There are not many men who epitomize an entire sport or way of life quite like Peter Aerts does for K-1. In the world of Kickboxing, Aerts is a legend with a whopping three K-1 World Grand Prix victories under his belt and out of all of the years of the WGP happening, only missing one year. It is safe to say that Peter Aerts is cut from a different cloth than everyone else is, and that he was born to be a fighter. To say that Aerts does not like to give interviews is an understatement, especially when it comes to interviews to international media, so when we got the green light from Peter's wife, Esther, it came almost as a shock to us.

We caught up with Peter Aerts after he landed in Japan last week, in preparation for last week's Inoki Genome Federation professional wrestling event. We were lucky enough to discuss some current events with him, on a wide range of topics from his retirement, the state of kickboxing all the way to pro wrestling. Peter's whole career has been full of hefty challenges, and in his final fight it will be no different, as he challenges the young and dangerous Tyrone Spong. The

question was burning in my mind, why would Peter Aerts take such a tough opponent for his last fight, although he made the answer sound so simple.

“Because he’s a good fighter,” Aerts simply stated. “I prefer to fight my last fight against a good fighter.” It was incredibly simple, yet so incredibly Aerts. There have been many doubting Aerts over the past few years, wondering why he is competing against the best still, but his 2010 K-1 World Grand Prix run showed what he was made of and why, even when faced with retirement, Peter Aerts will be challenging himself. It almost feels surreal to imagine Kickboxing without Mr. K-1, and a part of me wondered if K-1 were to announce that they were back and running a Heavyweight World Grand Prix, would you he in?

“Yes!” Aerts replied with enthusiasm, which really kind of makes his retirement look like it is out of necessity and not because of age alone catching up with him. Aerts is tired of waiting for K-1, and had to make the tough call to opt to retire instead of waiting around for them to make good on their promises. While he would not go into detail on the amount or what was discussed, Aerts did confirm with us that K-1 officials have been in contact with him, but that there is still a significant sum of money owed to him and for him to fight under the K-1 banner again, there would need to be some reparations made.

Of course, those aren’t the only problems that the sport of Kickboxing is facing, as his retirement fight had to be moved to a new location thanks to the Dutch government who are putting the pressure on larger Martial Arts organizations. The BIBOB law has especially upset It’s Showtime’s management, with them even talking about relocating their offices.

“It’s a big shame for the sport!” Aerts commented on the topic of BIBOB, as he was looking forward to having his retirement fight in his home of the Netherlands. “The government has no respect for our sport.” There are many who agree with Aerts, as the main reason that has been cited to the public has been criminals purchasing VIP tickets to events and basically making it look cool to be an outlaw. For someone like Aerts, he has a vested interest in the sport of Kickboxing in his home of the Netherlands, as he has a new state-of-the-art gym and has been focusing more on training fighters than training himself.

“I want to teach my students from my knowledge and experience in fighting,” he adds. If Kickboxing events aren’t happening in the Netherlands, a gym like Peter’s might become less of a destination for fighters looking to hone their skills or young and eager potential fighters looking to learn from a master.

There has also been a lot of talk about fighters leaving Kickboxing for other sports, such as Boxing or Mixed Martial Arts, but Aerts doesn’t see it as a threat to Kickboxing as some do.

“It’s their own choice,” he states. “When they can make good money in other sports, why not?” This, of course is not shocking as Aerts himself has dabbled in MMA when the money was right, sporting a 1-1 record in MMA. Of course, there is also IGF professional wrestling, where Aerts has been the most active over the past year or so. Aerts never imagined that he would end up in professional wrestling, but he did. It was a bit of a fascination for him in his youth, though.

“Sure, when I was young I liked to watch it,” he joked with us, but he seems comfortable with it now as it pays the bills and brings him back to Japan where he is still wildly popular amongst fans who know and love him as Mr. K-1. Even as popular as he is, the K-1 name has taken a hit over the past few years. We asked him if K-1 could possibly see the same level of popularity that it did in the past, as well as if Kickboxing itself could be popular without the K-1 name.

“I don’t know,” he responds to the idea of it being as popular as it was before. “I hope so.” As for the idea of how important the K-1 name and brand are, he still feels strongly for the brand that he is so closely associated with.

“I think that Kickboxing needs K-1,” he posits, and it might be hard to disagree with the man whose name is intertwined with the legacy of the name K-1. K-1 helped make Peter a global superstar, just like he did with the company itself over many years of competition. So many fights, that when prompted to choose just one as his favorite, he found it impossible to choose, although he did have one memory that really stood out to him as a career-defining moment.

“When I became champion in 1998, that was my favorite moment,” he answered.

We had one more question for him before we let him go, and that was a loaded question, which he handled with ease. We asked him if he was leaving behind the Kickboxing world with any regrets, if there were any fighters that he wished he could have fought or that he would like to fight again to prove something. His answer was simple, to the point, earnest and very Peter Aerts.

“No, I fought all of the best,” he responds, before quickly adding in, “I think.”