

## **REFEREE'S CALL:**

### **2005 Wish List Revisited**

**by Nelson "DOC" Hamilton**

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Three decades of martial arts training has taught me to periodically stop, look over my shoulder and take stock of my surroundings. Likewise, life has taught me that it is prudent for each of us to occasionally take the time to look over our proverbial shoulders. In so doing, we not only know what's behind us, but how we came to be where we are and if we are still on course to achieve our goals.

In late 2004, I wrote an article entitled "My 2005 Wish List." Given MMA's explosive growth and popularity over the past two years, I thought that it would be interesting to revisit that article.

In 2004, MMA got some broad mainstream exposure and made some significant inroads into cable TV with the appearances of Couture, Ortiz, Liddell, and K. Shamrock on the "Best Damn Show Period." It was my wish that the UFC reality show scheduled to appear on Spike TV in January 2005, would expose the sport to millions of viewers who in turn become rabid fans. Score one for me!

Understanding the critical necessity for competent officials, the Nevada State Athletic Commission (NSAC), in conjunction with Ring Experienced Fight Specialists (REFS), hosted the first formal training seminar for MMA referees and judges on May 1, 2004. Despite my wish that other Commissions would understand that such seminars are critical for fighter safety as well as the sports integrity, only the Texas Commission stood tall, assumed their responsibility, and hosted a seminar on May 6, 2006. Win some, lose some.

On September 21, 2004, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed Senate Bill 1549, giving the California Athletic Commission regulatory control of MMA. In

other words, after five years of near misses, MMA and California finally grabbed the gold ring.

On March 10, 2006, the HP Pavilion San Jose hosted 18,200 fans for the first State sanctioned MMA event, promoted by West Coast Studios/IEC. In addition to smaller promotions almost every weekend, thousands attended UFC-59 on April 15, 2006 at the Arrowhead Pond, UFC-60 on May 5, 2006 at Staples Arena, WFA on July 7, 2006 at the Great Western Forum, and the UFC-63 on September 9, 2006 at the Arrowhead Pond.

With some of the major accomplishments of 2004 duly noted, let's review some of my wishes in 2005 that have come true.

- Zuffa continues its dedicated and passionate involvement in MMA.
- The upcoming rematch (#1) between Couture and Liddell is more competitive than the first get together.
- To see a rematch between Matt Hughes and B.J. Penn.
- To see a lot more MMA on TV and a lot less Bass Fishing, rope skipping, and hot dog eating contests.
- Large crowds at the ADCC 2005 championships in Long Beach, Ca. in 05/05.
- Fewer K-1 bouts pitting Akebono against men the size of Rick Roufus and Royce Gracie.

Since every Yin has its Yang, here are some of the wishes I'm still waiting for.

- Fewer ring girls with tattoos and unrealistic breast implants.
- An injury-free 2005 for Sakuraba and Javier "Showtime" Vasquez.
- Frank Mir will sell his motorcycle, regain his conditioning, and regain his championship against Andrei Arlovski.

- To see Staples Arena in Los Angeles sold-out at least twice in 2005, once by the UFC and once by Pride.
- To see Dan Henderson, Crocop, 'Minotauro' Nogueirra, Fedor Emilianenko and Wanderlei Silva doing their thing at the Staples Arena in L.A.
- The top MMA fighters making money comparable to that of the top boxers.
- The return of Frank Shamrock, Erik Paulson, and Josh Barnett to the UFC.
- The promotional powers of MMA joining together for the good of the sport.
- More state athletic commissions providing formal training for its MMA judges and referees.

No one can deny that the sport has finally come into its' own. Both UFC and Pride competition can be viewed weekly on free TV. Also, as of this writing, Pride is scheduled to make its USA debut at the UNLV Thomas and Mack Event Center on 09/21/06. In addition to Americans, Mark Coleman; Phil Baroni; Kevin Randelman; and Josh Barnett, superstars scheduled to appear include; Fedor Emilianenko; Mauricio Shogun; Kazuhiro Nakamura, and Mirko Cro Cop.

Last but not least, rumors continue to circle around 'The Iceman' and 'The Axe Murderer' getting it on, with the blessings of both the UFC and Pride. Sounds good, but I think that I'll just add that to my 2007 wish list.