

The History of Modern Wrestling in the United States

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Introduction

Wrestling is without a doubt one of the oldest martial arts or sports. Many anthropologists have documented that early societies undoubtedly incorporated sports like running, ball playing, and wrestling in their seasonal festivals and religious practices.¹ In over 5000 years of wrestling's existence the basic holds and techniques have changed very little though the specific rules have varied from culture to culture and over time. For example, depictions of the basic holds of modern wrestlers have been found in the tombs of Beni Hassan in Egypt dating from the time of the Pharaohs (~1850 B.C.).² Similarly, a cast bronze statue of two wrestlers gripping each other's hips or belts was uncovered in 1938 while excavating the 5000 year old Sumerian temple of Kyfaje near Baghdad.³

A complete history of all types and styles of wrestling or martial arts that have a wrestling component would be very difficult and is beyond the scope of this paper. The objective of this paper is to discuss the history of wrestling styles that have had a direct impact on the common styles of wrestling now in the United States. According to the International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles (FILA), there are four main styles of amateur wrestling that are

practiced internationally today. These are freestyle wrestling, Greco-Roman, Judo, and Sambo. The styles or types of wrestling that are common in the United States include collegiate, freestyle, Greco-Roman, professional, and the relatively new no-holds barred or submission wrestling. The martial arts that have a large wrestling component that is practiced in the U.S. include judo, jujitsu and mixed martial arts. Collegiate wrestling is practiced in K-12 schools, colleges, and universities. Judo, freestyle, and Greco-Roman wrestling are all Olympic sports. Judo is included in this discussion since it has such a large wrestling component in its style. Discussions of mixed martial arts and submission wrestling are included since these styles have such a large wrestling component in them and have had such a large impact on current martial art practices. Jujitsu is also included in this discussion as the precursor to judo and of the impact it has had on mixed martial arts due to its strong ground or wrestling component.

Overall History

Classical Greek and Roman Wrestling

Origins of Greek Wrestling

Morton and O'Brien state that historically speaking, wrestling was part of Greek ritual long before there were established rules.⁴ In fact in chapter 23 of the *Iliad*, Homer gives detailed description of the moves in the match between Ajax and Odysseus (*Iliad*). Morton and O'Brien also note how in the Homeric contests only nobles were allowed to compete unlike later games.⁵

Many scholars have argued whether wrestling events at funerals were to honor mythic heroes versus an event simply to distribute the possessions of the dead leader.⁶

Wrestling was important throughout the history of the Greek culture. Many records still exist illustrating how important wrestling was to these civilizations. The Greeks valued individual excellence and competition in all aspects of their lives. Wrestling was especially held in esteem by the Greeks. They developed a style called *pankration*, a “no holds barred” style which was particularly rough and many times gory. The wrestlers could do virtually anything including kicking, punching, biting, and choking. This style continued in Greece until approximately 900 B.C. when Theseus, the legendary king of Athens decided to formulate more stringent rules.

Wrestling in the Ancient Olympics

Morton and O'Brien mention that there is no way to know the actual rules that were used during the 1200 year history of the Olympics.⁷ They know that upright wrestling was a competitive form but do not know what holds were allowed or what moves and counters were used. The information of that time is fragmented, incomplete, and definitely open to interpretation. It appears that holds below the waist were allowed. It appears that knees could touch the ground and not be counted as a throw. Back flips and bridging were also prominent which indicated that the match often continued on the ground. It is recorded around 700 B.C. that wrestling was the final event of the pentathlon in the Olympics. Beginning in the seventeenth Olympiad,

wrestling is listed as a separated event for men.⁸ Morton and O'Brian also discuss another style of wrestling that was in the Olympic games, the *Pankration*. It was fought on an area specially watered down for the ground struggle.⁹ Morton and O'Brien continued the discussion on the evidence gathered that the pankration was so brutal that even the most famous Greek wrestler of the sixth century B.C. refused to participate. The competitors were allowed to kick, trample, choke, dislocate, and break bones to subdue the opponent. There is an account of an Olympic champion in 564 B.C. who won by the use of an ankle bar but died due to the opponent holding him in a choke hold.¹⁰ The esteemed philosopher, Plato, named for his robust physique by his wrestling coach, Ariston of Argos, describes how everyday training of Greek youth included wrestling.^{11, 12}

Roman Wrestling

Later as the Roman Empire was born, their own style of wrestling was also developed. The Roman gladiator contests held in Rome influenced much of the rules and style of the wrestling matches on the continent. During the last quarter of the second century B.C. the Romans developed their own style of wrestling, though it never gained the popularity as did the Grecian wrestling.¹³ This version of what would later be known as *Catch-As-Catch-Can* style of wrestling was born.^{14, 15} This meant that the wrestler could catch any hold he could. It was a no holds barred style. The contestant was free to grab any part of the anatomy or whatever he was wearing. This style also merged with the style the Greeks had developed into what was known as

Greco-Roman wrestling. In this style however, holds were not permitted below the waist.

The impact of the Olympic games and the military adventures of Rome combined to spread the Greco-Roman style of wrestling throughout Europe via the growth of the Roman Empire.

Evolution of European Wrestling

With the rise of the “civilized world” came new rules for wrestling. Greco-Roman wrestling added rules to reflect the nature of the civilized societies. Where ancient wrestling concentrated on the ritual aspects of the sport, the Greeks and Romans concentrated on winning as the main objective. The holy men and shamen were replaced with referees and officials who were interested in guaranteeing a fair outcome.¹⁶

After the fall of Rome during the dark ages, not much is known about many of the original Olympic sports. However, there is evidence that wrestling continued as a local sport in towns throughout Europe. As nations became more established, wrestling once again emerged and became prominent over the European continent and the British Isles. Wrestling events became large spectacles with matches being set up months in advance between nations and the kings attending the matches. Royal titles, land, money, and armies were often bet on the outcome of a single match.¹⁷ It is even recorded that a wrestling match broke out between King Francis I of France and King Henry VIII of England while watching a match between representatives from the two countries.¹⁸ King Henry kept bragging how English wrestlers always won and all Frenchmen were puny. This boasting continued until

King Francis jumped King Henry VIII and tried to pin him. The match was broke up by the respective retinues and called a draw. There is another version where the two kings actually agreed to wrestle and King Francis I won by a pin.¹⁹

European Wrestling in the Colonial Era

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, England became the center of wrestling in Europe. Different styles emerged across England named after the English counties of origin. Morgan states that the most famous of these styles at the time were the Cornish, the Devonshire, and the Lancashire.²⁰ Ball states that in the mid-nineteenth century England was the center of development for boxing and wrestling.²¹ He goes on to state that there were three popular styles that dominated during that time: the more formal “Cumberland and Westmoreland” style which was popular in the north of England, while the less sophisticated “Cornish and Devonshire” style and the “Lancashire” style were popular elsewhere in England.²²

The Cumberland and Westmoreland style dictated that wrestlers wore tights and used only a few accepted holds.²³ The wrestlers would start chest to chest with their chins on their opponent’s right shoulder and arm bars around the waist. The match was over when any body part other than the feet touched the ground. The Cornish and Devonshire style was similar in style to Japanese jujutsu.²⁴ The opponents faced one another and attempted to grab hold of a harness worn by the other. Grasping various parts of the harness would help the wrestler to throw the opponent and win the fall. In the early forms of this style the competitors actual

wore heavy boots with steel soles and toes used to kick the opponent.

Ball reports that the Lancashire style developed from the previous two styles and allowed the wrestler any means necessary to throw the opponent.²⁵

Each year on St James Day, July 25, wrestlers from all over England, Scotland, and Ireland would gather in London for the national elimination matches.²⁶ The wrestlers from Ireland and Scotland tended to be consistently defeated by the English wrestlers. The two countries developed their own styles of wrestling. The Irish developed a style that was more brutal than the English style while the Scottish people developed a style similar to the Lancashire style (though Morgan did not elaborate on the particulars of any of these regional styles in his history).²⁷

During the same period, the French were developing the wrestling style that would form the basis of modern Greco-Roman wrestling. The wrestlers were not allowed any hold below the waist and kicking and tripping were prohibited.²⁸ The wrestlers were required to face one another at all times so many throws common to modern wrestling and jujutsu were not allowed.²⁹

History of Japanese Wrestling

Wrestling has been a national sport in Japan for at least 2000 years.³⁰ Similar to the kings in Europe, the emperors of Japan enjoyed watching wrestling and would establish festival days to highlight wrestling bouts. The favored wrestler of the emperor was called the “*sumo*” and sumo wrestling is still an important national sport and honored profession.³¹ In this style of wrestling, size was of paramount importance. For over

20 centuries, sumo wrestlers have been marrying daughters of other sumo wrestlers even before the west discovered the principles of interbreeding.³² From Japanese wrestling came jujutsu³³ and judo, both popular martial arts.³⁴ Ball states that the origin of jujutsu is shrouded in mystery.³⁵ Jujutsu allowed opponents any number of techniques with the goal being the successful takedown and pin of one of the wrestlers.

Early Wrestling in the U.S.

Wrestling in the United States at this time was based mainly upon several of the European styles but, due to the diversity of the country, undoubtedly had influences from Asia and Africa as well. Though it was the twentieth century before Asian wrestling became known in the United States, Asia had practiced wrestling for centuries.

In the United States during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most of the wrestling was done in the Greco-Roman style. A new style of wrestling emerged on the American frontier. It was known as “*Catch-As-Catch-Can*” (freestyle) wrestling.³⁶ Morgan does not cover the rules except to say that, in this style of wrestling, the wrestler could do what ever was necessary to win.³⁷ Wrestling enjoyed much popularity during this time since even the American president, Abe Lincoln, wrestled. During this time, freestyle wrestling became very popular in the United States. The Americans all but abandoned the Greco-Roman style since the crowds insisted that freestyle was more interesting to watch.³⁸

Wrestling in the United States by the nineteenth century could be characterized by three distinct schools, Greco-Roman, Catch-As-Catch-Can (or *freestyle*), and Collar and Elbow.³⁹ The style called Greco-Roman in the U.S. was very similar to the French style of the mid to late nineteenth century. It was adopted, at least in principle, as the acceptable style for high school and college wrestling in the United States. The Collar and Elbow style was quite similar to the Cornish and Devonshire style in England except the opponents wore loose fitting linen jackets to aid the practitioner in throwing. This style was practiced by the Irish immigrants who had developed their wrestling and self-defense skills since weapons had been forbidden to them in Ireland.⁴⁰

The most popular form of wrestling in the United States came to be a variation of freestyle. While freestyle had its roots in the Lancashire style of nineteenth century England, this style more closely resembled jujutsu in that any hold was allowed that enabled the practitioner to take down or overcome opponents. Ball states that the British later renounced the freestyle style of wrestling when the Public Control Committee of the London County Council recommended that the American style of wrestling be barred in London.⁴¹ They regarded the American style as a degrading and unhealthy form of entertainment. The date of this action was not mentioned by Ball.

American wrestling encountered a similar difficulty at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1905, Theodore Roosevelt mounted an anti-brutality campaign aimed at football which caused several colleges and universities to drop their football programs.⁴² Even though the

campaign was aimed at football, many wrestling programs also suffered. As the anti-brutality campaign settled down freestyle wrestling again became popular. This style of wrestling developed into two new distinct styles known as professional and rural wrestling.⁴³ The professional style was used in urban areas and was controlled with rules and regulations. A referee was always present and often the matches lasted for hours. In contrast Ball likens the rural style to a barroom brawl.⁴⁴ Circuses, fairs, and individual promoters would often allow local challengers to wrestle the featured "world champion". Since these matches often featured wrestlers of greatly varying skills they were often relatively short, bloody, and action packed.⁴⁵

At this time, professional wrestling in America was still "legitimate" in that the competitions were not pre-choreographed as they are today. Often these first "professionals" would travel around the country and visit taverns where they would wrestle local challengers. When two professional wrestlers were matched the entertainment factor was a greater consideration than the sport aspect.⁴⁶ It was during the first decade of the twentieth century in the U.S. that professional wrestling then became organized.

Professional Wrestling in the 20th Century

Professional wrestling became organized in the United States in 1904.⁴⁷ At that time, there were many wrestlers and non-wrestlers claiming to be the world heavy weight championship wrestler. In order to establish a legitimate champion, it became necessary to form an alliance and have only one title holder. In 1908

and 1909, two title matches between the same two competitors both resulted in incomplete matches. This resulted in dissatisfied audiences and accusations of fraud. This marked a temporary decline in the popularity of wrestling that lasted into the late 1920's.⁴⁸

As wrestling once again began to gain popularity in the 1920's, professional wrestling was torn between the dilemma of having a legitimate match which was often boring to the crowd or having an exciting match that was pre-choreographed and thus was deceitful to the audience.⁴⁹ During that time, initially, the wrestlers would begin matches in earnest and then let the crowd decide who would win. However, matches were often choreographed ahead of time and then would follow the script to a predetermined outcome. Ball states that in 1929, a drunken wrestling promoter actually leaked the winners for the next day's matches to the newspapers.⁵⁰ The wrestling promoters of the day also borrowed from other professional events in attracting crowds. They began using the boxing ring on an elevated platform. The promoters also used what was termed "freak shows" which often featured very small or very large people along with racial or ethnic minorities.⁵¹ In addition to borrowing ideas from other sports to increase the appeal to the audience, in the 1920's, promoters started importing athletes from other sports. Importing former college football players became extremely successful. Other techniques that originated during that time were fake blood capsules, the tag team match, and throwing opponents into the crowd to name a few.⁵²

Developments after World War II

Heavyweight professional wrestling gained tremendous popularity at the end of World War II. Soldiers were back from the war, the economy was booming, and Americans had much more leisure time. Americans were also much more mobile and were willing to drive to watch the wrestling matches. This meant that professional wrestling was no longer confined to the large cities as smaller towns also began booking wrestling events.

In the 1940s and 1950s, another element that would define American professional wrestling emerged.⁵³ A wrestler by the name of George Wagner, who was an ordinary wrestler, decided to dye his hair blond, set it, and hire a “valet” who would spray perfume and incense around the ring. He became known as *Gorgeous George*, one of the best box offices draws for professional wrestling. Since that time, many others professional wrestlers have developed stage personalities to enhance their personalities. In 1948, wrestling promoters formed an association that would later become known as the National Wrestling Alliance (NWA). The original purpose of the NWA was to reestablish the disputed world championship as well as parcel out limited territories to the more than 500 wrestling promoters in the United States and Canada.⁵⁴ Today, the NWA represents promoters in the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, with additional affiliates in Asia and Europe.

Another wrestling federation was formed in 1960 when a defending world champion from the NWA refused to have a title match with a challenger. The challenger became the title holder of the new

federation, the American Wrestling Association (AWA). Another controversy over the NWA heavyweight wrestling championship in 1963 caused the east coast promoters to form their own organization, the World Wide Wrestling Federation (WWWF). Today there are numerous wrestling associations with many of them naming world championships. These include the World Wrestling Federation (WWF), AWA, NWA, CWA, Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling (GLOW), and the United Wrestling Association (UWA) to name just a few.⁵⁵

Recent attempts to institute “honest” matches have been failures.⁵⁶ In 1970 an attempt to form a professional collegiate wrestling association failed. This group featured former college wrestling stars, but it was a failure almost from the start, doomed by low attendance at the first events.

Modern Olympic Greco–Roman Style Wrestling

As mentioned earlier, during the Napoleonic period, the French developed and refined the style of wrestling known as *Greco-Roman* wrestling.⁵⁷ The modern version is still very similar to the original style. This style requires a catch and hold, though no holds on the legs are permitted. In addition, no tripping is allowed. Throws are attempted from a standing position only in an effort to score a fall. A fall occurs when a wrestler throws the opponent to the mat so that the points of both shoulders touch the mat (as in a traditional pin). Greco-Roman wrestling is still practiced extensively in Europe and is still an Olympic sport. In the United States, Greco-Roman is also still practiced but to a much lesser degree than freestyle wrestling.

Modern U.S. Amateur Wrestling

Amateur wrestling in the U.S. first emerged as intraclub matches in the New York area. The first amateur championships were held in that region in 1878. The style was the American folk-style which was a form of wrestling that was influenced much by the collar and elbow style that came out of Vermont.⁵⁸ By 1900, club meets and tournaments were regular events. Many colleges had informal matches before Yale and Columbia met in 1903 for a wrestling match. In 1905, Princeton and Penn formed teams and joined the league for the first collegiate championship at Philadelphia. During the next few years various changes in the rules were tried out. In 1911, Yale withdrew because graduate students were no longer able to compete. The schools also tried Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) rules that had evolved from club competition. The rules included various weight classes as well as points awarded for control or riding time as well as positions of advantage in deciding draws.⁵⁹ Early matches followed the prevailing model of the professional matches in which there were three periods with each period lasting ten minutes each.

YMCA programs sprung up around the country as part of the YMCA original missionary activity, which was providing the youth with the benefits of wholesome exercise and allowing the middle class of American a participatory sport. Club wrestling and YMCA programs benefited from the AAU meets, which were organized to find American talent for the new Olympics. The United States sent its first wrestling team in 1904 after getting freestyle wrestling accepted

in the Olympics along with Greco-Roman wrestling. The early 1900's showed a steady growth in freestyle wrestling in the United States. Before the 1924 Olympics, over 3000 participants wrestled at 19 regional meets to select 150 semi-finalists who competed at Madison Square Gardens for a spot on the U.S. Olympic team.⁶⁰ Disagreements between the AAU and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) caused the college wrestling programs to initiate their own annual national meets, which started in the late 1920's.

Though not as "showy" as professional wrestling, rule changes during the twentieth century have been implemented to keep the crowds interested in the matches. The match time has been shortened to as little as three two minute rounds for high school matches. In 1927, a Wrestling Rules Committee was established by the NCAA. One of the most significant accomplishments of the committee was the establishment of a point system to determine a winner when no fall occurred.⁶¹ Point systems have also been modified to reward offense over defense.

Currently there are two styles of amateur wrestling in the United States.⁶² The first is the collegiate (folk-style) style and the second is the freestyle. The collegiate style is what is used at the interscholastic and intercollegiate level, whereas freestyle is the style of wrestling that is found in the Olympics.⁶³ Freestyle's "rolling pin" was once the main difference between the two styles. The rolling pin was where a wrestler would try and roll the opponent over to expose his shoulder to the mat and gain points even if the shoulders did not touch the mat. In the early days, the styles were

more distinct than they are today. Subtle rule changes have been implemented to not only protect the wrestler, but also insure an active bout. In addition, high school wrestlers and NCAA collegiate wrestlers now routinely compete in freestyle wrestling.

Submission Wrestling

Submission wrestling is a relatively modern term that amalgamates several martial arts and wrestling styles and places them into one category. The most well-known of these styles is Brazilian jujutsu. The history given for this style varies somewhat depending on the source. The history of Brazilian jujutsu as presented by Gracie is not as detailed as that as presented by Simco.^{64, 65} As might be expected, Gracie concentrates on the contribution to the art by the Gracie family whereas Simco gives a more detailed history of all of the jujutsu styles. A short Wikipedia article describes the differences between submission wrestling and classical jujutsu but does not mention any of the organizations of submission wrestling.⁶⁶

History of Jujutsu and Judo

Jujutsu developed gradually in Japan during the Feudal period (ca. 1200-1800). This style was originally developed for warfare but during the Meiji restoration following the abolition of the Feudal system, jujutsu was modified to make it more suitable for practice without injury.⁶⁷ During Feudal times, jujutsu was known variously as *Yawara*, *Hakuda* and *Kogusoko*, among other terms. The earliest recorded use of the jujutsu kanji, 柔術, was in 1532 by the Takenouchi

school or *ryu*. In order to make it easier to practice jujutsu, Jigoro Kano, under sponsorship of the Japanese government, developed his own style of jujutsu called *judo*, designed as a physical education regimen to be taught in public schools. Simco states that judo is simply a style of jujutsu and not a separate martial art.⁶⁸ It is also important to note that Kano was not the first to use the term judo. The first use of the term judo was by Seijun Inoue IV, who applied it to his jujutsu of Jikishin-ryu. A major contribution of Kano's judo was the innovative practice of *rondori* or sparring which allowed for the safe but realistic practice of throwing techniques. Kano, however, did not think ground work was important so ground work was not emphasized in his system.⁶⁹ Judo also began evolving to make it more acceptable as an Olympic sport. In Simco's opinion, the addition of these new rules was what hindered judo as a realistic form of self-defense. After a match up of older styles of jujutsu and judo at the Tokyo police headquarters, judo was named as the national martial arts of Japan and became the official martial art learned and used by Japanese law enforcement in the late 1800's.

Kuninori Suzuki V, the master of Kito-ryu jujutsu changed the name of his school from Kito-kumiuchi to Kito-ryu judo in 1714.⁷⁰ The most important contribution of Kito-ryu to judo was the principle of off-balancing or *kuzushi*, which is the key to the throwing techniques of modern judo. Kano studied with the masters of many styles of jujutsu and incorporated some of their concepts into his original style which he called Kodokan judo. The most notable were Jikishin-ryu, Kito-ryu, and later Fusen-ryu. Fusen-

ryu is the style which contributed groundwork to Kano's judo.

In 1912, Kano met with the remaining leaders of jujutsu to finalize a Kodoka syllabus of training and kata. These masters included: Aoyagi of Sosusihis-ryu, Takano, Yano, Kotaro Imei, and Hikasuburo Ohshima from Takeuisi-ryu, Jushi Sekiguchi and Mogishi Tsumizu from Sekiguchi-ryu, Eguchi from Kyushin-ryu, Hoshino from Shiten-ryu, Inazu from Miura-ryu, and Takamatsu, a Kukkishin-ryu master, whose school specialized in weapons training.⁷¹

Before this formal meeting between Kano and the grandmasters of Japan's greatest jujutsu schools, an event took place that Simco feels was a defining moment for Brazilian jujutsu. By 1900, the Kodokan had been challenging other jujutsu schools in sport competition.⁷² The Kodokan won these events with throwing techniques. Much of this success was due to Shiro Saigo, a practitioner of Oshikiuchi, the art of Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu, that Kano had recruited. In 1900, the Kodokan challenged the Fusen-ryu school of jiu-jutsu to a contest. Fusen-ryu specialized in ground work (Ne Waza). The contest was fought standing up since Kodokan did not have any ground techniques at that time. When the Fusen-ryu fighters realized that they could not defeat the Kodokan fighters standing up they decided to use their superior ground fighting skills. Thus when the matches were started, the Fusen-ryu practitioners immediately went to the "guard" position lying on their backs in front of their opponents. The Kodokan practitioners did not know what to do and the Fusen-ryu practitioners took them to the ground and used submission holds to win the matches.⁷³ This was

the first loss the Kodokan experienced in eight years. Kano then consulted with friends from other Jujutsu systems and developed the standard ground techniques (Ne Waza) of Kodokan judo. These consists of three divisions, including joint locking techniques (Katame Waza), choking techniques (Shime Waza), and holding techniques (Osae Waza).

Transmission of Jujutsu to Brazil

Soon afterwards, Japanese jujutsu (practiced as Judo) was introduced to the Gracie family in Brazil (c. 1915) by Esai Maeda who was also known as Conde Koma.⁷⁴ The name given by Gracie in his history of Brazilian jujutsu was Mitsuyo Maedo.⁷⁵ This gentleman was a Japanese politician who was sent by the Japanese government to help their new colonies prosper. In addition to his political skills, Maedo also was a practitioner and former champion of the Japanese art of jujutsu. He became close friends with Gastao Gracie, the father of Carlos Gracie. In return for Gastao's help and influence in the community, Maeda taught Carlos jujutsu. Carlos then taught his brothers Oswaldo, Jorge, Gastao, and Helio the basic techniques of jujutsu. In 1925 the brothers opened their first school. The basic or traditional jujutsu evolved into what is now Brazilian jujutsu. What has made this style be considered more effective than other martial art styles is the constant exposure of its practitioners to "real life" situations. The Gracie family would issue challenges to all others to fight without rules. In these no rules or *Vale Tudo* fights, the Gracie family and their students would evaluate the techniques of their fighting art.⁷⁶ A particular innovator for Gracie jujutsu was Helio,

Carlos's younger brother. He was much smaller and slight of frame and developed new techniques to suit his build. Where many of the traditional Japanese jujutsu techniques were based on speed and power, Helio's techniques concentrated on using leverage.⁷⁷

During the last fifty years, many Brazilian jujutsu schools have opened and broken away from the original members of the Gracie family. These new schools have slowly developed subtle differences in style within Brazilian jujutsu. Gracie jujutsu, Machado jujutsu, and Brazilian jujutsu are all different schools of the same art.

Wrestling in Mixed Martial Arts

Ultimate Fighter Championships

More recently, the surge in popular interest stimulating the growing number of mixed martial arts competitions and associations has had a similarly huge influence on the development and popularity of wrestling. Many competitions have arisen due to the quest to settle the age old question of which style of martial arts is "the best". The most popular of these events was the initial Ultimate Fighter Championship (UFC). The first UFC took place in 1993.⁷⁸ This event, the first of its kind in the United States, undoubtedly changed the martial arts community. It featured eight martial artists from different styles and experiences, all fighting round-robin style in a winner take all competition. It had only two rules: no biting and no eye gouging. There were no time limits and all fights were single elimination. The martial artists included a 380 pound sumo wrestler, a 215 pound champion kick

boxer, a pancrase champion, and Royce Gracie of the Gracie jujutsu dynasty. Royce was one of the smallest contestants and showed the world that the fight was not over when it went to the ground, as many people believed at the time, by becoming the champion in UFC 1. In the second UFC, in 1994, the competition was expanded to include 16 fighters. This meant that the champion would have to win four consecutive fights in a single night. The only rule change was the elimination of the 10 minute rounds since the fights did not last that long in UFC 1. Royce Gracie also won UFC 2. The UFC has continued to grow and gain popularity. Though the format and rules are somewhat different now than in the original competition, UFC continues to draw huge crowds and to stimulate fighters to change their views of the relative merits of the various martial arts.

PRIDE Fighting Championships

Another MMA organization that has gained popularity is the PRIDE fighting championships based in Japan. Its inaugural event was held in Tokyo in 1997. It is the most popular MMA organization in the world based on the number of attendees at its events.⁷⁹ The rules of Pride competition result in similar styles of fighting as the UFC. There are several differences however. The first is that Pride fights occur in a boxing style ring where UFC fights occur in an octagon shaped cage. The main differences in the rules are that kicking and kneeing a downed opponent is allowed in Pride but not in the UFC. In addition, elbow strikes are allowed to the head and face in UFC fights but not in Pride fights. In Pride fights, there is a 10 minute first round

followed by two 5 minutes rounds. In the UFC title fights there are five 5 minute rounds.

Other MMA or NHB competition organizations are forming frequently now, the better to take advantage of the huge popularity this “new” type of sport is currently experiencing. It has proven to be of great benefit to the martial arts practitioner as many styles are now re-evaluating their techniques and their applications to various situations. This will only make the marital arts more effective and the practitioner stronger.

Summary of Modern Wrestling Styles

This report serves only to show the varied past of wrestling in the United States. The author is sure he has left out some styles of wrestling or at the very least some details of the particular styles mentioned above that have had an impact on modern wrestling in the United States. As mentioned above, according to the International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles (FILA), there are four main styles of amateur wrestling that are practiced internationally today. These are freestyle wrestling, Greco-Roman, Judo, and Sambo. Sambo was not discussed in this paper since it has not had a major influence on wrestling in the United States. Sambo is a relatively new martial arts style that was developed in Russia.⁸⁰ The early attempt at developing sambo was the integration of judo techniques into native Russian wrestling following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905.

Wrestling is still in transition even today. Many federations have now been formed for the practitioners

of these various wrestling styles to aid in the development of the practitioner or for competition.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Ball p. 37.
- ² Morton and O'Brien p. 7.
- ³ *Ibidem*.
- ⁴ *Ibidem*.
- ⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 8.
- ⁶ *Ibidem*.
- ⁷ *Ibidem*.
- ⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 9
- ⁹ *Ibidem*.
- ¹⁰ *Ibidem*.
- ¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 11
- ¹² In volume V of Diogenes Laërtius' *Life of Plato*, Laërtius relates the claim from Dicearchus that Plato was a good enough competitor as a young man to have wrestled at the Isthmian games at Corinth, a biannual sporting festival contemporaneous with the ancient Olympian games.
- ¹³ *Wrestling*, p. 4
- ¹⁴ Niebel and Niebel, p. 6
- ¹⁵ The author has found the source literature to contain a confusing array of usage for the term *Catch-as-Catch-Can* (CACC) style of wrestling. A literature search has found it used to describe the ancient Roman style of wrestling, the style of wrestling started in Lancashire, England in the mid-nineteenth century, modern freestyle wrestling, the modern amateur style alternative to freestyle, as well as submission wrestling. The author has included all references to the term but with this statement serving as a warning of the confusion of its use.
- ¹⁶ Ball, p. 38
- ¹⁷ Morgan, p. 7
- ¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 9

- ¹⁹ Morton and O'Brien, p. 17
- ²⁰ Morgan, p. 9
- ²¹ Ball, p. 39
- ²² *Ibidem.*
- ²³ *Ibidem.*
- ²⁴ *Ibidem.*
- ²⁵ *Ibidem.*
- ²⁶ Morgan, p. 9.
- ²⁷ *Ibidem.*
- ²⁸ Ball, p. 40.
- ²⁹ *Ibidem.*
- ³⁰ Morgan, p. 10.
- ³¹ *Ibidem.*
- ³² *Ibidem.*
- ³³ The author found many different romanizations of jujutsu in the literature including: jiu-jitsu, jujitsu, ju-jitsu and jiu-jitsu. This text will rely on the defacto standard Hepburn system, which gives jujutsu as the best romanization of the original kanji, 柔術. As given online by the Wikipedia, decomposing this ideogram into its main parts, the first Chinese character, 柔 (Mandarin: róu; Japanese: jū; Korean: yū), is the same as the first one in 柔道 (Mandarin: róudào; Japanese: judo; Korean: Yudo). The second part, the Chinese character 術 (Mandarin: shù; Japanese: jutsu; Korean: sul), is the same as the second one in 武術 (Mandarin: wǔshù; Japanese: bujutsu; Korean: musul).
- ³⁴ Morgan, p. 10.
- ³⁵ Ball, p. 39.
- ³⁶ Morgan, p. 11.
- ³⁷ *Ibidem.*
- ³⁸ *Ibidem.*
- ³⁹ Ball, p. 40.
- ⁴⁰ Morton and O'Brien, p. 21.
- ⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 41
- ⁴² *Ibidem.*

- ⁴³ *Ibidem.*
- ⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*
- ⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*
- ⁴⁶ *Ibidem.*
- ⁴⁷ Morgan, p. 12.
- ⁴⁸ Ball, p. 43.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibidem.*
- ⁵⁰ *Ibidem.*
- ⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 45.
- ⁵² *Ibidem.*
- ⁵³ Morgan, p. 14.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 15.
- ⁵⁵ Ball, p. 49.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 44.
- ⁵⁷ Nieble and Nieble, p. 6.
- ⁵⁸ Morton and O'Brian p. 40.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 41.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibidem.*
- ⁶¹ Nieble and Nieble, p. 7.
- ⁶² Stone, p. 13.
- ⁶³ Camaione and Tillman, p. 8.
- ⁶⁴ Gracie, p. 4.
- ⁶⁵ Simco, p. 2.
- ⁶⁶ Submission wrestling.
- ⁶⁷ Simco p. 3.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 4.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibidem.*
- ⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 5.
- ⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 6.
- ⁷² *Ibidem.*
- ⁷³ *Ibidem.*
- ⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

- ⁷⁵ Gracie, p. 4.
⁷⁶ Simco, p. 9.
⁷⁷ Gracie, p. 5.
⁷⁸ Ultimate Fighting Championship.
⁷⁹ Pride Fighting.
⁸⁰ Sambo.