On December 6th, MMAFighting.com's Ariel Helwani broke the story about the Tatsuya Kawajiri / Josh Thomson lightweight match-up that is set to take place just days away at DREAM's DYNAMITE! 2010 show.

Both men have fought and held for numerous championships and have faced some of the best fighters on the planet in their careers. The fight between the two has been talked about since Strikeforce CEO, Scott Coker, announced a working deal with DREAM last summer. Nearly sixteen months later, MMA fans get to see the two top 10 lightweights go head to head. In that time, both men have had nearly polar opposite careers.

At DYNAMITE! last year, Kawajiri won a dominating decision over the tough, Kazunori Yokota. In the first half of 2010 he nursed several injuries and waited for an opportunity to fight Shinya Aoki for the DREAM lightweight title. He was unsuccessful in his July bid when Aoki forced Kawajiri to submit with an Achilles lock barely two minutes into the fight. Thomson also spent the beginning of the year recovering from past ailments. When he returned to the Strikeforce cage in June, Josh Thomson submitted Pat Healy in the third frame in a tougher than expected bout. The former Strikeforce lightweight champion continued his winning ways when he earned a very narrow (and controversial) decision over Gesias "JZ" Cavalcante. With that win, "The Punk" looked like he had positioned himself for a title shot and a rubber match with Gilbert Melendez. So that brings up the question, is the reward of a potential lightweight classic worth risking one of the biggest fights Strikeforce could make in 2011?

I'm sure most fans would say it is. The stylistic match-up between Thomson and Kawajiri almost guarantees fireworks and it's rare to get two top 10 opponents face one another outside the UFC. It's also one of the most compelling and competitive fights on DREAM's New Year's Eve card. However, Melendez vs. Thomson is a proven formula for a fight of the year candidate. Both of their first two fights had MMA fans praising both men's performance and yearning for the next installment. I would personally say that Tatsuya Kawajiri has a very good chance of throwing a wrench in Strikeforce's marquee lightweight championship affair. He has a very similar style to Gilbert Melendez (as evidence by the Melendez/Kawajiri fight in 2006) and

Thomson hasn't exactly looked stellar in his past two outings. Kawajiri probably will have some ring rust, but I think he's got a very good chance of going into DYNAMITE! and winning a close decision.

Scott Coker and company don't gain much from a Josh Thomson win. He's already got two solid wins under his belt, and with the nature of his rivalry with Gilbert Melendez, another win really isn't necessary to set up that trilogy fight. If you had to make a list of the biggest fights Strikeforce could make, I'd be comfortable in predicting that Melendez/Thomson III probably cracks the top 5 to 10. There aren't many fights that can be so easily as that one. Melendez/Kawajiri II takes a lot more marketing firepower.