When fight fans think about a fighter, especially a rising star, I'm surprised how few think about the term narrative. To me, the narrative of a fighter's career and of each fight is one of the most alluring parts of the fight game, and partially why Kickboxing has always aced Mixed Martial Arts for me. Sure, the kicks, the clinch game and the constant action helps, but K-1 especially did a great job in the 90's and early 00's of building up new stars and telling a story to the world, as opposed to simply pushing out fighters and booking them in competitive fights.

I'm not trashing competitive fights, just saying that simply booking them alone is not always enough in building a star. This line of thought crossed my mind when it became clear this week that K-1 had Daniel Ghita on the hook for the K-1 World Grand Prix, and instead of reeling him in and claiming the biggest star and most talented Heavyweight in Kickboxing today, they opted to let him go due to fears of him jumping to the competition after fighting for them and winning their tournament. I understand that line of reasoning, but the truth is, there is a good chance of Daniel Ghita, potentially the best Heavyweight alive in the world right now, might have to sit out the 2012 tournament season due to politics. This is all happening right when his star has been cemented and the narrative has been in place that Daniel Ghita is the best in the world, just ready to claim his throne.

No, passing on Daniel Ghita might not cost K-1 ticket sales right away, because as talented as he is, his star has not yet been established like Badr Hari's star has been. Of course, Badr Hari is potentially done with the sport, as well as a public life, for good, leaving Daniel Ghita as the lone man in the discussions for best in the world along with Semmy Schilt. If you look at It's Showtime's history of booking Daniel Ghita, he was not selling out arenas across Europe like Badr Hari could do, but instead he was being built into a star. There is something in professional wrestling called a "squash match" where a wrestler on the rise will perform against "enhancement talent" (read: jobber) and this match is simply a way to present them to the fans

and highlight their strengths. It is essential to building a star, but is not the only step on the road to stardom.

This also happens often in Boxing, and I've seen a lot of MMA fans over the years be critical of it, but the truth is, it works. It is tried and tested as a method, has been in use for years, and takes a fighter and gives them a winning streak, some material for the highlight reels, and helps to sell future fights against better talent. This is part of the reason why fans were drooling over the concept of a fight between Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather, Jr.; because both men were on a roll. Both men looked unstoppable and while they both had legitimate wins, they both had some easier feature fights for them as well. It is the concept of tension and release. You build the tension and then you hold on for as long as you can before the pressure begins to drop and you release. If you wait too long, things can go wrong (such as Manny Pacquiao losing, Floyd going to prison for tax evasion, etc.) and all of your hard work is down the drain, but if done just right, it pays off.

Daniel Ghita has all of the talent in the world, and is still developing into the fighter that he will one day be. Ghita is on a seven-fight win streak now, and there seems to be no end in sight to it, but peculiarly enough, not all of those fights were against top opponents. Instead, It's Showtime featured Daniel Ghita against lesser opponents in many cases, keeping him active (five fights this year alone), but out of harms way. If booked against a legitimate threat, Ghita could prove himself to be the star that many believe him to be. The chance for payoff was coming for those behind the monster that is Daniel Ghita, with him entering into one of the big tournaments. As of right now, while there is a chance for him fighting for Glory, it is still uncertain. For K-1, they had a chance to have the best Heavyweight in the world in their tournament, and if he lost to one of their up-and-comers, they'd have created an instant star. Hell, even if a guy like Randy Blake or Jarrell Miller stood toe-to-toe with Ghita, their name value would skyrocket and the questions about American talent would all-but vanish.

If Ghita ends up in Glory, a win in the Glory Grand Slam will cement him at the number one spot and the payoff will be felt for those in It's Showtime who helped build up the star that is Daniel Ghita. For me as a fan, I want to see where the story of Daniel Ghita goes; does he sweep whatever tournament he's in this year and take his place as the greatest Heavyweight alive, does he sit out due to politics, or does he enter a tournament and lose, getting set back for a year? I sure hope it isn't him sitting out, as when it comes to storytelling, that is just poor storytelling.