MIXED MARTIAL ARTS FROM BEGINNING TILL NOW

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Abstract
A first version of MMA that we see today surfaced in the early 1990's. Promoting matches with practitioners from different disciplines like karate, boxing, wrestling and the like, many match-ups at this time sought to identify the most effective style of martial art. As interest grew and a sport developed the athletes started training in more than one discipline to gain further competitive advantage.

MMA is a sport designed for sparring and competition, it is complex and intuitive, it demand great skills to master it. The aim is to attain the highest athletic level possible, with as few technical limitations as possible, while still ensuring a low level of risk for the practitioners.

MMA has had a tremendous expansion over the last years with an increase in the number of practitioners on all levels as well as followers and spectators. It is often referred to as the world’s fastest growing sport and there are positive examples of growth everywhere around the globe.

Keywords: Mixed Martial Arts, sport history, combat.

JEL classification: Y30, Y50

1. Introduction

Martial artists of different backgrounds have been fighting for years leading up to the burgeoning modern day interest in full contact combat athletic endeavors.

The sport of Mixed Martial Arts has exploded in the previous twenty years and has attracted countless new fans. Modern mixed martial arts competition or MMA has only a short history, as the first Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) event took place on November 12, 1993.

But as the sport evolves it is very easy to lose sight of even the recent past of the sport much less its far reaching roots.

This paper wants to recount the history of Mixed Martial Arts, from the earliest forerunners to the modern sport of MMA

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The history of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) dates back to Ancient Greece. Mixed Martial Arts fights originated as hand-to-hand combat performed as a sport called pankration, from the Greek words pan and kratos, meaning “all powers.” Greek Pankration, became a part of the Olympic Games in 648 B.C., and is the first documented full contact competition in history. Pankration was a popular event, and the competitors became heroes and the subjects of legends. It can be described as a combination of boxing and wrestling and the match began standing but most often came to a close on the ground where many different kinds of locks and strikes were used. The Greek competitors had only two rules: no biting and no eye gouging. Over time Pankration grew to be the most popular Olympic sport in the ancient world.

The teachings of ancient Greek pankration spread to India thanks to Alexander the Great and his habit of recruiting athletes as soldiers because of their strength and combat knowledge. A Buddhist monk traveling through India picked up on aspects of pankration and brought that knowledge to China, where it birthed Asian martial arts such as kung fu, judo, and karate.

During the times have been many examples of full combat fights designed to measure one style against another. One of the more notable occurred in 1887 when then heavyweight boxing champion John L. Sullivan took on Greco-Roman wrestling champion William Muldoon. Muldoon reportedly slammed his adversary to the canvas in two minutes.

The next encounter occurred in the late 1890s when boxing champion Bob Fitzsimmons took on European Greco-Roman wrestling champion Ernest Roeber. In September 1901, Frank "Paddy" Slavin, who had been a contender for Sullivan's boxing title, knocked out future world wrestling champion Frank Gotch in Dawson City, Canada.

Another early example of mixed martial arts sprouted up in England in the late 1800's via Bartitsu events, which Edward William Barton-Wright founded in London in 1899. Bartitsu put Asian and European fighting styles against one another - judo, jujutsu, boxing, savate and canne de combat.

During the 1900s, appear merikan, from the Japanese slang for "American". Merikan contests were fought under a variety of rules including points decision, best of three throws or knockdowns, and victory via knockout or submission.

In 1914, a Kodokan Judo master by the name of Mitsuyo Maeda taught Brazil’s Carlos Gracie (Gastao Gracie’s son) the art of judo in appreciation of his father’s help with business in the country. This was an amazing turn of events as the Japanese tended to hide jujutsu and judo from the western world. From there, Carlos’s youngest brother Helio, refined the art that had been taught to Carlos into
one that used less strength and more leverage. This was Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, in this
sport practitioners utilize joint locks and choke holds to their adversary on the
ground.

In 1936, heavyweight boxing contender Kingfish Levinsky and the wrestler Ray
Steele competed in a mixed match, which Steele won in 35 seconds.

In 1963, judoka Gene Lebell fought professional boxer Milo Savage in a no-holds-
barred match. Lebell won by Harai Goshi, leaving Savage unconscious. This was
the very first televised bout of mixed-style fighting in North America.

In the late 1960s to early 1970s, the concept of combining the elements of multiple
martial arts was popularized by Bruce Lee via his philosophical system Lee
believed that "the best fighter is not a Boxer, Karate or Judo man. The best fighter
is someone who can adapt to any style, to be formless, to adopt an individual's own
style and not following the system of styles." Lee was called in 2004 by UFC
President Dana White the "father of mixed martial arts".

The fight between Muhammad Ali and Antonio Inoki took place in Japan on June
25, 1976. Both fighters refused to engage in the other's style and after a 15 round
stalemate, it was declared a draw. Inoki flopped to his back for the duration of the
bout and kicked Ali's legs. Ali had sustained a substantial amount of damage to his
legs, causing him to be hospitalized for the next three days. This match generated
a lot of interest in mixed style competitions.

In 1988 Rick Roufus challenged Changpuek Kiatsongrit to a non-title Muay Thai
vs. kickboxing. Rick Roufus was at the time an undefeated kickboxer. Changpuek
Kiatsongrit an accomplished was finding it increasingly difficult to get fights in
Thailand as his weight (70 kg) was not typical for a Thai where competitive bouts
at tend to be at the lower weights. Roufus knocked Changpuek down twice with
punches in the first round breaking Changpuek's jaw, but lost by knockout in the
fourth round due to the culmination of low kicks that he was unprepared for.

Founders of UFC competition, Art Davie, Robert Meyrowitz, and, Rorion Gracie,
had a big question: which martial arts style is most effective? They set the answer
on November 12, 1993. The event pitted eight fighters against one another in a
single elimination. It had one day tournament and was seen on pay per view and
came to the masses live from the McNichols Sports Arena in Denver, Colorado,
there was a total of 86,592 spectators. The tournament had few rules (including no
decisions, time limits, or weight classes) and fighters in it from a variety of martial
arts backgrounds. Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (Royce Gracie), Karate (Zane Frazier),
shootfighting (Ken Shamrock), Sumo (Telia Tuli), Savate (Gerard Gordeau),
kickboxing (Kevin Rosier and Patrick Smith), and professional boxing (Art
Jimmerson). Royce defeated three fighters via submission in less than five minute.

The first documented use of the name mixed martial arts was in a review of UFC I
by television critic Howard Rosenberg, in 1993. The term gained popularity when
the website newfullcontact.com, then one of the biggest covering the sport, hosted and reprinted the article.

Rorion Gracie, believed that MMA should be conducted with fewer rules to make it more lifelike. The senator John McCain came across the event, one that he labeled “human cockfighting,” he worked hard and successfully to get it banned from pay per view and sanctioning in many states. This MMA blackout resulted in the UFC almost going bankrupt. Further, it allowed Japan’s PRIDE Fighting Championships, a now defunct organization, to rise up and become popular. Along with this, many former UFC fighters went to fight for them.

In 2005, the organization aired The Ultimate Fighter Reality television show (TUF) for the first time on Spike Television. Competitors on the show trained in a house together with Randy Couture and Chuck Liddell as coaches. Then they fought in a single elimination style tournament, with the winner set to receive a six figure UFC contract. The battle between Forrest Griffin and Stephan Bonnar during the show’s finale is considered to be one of the greatest MMA fights in history.

In our days the rules for mixed martial arts competitions have changed significantly since the early days. The main motivations for these rule changes were protection of the health of the fighters, the desire to shed the perception of barbarism sport and to be recognized as a legitimate sport. The new rules included the introduction of weight classes, open-fingered gloves, time limits to avoid long fights with little action (the time limits in most professional fights are three 5 minute rounds, and championship fights are normally five 5 minute rounds). Victory in a match is gained either by the judges' decision after an allotted amount of time has elapsed, a stoppage by the referee (for example if a competitor cannot defend himself intelligently) or the fight doctor (due to an injury), a submission, by a competitor's corner man throwing in the towel, or by knockout.

Mixed martial arts are primarily a male dominated sport, but it has some female athletes. There has been only a select few major professional mixed martial arts organizations in the United States that invite women to compete.

The Romanian Mixed Martial Arts Federation (RMMAF) was established in 2012 as a legal non-profit federation under the Ministry of Youth and Sport in Romania. The Federation was formed by the board of MMA organization AGON backed by a broad representation of the Romanian MMA community including around 20 pure MMA clubs and non-profit MMA organizations around the country.

Conclusions
- This full contact combat sport is growing in popularity at an amazing rate. In terms of following the popular MMA Websites receive more than a million visitors a month, and the sport is also very popular on TV.
These mixed-style competitions took place worldwide for several decades, gaining intense popularity in the United States.

As martial arts spread, so did the idea of mixed-style competitions. Often a practitioner of one martial art challenged a practitioner of a different one.

Modern mixed martial arts (MMA) is a sport that has similarities with Pankration due to the combination of techniques. The core of MMA consists of boxing, as well as kickboxing and muaythai (Thai boxing), wrestling (free style and Greco-roman), grappling (Brazilian jiu-jitsu) and judo.

Depending on the MMA organization, the rules of mixed martial arts combat may be slightly different.

An MMA athlete needs to be well rounded in the three main elements of combat; standing, ground and the transition in between them, and master a large number of techniques of various kinds. Prominent athletes have often had a very successful career in other sports before starting to train and compete in MMA.

MMA can be described as the most “natural” of all martial arts as the athlete has an almost infinite number of ways to defend himself.

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