shot for Scotlands very own JOJO Calderwood who is making massive waves in the female MMA scene!! I must add it would be an honour and a privilege to be able to promote such a fight and I will keep you guys updated with any developments.

Q- In the age of the internet, how can people see fights from your promotion?

Promoters and Promotions to Watch: Vinnie McWilliams

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A- At this stage in the promotions progression we have a youtube channel (ESU Muaythai) where you can see all the fights and pre and post fight interviews, this will also be available through our website once it has been completed on www.esu-fighting.com. In the future however I am certain ESU will be featured on some mainstream sports channel ;-).

Q- What is the long term goal of ESU promotion?

A- The long term goal I feel is to become the biggest and best Muaythai and KickBox promotion on the planet. I think with the right guidance and maybe luck, I have what it takes to get ESU up there with the big guns and I certainly have the drive, motivation and passion to make sure that happens!! Who knows, maybe ESU America will be happening sooner than we think.

Q- Last question, who would you like to thank and is there anything you would like to Promote?

A- I would like to thank everybody who has supported the dream and stuck by me when times were a little uncertain. Its these people that I will be taking to the top when things do really start to happen, and the next installment of ESU takes place at the lagoon Arena in Paisley on Sat 5th October where we will see 2 top European title fights between Steven Lochhead and Aaron OCallaghan and Darren Howison against portugese champion Joao Silva!! also includes a packed undercard of top professional bouts.

As you can see, Vinnie McWilliams is dedicated to growing the sport. Hit up youtube page as his website is still in development. Check out his fighters, in particular Chris Shaw who is a lot of fun to watch. The sport is always happening, so lets be apart of making it bigger.