

Note To Klitschkos--Overeem Brothers Would Fight Each Other

Written by Brian J. D'Souza

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Valentijn must get past Ray Sefo (r) and lots of other goofier stuff would have to happen before the Overeems would be positioned to face each other. But it is intriguing that they are open to the possibility. In Mixed Martial Arts, no question arouses more passionate argument than the question of whether teammates should fight one another. But what about taking the question even further—should siblings compete against each other?

With a slight possibility of facing his brother, Alistair Overeem, in the Strikeforce heavyweight tournament, Valentijn Overeem intrigued fans when he gave his answer. Speaking to MMAFighting.com's Ariel Helwani at the Strikeforce fan experience in New York City on Wednesday, Valentijn mentioned he was aware of the potential match.

"I've talked about it with my brother," replied the elder Overeem.

"You would consider it?" pressed Helwani.

"Of course," said Valentijn.

It's a question that has been posed to Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko on multiple occasions, as well as Frank and Ken Shamrock. The former answered with a resounding 'no,' saying, boxing isn't a game like tennis where only ego is bruised following a match; the latter seemed agreeable to fisticuffs due to bad blood, but with Frank in the 185 lb class and Ken scaling in at heavyweight—among other reasons—the fight never came off.

The Klitschkos, found wanting for a recognized opponent in the vein of Lennox Lewis, could never evade public curiosity over Wladimir vs. Vitali. In the case of the Overeem brothers, there is little or no interest in them fighting, since there are a plethora of heavyweight matches to test them.

The issue of teammates facing each other is equally complex as the Valentijn-Alistair equation. By working together, fighters learn the strengths and weaknesses of their training partners. They invest untold amounts of time, energy and advice and form a special bond that can transcend the gym.

"We're good friends, too. That's one of the big benefits," Valentijn explained to me. "We train and help each other prepare ourselves for the fight."

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As for facing teammates, the road to Alistair's 2010 K-1 World Grand Prix title was paved over Golden Glory member Gokhan Saki in the semi-finals where Alistair broke Saki's right arm with a left high kick.

Despite minor speculation over the possibility of Alistair vs. Valentijn, the stars would have to line up (im)perfectly for this match to occur within the Strikeforce heavyweight tournament: Valentijn must get past Ray Sefo tonight at Strikeforce: Fedor vs. Silva in New Jersey; Alistair must get past Fabricio Werdum in his first round match on April 9th; and at least two fighters would have to be injured and/or withdraw from the tournament since the winner of Shane Del Rosario-Lavar Johnson is the first alternate. Finally, Scott Coker would have to make a call—and he seems unlikely to invite controversy upon a tournament that Strikeforce has invested heavily in as their breakthrough event.

There's no right answer to the question of facing a friend, training partner, or even a sibling. Teams change, relationships are never static, and opportunities can always outweigh the risks. But if push comes to shove, we know the Overeem brothers' position.

Alistair didn't even flinch or hesitate when asked about the idea of facing Valentijn after the Strikeforce weigh-ins held on Friday:

"Sure. Why not?"

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FighterforJC says:

People are different. Also, it's easier to fake a MMA match than a boxing match because once it goes to the ground, it's easy to let someone apply a submission and tap from it. In boxing it'd be too obvious if you're pulling your punches. Also, MMA is safer than boxing. Even if the two brothers were to fight each other legitimately, it's going to be over suddenly. I don't mean that it'd be a short fight, but the nature of MMA is such that nothing could be happening for 90% of the fight but one punch/kick or a slip up can end in a sudden stoppage or tapout.