

The Re-Evolution of the Martial Arts

By Philip G. Ross

We are not speaking of a "Revolution, 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. 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 on who would win a fight: boxers, wrestlers, kickboxers, Judo players, Taekwondo or Karate practitioners. There were several attempts in the 70's to uncover the best art. The infamous fight between Muhammad Ali and Japanese Wrestler Antonio Inoki and Aaron Banks hosted a series of tournaments in Madison Square Garden that pitted boxing vs. Karate, Taekwondo vs. Judo, etc... None of it ever caught on, until the emergence of the UFC.

MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) had its rocky beginnings and then almost fell by the wayside a few years back. Now it is on the upswing. As testimony to the popularity of Spike, UFC, Pride and Strike Force, Brazilian Vale Tudo to name a few, MMA is becoming more and more mainstream. It's the boxing of the future.

Fifteen years ago, anyone who taught a "Mixed Martial Art" was chastised for not being a purist. Now, if you do not include some type of reality or ground fighting in your system people will overlook your school. Beware

of simply adding a few chokes or locks into your system; it is not enough. You must adopt a full curriculum in order to apply the techniques in a useful manner. The striking techniques that you employ need to set up your grappling and submission movements, the transverse also holds true. Additionally, a well rounded system includes the use of weapons, not only for practical application, but for the development of your grip, core and joint stabilizers.

I have had the pleasure of working with and training under the guidance Frank Shamrock. His system, SSF (Shamrock Submission Fighting), is a complete system that has abided by the Tao of Bruce Lee: "Absorb what is Useful." The validity of his 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, demonstrate why he has become one of the best MMA Fighters ever.

You will soon discover that in order to finish an opponent, positioning is the key. If you have ever observed a couple of dogs in a fight, the one who wins the scramble, wins the advantage. Your movement must be perpetual and purposeful.

SSF teaches you the submission positions and the transition from one range to another, as well as one position to another. These skills are developed through a series of drills and games. The drills and games are not

only fun, but they 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.

One art, though not very popular, has components from all phases of fighting. The Burmese art of Bando includes forms (series of movements that simulate fighting), Burmese Boxing (otherwise known as Muay Tai), Naban (Grappling), Banshee (Weapons) and Animal Forms. Bando, in my opinion, is the most comprehensive Martial Art in the world. No phase of fighting is overlooked. In order to achieve the level of Black Belt, one must not only be skilled in the use of the Kukri (short sword), Bo Staff (6' stick) and Short Stick (Club); one must be proficient in the use of firearms and archery.

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

About the Author: Philip G. Ross has over 30 years of experience in the combative arts, has been instructing the arts for over 20 years, is in 3 Halls of Fame, an SSF Level II instructor, holds Black Belts in Bando, Taekwondo and is a High School wrestling coach. He is also the creator of the S.A.V.E. Self Defense Fitness Workout.

