

MMA Submission: Heath Herring's Development

He took that loss to Lesnar pretty hard, but an overseas tour helped him out.

by Ryan Hockensmith



Getty Images

"Wow, this isn't going well."

He's been in 43 MMA fights. He's won most (28) of them. He's had a few brutal losses. But **Heath Herring** took his August loss to **Brock Lesnar** harder than any other.

From the opening minute of the 15-minute bout, Lesnar controlled Herring. Everybody knew Lesnar had a big advantage on the ground, but nobody thought he could work in so many strikes on Herring.

After the thumping, Herring decided to disappear for awhile. He went to Iraq on a USO-type tour, along with UFC veterans **Joe Lauzon** and **Jorge Rivera**. For two weeks, he visited two or three camps a day and received a rock star's welcome. Well, not quite like a rock star. How often do you think fans ask Springsteen to put them in a rear naked choke?

"Everybody over there wants to grapple," Herring says.

A year ago, Herring, Rivera and **Kenny Florian** all went to Afghanistan. Herring says he received a similar welcome there, but couldn't believe the contrasts between the two war zones. "Afghanistan felt very dangerous—lots of gunfire and stuff blowing up," he says. "In Iraq, it was really, really calm. The media downplays the success we've had there. It really felt safe. The biggest complaint I heard across all the camps I went to was that guys are bored and ready to come home."

Herring showed soldiers submission moves. What did they show to him? Well, Herring wasn't sure how much he could reveal. Except he did say it's pretty cool to fire off machine guns (but

not as cool as blasting the grenade launcher troops let him shoot in Afghanistan).

By the time Herring got back on a Blackhawk helicopter to begin the 30-hour trek back to the U.S., he was feeling a lot better about what he does for a living, the Lesnar loss be damned. "The trip made me feel grateful," he says. "I grew up fighting in rodeo arenas, and now I'm being taken to meet soldiers. And they're excited to meet me? Wow."

And it never hurts to have Herring's post-Iraq schedule, either. As in, a week in New Orleans for Halloween, then a trip to Los Angeles for his first movie role. Fellow UFC stars **Georges St.-Pierre** and **BJ Penn** were also in the movie. Herring's description of the film, which he says is tentatively titled *Sex, Blood and Fight*: "It was a Skinemax B-movie," he says. "It's going to be so good."

"NEXT UP: KIMBO'S CONTRACT. DO I HEAR \$5,000? \$5,000? CAN WE START THERE?"

Yes, you too can bid on Elite XC's remaining assets in an auction later this month. It'll be very interesting to see how the UFC handles it. **Dana White** has said repeatedly he has no interest in **Gina Carano** and **Kimbo Slice**, and I believe him. But business-wise, it may make sense to swoop in and buy both contracts at discounted rates and just make them sit for the remainder of their contracts. That would prohibit any other promotions, or a startup, from another high-profile debut (and flameout, the UFC would say). It's pretty cut-throat to buy an asset just to have it sit and rot. But this is the business of punching people in the face and choking people out. If I were Dana White, I would do it.