



## Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)

MMA is a combat sport which has developed out of a mixture of different combat sports and martial arts. MMA has two main characteristics. At first glance, it is particularly noticeable that in MMA fights, hitting and kicking opponents lying on the ground is allowed by the rules. The second special feature is that so called "submission holds" are often performed in MMA fighting. These two characteristics and the resulting spectacular and often bloody fights caused, especially in the 1990s and 2000s, sometimes very vehement mass media discussions about whether MMA can still legitimately be called a sport.

Nevertheless (or perhaps precisely for this reason), MMA has been gaining popularity worldwide, especially since the 2000s. Its origins can be traced back to Brazil in the 1920s (although many participants even see its roots in the Greek "Pankration"). In the environment of the popular "Vale Tudo" fights, the specific fighting styles "Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu" and "Luta Livre" developed and dominated MMA until the end of the 20th century. And they continue to shape the ground fighting techniques characteristic for MMA.

Regarding the global spread, Japan can be considered the global center of MMA from the mid-1980s until 2007. Since the collapse of the then largest MMA organization, the Japanese "PRIDE", however, the US-American "UFC" has been expanding worldwide and today has the market monopoly and the definitional authority of what MMA is and what a MMA fight looks like. The UFC is currently expanding strongly into the Asian region and to Europe.

In the course of the developing MMA, there have always been local variations of the rule sets, which are characterized by allowing/ not allowing knee punches, elbow punches and kicks at fighters lying on the ground. There have also been variations in the venues of the fights. Most fights today take place in a boxing ring or in a round or hexagonal or octagonal cage.

MMA has also been growing in Germany, where MMA fighting events used to be called "Free Fights" for a long time. In the last few years (with UFC Fight Nights Nos. 41, 69, 93 and 134), the UFC has held fighting events almost annually. Meanwhile, numerous German providers organize MMA fights in many cities on an almost weekly basis. Correspondingly, the number of MMA participants has also risen sharply. Observers estimate the number of clubs in Germany where one can train in MMA techniques to be in the low four-digit range.