



PRESS KIT

#BELLATORMMA // BELLATOR.COM

ABOUT BELLATOR MMA

Bellator MMA™ was founded in 2008 and is one of the world's largest mixed martial arts (MMA) promotions. Bellator, which is the Latin word for "warrior," has a vision to enhance the fight business and offer the most exciting sporting events for fans and viewers across the globe, while featuring some of the top-athletes in the world. Bellator will uphold the value of the sport and its fighters, while uniting them like no other organization can with the goal of expanding and showcasing the personality and showmanship that makes MMA the most exciting sport in the world.

Headquartered in California, Bellator is owned by American global mass media company Viacom, and currently airs in over 140 countries around the world.

Bellator made its Spike debut in January of 2013, and continues to reach over 100 million homes on a weekly basis. Additional

exclusive Bellator content, Bellator shoulder programming, highlights and reality based series airs on Spike TV and the newly relaunched Bellator.com.

This past June with Scott Coker serving as the company president, "Bellator: Unfinished Business" broke franchise records for ratings, peaking at more than 2.9 million viewers, making it one of the most watched MMA event on cable television in 2015.

Another milestone was achieved in September 2015 when Bellator hosted the company's Dynamite 1 event from the SAP Center. The event featured dual canvases—a ring and a cage—which played host to MMA and kickboxing bouts. A one-night, four-man tournament was also held in addition to Liam McGeary defending the Light Heavyweight World Title against Tito Ortiz.



ABOUT SCOTT COKER

Hired by Viacom in June of 2014, Scott Coker has stepped up to the task of leading Bellator in the proper direction. With more than 30 years promoting martial arts events, Coker is well known throughout the MMA industry as the founder and former CEO of Strikeforce MMA. His career in combat sports began as a student of acclaimed martial artist and fight choreographer Ernie Reyes Sr. Coker earned a 7th degree Taekwondo black belt and became an original member of Reyes' West Coast Demonstration Team. In March 1985, Coker promoted his first fight card, serving as the San Jose promoter for the Professional Karate Association (PKA), a regulatory body for kickboxing and karate competitions. Coker helped form the International Sports Karate Association (ISKA) in 1986 and served as a director of ISKA and later headed K-1 USA, an extension of the extremely popular Japanese-based K-1 kickboxing promotion. In 1992, Coker founded the kickboxing league, Strikeforce and struck a crucial deal with ESPN to air some of its cards. Strikeforce evolved into a mixed martial league in 2006, and its first MMA event featuring a fight between Frank Shamrock and Cesar Gracie drew an astounding crowd of over 18,000 at the HP Pavilion in San Jose, which to this day remains a U.S. record for MMA attendance.

Strikeforce became home to the sport's biggest stars including Fabricio Werdum, Daniel Cormier, Ronda Rousey, Robbie Lawler, Luke Rockhold, 'Jacare' Souza, Gilbert Milendez, Frank Shamrock, Cung Le, Nick Diaz, Fedor Emilianenko, Dan Henderson, Alistair Overeem, Clay Guida, Gina Carano, Jason Miller and Nate Marquardt. In April 2008, Coker increased Strikeforce's media presence by striking a deal with NBC to



air the half-hour highlight program, "Strikeforce on NBC," hosted by Ken Shamrock and Lon McHeron. In 2009, Coker completed an agreement with Pro Elite, Inc. to acquire the properties of the defunct Elite XC mixed martial arts company. The deal included its video library and fighter contracts. The purchase included an agreement between Strikeforce, CBS and Showtime Networks to produce several events per year, including the successor of ShoXC: Elite Challenger Series, Strikeforce Challengers. In 2011, Coker sold Strikeforce to Zuffa, the parent company of the UFC.

Coker's presence has provided the Bellator with immediate results through his signature "tent-pole events" which have seen "Bellator 131: Ortiz vs. Bonnar" and "Bellator 138: Kimbo vs. Shamrock" both set company records hitting peak ratings of over 2 million viewers each.

CURRENT BROADCAST PARTNERSHIPS

BROADCASTER // 134 TERRITORIES AS OF 08.09.2015

SPIKE TV // 3

USA, Canada, American Forces Network, Puerto Rico

AB GROUPE // 44

France, Andorra, Angola, Belgium, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Monaco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Republic of Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Switzerland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

DISCOVERY // 5

Italy, Malta, San Marino, Switzerland, Vatican City

SIC // 1

Portugal

THE FIGHT CHANNEL // 6

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia

CELESTIAL TIGER // 17

Brunei, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Palau, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam

NETWORK 15 // 2

Spain, Andorra

ANANEY // 1

Israel

NC+ // 1

Poland

NETWORK TEN // 1

Australia

bTV // 2

Bulgaria, Romania

SPIKE NETHERLANDS // 2

The Netherlands, Belgium

OSN // 25

Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, West Bank

CURRENT BROADCAST PARTNERSHIPS

BROADCASTER // 134 TERRITORIES AS OF 08.09.2015

SKY SPORTS // 1

New Zealand

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FOX SPORTS // 18

Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela

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RDS // 1

Canada (French-speaking)

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SPIKE UK / CHANNEL 5 // 4

England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland

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R2 // 2

Russia, Belarus

WHAT THE MEDIA IS SAYING ABOUT BELLATOR MMA

SB NATION // *Karim Zidan*

Bellator produced an entertaining night of fights that certainly brought with it more headlines and media attention than its main competitor, the UFC.

MMA FIGHTING // *Luke Thomas*

Bellator has never been more popular. Spike TV has strong ratings and has an elite MMA organization in house to promote, leverage and maintain.

GRANTLAND // *Geoff Gallo*

Bellator is putting on consistently good shows with an intriguing format and a growing pool of talent. Ultimately that's good for fighters and the future of the sport. And that's good for fans, too.

BLEACHER REPORT // *Jonathan Snowden*

Bellator has become a water-cooler subject.

YAHOO // *Dave Doyle*

Bellator's new leadership, one year in, has proven to be smart... The mere fact Bellator has become buzzworthy is just one of the reasons perceptions of the company have changed.

USA TODAY // *Sergio Non*

Bellator's organizational ability, knack for exciting bouts and unique approach to fighter match-ups made the promotion stand out.

MMA FIGHTING // *Mark Raimondi*

Bellator has made signing stud wrestlers a high priority. Ruth, a three-time Division I wrestling champion at Penn State, was signed in May. Pico, who is still only 18 years old, was inked in November. Both are also Olympic hopefuls.

MMA JUNKIE // *Ben Fowlkes*

Bellator will be the destination for the stuff we can't deny we want to see.

WHAT THE MEDIA IS SAYING ABOUT SCOTT COKER

YAHOO SPORTS // *Kevin Iole*

Bellator desperately needed someone one not only with a great eye for talent, but also one who was liked and respected throughout the industry. That almost perfectly describes Coker. One would have to search far and wide to find anyone with a bad word to say about the man.



BLOODY ELBOW // *John S. Nash*

After asking roughly two dozen fighters, managers, and trainers, inside and outside of Bellator, their thoughts on Coker taking the position of President...the responses ranged from positive to downright ecstatic.



SB NATION // *Josh Samaan*

Scott Coker is truly great at what he does think the separation between UFC and Bellator is important, and both parties seem to be doing their best to not be confused with the other. While the UFC continues fighting for legitimacy with uniforms and stringent drug testing, Bellator marches onward into the more experimental, as evidenced by their upcoming kickboxing/MMA hybrid card.



COMBAT PRESS // *Matt Quiggins*

Under the regime of company head Scott Coker, Bellator has done an incredible job of bringing back the Pride-esque introductions and walkouts. Coker has really upped the entertainment value while re-introducing fans to the days of old.



ESPN // *Brett Okamoto*

Coker has a proven knack for signing talent, something he reminded everyone of during Bellator 131 when he announced the signing of 18-year-old prospect Aaron Pico.



MIDDLEEASY.COM // *Dave Walsh*

Scott Coker's Bellator can make MMA cool again.



WHAT THE MEDIA IS SAYING ABOUT BELLATOR MMA: DYNAMITE 1

USA TODAY // *Ben Fowlkes*

Bellator's Scott Coker era has been all about ditching the every-Friday-night routine in favor of stuff that's just enough of a spectacle to get us in our seats with a real sense of eagerness and anticipation. It worked on me here. It even made me excited about what he'll come up with next.

USA TODAY // *Mike Bohn*

Bellator 142 was one of the biggest events in the organization's history, and it certainly felt that way.

SB NATION // *Steve Juon*

That opening pretty much destroyed anything UFC has done (or to be more precise, hasn't done) in the years since Zuffa purchased their last significant rival in Strikeforce and shut it down.

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED // *Mike Dyce*

"Bellator MMA: Dynamite 1" was an event like none other.

BLEACHER REPORT // *Jeremy Botter*

Last Saturday was another step forward for Bellator which delivered an entertaining event filled with fun and madness and familiar names.

SB NATION // *Adrian Macnair*

It was a circus, but the best kind of circus, the kind where you're not sure exactly what you'll see until you arrive.

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS // *Dom Santomieri*

A new era in fighting has been launched, and it doesn't involve the UFC...San Jose native and long-time fight promoter Scott Coker brought his brand of MMA promotion to the SAP Center in an astounding fashion Saturday night.

SB NATION // *Adrian Macnair*

The star power at "Bellator 142: Dynamite 1" was truly amazing.

WHAT THE MEDIA IS SAYING ABOUT BELLATOR 138

BLEACHER REPORT // *Steven Rondina*

So what did it do well? For one night, it captured the world's attention. #Bellator138 hit No. 2 on the worldwide trends on Twitter. It was No. 1 in the United States. It had mainstream media members tweeting about it. Those are all huge feats for the second-largest promotion of a niche sport.

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YAHOO // *Dave Doyle*

Google searches for "Kimbo Slice" over the weekend were around 500,000, putting it on par with UFC 182 (Jon Jones vs. Daniel Cormier) and UFC 183 (Anderson Silva vs. Nick Diaz), the UFC's biggest events over the past year. Bellator 138 took first for the day in the Nielson Twitter TV ratings in the Series and Specials category. Media outlets like the New York Times, which rarely touch MMA, much less the sport's second-place brand, covered the event.

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CAGE POTATO

Chalk it up to the marketing brilliance of Ken Shamrock, the Coker Era of Bellator matchmaking, or the undeniable Internet presence of Kimbo Slice, but here it is Monday morning, and the only thing anyone can talk about is the Bellator 138 main event.

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2015 Year in Review: Sweeping Changes Drastically Change MMA Landscape

By Jonathan Snowden, Combat Sports Lead Writer // July 6, 2015

Last summer, Viacom announced they'd hired Scott Coker to run the Bellator mixed martial arts promotion. It was one of the worst-kept secrets in the industry at the time.

As part of the deal when Coker sold his former Strikeforce promotion to Zuffa, he remained under contract with them for two years, followed by a short non-compete clause. Once that clause was up, Coker was heading to Bellator. Under Bjorn Rebney—the grating founder and leader of the promotion who was kicked to the curb as soon as Coker was available—Bellator had flailed and struggled to find an identity that connected with fans.

But with Coker, Viacom had a man who knew how to connect. Coker has promoted fights for much of his adult life, and he has helped shape today's modern MMA landscape far more than many have given him credit for.

Coker knew he couldn't compete with the UFC by keeping Bellator's stale tournament format, so he threw it out the window. And then he went about creating a new business model for Bellator, one built around quarterly "tentpole" events, aimed at bringing back fans who stopped watching the sport while also attracting those who rarely, if ever, tune in for fights.

Coker's first big show last November offered a glimpse at what Bellator was becoming. Tito Ortiz and Stephan Bonnar, two aged UFC veterans, faced off in the main event. Underneath them

were Michael Chandler and Will Brooks, the promotion's two best lightweights. There were other, younger stars.

Oh, and there was a production level never before seen from a North American mixed martial arts promotion. It resembled a miniaturized PRIDE event, with its lights and smoke and giant video wall. There were customized walkouts for each fighter and matching light shows. It felt like a big deal on a smaller scale, and it showed when the ratings came in; the event was by far Bellator's biggest show ever.

But that was just the start. Coker's next big show, last month, featured Kimbo Slice and Ken Shamrock. The card underneath them was stacked with fighters Coker wanted to highlight. The lights and video packages and the stage returned, and the night was a huge success: 2.4 million people tuned in to see Shamrock and Slice fight. It was again Bellator's best rating, and one of the highest-rated MMA broadcasts of 2015 thus far.

Next, he's taking things to a new level. On one night in September, there will be a combined Bellator/GLORY card. The cage and the ring will be set up next to each other. There will be MMA fights and there will be kickboxing. Oh, and there will be a one-night tournament featuring Bellator's four best light heavyweights.

You can look at all of this and call it a circus, but what you can't call it is a failure. Under Coker's leadership, Bellator has become something new and exciting. He has taken pieces of his history, of Strikeforce and of the glory days of MMA in Japan, and he has modernized them and created something entirely different. He lacks the bombast and the foul mouth of his UFC counterpart Dana White, but Coker is repeatedly proving that he is every bit White's equal when it comes to promoting fights.

Bellator has become a water-cooler subject. Hardcore MMA fans may wring their hands at the notion of Slice and Shamrock and Ortiz and others taking up valuable space that could be given to a talented young fighter. But the truth is that hardcore MMA fans matter very little when it comes to the fight business, because the fight business is about attracting eyeballs to your product, no matter how you do it.

Nobody understands that better than Coker, and the future is bright for Bellator because of it.

SPORTSBLOG.com

MEET MMA'S MR HYDE

By Tadhg O'Connor, TO'S Combat Sports and More // June 29, 2015

The landscape of sports has had no shortage of evolution over the past few decades. Athletes have progressed at remarkable levels and with each game we can see a massive difference in speed and skill over just a short period of time. No sport is this more intensely evident than Mixed Martial Arts. To the hardcore fan this is simply a commonly repeated conversation and inevitably is nothing more than preaching to the fight fan choir (cue the endless rants on the subject by Joe Rogan). For those more modestly interested you may recognize this as cage fighting or often mistaken for its largest organization; the UFC. You may call to mind such people as Jon Jones, Ronda Rousey, or Brock Lesnar as well as fighters such as Chuck Liddell and Georges St. Pierre. The list of iconic stars is astounding for just 20 years of existence. If you dive a little deeper though you may find it interesting that all of these stars lie in the same organization, the Ultimate Fighting Championship. This is the result of several years of painstaking purchasing and acquisitions of other prominent fight organizations such as Pride, the WEC, and so on. At the helm of this company sits Dana White, the bald headed icon of the sport who comes across as what would be MMA's version of a commissioner. He always seems to be steering us to more entertaining events as well as interviews due to his "I don't give a shit" mentality in regards to censuring himself. Like every story where an almost untouchable figure seems to be in complete control of their situation, there is always someone creeping along waiting for an opportunity to steal their momentum.

Enter MMA's Mr. Hyde. Scott Coker is a name that almost none outside of dedicated fans or those employed around the sport would recognize, but his influence should make all of us who enjoy having the best fighters in the world in one place cringe a little in our seats. He is the man behind the scenes who is threatening the spreading of talents from the world's foremost prominent MMA promotion. Coker's resume is one that would make most of us guys a little jealous. Coming out of an impressive martial arts academy, he earned his black belt in Taekwondo and continued on to have roles in B level action films as almost an American laid back version of Jean-Claude Van Damme minus the main roll of course. Not too shabby

right? How about then graduating on to start your own fight organization which would then become the second best in the land? Yeah, this guy was living the dream. His promotion known as Strikeforce became a hotbed for high level talent. Talent which for the most part he kept and nurtured for the length of its existence. This is no small accomplishment due to the cut-throat world of fighters contracts. Strikeforce was so impressive in its roster that Zuffa, the partnership which owns the UFC, was forced to purchase it and absorb its best fighters. Even now after over four years since the announcement of the purchase, ex-Strikeforce fighters comprise 40% of the UFC's list of current champions. Not bad for what was considered a second tier organization. You can thank Scott Coker's genius for this interesting MMA stat. It was clear that at its peak, the UFC was getting a little nervous about Strikeforce's potential.



In the end like so many others though, Scott Coker sold his organization off to the evil empire and ran away with the profits. Nice little story right? Maybe, but if Dana and the other executives from Zuffa thought the threat was over they were sadly mistaken.

Up until about a year ago, the UFC was a titan amongst midgets when it came to MMA. No one could come close to touching them, not even in the same ballpark. It was almost laughable to say that someone else could compete on a talent and resource basis. Then like a bad sequel in walks good old Mr. Coker. The retired fight promoter had been quietly offered the position of Bellator MMA's president which much to the nervous laughs of UFC fans he accepted. Nothing seemed wrong at first, but the tide is changing faster than we think. There are certain creepy parallels between Bellator and the UFC that can no longer be

ignored. First of all, the UFC has always seemed to be a company fueled by endless money thanks to the Fertitta's and their Casino empire's fortune. There's no way poor little Bellator could compete right? Wrong. The growing promotion is owned by none other than the media giant Viacom. Where on TV can you find them? Good old Spike, the channel that is responsible for the UFC's explosion in the mid-2000's. The comparisons continue into small and irrelevant areas such as how the UFC is heavily sponsored by Bud Light and Bellator by Miller.

And then you have Coker. With the signing of Light Heavyweight perennial contender Phil Davis, as well as having a mix of up and coming fighters as well as MMA legends past their prime,

Bellator is starting to form a foothold against what was the impossible current of it's big brother. This combined with the recent Reebok deal with the UFC which drastically cuts most fighters sponsorship money down to almost nothing now may be the time Scott Coker strikes and a guy with a track record like his doesn't often miss. Now am I saying that Bellator will be the biggest MMA organization in the world soon? Absolutely not, but do not get the facts twisted UFC fans, your era of total dominance is soon to be chipped away at and Coker is bringing the heat. If Dr. Jekyll is Dana White than Scott Coker is undoubtedly Mr. Hyde and the outcome of the MMA industry could likely get a bit scary very soon.



Story of the Year

By Tristen Critchfield, Sherdog.com // December 27, 2014

Before Bellator MMA's first-ever pay-per-view event kicked off in May, Muhammed Lawal went rogue during an interview on the Spike TV portion of the broadcast: "I came out here to beat [Quinton] 'Rampage' [Jackson] and stop all the d---riding Bjorn be doing."

The interview ended promptly there due to some dubious technical issues, but "King Mo" had already articulated what many within the promotion had been feeling for a while: Bellator CEO and founder Bjorn Rebney was not the world's most beloved boss. Some two months later, Rebney was gone, not necessarily ushered out by Lawal's remarks but by a much grander scheme that had probably been in the works for quite some time.

"It is with bittersweet emotions that I announce that I am leaving the company I founded. I have great pride in having turned my vision into reality, a thriving business with television distribution to over 140 countries around the world, a partnership with one of the world's largest entertainment giants and wide array of sponsors, partners and strategic allies all over the globe. This has been a wonderful eight-plus years of creation, development and success," Rebney said. "I will miss the courageous, strong and dedicated fighters I have had the pleasure of promoting, and equally, I will miss the incredibly hard working, remarkable team that has become a family for me over the years."

With that, Rebney disappeared—perhaps to drown his sorrows in margaritas on a sun-drenched coastline somewhere in Mexico. The same day Rebney said goodbye, the long-rumored Scott Coker era officially began. If ever there was a person capable of turning Bellator into a feared competitor to the Ultimate Fighting Championship, it is Coker. After all, he had worked wonders in Strikeforce before the company was purchased by Zuffa and eventually laid to rest early in 2013.

Where UFC President Dana White once scoffed at the notion of women competing in the Octagon, Coker laid the groundwork



for a judoka named Ronda Rousey to eventually become a superstar. While UFC brass found Fedor Emelianenko to be a stubborn adversary at the negotiating table, Coker struck a co-promotion compromise with M-1 Global and inked a deal for the mythical pound-for-pound king to compete under the Strikeforce banner. Numerous other talents—Luke Rockhold, Tyron Woodley, Ronaldo Souza, Nick Diaz, Gina Carano and Daniel Cormier, to name a few—thived under Coker's watch.

Warm and fuzzy feelings abounded with the announcement. Even White, who never made an effort to disguise his contempt for Rebney, gave his stamp of approval.

"Not only do I know Scott very well, I know the guys at Spike (TV) very well," White said in an interview on AXS-TV's "Inside MMA." "I was in business with them for a long time, and I think this is a much better fit for them than 'Bjork' was."

Apparently, absence does make the heart grow fonder. More importantly, Coker's reputation within the MMA community resonated as he made a strong impression on Spike TV executives.

"Coker has great relationships with fighters," Spike TV President Kevin Kay told *Sports Illustrated*. "They really respect him. He has great relationships with fight camps. Everybody wants to work with him. We went to the Glory pay-per-view together [the weekend after he'd been hired] and I just watched as every athletic commissioner, every other fight manager, every fighter that was there, came up to congratulate him on taking this job. Everyone seemed thrilled for him and thrilled for Spike to get into business with him ... if you're me, that's what you want to hear."

That reaction, along with the overall progress the promotion has made over the course of the past six months, makes Bellator's

hiring of Coker Sherdog.com's "Story of the Year" for 2015. The impact was felt in the short-term, and its long-term significance could cement the promotion as more than a gnat buzzing around the Zuffa behemoth's ears.

"It feels good to be back. I'm excited to team up with Spike and Viacom, who have played a very integral role in the success of mixed martial arts over the last decade," Coker said during an introductory conference call. "I see a lot of potential in Bellator. I'm thrilled to have an opportunity to build a brand and take it to the level I think me and my team can."

When it came to revealing what changes might be in store, Coker was slow to tip his hand. However, it was immediately clear that his arrival marked the end of Rebney's brainchild, the so-called "Toughest Tournament in Sports." One of the key components of Coker's Bellator 2.0 was a trimmed down itinerary featuring 12 monthly shows and four larger scale-events instead of weekly offerings during a bi-annual season.

"As far as doing 26 fights and going on the road 10 weeks in a row, I just don't think you can be an effective promoter," Coker told Sherdog.com in August.

Fans got a small taste of Coker's vision when Bellator went head-to-head against the UFC—in the same state, no less—on Sept. 5. The Bellator 123 card had a little something to satisfy everyone: Pat Curran-Patricio Freire for the MMA purist, Bobby Lashley for the crossover wrestling fan and Cheick Kongo-Lavar Johnson for the bloodthirsty.

What stood out most of all that night, however, was the bizarre way the promotion chose to unveil its next headlining bout: a light heavyweight showdown between Stephan Bonnar and Tito Ortiz. Criticize the sports entertainment rip-off if you will, but the in-cage shenanigans that ensued between Bonnar, Ortiz and a masked Justin McCully certainly got people talking. While featuring that trio did little to further Coker's plan of going out into the field and developing new stars, the ex-Strikeforce leader

never said he was averse to recruiting some familiar faces to build a brand.

"We are going to look at the roster, build a roster and start developing new talent," Coker said. [That means] going out in the field and finding new guys and start looking for new stars. We might share some; we might buy some; we might build some. That's been our motto in the past."

If at this point skeptics still thought Coker's arrival was simply a prelude to a Zuffa takeover—he was at the helm when the same thing happened to Strikeforce, after all—that notion all but disappeared with the aggressive strategy utilized to promote Bellator 131. In addition to the two UFC hall of famers

at the top of the bill, Bellator enlisted ex-Octagon standouts Royce Gracie, Randy Couture and Frank Shamrock to appear at a pre-fight fan fest at Dave & Buster's in San Diego. Wanderlei Silva was also initially scheduled to appear but ultimately bowed out due to existing contractual obligations with the UFC. That so many fighters who made their name in a rival

"That so many fighters who made their name in a rival organization would come out to sell a promotion for which they would never compete spoke volumes about Coker's influence—and Bellator's plan of attack."

organization would come out to sell a promotion for which they would never compete spoke volumes about Coker's influence—and Bellator's plan of attack. Gracie, designated as Bellator brand ambassador, led the charge.

"I have known [Coker] for a long time and have always respected him as not only a promoter but as a martial artist who has always treated fighters with respect and truly understands their value," Gracie said. "Bellator and Viacom want to give fans exciting fights and enable fighters to continue to grow and most importantly provide for their family, and it's something I want to be a part of."

"UFC has done a great job over the past 20 years in building this sport and taking it globally, and I'm glad to have been part of that, but Bellator is a growing organization I am honored to be a part of," he added, "and with the dedicated and talented people

already associated with the company, we can further the growth of mixed martial arts as a sport worldwide.”

Bellator 131 on Nov. 15 went head-to-head with UFC 180, which marked the Las Vegas-based promotion’s initial foray into Mexico. Also on the agenda was World Series of Fighting 15—a distant third in the running for the public’s attention. When it came to the always-coveted buzz, Bellator won the day. UFC 180 was ravaged by the loss of Cain Velasquez, Diego Sanchez and others, and while pay-per-view numbers were not officially released, projections were not optimistic.

Bellator 131, meanwhile, was by most accounts, a hit. The Ortiz-Bonnar clash, while not a classic, attracted to Spike TV a mainstream audience weaned on Ortiz’s grave-digger routine and Bonnar’s epic brawl with Forrest Griffin. Before the headliner, viewers were treated to a pair of explosive knockouts courtesy of Mike Richman and Joe Schilling, while Will Brooks established himself as a star-in-the-making with his second consecutive triumph over Michael Chandler in a lightweight title bout.

Through it all, Coker’s fingerprints were everywhere. From the stage and ramp setup, to the video vignettes, to the fighter introductions, Bellator 131 felt like a big deal; and while there were plenty who gnashed their teeth at the thought of two past-their-prime veterans headlining Coker’s official coming-out party, that angst was not reflected in the final numbers. The card averaged 1.2 million viewers—a record for a Bellator



event on Spike—and peaked at two million for the light heavyweight main event.

“Bellator 131 was an incredible event that had something for everybody, and I’m thrilled to see our efforts were so well-received by our fans,” Coker said. “I’m very proud of our entire Bellator and Spike family for all of the hard work they put [in] resulting in these record-breaking ratings. The most exciting thing for me is the knowledge that we are just getting started, and I can’t wait for everyone to see what we have in store for the future.”

Under Coker, the future of a new-look Bellator looks bright indeed.



CagePotato.com Presents: The 2014 Potato Awards

Promotion of the Year: Bellator

By Matt Saccaro, Cage Potato // December 2014

Yes. Bellator.

Here's a harrowing statistic for you: The last TUF Finale to air on Spike TV was the TUF 14 finale back in 2011. It garnered 2.5 million viewers on average and peaked at 3.4 million.

The most recent TUF finale—for TUF 20—aired on Fox Sports 1 and drew a paltry average of 989,000 and peaked at 1.2 million.

What does this have to do with Bellator?

November's Bellator 131 received an average of 1.2 million viewers and peaked at 2 million. While we're sure people will say Bellator's best show barely beat out an underwhelming TUF Finale on a worse network, that's an unsophisticated way to look at it.

The UFC has been on the downswing throughout 2014. PPV numbers are catastrophic, ratings are far removed from the golden days of Spike TV, Zuffa's revenue is down 40 percent, and now the UFC has an ugly anti-trust lawsuit to deal with, as well as Bellator's impending legal action over the signing of Quinton "Rampage" Jackson.

Is that really a promotion we can call "promotion of the year?"

Now contrast this to Bellator's moves in 2014. They hired Scott Coker, fired Baroni, brought back women, drove a bulldozer through the UFC Hall of Fame and re-built it at Dave & Buster's, they get good ratings, they've put on some great shows (we'll remember the finish to Schilling vs. Manhoef forever) and they signed a legitimate super-prospect in Aaron Pico. Sure, they're guilty of doing some dumb shit (Bonnar vs. Ortiz, which rightfully won this year's Minowaman Award), but they certainly haven't committed as many unforced errors in 2014 as the UFC.

Bellator is CagePotato's promotion of the year. Go whine about it in the comments.



CYNOPSIS MEDIA

Bellator MMA President Scott Coker Makes a Move

By Synopsis Media // October 27, 2014

Scott Coker's presence since taking over the reigns as President of Bellator MMA earlier this year has quickly left its mark on the organization. With the promotion now moving away from weekly broadcasts of its tournaments into a monthly card designed to showcase stronger talent, the company is now moving forward as it continues its climb toward global popularity. New initiatives include: a live show on Spike TV once every month on Friday nights with three or four additional shows on the network that will feature its top matchups in a super card.

Ahead of its big Nov. 15 show in San Diego, which will feature the likes of Tito Ortiz/Stephan Bonnar and Will Brooks/Michael Chandler, Synopsis Sports spoke with Coker about his vision for the organization, the new setup and whether he would ever work with another promotion on a co-branded event.

Coker on taking the job: Spike TV and I started talking right after my non-compete expired with the UFC. We had a couple of meetings and I felt like where they wanted to go was where I wanted to go. There's a lot of synergy between how Spike TV President Kevin Kay and I see this working. I was heading in another direction with a different media company but Kevin swayed me over.

On initial goals: To evaluate the talent, evaluate the staff and the whole operation as well as evaluate what we can do to make this promotion better. The first thing was the tournament format, which as attractive as it may seem in the beginning, can be eliminated because you aren't going to put on the fights that the fans want to see all the time. You are stuck with the bracket system. The fighters who I wanted to see face each other ended up not fighting each other. So, although I think there is a space and time for tournaments in martial arts, I just felt like this was our time to put on big super fights.

On super fight cards: I always felt like cards should be an event. When you start doing fights every week, you are kind of watering down the product and becoming like a Friday Night Fights. I wanted to take a step back, start growing the roster and put on big, monthly shows instead of smaller weekly shows. When you think about next year, we are going to do a monthly series and we are going to do four big, tentpole events with all of our superstars. You'll see some big differences on what Bellator has done in the past on Nov. 15 in San Diego.

On the biggest lesson learned at Strikeforce: Be careful who your partners are. When you have a partner that wants to go one way and you want to do something else, it can become difficult.

On working with another promotion: My philosophy has always been, 'Let's keep the door open.' If it is something where someone wants to work with us and it makes sense, than let's do it. One of my proudest moments was when I was at Strikeforce and we worked with a company called Pride in Japan. We had a nice relationship with them and I am very proud of that.



Fox Sports Latin America Came Calling and Bellator Answered

By Damon Martin, *Bleacher Report/CNN*

Several years ago, when Bellator MMA signed its first deal for an English-speaking broadcast partner in the United States, it was with the regional Fox Sports channels that aired all over America.

The promotion had originally been partnered with ESPN Deportes, a Spanish-language station and, as the brand grew bigger and bigger, they eventually outgrew both partnerships. They now air on Spike TV, which is available in almost 100 million homes in the United States.

Bellator is continuing its expansion into new international markets, however, and they signed a major deal this week with Fox Sports Latin America that will bring the MMA promotion into more than 50 million homes starting this October.

Bellator CEO Bjorn Rebney led the negotiations with Fox Sports Latin America after the dialogue was opened up by some old friends of his at the broadcast network from several years ago when the promotion was still airing on the Fox Sports local stations.

"The good news is over the years I was able to keep really good relationships with the people that I worked with at Fox many years ago. Remember many years ago when we came out of the ESPN Deportes deal, the first English language deal we ever did was with Fox Sports network. So I've always kept in touch with some of those guys, they were great guys," Rebney told Bleacher Report on Tuesday.

"About four months ago they reached out to me and they were guys I worked with before at Fox, and they said 'Hey, I would love to put you in a room with all the guys at Fox Sports International, they're really interested in Bellator and they would like to talk to you about the potential of putting a deal together.' That's where it all started."

Several months later, and now Bellator has inked a multi-year deal with the network to broadcast live shows as well as other programming on the Latin American station. While live fight cards are part of the deal, Rebney says this new partnership with FoxSports Latin America goes beyond just sending a satellite signal and having the fights aired in the new markets.

He explains that Bellator programming as a whole will find a new home on Fox Sports Latin America with "best of" shows, pre-fight and preview shows, as well as the expansion of the brand into areas of Mexico, Brazil and Argentina where they will put on live fight cards as well.

"It includes every single piece of the puzzle," Rebney said. "It's the largest distribution platform in that part of the world, it's going to have live events, it's going to have live events take place in that area with Mexico, Brazil, Argentina. It's going to have shoulder programming, it's going to have independently produced Bellator shows that will air all throughout Latin America.

"There's going to be huge cross platform support that Fox is going to give to us with all over their soccer programming and all of the other shows that they have on the largest sports network in the region. It's got all the pieces. It's the right fit."

One of the first questions that came up when Bellator and Fox Sports Latin America announced the framework of their new deal on Monday was the fact that Fox Sports and the Fox brand, as a whole, have a seven-year, multi-million dollar deal with the UFC to broadcast their shows in the United States.

Even UFC president Dana White was taken aback by the news when he heard about the deal firsthand at a media event on Tuesday while promoting UFC 168. For his part, Rebney was as confused as anybody when Fox Sports Latin America came calling, but he wasn't about to turn them away just because they were also partnered with the UFC.

If anything, he believes it's an act of recognition that Fox Sports Latin America chose them for their network, and he's happy to have a new television partner for that part of the world locked down now.

"Don't think it wasn't a question I had when they first made the overture to me and I was invited into the Fox corporate offices where there were UFC banners and UFC posters and UFC programming promotions all over the walls," Rebney said. "It was a question I asked as well. As a fan of the space and as somebody that works in the space, I'd have to assume given

the size of Fox's U.S. deal with the UFC if Fox had wanted an alliance with the UFC in Latin America, I assume they would have made one happen.

"So you think about those things, and you wonder about those things, but the overriding consideration that I had was look they're the biggest, they reach the most consumers, they have the largest reach, they've got the biggest promotional vehicle on the biggest sports, and that's where we'd want to be.

"The UFC may be partnered here with Fox, but boy I'm thrilled to be partnered with the biggest player in the space down in Latin America."

Rebney says that live programming will pick up next month on Fox Sports Latin America, and the residents in those areas

will also be able to watch the live Bellator pay-per-view airing from the United States, pitting Quinton "Rampage" Jackson against Tito Ortiz.

The promotion won't waste any time moving into the Latin America market either, and Bellator MMA will be expanding with plans for shows in Mexico and Brazil very soon as well.

It appears even though Fox Sports Latin America is a different branch of the Fox Sports brand, Bellator and the UFC will be bumping into each other more often than one may have first expected. ■

DAMON MARTIN IS A FEATURED COLUMNIST FOR BLEACHER REPORT AND ALL QUOTES WERE OBTAINED FIRSTHAND UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.



Viacom Buys Bellator, Plans 2013 Start on Spike

By Sergio Non

MTV Networks' Spike TV channel is getting out of the Ultimate Fighting Championship's business, but the broadcaster has increased its ties to mixed martial arts.

Viacom, parent of MTV Networks, bought a majority stake in Bellator Fighting Championships and will start airing the promotion's bouts on Spike in 2013, the companies told USA TODAY this week. They've had ongoing talks for about a year as they finished up various deals, and over the past month finally reached the point where they could announce the news, Bellator CEO Bjorn Rebney said.

Selling to Viacom's entertainment conglomerate guarantees a stable future for Bellator, said Rebney, who will remain in charge of the MMA organization.

"It puts all of those cornerstones of ownership in place for us," he said. "Which is something that's been so seriously lacking in the MMA space with so many different companies, including Strikeforce and the IFL and Affliction and all the different failures that have occurred. ... It alleviates those issues."

Bellator is the No. 2 promotion in mixed martial arts behind market leader Zuffa, owner of UFC and Strikeforce.

The experience and cachet of Spike in broadcasting mixed martial arts over the last six years makes it the ideal partner for Bellator, Rebney said. Spike became the first channel to embrace the sport when it started airing Zuffa's programming in 2005, including The Ultimate Fighter reality show and live UFC Fight Night events.

Although Spike's agreement to carry new material from UFC ends in December, the channel still has rights to the promotion's library through 2012. As a result, fights from Bellator won't air on Spike until 2013, said Kevin Kay, Spike TV president. In addition to continuing Bellator's current practice of having two seasons annually, Spike expects to run additional programs such as highlight shows and related content, both on TV and online.

MTV2 has been airing Bellator's main cards since March. MTV Networks increased its Bellator programming in September by streaming preliminary fights on Spike TV's website.

As early as last year, executives for Viacom saw little hope for reaching another deal with UFC.

"We had a great relationship with UFC and we still do," Kay said. "We helped each other to build each other's brand. Like all good things, you know that at some point it's going to come to an end."

ADVANTAGES OF OWNERSHIP

Owning its own promotion allows Spike to take a longer view and commits it more firmly to the sport, he said.

"As we realized that our relationship with UFC was likely to come to an end, our Viacom mergers and acquisitions folks, and us, started to have conversations with MTV2 about getting invested in a mixed martial arts promotion and become owners as opposed to renters," Kay said. "You're building value in something that you own, and you own it for the long term. You're not in a constant state of negotiation."

Other brands in mixed martial arts have been sold over the past year, most notably Strikeforce, which Zuffa bought in March. But Bellator's organizational ability, knack for exciting bouts and unique approach to fighter match-ups made it stand out, Kay said.

While most MMA companies put together cards based around single fights, Bellator has weekly shows built around eight-person tournaments to produce title contenders.

"The tournament format (is), we think, a great way to get the audience invested in the fighters as personalities, as characters," Kay said. "I think we can help, with the expertise we have in building fighters as fighters that people want to see and come back week to week."

Since starting in 2009, Bellator has built up a roster that includes a number of ranked fighters. Lightweight champion Eddie Alvarez, featherweight contender Pat Curran and featherweight Marlon Sandro are in the top six for their weight classes in the USA TODAY/MMA Nation consensus rankings. Middleweight champ Hector Lombard and featherweight titleholder Joe Warren are No. 13 for their divisions.

Other top-20 Bellator names include heavyweight champion Cole Konrad, welterweight champion Ben Askren, welterweight contender Jay Hieron, bantamweight champion Zach Makovsky and bantamweight tourney finalist Alexis Vila.

BIGGER AUDIENCE, MORE RESOURCES

The overall reputation for Bellator's assembly of talent remains far behind UFC, by far the largest and richest organization in the sport. But adding Viacom's financial muscle could help Bellator retain its biggest stars, or at least make it much harder for others to sign them away.

"They'll have a ton of more money to negotiate with," said Alvarez, who has three to four fights left on his current contract. "As long as I keep doing well and do what I'm supposed to do, the future looks bright."

He's been with Bellator since it started in 2009 with delayed airings on ESPN Deportes. Bellator has expanded its TV presence each year, with live shows on the scattered affiliates of Fox Sports Net in 2010 and a consistent presence on MTV2 this year.

"We both grew together," Alvarez said. "I'm sort of peaking in my career, and it seems like so is Bellator. ... I was with a lot of promotions that failed, that flopped, and this is actually working. Everything's coming to fruition."

Moving to Spike all but guarantees a much larger audience for Bellator. Spike says it's available to almost 100 million cable and satellite subscribers, compared to roughly 80 million for MTV2. Spike is also easier to find in channel line-ups because it generally gets a lower number in the vicinity of other popular cable/satellite offerings such as FX, TBS, and USA Network.

Spike also has high-definition broadcasts, these days a benchmark for sports programming. Bellator currently appears on HD only through Epix, which is not carried by some large cable providers.

"The goal is HD all the time and once we get to Spike, it'll be that way," Kay said. "When you're looking at an organization like Bellator, what you see is the opportunity for growth and to grow ratings. We have big expectations."

Fighters and managers will raise their sights too. Exposure to more viewers should help athletes land sponsors that can add a sizable amount to their income.

"I'm smiling ear-to-ear right now," Alvarez said. "I couldn't be any happier. Endorsements are hard to come by when you're on ESPN Deportes and these other smaller channels."

AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS

Bellator's largest audience for a live broadcast on MTV2 was an estimated 325,000 viewers for a show in May. Spike has generally drawn between 1.2 million and 2.2 million viewers for

"When you're looking at an organization like Bellator, what you see is the opportunity for growth and to grow ratings. We have big expectations."

KEVIN KAY, PRESIDENT SPIKE TV

UFC Fight Night shows.

TV ratings and pay-per-view buys for UFC have flattened or declined this year. Spike's executives dismiss concerns that the sport's popularity has peaked. Injuries to big names beset several UFC main events since March, which Kay describes as a short-term problem.

MTV2 airs Bellator on Saturdays, often pitting it head-to-head with UFC's live programs. Executives haven't decided what night will work on Spike, but next year's run on MTV2 gives them a platform to test ideas. The effect of not only UFC, but other sports, needs to be measured, Kay said.

"There's a lot of factors we're going to analyze and figure out," Kay said. "Also, where's our audience used to watching it? ... We've got a lot of good research and data to think about where it goes. I don't know that you want to program football against football or baseball against baseball. We'll look at all of that."

Bellator deserves at least two years on Spike before its success can be evaluated, he said. The channel has been willing to give its shows time to develop, especially when it owns the content and is investing in its development. Kay cited Spike's patience with comedy Blue Mountain State, which started with unimpressive ratings before blossoming.

No one expects Bellator's numbers on Spike to match UFC right away. Losing UFC's cachet as the industry leader has risks, but Spike's experience moving from World Wrestling Entertainment to Total Nonstop Action Wrestling in 2005 shows that long-term exposure eventually can boost numbers when switching from one brand to another, Kay said.

"I had the same fear: 'Are people going to watch another wrestling organization on Spike?'" Kay said. "That first year or so,

we had probably (an average of) 600,000 viewers. Last week we had 2 million; it's the highest-rated TNA in the history of Spike."

COMPETING OR COMPLEMENTARY?

Zuffa over the last few years has been pushing into other countries aggressively, going so far as to sell a 10% stake to an arm of the Abu Dhabi government because of that entity's ability to open new markets. Viacom's resources will also fuel expansion plans outside the United States and Canada, Rebney said.

"The timing remains to be seen in terms of when exactly that occurs, but that will occur," he said. "International expansion of live Bellator events will absolutely occur."

Even though Bellator will replace UFC on Spike and occasionally try to go after the same talent, Rebney and Kay declined to characterize themselves as direct competitors with UFC.

"They're No. 1 in the space, there's just no question about it," Kay said. "Who's more competitive than Dana White? I am, but that's not a horse race we really want to run around here. I think we respect that organization tremendously."

Bellator and Zuffa have occasionally butted heads over talent—they're currently suing each other over fighter contracts—but

executives from both companies steer clear of harsh words. Even UFC President Dana White, never shy about disparaging promoters who irritate him, maintains a mild tone.

"The people from Bellator have never said anything about us," White said recently. "I have nothing to say about them either. They're out there. They're doing their thing. Good for them."

Spike taking over Bellator could help Zuffa in terms of public perception. Critics argue that Zuffa has become a monopoly by acquiring other brands such as Pride Fighting Championships and Strikeforce, making it difficult for other companies to break into the space and taking away options that might give fighters negotiating leverage. A thriving Bellator would erode that argument.

At the same, UFC's continued growth and success would help Bellator and Spike because it would expand the sport as a whole, executives said. Bellator's announcement with Spike comes less than three weeks before UFC makes its debut on Fox.

"It's a very, very good day for mixed martial arts as a whole," Rebney said. "Because now you have two groups in the space that have a very substantial presence that obviously isn't going to go anywhere for a very, very long time." ■

2014 SUBMISSION OF THE YEAR



LIAM MCGEARY
defeats **KELLY ANUNDSO**

INVERTED TRIANGLE CHOKE // Round 1, 4:47 / Bellator 124 / 09.12.2014

2014 KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR



JOE SCHILLING
defeats **MELVIN MANHOEF**

KNOCKOUT (PUNCHES) // Round 2, 0:32 / Bellator 131: Tito vs. Bonnar / 11.15.2014

BELLATOR MMA: WORLD CHAMPIONS



BANTAMWEIGHT CHAMPION: MARCOS GALVÃO

BORN: 06.23.1981
FIGHTING OUT OF: New York, NY
RECORD: 17-6-1
HEIGHT: 5' 7"

WEIGHT CLASS: 135 lbs
WON TITLE: Defeated Joe Warren via Submission (Kneebar) // Bellator 135 // 03.27.2015



FEATHERWEIGHT CHAMPION: DANIEL STRAUS

BORN: 07.27.1984
FIGHTING OUT OF: Coconut Creek, FL
RECORD: 24-6
HEIGHT: 5' 8"

WEIGHT CLASS: 145 lbs
WON TITLE: Defeated Patricio "Pitbull" Freire via Unanimous Decision // Bellator 145 // 11.06.2015



LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMPION: WILL BROOKS

BORN: 10.08.1986
FIGHTING OUT OF: Coconut Creek, FL
RECORD: 17-1
HEIGHT: 5' 11"

WEIGHT CLASS: 155 lbs
WON TITLE: Defeated Michael Chandler via TKO (Punches) // Bellator 131 // 11.15.2014



WELTERWEIGHT CHAMPION: ANDREY KORESHKOV

BORN: 08.23.1990
FIGHTING OUT OF: Omsk, Russia
RECORD: 18-1
HEIGHT: 6' 1"

WEIGHT CLASS: 170 lbs
WON TITLE: Defeated Douglas Lima via Unanimous Decision // Bellator 140 // 06.17.2015

BELLATOR MMA: WORLD CHAMPIONS



MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPION: RAFAEL CARVALHO

BORN: 07.27.1986
FIGHTING OUT OF: Rio De Janeiro, Brazil
RECORD: 12-1
HEIGHT: 6' 3"

WEIGHT CLASS: 185 lbs
WON TITLE: Defeated Brandon Halsey via TKO (Body Kicks) // Bellator 144 // 10.23.2015



LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: LIAM McGEARY

BORN: 10.04.1982
FIGHTING OUT OF: Andover, England
RECORD: 11-0
HEIGHT: 6' 6"
WEIGHT CLASS: 205 lbs

WON TITLE: Defeated Emanuel Newton via Unanimous Decision // Bellator 134 // 02.27.2015
FIRST TITLE DEFENSE: Defeated Tito Ortiz via Submission (Inverted Triangle Choke) Bellator MMA: Dynamite 1 // 09.19.2015



HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: VITALY MINAKOV

BORN: 02.06.1985
FIGHTING OUT OF: Bryansk, Russia
RECORD: 15-0
HEIGHT: 6' 2"

WEIGHT CLASS: 265 lbs
WON TITLE: Defeated Cheick Kongo via Unanimous Decision // Bellator 115 // 04.04.2014