

Last Shot is a guest editorial and does not always reflect the views or positions of Martial Arts Professional, NAPMA or their directors.

The Re-Evolution of the Martial Arts

By Philip G. Ross

We are not speaking of a "Revolution" here but a "Re-Evolution." It is quite evident that the martial arts have, on a whole, become fragmented. I say "have become" because, at the inception of the arts, all warring (martial) arts included the employment of a full arsenal of weapons. The military practiced kicking, punching, blocking, striking, throws and submission holds.

Then, as different instructors taught the arts, they had a tendency to focus on what they personally did best or what techniques and methodology suited their particular area. That's a quick summation of martial arts evolution.

For decades, there were always countless arguments over who would win a fight: boxers, wrestlers, kickboxers, judo players, taekwondo or karate practitioners. There were several attempts in the 1970s to uncover the best art. The infamous boxer-versus-wrestler bout between Muhammad Ali and Japanese wrestler Antonio Inoki, for just one example. And New York martial arts promoter Aaron Banks hosted a tournament in Madison Square Garden that pitted boxing vs. karate, taekwondo vs. judo, etc. None of it ever caught on with audiences, however, until the emergence of the Ultimate Fighting Championship in the early 1990s.

Known variously as "no-holds-barred" and "ultimate fighting," mixed martial arts (MMA) had a very rocky beginning due to its reputation as a "bloodsport." And then, it almost fell by the wayside in the late 1990s and early 21st century when a bunch of states banned its event promotions in their jurisdictions.

Today, it's not only on the upswing, but is considered the fastest growing professional sport in the world. As a testimony to its popularity, MMA is becoming more and more mainstream, thanks to the UFC, Pride and Strike Force, to name a few organizations, and the sport's regular appearances on television, in particular the *Ultimate Fighter* weekly series on Spike TV. It's the boxing of the

future. As UFC President Dana White bluntly puts it, "Boxing is your father's sport."

15 years ago, anyone who taught a "mixed martial art" was chastised for not being a purist. Today, if you do not include some type of reality or ground fighting in your system, you could lose potential students. Beware of simply adding a few chokes or locks into your system; it's simply *not* enough. You must adopt a full curriculum in order to apply the techniques in a useful manner.

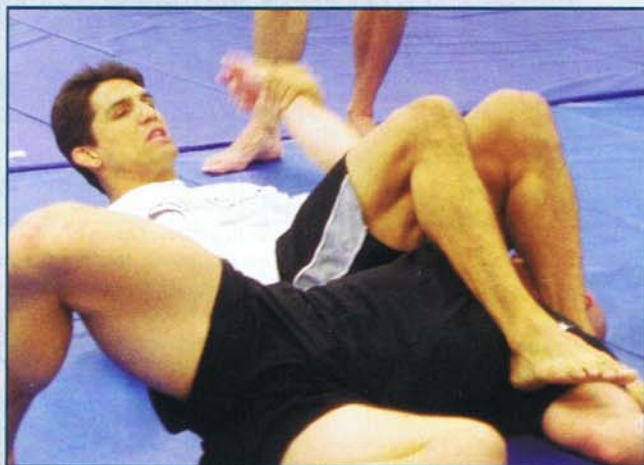
I have had the pleasure of working with Frank Shamrock. His system, SSF (Shamrock Submission Fighting), is a complete one that has abided by the Tao of Bruce Lee: "Absorb what is useful."

The validity of Shamrock's material as presented eliminates unnecessary movement, training methods and philosophies. The manner in which he presents the transitory fighting application is very succinct and direct, moving from kicking to striking to takedown to submission. It demonstrates why he is such a successful fighter.

You will soon discover that, in order to finish an opponent, positioning is the key. If you have ever seen a couple of dogs fight, the one who wins the scramble, wins the advantage. Your movement must be perpetual and purposeful. These skills are developed through a series of drills and games. The drills and games are not only fun, but they also develop the skills necessary for positioning during combat. As we all know, position yields control; not only ultimately of your opponent but more importantly of yourself.

Embracing the modern method of fighting and training is essential to your (and your students') growth as martial artists. Open your mind to integrating elements of MMA into your curriculum. Your students won't be disappointed. ♦

Philip G. Ross has over 30 years of experience in the combative arts, has been instructing the arts for 20 years, is in three Halls of Fame, an SSF Level II instructor and a High School wrestling coach. He is also the creator of the S.A.V.E. Self Defense Fitness Workout. He can be contacted at eagle62@optonline.net.



"Today, MMA is not only on the upswing, but is considered the fastest growing professional sport in the world."