

## History Of The Ultimate Fighting Championship

The Ultimate Fighting Championship, better known as the UFC, officially started with the airing of *UFC 1* on pay-per-view in November of 1993. Art Davie came up with the idea of a mixed martial arts fighting tournament after being inspired by seeing Rorion Gracie fight using Brazilian Jui-Jitsu. Davie was working for a marketing client attempting to determine the best and most effective fighting style in the world.

Mixed martial arts means just what it says. It is a combination of several different fighting styles commonly used among differing martial artists. At the beginning of UFC, eight fighters were brought in to compete against each other. At that time, most fighters were skilled in just one fighting style, such as boxing, wrestling or karate. The single elimination tournament was designed to find out who the best fighter was and what the most effective fighting style really was.

Fighters were matched up at random. There were no weight classes and very few safety rules. The absence of weight classes proposed the question of whether the size of your opponent really mattered. Many martial artists taught that size indeed did not matter. The UFC became a trial ground to find out if that philosophy was true. At 170 pounds, Royce Gracie, Rorion's younger brother, won three out of the first four UFC tournaments and proved that size was not everything.

The UFC was quickly labeled as extremely violent because of their "no rules" policy. In fact, the UFC did have rules, but the rules were very limited. Biting and eye gouging were prohibited, and head butting, groin strikes and hair pulling were allowed but not encouraged. The nature of the sport led many U.S. states to ban UFC events. This also caused cable television to drop the UFC from the mainstream. In light of the poor reputation that the UFC was acquiring, the rules of the tournaments were modified to please the state athletic commissions.

The Ultimate Fighting Championship slowly re-established its reputation as a sport after several rules were progressively added starting in *UFC 12*. Gloves became mandatory, and weight classes were introduced. Groin strikes and hair pulling were officially banned, as were kicks to an opponent when he was down. Strikes to the back of the neck and head were later banned along with small joint manipulation. The UFC was could no longer claim the tagline "There are no rules!"

In 2001, Zuffa, LLC was created to purchase the UFC by Frank and Lorenzo Fertitta and Dana White. Lorenza Fertitta has a history with the Nevada State Athletic Commission and was able to get the UFC sanctioned in Nevada. This led to the reintroduction of the UFC to cable pay-per-view audiences with *UFC 33*.

The UFC slowly regained a margin of popularity and later struck a deal with Fox Sports Network. It wasn't until *UFC 40* that the Ultimate Fighting Championship broke through with a big success among the pay-per-view audience. The highlight of the tournament

was a grudge match between the controversial champion, Tito Ortiz, and a veteran of the UFC who later moved into professional wrestling with the WWE, Ken Shamrock.

The UFC didn't make itself known in the mainstream until the Fertitta brothers decided to create a reality series called The Ultimate Fighter. In keeping with the UFC philosophy, the cast was made up of up and coming fighters in mixed martial arts. The fighters competed against one another to determine who the best fighter was. The top fighter was then given a contract to fight in the UFC. Spike TV was the network that decided to air the series in January 2005.

The reality series made the UFC virtually an overnight success and became the highest ranking show on Spike TV. Successive seasons of The Ultimate Fighter were launched and the UFC has had no trouble staying in the mainstream.