Another side to the Bob Sapp Story

Contributed by Brett Atchley
Sunday, 28 May 2006

Rumors have been swirling about Bob Sapp's prompt exit from the main event of the K-1 Holland event . K-1 has released their version of the events in their event report, but MMA Ring Report's Brett Atchley has dug deep to get the most info about the incident and the inner workings of the K-1 organization and brings us the most info on the situation that we have ever seen. Lies, deceipt, threats to Sapp's health, and much more are here, for the full story click on... There has been a lot of speculation going around about the current state of K-1 as an organization. With the recent incident of Bob Sapp walking out of K-1's last event in Holland at the last moment, despite being in the main event with Ernesto Hoost rumors have been swirling.

What was shared with me over hours of conversation over days with a source that asked to go un-named was nothing short of unbelievable. The source is someone who is as close to the organization as one can get and the source conveyed, "If this is written accurately, K-1 will know it to be the truth and will have no doubt as to its origin,"

What this individual heard was that although the events that transpired were over a very long period of time he would agree to condense and provide me with the readers digest version. Two hours later and in the company of a very irritated wife, (I went to see the DaVinci Code and she ended up watching it alone) I learned more than I ever expected, in terms of what goes on behind the scenes of the K-1 organization from this source, from his perspective. Maurice Smith also reinforced and substantiated much of what was shared with me as well, as he was and still is Bob Sapp's trainer.

On May 13, 2006 a strange turn of events took place when much to the surprise and shock of some 25,000 unsuspecting fans, Bob Sapp initiated a very bold move and told Toru (K-1's Attorney) he would not be fighting and walked out of the venue with his hands taped. What was reported on a website was that he walked out in an air of cowardice and false injury. What was also implied was that Sapp was doped up! How absurd is that, considering in Amsterdam narcotics are on many levels, not only an accepted part of society, but legal?

Bob Sapp was under a pre-existing fight contract with K-1 for a 20 fight contract, and he fulfilled that contract and his fight with Hoost, would've been his 22nd fight for the K-1 organization. His agreement with them was to renegotiate with K-1 on his 21st fight, with the promise of a substantial bonus, and the promise a new contract would be in place by his 22nd fight.

One week before the Hoost fight was to take place, K-1 and the promoter of the Holland event, (Simon Rutz) contacted Mr. Sapp, summoning him to Amsterdam to fight Ernesto Hoost in the main event. They promised in good faith that a new contract had been drawn up by the K-1 counsel and would be available for his review in Amsterdam, and that the money which was reported to be in the $500,000.00 range, would be deposited into his account or in escrow before his arrival to Amsterdam. When Mr. Sapp arrived in Amsterdam four days prior to the event there had been no monies deposited, or in escrow, so he contacted the organization in Japan with his concerns. Sapp told MMA Ring Report, "Japan is in opposition to Amsterdam in terms of time zone so it was the middle of the night and everyone was in bed, which was bullshit, it's four days before the fight, I have no contract, and they are not getting their lazy asses out of bed to take care of this! We lose another day and the clock is ticking. We get a hold of K-1's attorney (Toru) and the promoter (Simon Rutz) to find out what the skinny is. The promoter does not know, and the attorney says he is going to get it all taken care of."

As days pass and the event approached, Sapp is of the climate that all will be worked out. The day before the fight, Mr. Sapp approaches the K-1 attorney (Toru) to ask him where the new contract is. The attorney was, in prior days, very personable, light-hearted and optimistic about the current situation. When Bob inquired further, he was told in no uncertain terms, that he did not know what was going on with the contract and to leave him "the fuck alone!" He further stated, "look Bob, I'm not your friend, this is not a friendship, it is business and that is just the way it goes. I will let you know when I know something." Mr. Sapp was visibly and emotionally disturbed and insulted by the mentality that he just been exposed to. It was apparent to him that distance was being placed between himself and the organization. Mr. Sapp always felt that his relationship with K-1 was more than just a business relationship; he had after all been more than generous in the past with K-1 helping them promote at no cost to them. "The "Beast" promotions were promoted on the shoulders of Sapp and had done very well because of that, he had even made sure that each of the participants were very well taken care of, to the lengths of offering them items such as flat screen TVs, DVD players and digital cameras, independent of the purses. It was out of his own pocket, and he felt a fierce loyalty to the organization and wanted the athlete's to be treated as professionals."

All in all the point made was that he was nothing but a product that was to be put in his place and not forget who buttered his bread. This is where it got to a point of complete senseless behavior by the K-1 hierarchy. "They would not engage him. He finally was able to make his point to the promoter Simon Rutz, what his intentions were. They were as follows; Bob would fight Hoost for nothing if it were agreed that K-1 release him completely from all current and future obligations, or that he be presented with the promised contract that they were in severe breech of, signed by the K-1 matchmaker, Sadaharu Tanigawa. His demands were then conveyed to Mr. Tanigawa. Sapp was told the night before the event that

he would have his contract and agreed upon purse by the promoter. This was reportedly, suppose to happen the next morning. Mr. Sapp had his own contract drafted just to cover his bases.

The next morning Sapp began his day as usual, doing various appearances and making himself visible to the promotions public and fan base. He was present at all press conferences and photo shoots, it seemed as though all would be as promised. They (Simon Rutz, the promoter and Tanigawa, the match-maker) relayed to him that it would all be resolved. Less than 4 hours from the start of the event nothing had been done. Sapp would not go to the venue, he took a firm position that he would not participate in the event unless he had a valid contract of some nature.

Two hours before the event was to commence Sapp got a call from Simon Rutz, begging Sapp to come to the venue and was once again assured that everything would be in order. He would go to the venue. When he got there he was met by both Tanigawa and Toru (the K-1 attorney) and directed to go to his dressing room to get ready and taped, they would be there with the documents containing within them a new contract. They would not agree to let him out of organization, and indicated that they would make good on their promise of the before mentioned agreement and compensation.

In the dressing room Maurice Smith began preparing Sapp for the fight. He began taping Sapp's hands. "Some time had passed and nobody had shown up, he was dressed down, taped, jock, cup and shorts, ready to rock Ernesto's world. Nobody had shown up, so the contract he had was taken, and off Sapp goes out to the venue with contract in hand. He can't find K-1's attorney. Toru just quit answering his phone and kind of disappeared placing a larger amount of distance between himself and the volatile situation. He catches up with Toru and shows him the contract, Tanigawa is present and Sapp is waving this contract around demanding for it to be signed or that they give him one. There was never a contract from K-1, and Tanigawa along with Toru say that they need an American to interpret the contract, that's just bullshit. It's not happening, Bob was being put in a corner and they gambled that he wouldn't stand his ground. It was a pressure boiler of a situation. Bob Sapp and Maurice Smith along with the entourage in tow walked over to Toru and Dieasuke Karaguchi (a K-1 representative) and further reinforced the seriousness of his intentions by grabbing by the shoulder of Toru telling him in an angered tone, "this is all your fault mother fucker and I'm out of here."

"Complete chaos and pandemonium commences. It was crazy, people are yelling, screaming, fighting, and crying. We had to get out of there. He was told before he could leave by both Toru and Karaguchi that if he did not fight, his physical well being would be compromised and those that were with him. We got the hell out of there as soon as we could. We got back to the room and a call was made to a well known billionaire who immediately arranged for eight bodyguards to see him and his team safely out of harms way."

Sapp and his team were led from the hotel with eight security personnel to an undisclosed location in Amsterdam where they spent the night and caught a plane back to the United States. The aftermath of what happened is something that is almost beyond belief in what it reveals about K-1, its personalities, its athletes, and the industry as a whole.

K-1's athlete's are subject to a "consumption tax" levied by the country of Japan. The foreign contingent of K-1's athletes will be subject to this tax retro-active to 2002. It is basically a tax based on the principles that athletes come to Japan to reside, thus consuming, space, food, energy, and other dispersed and disposed commodities noted to be of an above average value on a piece of land that pales in comparison to magnitude of it's population. K-1 has not notified or advised any of these athletes about this, and until now they would never known until the Japanese equivalent of the U.S's IRS caught up with them. What is believed by exercising this deception, is that it would present a situation in contract negotiations where the athlete's could and would be entitled to a provision in the purse agreement that K-1 absorb the said tax.

"It all comes down to money and K-1 is not being upfront in advising or disclosing this tax. Thus the fighter is subject to these taxes unknowingly long after the contract is binding and monies are paid. Pride FC's athletes all pay that tax, why K-1 has not attended to what will be a very serious matter for these athlete's boggles the mind.

K-1 will not let Bob Sapp out of a contract. They see him even today as a big draw and a huge commodity. Bob has not done so well of late in competition. You would think that rather than keep him on a contract and continue to pay him for not fighting they would let him go. Since this has happened they have threatened to sue him and harm him, they see him now as an opportunity to exercise the same deal that they did with Royce Gracie.

Pride files suit in a California supreme court against K-1 in a matter that involved Royce Gracie. Pride was granted relief in California by the court in the K-1 lawsuit to the tune of just under $500,000.00. Toru was the lead counsel for K-1 in that matter. K-1 however, did turn around and negotiate with Zuffa to loan them Royce Gracie for some absurd amount that was bound to absorb the Pride award, with much more to spare. K-1 has the same hope and aspirations for Bob Sapp. Sapp has been speaking with all domestic MMA organizations and is actively pursuing an MMA career with these organizations. If the money is right and he has been welcomed with open arms. K-1 is doing everything in its power to make sure that they receive the lion's share of that contract by "loaning out their fighter." Sapp just laughs it off in that booming laugh that is uniquely Sapp. "Let them make their move, they got no game over here, they're delusional."

The rumors are to be put to be put to rest at least from the sources perspective of what happened in Amsterdam.

It is further noted that Fuji is in a state of complete ignorance of what the financial ramifications will be when the dust settles. K-1 is now promoting Sapp as a participant in the K-1 Grand Prix on July 30th of 2006. Currently there are no plans by Sapp's camp to participate in that promotion. "If he were to participate for a said purse and contract of $ 1,000,000.00, he would be subject to the consumption tax and the IRS taxes, thereby leaving him with about $50,000.00. That is financially prohibitive all the way around. He just got a letter from K-1 advising him of the consumption tax. That's the first ever in 4 years that it has ever been brought up." There are no immediate plans for Sapp to ever return to Japan to engage in further negotiation with K-1. His health and welfare have been aggressively threatened. Simon Rutz is currently under investigation for charges of conspiracy and felony death threats.

It should be clarified that Simon Rutz was not involved in any of the threats in any way, shape, or form. He is just a good guy trying to salvage a bad situation. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time and is now being thrown out to the wolves as a scapegoat. Sapp has been approached by various MMA entities in the U.S., offering contracts. Sapp technically owes monies and has debt, thereby allowing him under U.S law to provide for himself a means of income.

The question that begs to be answered is this: What has K-1 gotten themselves into, that these acts of desperation and greed present to its athletes and public that there is an air of insecurity and volatility? Have they entered into a partnership with an element that is has no regard for its practices or its athletes welfare? As this unfolds, it is surely on a path that will rear the answers to these questions and many more surprises will come to light.

Sapp will stay here in the U.S and consider his current opportunities in the sport and in Hollywood. He is to be in a film with Rob Schneider and Randy Couture this summer. He has aspirations of being able to cross over from one industry to the other. Love him or leave him, what should be looked at are his actions as a whole, and the whole turn of events and actions by all parties. I leave it to you to make your own conclusions.Any questions or comments? Feel free to contact Brett Atchley at batchley1@comcast.net

In an added addendum I recently wrote an article about Maurice Smith and his thoughts on the industry. He has asked me to clarify a few points.

He has a healthy distaste for both the UFC and K-1. The verbiage I used to illustrate that distaste was too harsh and pointed out that if he said it, it was not to be for the public.

He also was very specific on another point on his perceived dismissal of Forrest Griffin as an athlete. "I meant no disrespect to Forrest on any level. I have been out of the current tracking of the sport and he at that time was not familiar to me. Anybody who can go into a battle with Tito and come that close to beating him is certainly someone who is not deserving of any manner of disrespect. My hat's off to him."The interview in question can be found HERE...