*Amidst all the bad K-1 news, Europe's top fighting organization, **It's Showtime**, has been a hot topic of conversation lately. As plans for 2011 come together, we're seeing more and more events announced by the company, who find themselves constantly expanding their product throughout the world. But in the middle of all the positive news came an unfortunate announcement last week – due to a planned co-promotion with K-1 falling through, It's Showtime would not run their big annual show at the Amsterdam Arena in 2011.*

*Between this latest news, all the rumors swirling around K-1, Badr Hari's return, and various other stories, now seemed like a good time to speak to the always forthcoming It's Showtime president **Simon Rutz**. As always, Mr. Rutz offered plenty of insight into their dealings with K-1 and so much more.*

*Read on for part 1 of this 2 part **exclusive LiverKick.com interview**, as we get the story on exactly what happened with the canceled Amsterdam Arena event and the state of affairs for K-1 and It's Showtime.*

LiverKick.com: It's a shame you may not run in the Amsterdam Arena this year. When did you begin to think this show might not happen?

Simon Rutz: We have already known for many years that K-1 has big problems, but a few months ago they said to me that they have a new investor. That was the reason why I agreed to cooperate on the Amsterdam Arena event in May this year. Around Christmas I felt that there was something wrong with their situation because they didn't answer my requests anymore.

LK: What were the plans for the show? Did you have fighters already lined up?

SR: When It's Showtime and K-1 cooperate I always give my suggestions, and most of the time they use them. My suggestions for this year were: Badr Hari vs. Gokhan Saki; Peter Aerts vs.

Tyrone Spong; and Hesdy Gerges vs. Alistair Overeem, Errol Zimmerman, or someone else.

LK: We've heard a lot about K-1 not paying fighters, and I know Giorgio Petrosyan had problems with that last year. Are there It's Showtime or Black Label fighters who are waiting to be paid by K-1?

SR: Yes, the following fighters have not been paid for a fight: Melvin Manhoef, Tyrone Spong, Daniel Ghita, Hesdy Gerges, Gago Drago, Pajonsuk, Dzevad Poturak, Chahid, and Giorgio Petrosyan still needs his win bonus from the last K-1 MAX tournament. It is a lot of money! I never let our fighters fight before they are paid for their last fight. I hear that some other fighters haven't gotten their money for 4 fights. It is a sad situation for all the fighters.

LK: Given all these problems, what, in your opinion, does K-1 need to do to survive?

SR: They need a lot of money, and they must ask my advice (and do something with that advice) because they do a lot of stupid things.

LK: If they don't get that money, and they don't survive, what will it mean for kickboxing and for It's Showtime?

SR: If they don't survive it is very bad for the sport and for many fighters. For It's Showtime, it would mean that we are the number 1 kickboxing organization in the world and everybody will look to us. We are getting busy like never before. We have already seen a movement from K-1 to It's Showtime. Almost every day I talk with people around the world who want to organize an It's Showtime event in their country.

LK: Would you ever consider buying out K-1?

SR: Why should I do that? I have my own brand and company who is healthy and is going very well. Also, what am I buying then? Only a lot of problems! The [K-1] name is very strong, but I

already have a good name. I will keep my money in my pocket!

LK: You said you are talking with people around the world, and this looks like a huge year for you with new events in England, Germany, and Spain. Any details on those shows?

SR: Our schedule for the year is now: March 6 – Amsterdam, Holland; March 26 – Brussels, Belgium; May 14 – Lyon, France (not signed yet); May – Manheim, Germany (not signed yet); June 11 – Warsaw, Poland; July 23 – Sochi, Russia; August 27 – Sarajevo, Bosnia; September 18 – Amsterdam, Holland; September 24 – Manchester, England (not signed yet); October 8 – Geneva, Switzerland; End of December in Amsterdam for the It's Showtime Christmas Edition again. We are also talking about It's Showtime events in Spain, Ukraine, and Australia. As you see, we are really busy. We have at least 10 big events this year, maybe 12.

LK: You know I have to ask – any further info on possibly running in the United States?

SR: I am getting more and more interest for It's Showtime events in the US. Last week, one of the TV stations from the US bought our It's Showtime events, so that is starting. I also am speaking with several people to see what the possibilities are in the US. But when we start, we will start slowly with events for 2,000 people.

LK: With all this expansion, where do you want It's Showtime to be in 2 years?

SR: Pff..... 6 months ago I said that in 5 years It's Showtime would organize between 15 and 20 events a year, but we are going so fast, maybe next year we will already be doing 15 events a year!

Check back tomorrow for the conclusion of this interview as we discuss Remy Bonjasky's retirement, Cosmo Alexandre, the Hesdy Gerges/Semmy Schilt controversy, and of course, Badr Hari.