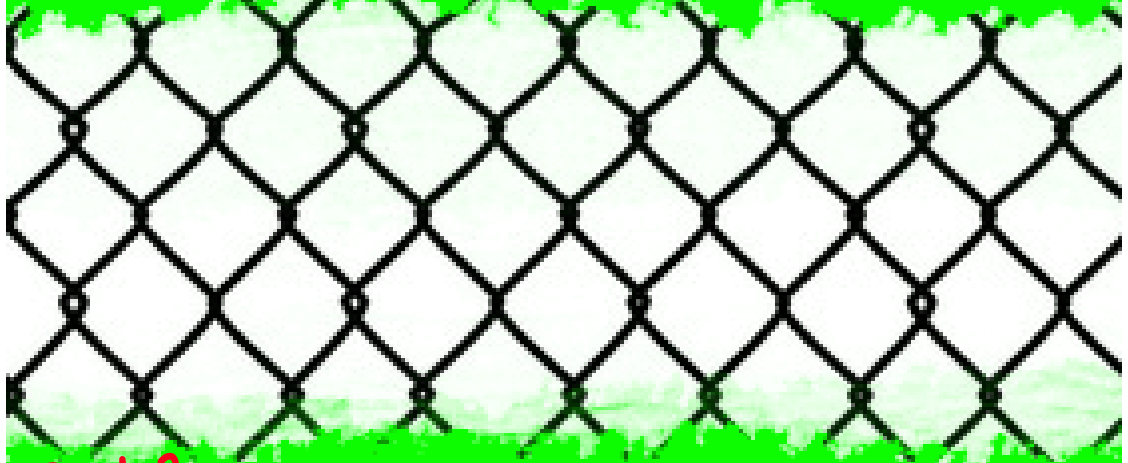




Taking MMA from the cage to the classroom.



Part 2
Cooking up the masterpiece
By Elite Coach
John B Will

The Mixed Martial Arts wave is not a fad. The proof of this lies in the fact that it has pervaded mainstream society via, fashion clothing, media, even the everyday vernacular. MMA cuts across style boundaries and provides a means of pressure-testing the effectiveness of our training. And as the saying goes – pressure makes diamonds. But let's take a look at the various ingredients that go to the making of a solid MMA program. If your delivering up these ingredients as separate items, you are playing the role of grocery store; if you're combining them together professionally, you are playing the role of chef!

Baking the MMA cake

To bake a cake we need to blend the correct amounts of a variety of ingredients; and so it is with a professional approach to MMA. From a coach or instructors perspective, all these ingredients need to be stored away in their respective compartments; we should know not only what they are but where they are. When we teach MMA, we need to bring them out and put them together to create something unique – therein lies the skill. Firstly though, we need to make sure our pantry is fully stocked; we need to know what each of the ingredients are and we need to know how to label them.

Ingredient One: Stand-up

Basic stand-up tools are a must. The basic strikes and kicks do not need a lot of modification, except that we need to understand that high kicks are, for most practical purposes, not much use in MMA. Keeping the kicks low, mitigates the likely-hood of getting the leg caught and being more easily taken down. Besides that, most of the effective combinations of strikes and takedowns are going to be put together via the use of handwork, and less so kicking work. That being said, basic hands, low kicks, elbows and knees are all part of the overall MMA arsenal.

Ingredient Two: Entries & Clinching

Effective entry skills must be built on a foundation of solid defence. Structure-based Defence (SBD) strategies like 'The Shell', that make use of our hands and arms to build effective cover against strikes, allow students to make rapid entries without getting hit in the process. The SBD methodology, combined with good clinching skills

allow for very safe transitions between striking and grappling ranges. The days of rushing in blindly and hoping for the clinch are rapidly dwindling.

Ingredient Three: Takedowns

Takedown styles vary greatly. Those that rely heavily on grabbing the clothing of an opponent, like Judo for example are not as useful in MMA as are the styles that focus on upper body control or ‘shooting’ the legs. The Freestyle and Greco Roman styles of takedowns can be more easily modified to suit the holistic approach that MMA personifies. Though how we can make best use of strikes and clinching to set up these takedowns is still very much a work in progress. In fact, it is the seamless weaving together of the stand-up techniques and the takedown techniques that will provide challenge to the creative and skilled for many years to come.

Ingredient Four: Safe Ground & Pound

Striking whilst on the ground is an aspect of MMA that is fast becoming a science in its own right. Creative training solutions for this phase of the fight should focus equally on safety as they should on effectiveness. Safe training models allow the mainstream student body to develop skills in this area. Here again, Structure-based defence models really come into their own.

Ingredient Five: Ground Control & Subs

The rise in popularity of BJJ (Brazilian Jiu Jitsu) has impacted the martial arts industry more than any other event in history. The whole concept of submission grappling has been taken to a new level through the widespread adoption of BJJ technique and strategy. BJJ is based on a solid understanding of a wide range of ground positions and the relationships between those positions. The ground-game is an art in its own right and can offer students a degree of control over their opponents that they have never been able to enjoy before. The BJJ ethos of ‘First Control – then Submission’, provides a complete ground-solution for the MMA practitioner.

Getting the mix right

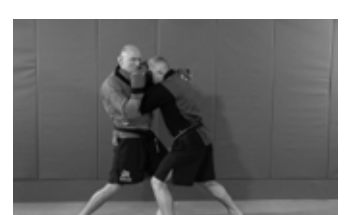
Even though we have the ingredients at our fingertips, doesn't mean we can bake the cake of our dreams. Two different people, even though they have the same basic ingredients, can come up with two, very different types of meals.

All these things need to be woven together in the right proportions and in the right way to achieve remarkable results. Tomorrow's approach to MMA will be a seamless one; the striking will dovetail beautifully and effectively into the clinch, takedown and groundwork phases of the fight. Drills and training should be structured with that very end in mind. The era of the ‘three-coach-approach’ will eventually be replaced by the single MMA qualified coach. This person will play the role of the master-chef, who will weigh, measure, blend and co-ordinate the correct set of ingredients to create something unique and palatable to the mainstream demographic.

The proof is in the pudding

We all live in an age where ‘recreation time’ has become more precious than ever. This means that more than ever before, people are expecting results, and fast results at that! Students want more ‘bang’ for their ‘training buck’ and they have an increasing expectation that their instructor is providing them with the best possible training practices.

A well thought out MMA training regime can produce fast and effective results that have huge appeal to today's information-savvy student. Rapid skill acquisition is a result of cutting edge training methodology and correct use of super-coaching principles. As the technical aspects of martial arts training continue to rapidly evolve through the spread of MMA, so too must the training and coaching methods. MMA has evolved in an arena where ‘pressure-testing’ is the norm; the masses who are about to take up MMA related training are expecting to be beneficiaries of that testing process. The challenge is to deliver on that expectation – and to do so in a safe, fun, yet ‘outcome-focussed’ way.



Alpha MMA - educating the professional coach