

## **REFEREE'S CALL:**

### **When, Where, and Why (pt. 2 of 3)**

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This is the second installment of a three-part series exploring the various circumstances that have contributed to the evolution of the MMA "Unified Rules" so prevalent in the United States presently. To date we have covered the rule changes instituted through UFC-7.

As I stated last month, most of the rules have evolved as a direct response to the old adage, "necessity is the mother of invention."

As a result of time limits being instituted for all bouts at UFC-7, judges and scoring now became necessary to determine the winners of each bout going the distance. At the *'Ultimate-Ultimate 95'*, held on 12/16/95 in Denver, Colorado, Dan Severn and Tank Abbott met in a semifinal bout. After the 20-minute time period expired, the decision went to the judges and Severn was awarded a unanimous victory. *This marked the first time in the UFC that the outcome of a bout was decided by judges.*

In its infancy, part of the fascination with the UFC for many fans and martial artists was the absence of weight classes. Most of us, as fans, still recall UFC-1 and the memorable confrontation between 216 pound Gerard Gordeau, and 410 pound sumo wrestler, Teli Tuli. And, who can forget the classic match at UFC-3 between the 200-pound kenpo stylist Keith Hackney, and the six-foot eight, 600-pound sumo practitioner, Emmanuel Yarbrough.

However, as the fighters began to cross-train and became multi-disciplined, it became obvious that it was both unsafe and unfair to permit competition between equally skilled athletes with gross weight differences. Consequently, *weight divisions were first employed in UFC-12 on 02/07/97.* Interestingly, there were only two divisions, under 200 pounds and over 200 pounds.

On 07/27/97, the UFC finally acknowledged what mankind has known for centuries; if you punch a hard object, like someone's head, elbow, or knee, there is the likelihood that you will injure your hand. After numerous such injuries, and partially in an attempt to quiet its critics, *gloves for all competitors became mandatory at UFC-14. Head-butts and groin strikes were also declared illegal techniques.*

In an attempt to broaden its fan appeal and provide many smaller, talented fighters, an opportunity to compete, *a lightweight division (under 170 pounds) was added at UFC-16, 'Battle in the Bayou', on 03/13/98.*

*UFC-22 saw the discontinuation of the long favored tournament format. With the inclusion of time limits for individual bouts, weight classes, and the employment of judges, it was only a matter of time before rounds and a scoring system would be employed. In addition to now employing the ten-point-must scoring, all preliminary bouts were two rounds and five minutes in length; all under card bouts were three rounds of five minutes length; and the championship fight was five rounds of five minutes.*

And what a championship bout it was! Frank Shamrock retained his Middleweight Championship with a "ground and pound" attack, which forced Tito Ortiz to submit at 4:48 of the fourth round. Still, one of the best fights ever!

On March 26, 1999, the California State Athletic Commission (CSAC) appointed selected members of the martial arts community to a panel for the expressed purpose of developing a set of rules to regulate MMA in the state. After many months, a viable set of rules acceptable to the Commission was produced. However, since CSAC was unable to get MMA competition approved, the rules were never used in California. Never the less, these rules, with minor modifications, were the foundations for what have become known as the "Unified Rules".