

**TOUGH TASKMASTER:**

Mehdi Baghdad (right) makes sure his fighters are in tip top shape



# Q&A: Six rounds with The Sultan

## Baghdad hopes to inspire new generation

**THE rise of mixed martial arts across the Middle East has seen a host of young men and women dream of one day representing the Arab world on the global stage.**

For one fighter, that dream has become a reality as French-Algerian Mehdi Baghdad has carved out a reputation as one of the most feared lightweights on the MMA circuit.

Known as "The Sultan", Baghdad has 10 wins from 13 fights and is a former Muay Thai world champion.

But far from just being a fighter, Baghdad is helping the next generation as a coach on the popular MMA reality TV show 'Al Batal', which is in its second series on Fox Movies. Here we speak to the 29-year-old about the talent in the Middle East and his dreams of fighting in the UFC.

**Mixed martial arts is a hugely popular sport all across the Middle East, can you see more fighters emerging from this region?**

Yes for sure, we are tough people! But we have to have more trainers, coaches and gyms for different areas of MMA in the Middle East.

**You have been working with fighters from the Gulf region in 'Al Batal', how have you enjoyed coaching these aspiring fighters?**  
It's been my best experience for sure. Coaching



on the show actually made me realise that I like to show techniques and help train upcoming fighters. Overall I had a great time getting to know everyone. My experience to help these young fighters was like a brotherhood and it was great to see them getting better as time went by in the 'Al Batal' house.

**Can you see any of the fighters going on to have successful careers?**

There was some really talented, hungry fighters on my team so I'm sure they will go on to be hugely successful.

**Has working on the show inspired you to take up coaching in the future after your fighting career comes to an end?**

I definitely see myself creating my own show in MMA and most importantly building a family. But hopefully not for quite a few years yet.

**What would it mean to you if you were able to perform on a huge fight card in this region, like when UFC had a show in Abu Dhabi?**

It would mean everything to me. This has definitely been one of my main goals, what's better than representing in the UFC for the Middle East?

**What do you hope your future holds and what would you like to achieve?**

My main goal is to get into the UFC in early 2015. After I see myself creating my own show in MMA and most importantly building a family. I also hope to inspire aspiring Arab fighters and show that hard work and dedication pays off.







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