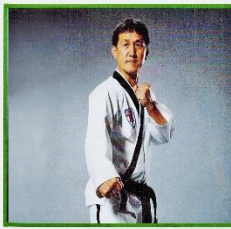
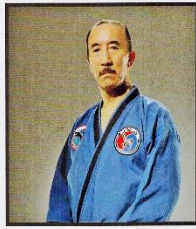
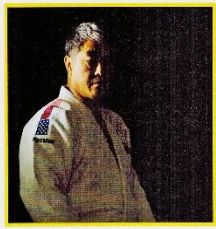
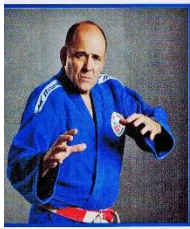
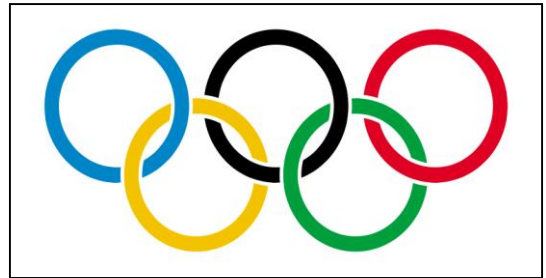
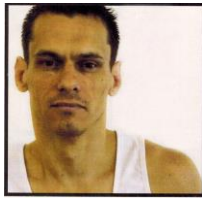
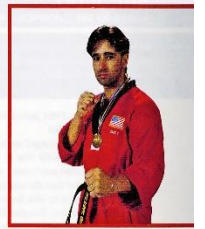


COURSE



Does Being an Olympic Sport Make a Martial Art More Popular, or Does It Lead to the Decline of Tradition and Technique?



COURSE

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BLACK BELT
World's Leading Magazine of Martial Arts

In case you live in a cave, here's a news flash: 2016 is an Olympic year. The 31st Summer Games are scheduled to take place August 5-21 in Rio de Janeiro. Whenever the world's premier sporting event rolls around, we find ourselves reflecting on how the Olympics have affected the martial arts.

Part 1 of this article examines whether the Games have been good for judo and taekwondo. For input, we interrogated five experts, prompting them with questions and hoping they'd offer opinions on other topics that are of concern to them and practitioners of their art.

— Editors

ART: JUDO ADDED TO THE OLYMPICS: 1964

EXPERT: Gary Goltz, former president of the U.S. Judo Association, current board member of the Hal Sharp Judo Teachers Foundation and first vice president of Nanka

QUESTION: Is pre-1964 judo different from post-1964 judo?

Actually, a lot has changed since then. This started after World War II, when judo's focus became much more on the sport aspect rather than the martial arts aspect. It had a lot to do with the occupation of Japan and Gen. Douglas MacArthur's ban on the practice of all martial arts. The Kodokan set out to impress the American officers by showing that judo was a sport and a peaceful activity. When the Olympics came to Japan in 1964, they introduced it as an exhibition event. Back then, there were no weight divisions and no females. The only scores were the *wazari* (half point) and the *ippon* (full point). Matches lasted up to 20 minutes.

QUESTION: Did the imposition of rules for the Olympics change judo from a martial art to a martial sport?

Olympic judo today is more driven by rules than ever before. Wrestling-type moves such as *kata guruma* (shoulder wheel) and *morote gari* (two-hand leg reap) are now illegal. This was to force players to use more standing techniques such as *uchimata* (inner-thigh throw), *harai goshi* (hip sweep), *seionage* (shoulder throw) and *ashi waza* (foot techniques). The goal was to look good on TV and differentiate judo from wrestling.

QUESTION: Has Olympic inclusion boosted the popularity of judo overall?

Judo's popularity soared in most countries with the exception of the U.S. This was due to the national judo organizations' insistence on maintaining their members' amateur status to meet Olympic requirements at the time. Here, other martial arts — karate in the 1960s, kung fu in the '70s, and then Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* and *krav maga* now — flourished in part because of the entertainment industry and successful commercialization methods.

QUESTION: Does being an Olympic sport help judo create stars?

Absolutely. There are many such examples in Japan, Korea, France, Brazil, Holland, England and even Cuba. The best example in the U.S. is Ronda Rousey, who took a bronze medal in Beijing and

then left the sport to become the biggest female star of the UFC. Kayla Harrison, on the other hand, is the only American Olympic judo athlete to take a gold but is far less well-known because she's chosen to stay focused on judo and enter the 2016 Olympics in Brazil. This illustrates the dilemma faced by those who devote themselves to becoming Olympic champions. They may find that they have limited career options upon retirement.

QUESTION: Did judo lose anything when one portion of it — competition — was added to the Olympics while other parts such as kata were not?

When judo became an official Olympic event, competition became the priority. Kata have been made much more consistent over the last five years by the International Judo Federation, perhaps in an effort to eventually make it part of judo in the Olympics, too.

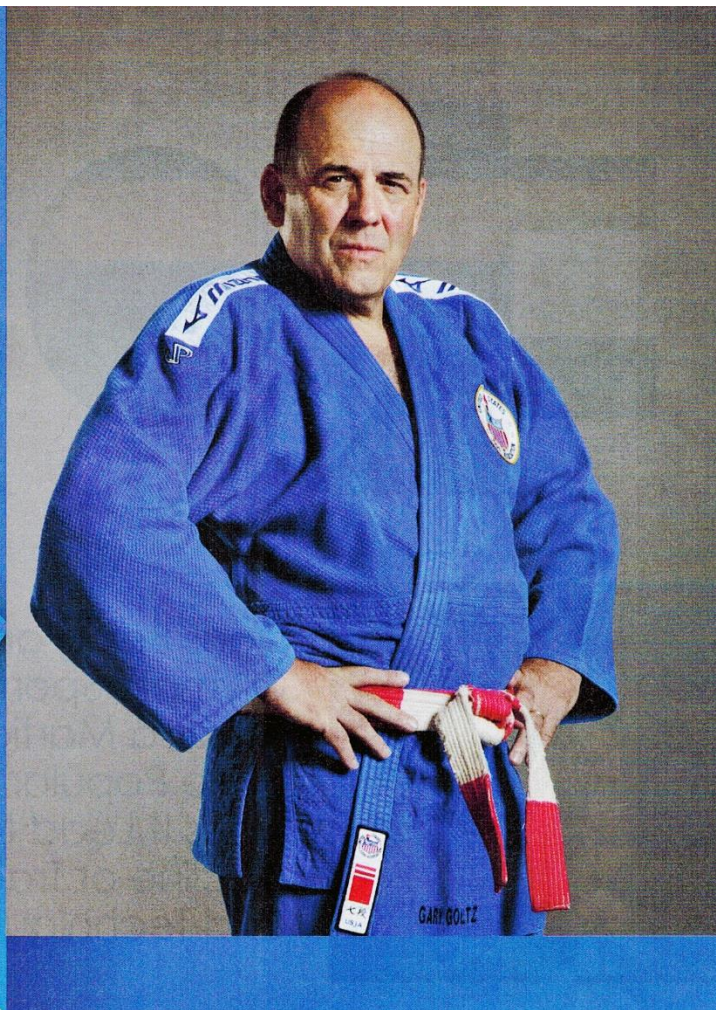


Photo by Peter Luciders

ART: JUDO

EXPERT: Hayward Nishioka, 1967 Pan-American Games gold medalist, *Black Belt's* 1968 Judo Player of the Year and 1977 Judo Instructor of the Year

QUESTION: How has judo changed since it was added to the Games?

Judo today is stronger, faster and tactically different due to the influence of the Olympics. The Olympic motto of *Altius, Citius, Fortius* (Higher, Faster, Stronger) seems to hold true for Olympic sport judo. One need only look at YouTube submissions to compare the old with the new. Where once weight, height, strength, cardio fitness, nutrition and specialized tactics took a back seat to *waza*, or techniques, they are now integral pieces of a total package. If you're missing any one part of the equation, you're at a distinct disadvantage. Now, all your bullets had better be hyper-packed with powder or you're in trouble because everyone else comes fully loaded for war.

While the quest for excellence is an admirable goal and everyone wants to be a gold medalist, this was not the sole direction that Pierre de Coubertin or Jigoro Kano had intended for sports or for judo. Both were physical educators and came from wealthy families. De Coubertin knew the positive benefits of sport and wanted to use it to promote world peace. Kano believed that the practice of judo would develop better citizens. Unfortunately for them, the Olympic Games and judo have taken on a life of their own and gone in a different direction.

QUESTION: Did Olympic officials intentionally alter judo?

The intent at the upper level of the International Olympic Committee is the thought that bigger is better. This is not to say that their higher goals have been displaced by the desire to make money. They have not, but it sure helps when funds are plentiful rather than sparse. The 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, where millions were made, served as a model for running the Games. That's when we saw professional marketing, increased sponsorships and increased costs to secure TV rights. Events had to change to meet the demands of TV sponsors who wanted more bang for their buck. They

called for more action, more excitement and less downtime.

In an effort to adapt, judo changed its rules to make the game faster and more exciting — for example, encouraging an attack every 20 to 25 seconds, requiring the right size *judogi* to allow for attacks to be done and eliminating some excessive bowing practices.

So, yes, the Olympics forever changed the face of judo. It is no longer a martial art steeped in tradition and culture, which was valued by those searching for esoteric Asian answers. It's now an Olympic sport driven by scientific training formulas for becoming a champion.

QUESTION: Did the Olympics make judo more popular?

Judo people once said, "If judo is included in the Olympics, it will help make it popular." It's now in the Olympics, but judo is still not popular in the United States.

Later, people said, "If we have Olympic medalists, that will make a difference." We've had several, but it hasn't made a difference here.

Records indicate that there actually

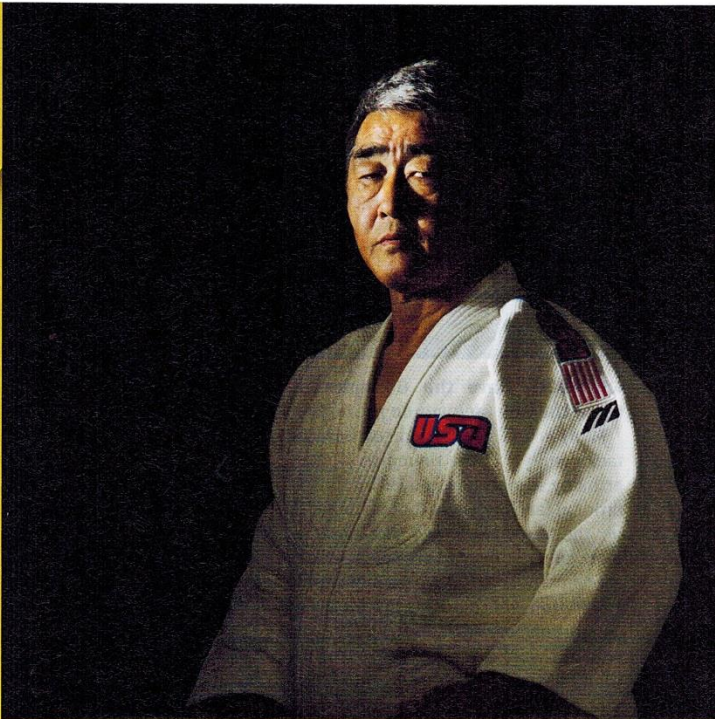
has been a per capita decline. For example, the U.S. Judo Federation has had a membership of 10,000 for the past 10 years. The second-largest organization is the U.S. Judo Association with 7,000 members. The smallest is the national governing body known as USA Judo, which has a membership of 5,000. In a country where the population has gone from 290 million to 330 million in the past decade, judo has not grown.

Contrast those numbers with France, which now has a population of 68 million and a judo membership of 600,000.

QUESTION: How else is judo in France different from judo here?

In France, judo is a household word. The country is home to many of the finest *judoka* in the world. Its current champion Teddy Riner is without rival. He just won the World Championship for the eighth consecutive time. No one even comes close historically or in the present. So although Olympic judo can create stars, unfortunately it does not in our country.

Nevertheless, the Games are a place where the ideals of developing a great citizen and a responsible person still prevail in spirit.



ART: TAEKWONDO ADDED TO THE OLYMPICS: 1988

EXPERT: Hee-Il Cho, ninth *dan*, *taekwondo* instructor, *Black Belt's* 1989 Co-Instructor of the Year and 2012 Man of the Year

QUESTION: Have the Olympics altered the way taekwondo is taught?

Many schools have changed because taekwondo is in the Olympics. However, many schools have stayed on the traditional teaching path. It often depends on the instructor's age and point of view. Younger instructors may have had exposure only to the World Taekwondo Federation, which means there's a new generation of WTF instructors and students who are more geared to the Olympic-sport style of taekwondo.

At my school, we prefer to teach a combination of both styles. We do not gear our program specifically to the Olympics. Instead, we use a teaching style designed to give maximum benefit to the students.

QUESTION: Has taekwondo changed from a martial art to a martial sport since 1988?

In many ways, taekwondo has changed into an Olympic competition. Many technical advantages have evolved because of the competitive nature of practitioners around the world. Every country wishes to win a gold medal, and therefore many techniques have come about which are specifically geared to Olympic rules. These techniques, however, may not be the most effective for self-defense. For instance, because of Olympic rules, hand techniques in taekwondo have diminished while high kicks have flourished.

QUESTION: Have the Olympics helped or hurt taekwondo overall?

The sport of taekwondo has grown immensely in popularity since Olympic recognition. Countries that were never exposed to it now are aware of it. Taekwondo is recognized throughout the world.

There have been many positive effects, but there are also some traditional aspects and values that have changed. For many people, the goal of

training is different now. In the traditional martial arts, the aim is to perfect one's character. In sport, the aim is to become a champion. The method and the path are not necessarily emphasized because the primary focus is on the quest for victory, which sometimes is sought at any cost. This is where drugs and cheating can come into play. In sport, the goal of winning can overwhelm any moral values that are part of traditional taekwondo such as those reflected in the five tenets.

QUESTION: Does the possibility of winning an Olympic medal in taekwondo result in more children enrolling?

It might help generate interest among children because they're able to watch talented participants in the Olympics. In the USA, however, there's not much fame or recognition because of minimal coverage of taekwondo competition by

the media. One Hollywood movie like *The Karate Kid* generates far more interest in taekwondo than sport competitions do.

QUESTION: For children, is it better to learn traditional taekwondo or sport taekwondo?

Traditional taekwondo instills character-building traits like discipline, respect and focus. The child respects the master. In sport taekwondo, often the title of "master" is replaced with "coach." This can reflect the absence of respect and discipline.

Sport taekwondo is highly competitive, and there's only one first-place winner, one gold medalist. Second place is barely even recognized. Because of that, the sport aspect of taekwondo appeals to children with exceptional natural talents. In contrast, traditional taekwondo offers success and accomplishments for all levels of skill and natural talent.

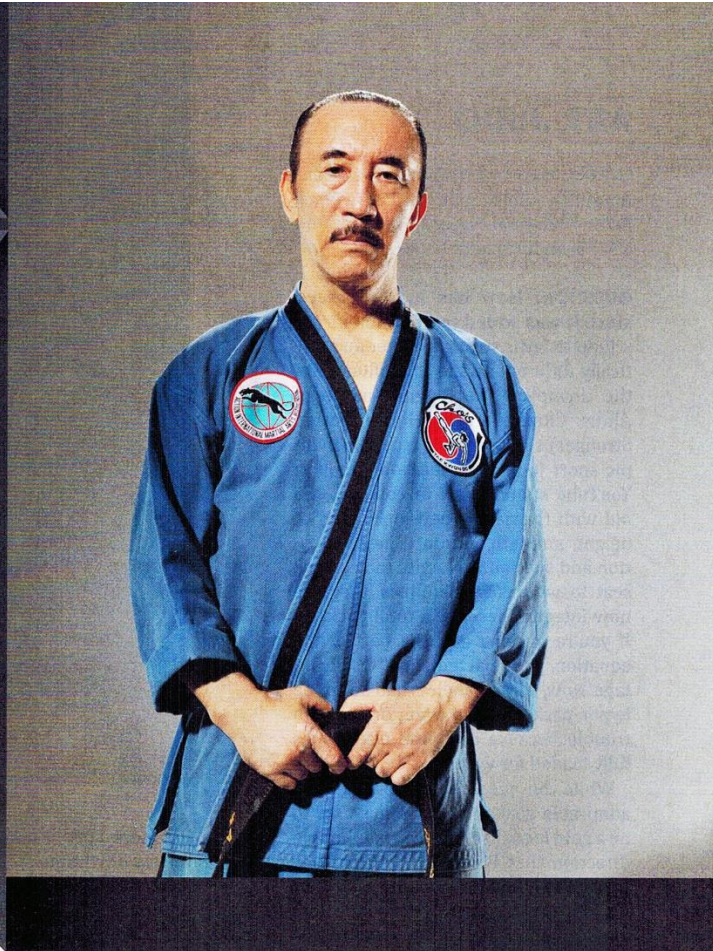


Photo by Robert Beiff

ART: TAEKWONDO

EXPERT: G.K. Lee, chief master of the American Taekwondo Association, *Black Belt's* 2014 Instructor of the Year

QUESTION: Does the ATA teach primarily taekwondo for aspiring Olympians or for people who want to become proficient at self-defense?

Our main focus is traditional taekwondo — mental and physical self-defense. The ATA does not currently train members specifically for the Olympics, but we do not prohibit it.

The ATA could easily adopt an Olympic-coaching system in the future. Since 1996, we have integrated Olympic-style training into our curriculum. We have employed Olympic coaches and provided Olympic-style seminars and Olympic training camps for our instructors and students.

QUESTION: Has taekwondo changed since it was added to the Olympic Games in Seoul? Has it become a sport rather than a martial art?

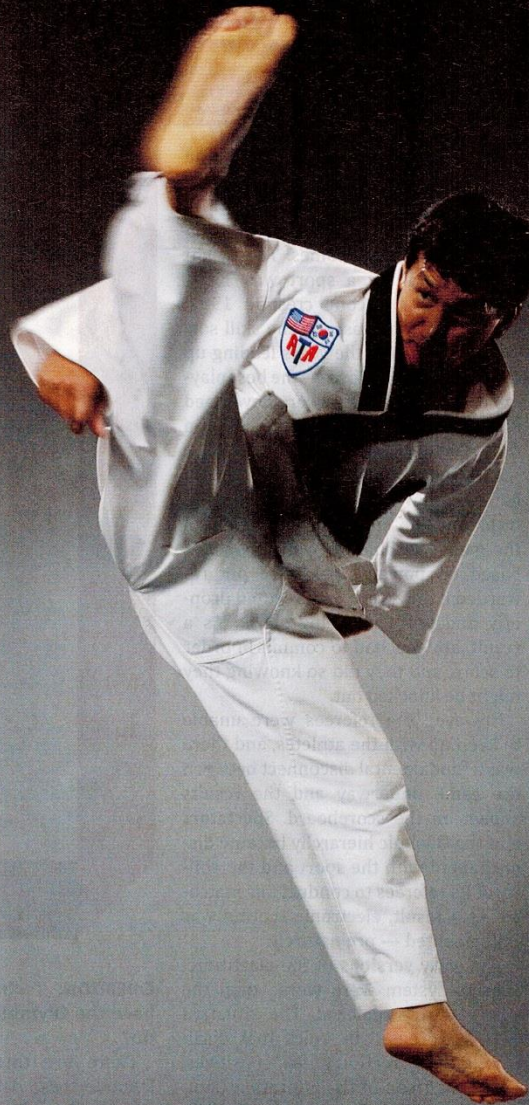
For some, maybe. But the majority of classes are still being taught by first-generation martial artists who want to keep it traditional. At the ATA, we make certain that taekwondo is a traditional martial art that people can enjoy and practice through old age.

Taekwondo hasn't really become more popular here as a result of the Olympics. Maybe it has in small countries, where they have government support, but not in the United States. Traditional martial arts are not generally supported by governments.

QUESTION: Does taekwondo's inclusion in the Olympics make the art appeal more to the next generation of students?

Of course. And the ATA would like to develop a world champion or an Olympic medalist. However, we prefer to teach our young competitors that while taekwondo is a set of martial arts skills and life skills that can take them to the Olympics, it's an art that they can practice long after their competition years are over.

Photo by Peter Lueders



ART: TAEKWONDO

EXPERT: Herb Perez, 1992 Olympic gold medalist, *Black Belt's* 1992 Male Co-Competitor of the Year

QUESTION: What's your stance on the pre-1988 vs. post-1988 question?

Taekwondo has been bifurcated into disparate arts with differing expectations, goals and outcomes. The height of taekwondo as a sport was 1988, maybe with a second crest in 1992. The greatest increases in the skill sets were seen during the years leading up to Seoul and Barcelona — the best players our sport has seen were developed under the rules and objectives used in those Olympic Games.

They were creative players known for their power, speed and ability to transcend the technical parameters of the game. Techniques were rewarded based on power. They were not rewarded if they were not executed properly and with trembling shock. As a result, athletes had to commit in order to score, and they did so knowing they might be knocked out.

However, the referees were unable to keep up with the athletes, and there was a fundamental disconnect between the game underway and the results shown on the scoreboard. Spectators and the Olympic hierarchy became disenchanted with the sport and the ability of its referees to conduct fair matches. As a result, electronic scoring was implemented — prematurely.

The early versions of the electronic-scoring system were worse than the referees they replaced. The situation was exacerbated by rules that disallowed the correction of false positives. I was chairman of the Education Committee and vice chairman of the Technical Committee, which wrestled with these issues. Dr. Steven Capener and I created a multitier point system that rewarded different techniques with different points. However, it was based on well-executed techniques and power.

The intent was to create a merit-based scoring system that depended on technical and power superiority. This has been bastardized, resulting in basically a watered-down version of a bad point-karate event. In fact, I believe that a decent point-karate open-circuit fighter with a little training could win an Olympic medal in one year.

QUESTION: Technically, what effect have the Olympics had on taekwondo?

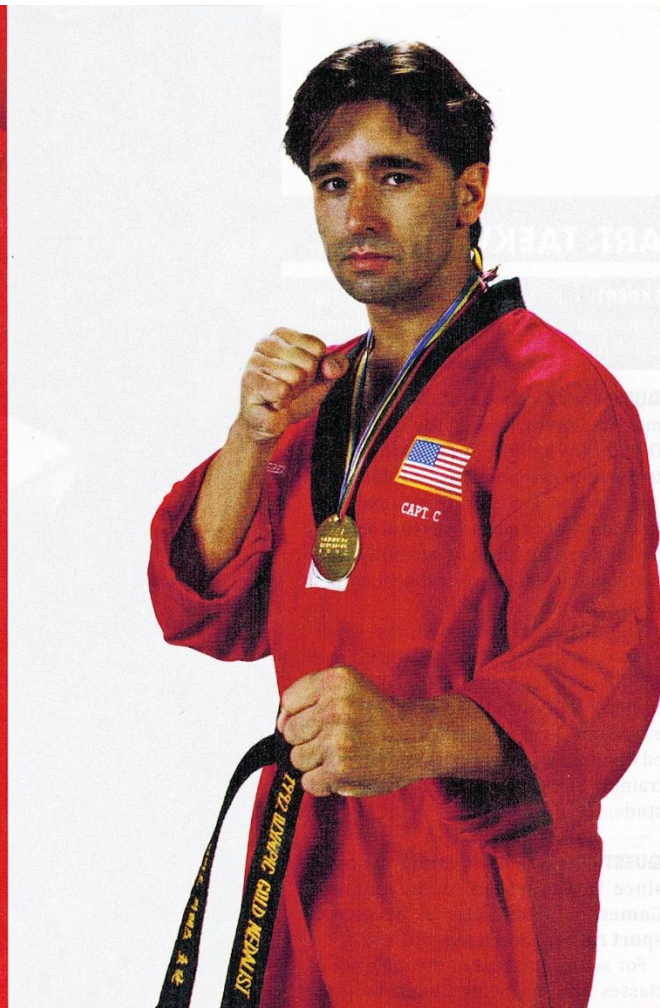
There are three versions of taekwondo these days. One is traditional taekwondo, which focuses on fighting and training as they were done before 1992. Another is traditional taekwondo as a martial art, which is taught by most instructors who are not in the Olympic pipeline. The third is the “electronic-scoring taekwondo.”

The shame for the art is that kicking is a superior method for achieving one's objectives in a fight. The shame for the sport is that kicking is a great base on which to build a competition format. Because of “electronic-scoring taekwondo,” however, fewer people are focusing on developing power and properly executing techniques.

QUESTION: With taekwondo going in three directions, how should instructors lead their students?

I own and operate four *dojang* with more than 1,800 members. We teach life-skills development through taekwondo. We believe this is the most important benefit of training. Last year, one of my students was accepted to Stanford University — that is my measure of success. ✘

In Part 2, Black Belt will examine how the Olympics have affected wrestling — and how they might influence pankration and karate if they're successful in their bids to get (back) in.



ART: PANKRATION ADDED TO THE OLYMPICS: 648 B.C., MAY RETURN IN THE FUTURE

EXPERT: Jim Arvanitis, *Black Belt Hall of Famer*, known as the “father of modern pankration”

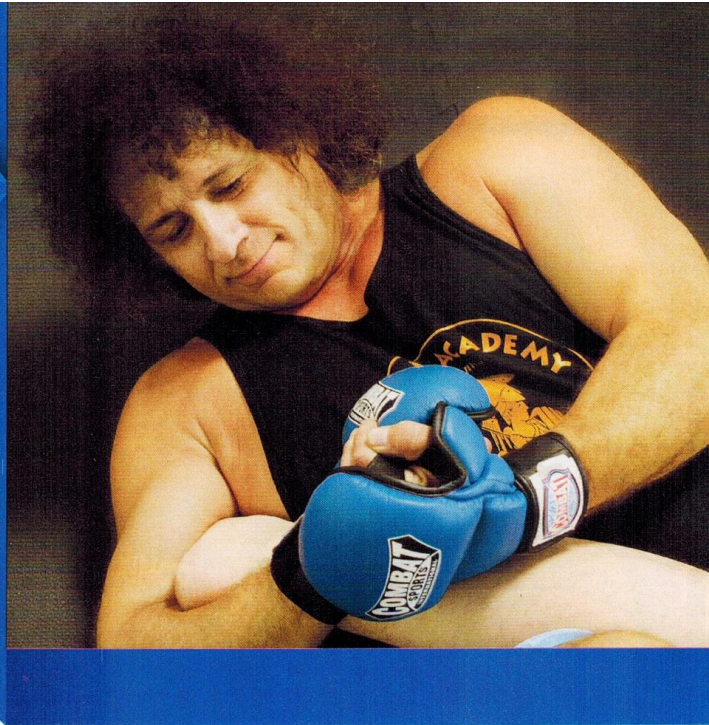
QUESTION: Was pankration a single system that was always part of the Olympics and used for war, or was there a “battlefield pankration” and a tamer “competition pankration”?

Pankration was a Panhellenic sport that was included in all the athletic festivals in Greece. It was first entered into the 33rd Olympic Games circa 648 B.C. It followed wrestling, which was the first combat-sport entry in 708 B.C., and boxing, which debuted in 688 B.C. One theory is that pankration was added to the program to fill the void left by boxing and wrestling; in other words, it would represent the ultimate form of combat competition. The goal was to attract the fittest and strongest athletes and allow them to use *all* methods of combat except biting and gouging.

In its earliest format, pankration was closely modeled after *pammachon* (“total fighting”), its battlefield component. Striking was given more emphasis than grappling, although ground skills became more necessary as the sport evolved. A “tamer” version, referred to as *ano* or *orthostanden* pankration, often served as a preliminary Olympic event and was favored in training. This variant employed lighter contact and omitted the more dangerous strikes and disabling holds. It was primarily stand-up fighting with throws, takedowns and a select number of submissions. Once the fighters hit the ground, the referee ordered them to their feet.

QUESTION: Has its Olympic history had any effect on the current popularity of pankration?

Pankration enjoys its greatest popularity now throughout much of Europe. It’s safe to say that its history as the ultimate Olympic spectacle retains the same spirit, honor and integrity among those competing today. Is this the original hardcore pankration? Certainly not. Nor is it meant to be. It’s a safer alternative than professional MMA, one that appeals to a distinct group of athletes who maintain full-time occupations.



However, their love for fighting and competing is just as great.

QUESTION: Do you think pankration will make it back into the Olympics? Would that be good or bad?

There was a failed attempt to bring pankration back to the Olympics when Athens was named the host for the 2004 Games. In the years leading up to the Games, in part because of the popularity of no-holds-barred fighting — which became MMA — and in part because of my efforts to restore pankration, there was a movement by leading karate practitioners in Greece to revive interest in the ancient fighting art/sport for possible inclusion. But the International Olympic Committee opposed it.

Pankration also was denied acceptance when the modern Olympic Games were created in 1896. All other events were allowed in, but pankration was deemed “too dangerous.” However, it’s been my vision to see pankration return to its rightful place in the Games since I resurrected it in 1969. In the sense of preserving the Greek legacy, it would be the right thing to do.

The IOC, however, has major concerns. The safety of the athletes is very important. With the rules watered down to promote safety, pankration

would lose its connection to its roots. It would look more like a karate/*jujitsu* match with an inordinate number of rules and with winning based on points — as most tournaments are today. MMA is somewhat closer to original pankration, but despite its present status throughout the world, I doubt that the IOC would accept MMA contests because of the potential for injury. So I’m torn on whether pankration’s reinstatement as an Olympic event would be good or bad.

QUESTION: Would any other hurdles need to be overcome for pankration to return to the Olympics?

One of the greatest challenges facing the inclusion of any new combat sport in the Games is the IOC’s standards, among the most important being safety. The IOC is also concerned with providing entertainment for spectators. This tends to be the reasoning for wrestling’s future status as a medal event. While both freestyle and Greco-Roman competition will be part of the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, they have been cut from the 2020 Games set for Tokyo — because the sport supposedly lacks a strong following and enough excitement to fill the stands. This is a sad excuse because wrestling has been part of the Olympic tradition from antiquity.

Photo by Rick Husted

ART: KARATE

ADDED TO THE OLYMPICS:
POSSIBLY IN 2020

EXPERT: Tokey Hill, *Black Belt* Hall of Famer, former karate world champion

QUESTION: Are you optimistic that karate will become an Olympic event? If it does, will it change the art?

Yes, I think it will be in the Olympics, and that will really change the art. But I like to look at the positive side of the issue. If the Olympic rings are on display at any karate training center, it's going to have a positive impact and great advertising value. Programs will need to have Olympic accreditation to maintain the highest standards. This way, it will ensure that an instructor and a *dojo* have the right technical background and knowledge. I talk with a lot of Olympic Committee members from this country and others, and they all agree on these issues.

QUESTION: If karate becomes part of the 2020 Olympics, will it change from a martial art to a martial sport?

For sure. However, the World Karate Federation, which is recognized by the IOC, is trying to keep the philosophical content of karate as a martial art in its purest form, which means maintaining its traditional background.

QUESTION: Many martial artists are against arts becoming sports, but you seem to be in favor.

As long as we preserve as much tradition as possible — respect, discipline and the core values — it can be a good thing.

QUESTION: Do you think being in the Olympics would boost the popularity of karate overall?

Absolutely. If a country's national governing body for karate strategically puts in place a public-relations and marketing campaign, it will directly affect karate at the grass-roots level. Of course, that will require proper instructor education.

QUESTION: Would the transformation from art to sport cause karate to lose its lethal fighting techniques?

Yes and no. However, even people who compete in karate now focus on major strikes that can immobilize an

opponent as well as an attacker, and those strikes are not necessarily lethal ones.

Most parents take their children to the dojo to learn discipline, self-confidence, character building and self-esteem, all of which makes them pillars in society. And they would still

be able to do that. The small percentage who want their children to become sports champions would have what they want, too. Karate can serve as a self-defense system with or without lethal techniques. All forms of karate are great as long as they're taught with the right values. ✘

