

There has been an insurgence of the MMA, or Mixed Martial Arts movement in America recently and every school across the nation is offering courses to capitalize on this new "fad" in the martial arts. Although I enjoy the TV series on Spike TV and have been to several events I have to point out that all the things that qualify a system as a martial art do not exist in this new movement.

MMA fights or cage fighting is not entirely a new concept. There have been many no holds barred fights across the nation as far back as I can remember. Perhaps even some of the tough man competitions were a form of no holds barred, except they were not allowed to grapple or do submission holds. When I was a young martial artist I can remember overhearing stories from many of the black belts at tournaments about how certain schools held "closed" fighting sessions where they allowed competitors to go full out. When I hit my teen years I began to investigate these more since I was just beginning my kickboxing career and developed an interest in full contact fighting. The majority of the events that I attended were held in a school and they typically pitted street fighters against trained martial artists, or different styles of martial arts against each other. They were very bloody and I cannot ever remember there being a rule meeting or any rules for that matter since I did see fish hooks, small digit joint locks and even more. The main thing I remembered was the violence that was associated with this type of competition and how...wins or loose...honorable the combatants were at the end of the match.

In the late 1990's began a movement to popularize this type of fighting called cage fights. The first major promotion was an idea created by the Gracie family to prove to everyone how their martial art was the superior or ultimate system. These events were called the Ultimate Fighting Championships, or UFC. I can remember everyone tuning to watch this 5'10" 185 lbs Gracie take on all fighters to be crowned the UFC Champion and get lots of "MONEY". This created an insurgence of Jujitsu schools all across America and even more schools offering "grappling" that had little or no experience because everyone believed it was the ULTIMATE system of combat and would make you the next super hero of the fighting world. The truth is that grappling concepts were not a new thing. My Sensei had us doing grappling since the early 1980's and it was always mixed with chokes, submissions and much more but was not designed to win a contest, rather to survive a street fight if we were ever taken down.

After the invention of the UFC a wave of these types of fights popped up all over America with promoters hoping to cash in on the fame and glory, or should I say gullible audiences in the US. People that promoted these earlier editions of these fights rarely were there to promote anything martial arts related but rather they wanted to make money of other people's blood. Most of these promoters had no experience in this type of fighting and had been kickboxing promoters in the past. It was all about the money and nothing about martial arts. How can I say this? Let me explain. The martial arts were originally developed to survive combat or use in battle against either an armed or unarmed attacker. During the reformation period of Japan they were no longer seen as needed for combat since Japan was now at peace and there were no more confrontations going on to secure land. The ruling class loved their martial arts so much and since Zen Buddhism was a major influence on the thinking of the martial art practitioners they developed them into a way of life aimed at discipline, physical, mental and spiritual development...more out the need to preserve these arts. In the process the martial arts developed into the world's most unique system of training whereas a student trained to develop their ability to survive a fight but only if they ever needed to actually fight. A major fraction developed in the warrior arts of Budo at this time. Some scholars called it the Do / Kai separation where Do means "the way" and Kai means "warrior". The arts that were practiced in the manner of the Do were about internal development of the person whereas the Kai arts were still about actual combat. The masters of each type of discipline were at war with each other through many different ways including challenges and bad mouthing of each other's arts. The Do people claimed that the ultimate goal of a practitioner was to develop their abilities and spirit for enlightenment whereas the Kai people still believe the ultimate goal to train was to survive a battle. This conflict still remains today among many modern martial artists since each has their own belief structure in why they train.

Although there is a unique history to development of these systems, the American public is to blame for the insurgence of the MMA movement. Our lust for blood and our own arrogance is what has caused the MMA to take on. In the United States we have created a emphasis on power, personal gain and self

reliance above all else. We love competition and everyone wants to be a winner, or be on the side of the winning team. Very few people respect the loser even if they won an internal battle within their own self, yet lost the match. A prime example of the Delahoya and Mayweather fight that just took place. Delahoya lost yet he accomplished a great deal and went the full 12 rounds with a younger, seasoned and in his prime fighter. When the smoke cleared Mayweather was the champion. Sure some of the fans of Delahoya are upset and they are mad at their favorite fighter, but look at the overall picture. Delahoya is a proven fighter who has done many great things in his life and is truly accomplished whereas Mayweather is young and although a great fighter has nothing else he can lay claim to. So the question remains who is the true winner of the fight? If you look at only the combat then Mayweather won, but if you look at the overall picture then Delahoya is the true champion...this is something we as Americans do not take into consideration.

The MMA generation is not a good example of role models for our children either. Take in the account of the recent UFC fight that I watched which was in many terms just like the past ones, where the fighters basically cussed a lot and the "F" word was said like candy available. As a parent I know that I do not want my child subjected to this language any sooner than needed so I would not let her watch these fights. Now take into consideration that the majority of these fighters use drugs to build their bodies and also I have seen many of them drink heavily at events I have attended. How many have criminal backgrounds for violent crimes? Many of them do. To take in to consideration that they may change because of the training but the moment they start to lose their "victor" status they return to their previous life style. I am sure there are some fighters out there who are not living this way but the majority of the one's I have met do and they are not afraid to publicize the fact they are "Bad Boys". If this is the type of role model you want for your child then more power to you but let me assure you that this has NOTHING to do with martial arts at all. In fact true martial arts training is just opposite regardless of whether you study a DO or KAI system, there is a code of etiquette involved that cannot be bastardized to make it your own set of rules for what suits you.

Yes I am aware of the fact that many of the boxers of today's generation are/were the same way and yes they do the same thing. I am also aware of the legal trouble the professional sports players of baseball, football, etc. get into all the time. This is one of the primary reasons I feel the martial arts are superior for training children than other sports because we have "good" role models for the most part, but I am aware there are bad eggs in our outcroppings as well. I even had a sensei once who drank Jack Daniels a lot and was very apt at using cuss words in class as well as in life. He was a good kickboxing coach but I never followed his path nor would I have ever considered him as one of my main sensei. The biggest problem that I can see with the MMA faction is the attitude. All they ever talk about is how tough they are and the talk down about everything else. The general public acknowledges this and they are not educated about martial arts so they except everything these people say as if it were the golden rule. The reality being they are not "REAL" fights. They are only a sport or a version of combat but there does exist many rules in the ring that you will not have on the outside. In my years that I have been in martial arts I have been in a few conflicts, which I consider to be unfortunate. Fighting is the last answer to a true martial artist but if you are in a situation where you have no choice you do fight ferocity and vigor to win the battle "at any cost". What I have come to learn is that no matter how prepared you are and if you publicize how tough you are eventually someone will kick your butt and it will be very bad. Look at it this way...if you are a bad boy and think you can beat anyone just because you have had a few fights, maybe won a title or two in a ring and you make the wrong person mad you could be walking out to your car after being in a bar and SMACK! Next thing you know you wake up in the hospital being informed you have a lifelong injury that just ended your career or worse...you never wake up at all! This is the reality of fighting. Make the wrong person mad and you could get hit from behind with a crowbar or stabbed or even shot! I personally have witnessed this in my life time as a former security professional as well as a body guard.

Now to the summation of this brief article on MMA. MMA is not a martial art. It is a hybrid of several systems of martial arts and modern combative sports such as boxing and kickboxing. There are many reasons why it is not a martial art but here the primary manners in which it directly conflicts with the definition of a true martial art:

- Martial Art systems are developed over many years of scientific research and training in other styles. A teacher of these systems does not spend a few years in a few arts and then create their own system. You must have Master rank which takes at least 10 years study in the arts you chose to develop your system in order for it to be accepted as a martial art.
- Martial arts are not about fighting however they are about self defense. There is a huge difference. Any moron can go out and win a few fights, even if they are not trained. Martial artists train to avoid having to fight yet we train to win if we are in a fight. We do not seek to fight but rather prepare if one comes our way. We will do whatever we can to avoid the physical confrontation because we realize that our skills can seriously injure, or kill others and since we value life above winning a fight...it is our last ditch effort to have to strike another person.
- A true martial art is much more than just physical skills. We train to discipline and develop the mind, body and spirit to be one cohesive unit. This takes more than just hitting objects and sparring with partners. It requires the ability to teach focus and proper breathing. It requires meditation and guided instruction from a real master who leads his life by the methods in which they teach others. You cannot do drugs or drink heavily since that makes you unbalanced and you definitely cannot fight for fun.
- Martial arts in their purest sense are very personal. Many times a student has spent much of their life dedicated to perfecting the requirements needed to attain status in their chosen art. Along the way it becomes a private part of their life. Sure we all have stories of how many bones we broke or talk about some great sparring session but the real meaning behind our training and why we do what do is very personal. We would never seek fame or fortune because of the arts but rather just continue to train.
- An one of the biggest reasons is that a true martial artist has nothing to prove to others but rather to one's self. We do not need to compete in the cage to prove how tough we are because we know that does not matter. We do not win a title because we know the knowledge and skill are more important. We do not need to brag or show off because we know that in time physical skills will fade away and be replaced with true knowledge and understanding. MMA people base everything on what the martial arts do not believe in. We train to be the best we can be so that we can live a better way of life. There is no need to kick someone's butt to prove anything at anytime.
- The true value of martial arts lies in the mastery levels, not the competitive aspects. A martial artist understands that they are learning new skills to perfect them so that they may honor their sensei by passing on the traditions, etiquette and skills to other people. Unlike many other things in American culture a martial art teacher is defined by their understanding of the knowledge of they are teaching others rather than their skills and ability to show it off.

In the years I have been in martial arts I have competed in tournaments, full contact karate matches, kickboxing and even fought a few cage matches, but I did it for fun. If I had to do it as a way of making a living then I would not be in it very long. My training is personal and all I care about is giving my best to my students. If they want me to fight in a cage match to prove the effectiveness of my system they will not be my student very long as the Aiki Te Ryu system is designed that we respect knowledge, dedication to the system and proper understanding of the techniques above any fight you would ever win. Our system is designed to inform the student that the toughest challenger they will ever have to defeat comes from within their own mind...their own body and their own spirit.