

Hopkins University School of Medicine, researchers found that professional MMA competitors suffered the same percentage of injury as professional boxers.

When one compares the safety of MMA to boxing, there is even more to be said. Let's get real here — what we are talking about is repetitive head trauma and long-term brain damage. This is far less likely to occur in MMA, for two very specific reasons.

First, in MMA, there are myriad ways for a fight to conclude: technical knockout, knockout, submission or decision. This essentially has to do with the inclusion and use of ground fighting such as wrestling and Jujitsu, two combat sports that the Hopkins study found to be significantly less riddled with injuries. A professional MMA competitor can win a match by Jujitsu arm bar just as resolutely as he/she could win by knockout. Arm bars, knee bars, chokes, leg locks — your limb isn't going to feel good the next morning, but your brain is still intact.

Furthermore, in the MMA community it is considered wise to tap (called "tapping out") when in the grip of an inescapable submission, so as to secede from the contest

but preserve one's body and career. In boxing, there are only three ways to win: knockout, technical knockout or decision. Your corner can throw in the white towel, but no boxer wants that — it is considered shameful.

Second, in terms of striking: Boxing and kickboxing competitors use 10-ounce gloves; this protects the hand and allows the boxer to deliver a great deal more trauma to the head of his opponent as opposed to just knocking

There is also the standing eight-count rule in boxing and kickboxing, which allows a fighter who has been significantly stunned by blows to have eight seconds of recovery time before returning to the fight. MMA has no standing eight count and, as Perry explains, "going back into the fight after already receiving head trauma causes even more opportunity for severe head trauma and brain damage."

'PEOPLE THINK IT'S MORE VIOLENT THAN FOOTBALL OR RUGBY OR ANY OTHER CONTACT SPORT YOU SEE ON TV, BUT IT'S NOT. IT'S ACTUALLY WAY SAFER.'

- FIGHT DOCTOR DEWAYDE PERRY ON MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

him/her out. Although the notion of a safe knockout may sound oxymoronic, the gloves used by MMA competitors weigh 4 ounces; a well-placed punch from such a glove will simply knock a person out, which is safer than permitting further blunt force trauma to the recipient. "Most amateur MMA fights I've seen end by TKO, in general because of the concern for the safety of the participants," Perry says.

Safe or not, MMA is going big time now, and will be making its way to your standard issue cable TV soon, alongside football, ice hockey and other contact sports, all of which have been criticized as too violent or dangerous.

Similar to those other sports that in this new era will be showcased alongside MMA, the willing participants are as safe as they can be within the context of a contact sport. **EW**

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