

## Mixed Martial Arts - Overview

Mixed Martial Arts is an action-packed sport filled with striking and grappling techniques from a variety of combat sports and martial arts. During the early 1900s, many different mixed-style competitions were held throughout Europe, Japan and the Pacific Rim.

CV Productions Inc. showed the first regulated MMA league in the US in 1980 called the **Tough Guy Contest**, which was later renamed as **Battle of the Superfighters**. In 1983, the Pennsylvania State Senate passed a bill which prohibited the sport. However, in 1993, it was brought back into the US TVs by the Gracie family who found the Ultimate Fighting Championships (UFC) which most of us have probably heard about on our TVs.



These shows were promoted as a competition which intended in finding the most effective martial arts in an unarmed combat situation. The competitors fought each other with only a few rules controlling the fight. Later on, additional rules were established ensuring a little more safety for the competitors, although it still is quite life-threatening.

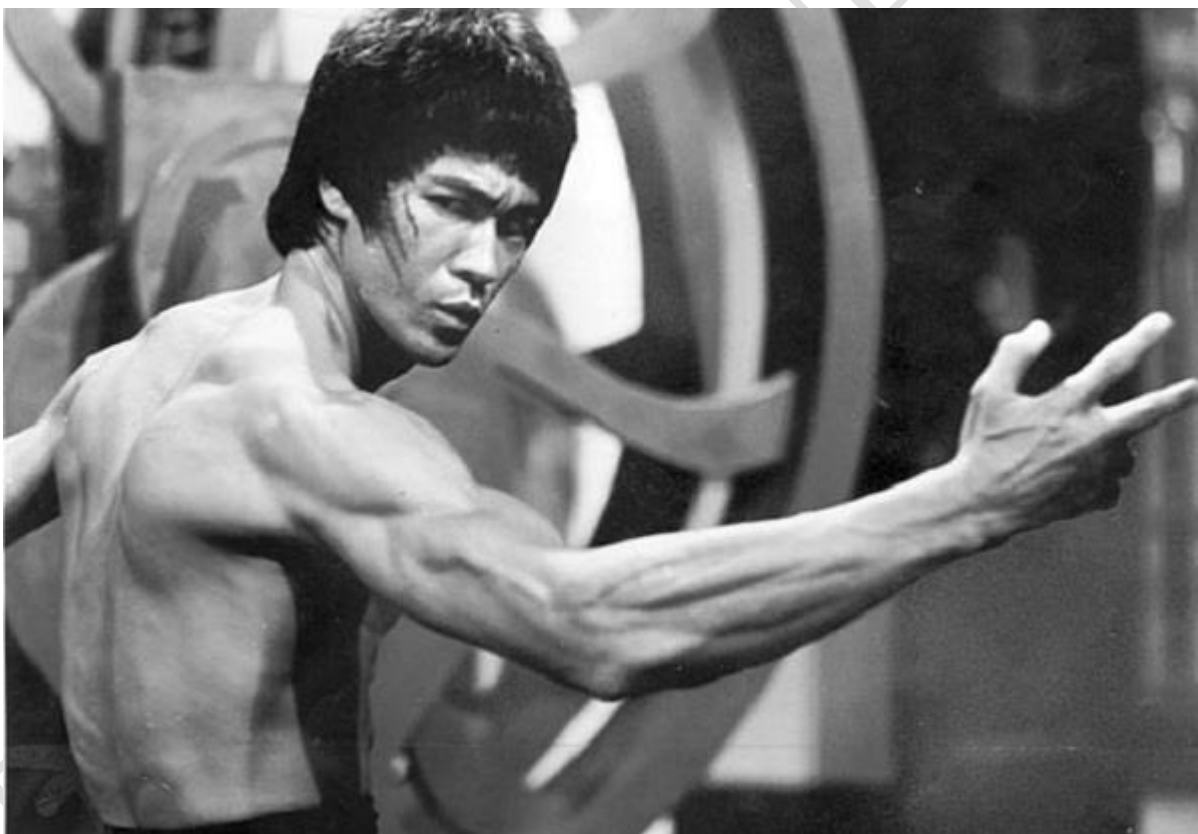
### A Brief History of Mixed Martial Arts

The history of MMA dates back to the Greek era. There was an ancient Olympic combat sport called as **Pankration** which had features of combination of grappling and striking skills. Later, this sport was passed on to the Romans.

An early example of MMA is **Greco-Roman Wrestling** (GRW) in the late 1880s, where players fought without few to almost zero safety rules. These were also called as **no-holds-barred** matches. In these matches, consistent winners like William Muldoon were slammed to defeat in just two minutes!

The popularity of professional wrestling sports diversified after the First World War. It split into two main genres – **shoot** and **show**. In shoot, the players actually had to compete. Show is what developed into the modern professional wrestling.

The concept of combining the elements of several martial arts was popularized in the late 1960s by **Bruce Lee** with his technique of **Jeet Kune Do**. Bruce Lee believed that the best fighter isn't any boxer or judo-fighter or karate-fighter. The best fighter was one who could adapt to any fighting style.



The famous match of Muhammad Ali vs. Antonio Inoki was fought in Japan in the year of 1976. It ended up in a draw as both of them refused to follow each other's style. In the fight, Ali's legs were badly damaged and he was hospitalized for three days.



## Mixed Martial Arts - Rules

Since the early days of UFC 1 and shoot wrestling etc., the rules of MMA have changed quite a lot. The audience came to know more about the fighting styles and saw the danger and wanted more reasonable rules. This perception barbarism and lawlessness was to be changed and MMA had to be recognized as a legitimate sport.

The new rules which were established included the introduction of weight classes. In MMA, there are nine different weight classes according to the Unified Rules of Mixed Martial Arts (URMMA). These include –

- Flyweight – Up to 56.7 kg
- Bantam weight – Up to 61.2 kg
- Featherweight – Up to 65.8 kg
- Lightweight – Up to 70.3 kg
- Welterweight – Up to 77.1 kg
- Middleweight – Up to 83.9 kg
- Light Heavyweight – Up to 93.0 kg
- Heavyweight – Up to 120.2 kg
- Super Heavyweight – No upper limit

## The Fighting Area

MMA competitions are held in a ring or a fenced area according to the rules and regulations of UFC. If fenced, it should be round or have a minimum of six sides. If caged, it should be an octagon shaped cage (8 sides).



## Protecting the Fists

To protect the fists, small open-fingered gloves were introduced so as to reduce the possibilities of cuts on fists and rather increase the confidence of the fighter to strike better leading to a more exhilarating match.



In most of the professional fights, players have to wear 4 oz gloves. In some other styles, amateurs have to wear 6 oz gloves for better protection of fists and wrists.

## Avoiding Lengthy Fights

To avoid lengthier fights with quite less action and unpredicted airing of live events, time limits were established. In most of the professional fights, there are three rounds of 5 minutes each. In championships, the fights are normally five rounds of 5 minutes each.

A Japan based organized, **Pride Fighting Championships**, held an opening 10-minutes round which was then followed by two shorter 5-minutes rounds. A fighter can stomp, kick, and can use knee strikes to the head, but cannot strike with the elbow on the head.

The rules may differ from championships to championships. In a Singapore based organization, the **ONE Championship** allows kicks and knees to head and also elbow strikes to the head, but prohibits from head stomps.

## Victory

A fighter is declared as the winner, either by the judges or a stoppage by the referee in the following cases –

- If a fighter isn't able to defend himself
- By the fight doctor if there is some injury
- If someone submits himself
- By a competitor's corner man throwing in the towel
- By **knockout**

## Knockout (KO)

If a fighter strikes the opponent and the opponent is not able to continue anymore, the striker wins the round and the fight is stopped so that the fallen fighter doesn't get further injured.

## Submission

A fighter can submit himself (accept defeat) by the following gestures –

- Tapping out, on the floor or the body of the opponent
- Saying it out loud that he quits

There is technical submission as well, where the referee stops the fight if the fighter who is caught in a submission hold and is in danger of being injured. This submission usually happens when a fighter gets choked to unconsciousness or when a bone breaks due to a submission hold.



## Technical Knockout (TKO)

A referee declares a technical knockout in case of the following situations –

- **Unable to defend** – A fight can be stopped if a fighter cannot defend himself and takes a lot of damage from the dominating fighter.
- **Losing Consciousness** – A fight can be stopped if a fighter appears to be losing his or her consciousness.
- **Serious Injury** – A fight can be stopped if a fighter appears to have a serious injury like a broken bone or severe cut.
- **Doctor Stoppage** – A fight can be stopped in case a fighter gets injured and needs immediate doctor's attention. The other fighter will be declared as the winner. But if there's any illegal action by that fighter, he will be disqualified.
- **Corner Stoppage** – The corner men of a fighter can throw in the towel and stop the fight if they feel their fighter is taking too much damage and could result in severe injuries.
- **Retirement** – A fight can be stopped if a fighter can no longer fight due to exhaustion or nausea.
- **Forfeit** – A fighter forfeits the match before it begins, resulting in the winning of the opponent.

- **Disqualification** – If a fighter commits an illegal action or a foul, he will be warned by the referee. After three warnings, the fighter is disqualified.
- **No Contest** – In case both the fighters commit illegal actions, or one of the fighters cannot continue to fight due to illegal action(s) by the opponent, then the fight is declared as no contest.
- **Technical Decision** – According to the unified rules of MMA, if a fighter cannot continue due to unintentional illegal actions near the end of the match, a technical decision is given by the judges based on who was better on their scorecards. A majority of the rounds must be completed before declaring a technical decision, like 2/3 rounds must be completed in a three round match and 3/5 rounds must be over in a five round match.

## Ranking of a fighter

All the MMA fighters are ranked according to their performance and their results against the competition they had to face. Various sorts of ranking portals are used for these rankings. Some of the most popular ones are as follows –

- **Fight Matrix** – The top 250-500 fighters of the world are ranked for every possible divisions of male and female.
- **Sherdog** – Here, the top 10 fighters worldwide are ranked for the available UFC divisions.
- **SB Nation** – The top 14 male fighters of the world are ranked here.
- **UFC** – The UFC ranks the top 15 contenders signed by them as per their directions.

## Clothing

The male typically wear shorts and nothing else. Female fighters wear shorts and sports bras or similar tops. Both of them have to wear mouth guards as a safety measure.

The clothing needs to be durable, comfortable and flexible as the fighter will be using his legs a lot. There are a range of short brands which make MMA clothing and casual wear available to the public.

## Mixed Martial Arts - Combat Forms

Traditional Martial Arts has certain disciplines and training on improving one's fighting style. Some of the popular disciplines are as follows –

- **Stand-up** – Kickboxing, Muay Thai, Boxing, Kyokushin Karate, Taekwondo, Sanshou and Combat Sambo are trained to improve stand-up strikes.

- **Clinch** – Judo, Sambo, Sanshou, Jujutsu, Freestyle and Greco-Roman Wrestling are trained in order to improve clinching, takedowns and throws.
- **Ground** – Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, Sambo, Submission wrestling, Judo and some other arts are trained in order to improve ground control and position of a fighter, and also to use submission holds to defend against them.

Most of these styles are inherited directly or indirectly from their traditional forms.

Initially, MMA was practiced only by competitive fighters but it is no longer the case. The sport has become more mainstream and taught all over the world. People learn one or other form of MMA for safety and fitness, regardless of their age.

## Boxing

Boxing is a very popular combat form and it is widely used in MMA. Majority of the strikes during the stand-up fights are boxing punches. Many boxing punches account for the most number of knock downs and knockouts in MMA competitions.

Many aspects of boxing like kicks, combinations, and blocking techniques like slips etc. are highly valuable to MMA. Some fighters who use boxing in MMA are Cain Velasquez, Junior dos Santos, B.J. Penn, Dan Hardy, Nick Diaz, and Shane Carwin.

## Muay Thai

One of the best technique for striking in MMA is combining Muay Thai with boxing. Its versatility is its vital characteristic. Kicks, throws, clinch holds etc., according to long range, middle range and short range! One can learn all these techniques in Muay Thai.

As the name indicates, it originated in Thailand. Muay Thai is also referred to as “Art of eight limbs” as it makes use of the legs, knees, fists and elbows.

## Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu got most of its popularity in the early 1990s when its expert Royce Gracie won both the second and fourth UFCs, against fighters who practiced other larger styles like boxing, karate, taekwondo. Since then it has become a popular fighting style.

## Karate

Karate is also known as **Kyokusin** and **Full Contact**. It has been very effective in the sport of MMA. It has the core foundations of kickboxing and in striking



techniques. Styles of karate are practiced by some of the popular MMA fighters like Chuck Liddel and Bas Rutten.

## Taekwondo

Taekwondo, also called as TKD, is used extensively by some of the MMA fighters. Anderson Silva, in his book admitted that TKD had influenced in largely in his style at the beginning of his career.

## Mixed Martial Arts - Techniques

The techniques used in MMA are put in two categories, striking and grappling techniques. Striking techniques include kicks, knee strikes, punches, and elbow strikes. Grappling techniques include clinch holds, pinning holds, submission holds, sweeps, throws, and takedowns.

Some of the famous strategies used by many fighters in MMA are as follows –

### Sprawl-and-Brawl

This is a stand-up strategy used mostly to defend against takedowns. This technique is mostly used by boxers, kickboxers and karate fighters to avoid takedowns and to keep standing.



### Ground-and-pound

In this strategy, the opponent is taken to the ground with a takedown or a throw, and the fighter gets on top and with a grappling position, strikes the opponent with fists, elbows and hammerfists. This strategy is mostly used before performing a submission hold.

## Submission-seeking

This is a strategy where a fighter takes down his enemy by a takedown or a throw and then tries to get him into a submission hold, forcing him to submit. Submissions are an important part of many disciplines like Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, Judo, Sambo etc. These were popularized in the early events of UFC.



## Score-oriented fighting

This technique is mostly used by fighters who have a strong wrestling background and are facing a skilled Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu opponent or other stand-up fighters.

With this technique, the fighters take down their opponents to score. They land clear strikes and try to control the octagon. Contrary to the technique, for one to win, he should master defence techniques of MMA in order to avoid getting taken down.

## Clinch-fighting

In this technique, the fighter uses a clinch hold to prevent the opponent from getting into distant enough outside the striking range, while at the same time the fighter keeps striking by knee strikes, punches, elbow strikes, stomps, and attempt to takedown the opponent. This technique is mostly used by wrestlers and judo fighters in MMA matches.

## Mixed Martial Arts - Injuries

Since the first UFC in 1993, MMA competitions have changed a lot mainly because of the introduction of the Unified Rules of Mixed Martial Arts. Things can get really dirty inside the cage when both the fighters get to the farthest of their skills, sport, and spirit.

## Rate of injuries

Recently in a meta-analysis which showed injury data in MMA, it was found that –

- Incidences of injuries were estimated to be about 228.7 injuries in every 1000 fights.
- This data is greater than that of judo (44/1000), taekwondo (79.4/1000), amateur boxing (77.7/1000), professional boxing (118 to 250.6/1000).

## Patterns of injuries

The injury pattern in MMA is quite similar to that of professional boxing. The most commonly injured body part is the head, then the wrists, then fractures, and the least are concussions.

## Mental health of fighters

It has been found out that fighters with more than 6 years of experience in these types of fights, were observed to have reductions in their size of hippocampus and thalamus and fighters with more than 12 years of experience in the same were observed to have reductions in memory and alertness as a result of reduction in their hippocampus and thalamus.

## Fatalities

Till date, there have been seven known deaths in and due to MMA. All these cases are incidents after 2007 as before then there were no documented cases of deaths in MMA.

From 2007 to 2010, two fighters had died because of the fights, Sam Vasquez on 30<sup>th</sup> of November in 2007 and Michael Kirkham from South Carolina on June 28<sup>th</sup> of 2010.

## Mixed Martial Arts - Local Bodies

### Australia

In Australia, MMA is sanctioned in all the states and territories by various organizations. Although there was a debate about the cage, which was banned in the state of Victoria in 2007 but it was again legalized in 2015.

### Belgium

In Belgium, MMA is not supported, but they do tolerate it enough to be legalized there. The Belgian MMA Federation or BMMAF was the third member of the IMMAF.

### Brazil

The Brazilian MMA Athletic Commission joined the IMMAF on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2013. The commission is known as the **Comissao Atletica Brasileira de MMA** or CABMMA in Brazil. It represents state federations all across Brazil.

## Bulgaria

MMA was professionally introduced in Bulgaria around 2008-2009. It is growing quite rapidly with an established strong wrestling and boxing culture. It was not regulated there until the Bulgarian Federation for Mixed Martial Arts was elected to be the national federation to represent Bulgaria under IMMAF in October 2014. It is also a non-profit organization established in November 2013.

## Cambodia

The Cambodian Mixed Martial Arts Association or CMMAA was created in January of 2013 under the **Cambodian Martial Arts Federation**. Until then, there were no MMA events organized there.

## Canada

MMA competitions were illegal in Canada for many years. Canada formally decriminalized MMA with a vote on June 5, 2013.

## China

The **Ranik Ultimate Fighting Federation** or **RUFF** hosted the first MMA event in Shanghai, sanctioned by China's governing body for combat sports called the Wushu Sports Management Center of the General Administration of Sport in China.

## Denmark

MMA is not legally regulated in Denmark although it is supported by a federation called the Danish Mixed Martial Arts Federation.

## France

MMA is illegal and is banned in France under their **Pancrase Rules** and its variants.

## Ireland

The Irish Martial Arts Commission does not recognize MMA among its sports. The Mixed Martial Arts Federation Ireland (MMAFI) is intended as a federation for amateur MMA clubs and is still gaining the prospect of getting recognition.

## Japan

MMA competitions are legal in Japan since the mid 1980s. There are many MMA related organizations like RIZIN FF, DEEP, Pancrase, Shooto, and ZST.

## Malaysia

The Malaysia Mixed Martial Arts Association or MASMMAA was formally announced as the official national governing body for MMA in Malaysia in July 2013. It is registered under the Malaysian Sports Development Act 1997 and recognized by the Commissioner of Sports.

## Norway

MMA and boxing are illegal in Norway. There is an elected body called the Norwegian MMA Federation by the IMMAF, which represents 49 member gyms across Norway. The fighters have to travel abroad in order to compete.

## Portugal

MMA is legal in Portugal. The Federacao de Mixed Martial Arts de Portugal or FMMAF was founded in a collaborative effort by six existing non-profit organizations in 2012. Portugal needs at least three associated non-profit groups and they already have six, hence it is legal.

## Romania

MMA is legal in Romania. The Romanian Mixed Martial Arts Federation (RMMAF) was established in 2012 under the Ministry of Youth and Sport in Romania as a non-profit federation.

## Russia

MMA is legal in Russia. MMA was given the status of National Sport in Russia in September of 2012. On the same day, fighter and M-1 Global promoted Feddor Emelankenko was appointed to carry the role of Russian MMA Union President.

## Sweden

MMA is legal in Sweden under the **Swedish Mixed Martial Arts Federation** or SMMAF which was formed in 2007. It has been overseeing MMA events and governing the sport of MMA as a whole in Sweden since 2008.

## South Africa

MMA is legal in South Africa under the purview of the **Professional Mixed Martial Arts Council** or PROMMA Africa. It was founded in 2010 to regulate MMA at larger promotions like EFC Worldwide etc.

## Thailand

MMA was banned in Thailand in 2012 but the same ban was removed on September 12<sup>th</sup> of 2013. They banned it on the first place as they speculated that MMA could potentially take away business from the Muay Thai industry.

## United States of America

MMA is legal in the US. Professional MMA is looked after in the US by the Association of Boxing Commissions. According to them, professional MMA competitions are allowed all over the US.

## Mixed Martial Arts - Championships

There are hundreds of MMA promotions around the world that organize MMA events. Other than UFC, some other major MMA promotions are –

- Bellator MMA
- ONE Championship
- World Series of Fighting
- Invicta FC (All female MMA)

## International MMA Federation

The International Mixed Martial Arts Federation (IMMAF) was founded on February 29, 2012, to bring international development, support and structure for MMA across the world.

The IMMAF was launched with the support of the UFC. IMMAF is a non-profit and democratic federation to ensure that MMA gets the same recognition as all the other popular sports.

At present, there are 39 members in IMMAF from 38 countries –

Austria	Greece	Pakistan
Belgium	Iceland	Paraguay

Brazil	India	Poland
Bulgaria	Ireland	Portugal
Cameroon	Italy	Romania
Canada	Jordan	Seychelles
Czech Republic	Lebanon	South Africa
Denmark	Lithuania	Sweden
El Salvador	Malaysia	Switzerland
Estonia	Nepal	Tajikistan
Finland	Netherlands	Ukraine
France	New Zealand	United Kingdom
Germany	Norway	USA

The federation held its first Amateur World Championships from June 30<sup>th</sup> to July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014, in Las Vegas, USA.

## World Mixed Martial Arts Association

The World Mixed Martial Arts Association (WMMAA) was established in 2012 in Monaco. The WMMAA has 43 members under it –

Afghanistan	Greece	Senegal
Albania	India	Serbia
Armenia	Iran	Slovakia

Austria	Italy	South Korea
Azerbaijan	Kazakhstan	Spain
Belarus	Latvia	Switzerland
Belgium	Lithuania	Tajikistan
Bulgaria	Macedonia	Trinidad & Tobago
Canada	Moldova	Turkey
Croatia	Mongolia	Ukraine
Colombia	Netherlands	Uzbekistan
Czech Republic	Poland	Venezuela
France	Portugal	Monaco
Guatemala	Romania	
Georgia	Russia	

The first world MMA Championship was held on October 20th 2013 in St. Petersburg, Russia.

## WMMAA Pan-American Division

The World MMA Council merged with the WMMAA on July 4<sup>th</sup> of 2014. The first even Pan-American Division for the World MMA Association was established under the leadership of business magnate Tomas Yu, during the 2014 WMMAA Congress which was held in Amsterdam, Netherlands.