

Why does the EWTO not take part in competitions? | WingTsun-World

Time and again we are asked the question by outsiders, but also by new members and even very advanced students who should know better:

WHY DOES THE EWTO NOT TAKE PART IN COMPETITIONS?

In competitions it is essential to abide by certain rules so that fights can remain relatively free from injuries, otherwise these events would be banned.

Even full-contact events and the Ultimate Fighting Championships (UFC), which have brought a considerable measure of reality into the sporting martial arts and contributed to a healthy disillusionment, are not actually able to do without certain rules.

The following attacks are e.g. forbidden according to the UFC rules:

- Butting with the head
(head-butting is a widespread technique in the street!)
- Eye gouging
(jabs to the eyes are very effective, e.g. in groundfighting)
- Biting
(biting comes from our primate ancestry, and is even quite common amongst boxers)
- Hair pulling
(even children do this in the school playground, don't they?)
- Putting a finger into any orifice
(normal behaviour in a real fight)
- Groin attacks
(normal behaviour in a real fight)
- Small joint manipulation (e.g. finger)
(bending an opponent's finger back e.g. to release a grab is normal)
- Striking to the spine or the back of the head
(anybody who turns away must expect this)
- Striking downward using the point of the elbow
(part of our normal repertoire, e.g. if a freestyle wrestling attack seeks to take our legs out from under us)
- Throat strikes of any kind, including grabbing the trachea
(only attacks to the neck have a fight-stopping effect against a physically superior opponent)
- Clawing/pinching
(even ladies do this)
- Grabbing the clavicle
(damaging the clavicle is normal practice in kung-fu)
- Kicking or kneeing the head of a grounded opponent
(this is the 5th phase of today's ritualised combat in the street)
- Kicking to the kidney with the heel
(an obvious target on the ground)

- Spiking an opponent to the canvas on his head or neck
(happens during almost every throw)
- Throwing an opponent out of the ring or fenced area
(in a real fight, the opponent is thrown against radiators or downstairs)
- Spitting at an opponent
(not uncommon in ritualised combat)
- Using abusive language in the ring or fenced area
(this is how ritualised combat starts)
- Attacking during or on the break
(fights in the street continue to the bitter end, with no breaks)
- Attacking an opponent who is under the care of the referee
(there is no referee to protect us in the street)
- Attacking an opponent after the bell has sounded the end of a round
(there are no bells out there, only the ones ringing in your head)
- Avoiding contact with an opponent
(sensible behaviour in the real world ...)
- Third-party interference
(this is to be expected in a real fight)

The techniques forbidden in sporting competition are always the most effective ones – that's why they are forbidden!

It is precisely these attacks and the responses to them that should definitely be practiced if we want to learn how to defend ourselves out there in the real world! MMA champion Forrest Griffin, (Got Fight, New York, 2009, P. 52) advises just these forbidden techniques and a form of chain-punching in the street:

"Street fighting ... is very different from fighting professionally in the ring or cage... My advice for street fighting is to tuck your head, put your hands up, and throw your fists as fast as you can from your chin to your opponent's chin as you move forward. You never want to back away – always move forward. When you've closed the distance and can't punch anymore, throw elbows. When you no longer have the room to throw elbows, deliver a series of headbutts. This blind, fierce aggression is the best way to win a street fight, and I'm talking from experience ..."

Competition rules disarm us WT people

- If a WT user were to fight according to the above rules – with the exception of chain-punches to the head – he would disarm himself practically to the level of helplessness, as our most important target for attacks (though forbidden in competitions) is always the opponent's neck area.

- I personally would only use WT chain-punches as a surprise attack against an unprepared opponent, and had a great deal of success with this in the past. But the experienced opponent who is familiar with chain-punches will try to duck under them and use a freestyle-wrestling (shoot) attack to take our legs out and bring us to the ground.

We therefore definitely need to deliver blows to the back of the neck and spine using the elbows (which is forbidden in competitions). Otherwise we will end up on the ground with him.

- Once on the ground, a penetrating attack with the fingers in the eyes and the downward elbow strike (which are likewise forbidden in competitions, for good reasons) are some of the most effective weapons in the WT arsenal.

No wonder that downward elbow strikes (using the force of gravity!) and attacks to the eyes are forbidden, as they make an extended, spectacular groundfight practically impossible!

Methods that can be employed in a sporting competition must not be really dangerous

"If a method can be practiced full force in a competitive venue, then obviously it lacks crippling, maiming and killing skills – all of which whether it is popular to say or not, must be taught and embedded in the student's psyche and nervous system. "

Brad Steiner

Almost superhuman strength is needed to knock somebody out with permitted techniques

So it is no wonder that the athletes taking part are almost all packed with muscle like Superman.

Using real fighting systems in competition is sheer madness!

"If a system is fully combat worthy, then any competition or full contact training in the skills (except against dummies and other insentient training aids) is nothing short of insanity."

Brad Steiner

Differences between sporting competition and reality

To be truly realistic, sporting competitions, as bloody as they might be, would need to take place entirely without a referee, on a concrete floor, in a bar with chairs, tables, glasses and ashtrays. Concealed weapons would be allowed, and above all the cage would need to be removed so that third parties could intervene as they do in reality.

Things often kick off with no warning

But the difference is not only the uncompromising violence of real combat (sudden attack, ambush). The main difference is that it often starts with no warning, with only the attacker determining the start.

No simultaneous start

There is no referee who stands between the opponents and signals the simultaneous start of the fight.

No distance

There is no distance between the opponents that must first be bridged at the cost of time. In a competitive bout it is possible to keep the opponent at a distance with the feet, but in ritualised combat ("What the hell are you looking at?") the opponent has e.g. already brought himself into attacking range by deception or talking before he kicks off.

One blow is enough for a knockout

A fighter who is able to strike a vulnerable spot with corresponding force from an effective range with no warning (i.e. without drawing back to strike or shifting his weight) will knock his victim out cold before the latter even realises that a fight has started.

A trained fighter, for example, needs no more than one tenth of a second to deliver a knockout punch with no warning from a range of 30 cm. But like everybody else, the victim experiences a "shock delay" that is also at least 0.10 seconds. So in principle the victim can only react when he is already unconscious. Even the most intensive boxing training and the most realistic sparring is therefore no protection against being knocked out by some small-town thug. (This is why we cannot afford to wait for any "visible drawing back of the fist" before we act in legitimate self-defence. Unfortunately many judges expect this out of ignorance, however.)

The fight does not last for 10 rounds

In my experience real fights – most of which are completely one-sided, with only one party delivering punches – are usually over after 2-5 seconds. Stamina is therefore hardly required, which means that even fat, unfit opponents can pose a danger that is frequently underestimated.

The main weapons are shoving and wild "haymakers" (roundhouse punches)

Anybody who loses his balance and falls to the ground is nowadays as good as dead, or at least dependent on the mercy of his opponent, as he can be "booted" in the head with steel-capped footwear.

A solitary opponent is a rarity nowadays!

Anybody who grabs when the opponent grabs, or wrestles when the opponent wants to wrestle, immobilises himself and falls victim to the opponent's friends or "mates". Only rapid blows to the neck and head, with constant changes of position, give us a fighting chance.

Wrestling on the ground is something for spectator events, desert islands and stamina training

A fighter who has managed to subdue his opponent on the ground may well be pulled off and attacked by the opponent's friends. Wrestling on the ground is very beneficial for stamina training. When it comes to self-defence in the street, we practice "anti-groundfighting", i.e. avoiding going to ground, and getting up rapidly if it happens.

Sparring is not a very suitable training method for WT

Conventional sparring, where two partners alternately attack and defend, is suitable to build up stamina for sporting competition, but certainly not an adequate training method for WingTsun (WT).

WT should use the attacker's strength, as he obviously has enough of it. Therefore we do not fight "against" but rather "with" the opponent. We borrow his strength for our use, transforming his pull into our strike and his strike into our pull. No opponent has any other way of bringing his strength into play against us. But in order to do this we need a great deal of all-important tactile sensitivity and practice. Sparring as a training method does not give us this practice. Sparring is an alternating monologue: first one partner attacks and the other protects himself, then it is the other partner's turn. In a real life-or-death encounter this simply doesn't happen. WT concerns itself with real combat, therefore we in WT are only interested in simultaneous, not sequential.

In WT it is by definition the weaker person who defends himself (originally a woman to personify the physically weaker party) against a stronger attacker. It must all be over in 4 seconds, otherwise the fight is lost. That is why there is no to-and-fro, no strength-sapping exchange of blows.

We must replace strength with physical unity, and speed with timing. Our knockout must occur when the other party intends to move, or at the same time as his first movement, or when he draws back his chosen weapon (e.g. fist).

If we are taken by surprise (several attackers?), our attacking response must flow directly from the initial shock reaction. Afterwards we immediately retreat. Our aim is not to win, but rather to survive!

We only fight if left with no alternative

If we do not happen to be professional warriors (elite police/military units, bodyguards etc.), and if our work does not require that we intervene and look for conflict, we have no interest in measuring ourselves against opponents. We have no wish to fight, and certainly not for some obscure concept of honour, for our ego, for money or for fame. The fight, or rather our defence, is forced upon us by the aggressor.

We do not challenge anybody in the street, and we do not accept challenges. Therefore we have a clear conscience if we legitimately defend ourselves using all (!) the means at our disposal.

The fact that we are human beings who respect life, and will spare the opponent if possible, is quite another matter. First of all, it is our life and health that counts more than that of the other party – after all, we did not go looking for a fight, we were forced into it!

Sporting competitions are no proof whether a self-defence system works

People who have not adequately concerned themselves with the scientific theory of combat believe that they can put the combat logic and effectiveness of their style to the test with sparring or contests. In fact all this can do is test and develop their fighting spirit and stamina.

It is people who fight against people in a competition, not really strategies against strategies. A self-defence system is a strategy, the software so to speak. We must exclude the individual human factor from the comparison, which is difficult because it is a person who is supposed to implement the strategy with his mind and body.

To make a comparison between fighting systems, you must let their strategies fight each other

If we want to compare fighting systems, styles and methods with each other, we need to know their strategies, their principles, their structures and their "techniques", bring these together in a computer programme – a little like computer chess tournaments – and let them compete with each other. A small number of combat researchers are currently working on such a computer programme, either together with us or independently. This is a difficult task, for unlike in the tournaments with Robert Axelrod, where the WT-like strategy of "tit-for-tat" reigns supreme, there are more than just two decision-making alternatives in a real fight, and the "moves" are not sequential but occur at the same time.

How do we recognise the strategy of a system?

The problem starts with the fact that if asked, only very few masters would be able to state and formulate the principles of their style. Except for representatives of so-called internal styles (in which I include our WT), I personally have only seen this in a few sword-fighting styles, our EWTO Escrima and – perhaps surprisingly for some – in Muay Thai.

In some cases an observer might even gain the impression that a style only consists of "techniques" that fit together more or less well.

We have it easy in WT, as our strategy is precisely defined by the logical fighting principles which we must live by (absorb what comes, follow home what goes, attack when the way is clear) and the sub-principles derived from them, which are finally translated into movements in conjunction with structure of WT. Our strategy even determines our actions in combat, which is an inestimable advantage as it relieves us of time-consuming and therefore dangerous decision-making.

And there is yet another important reason not to take part in competitions: Wu Wei

Firstly therefore, sporting contests between two people do not really prove that the style they follow is superior to another. Secondly, we refuse to satisfy the lust for sensation of mass spectators out of respect for life and for ethical reasons.

Moreover, and not least because of time stress and the expectations the spectators have of the fighters, public contests by their nature prevent Wu Wei, i.e. action without intention.

But without Wu Wei there can be no effortless victory, as the constant intention to perform a certain

technique and look good in the process leads to a preoccupation with techniques and constant tension. This obvious tension e.g. deprived Vitali Klitschko, who is known for his ferocious punching power, of a knockout victory over Shannon Briggs in the WBC World Championship in Hamburg on 16.10. 2010. The hard-hitting world champion was unable to achieve a knockout in 12 rounds, although he consigned his badly beaten challenger to intensive care in a hospital with several bone fractures.

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