

Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services in MMA in years 2013–2015

Authors' Contribution:

A - Study Design
B - Data Collection
C - Statistical Analysis
D - Manuscript Preparation
E - Funds Collection

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Abstract

The main aim of this study is to turn attention to the need of incorporating hand-to-hand combat skills in training of the officers of the Polish Uniformed Services and using the skills during the competitions of the championships rank. In the study the attention was also drawn to the uniform services workers' attitude to mixed martial arts (then: MMA) and their participation in the Championships of Poland in this sports discipline. The third aim of the study was to show the development of popularity of MMA in recent years, both in Poland and among the officers of the uniformed services

Key words: mixed martial arts, uniformed services, Polish Championships.

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Received: 25.03.2016; Accepted: 5.09.2016; Published online: 17.10.2016

Introduction

Hand-to-hand combat skills have always been essential for soldiers, especially during wars when the majority of battles was fought basing on the direct contact with the enemy. Nowadays when the uniform services have a difficult task to perform, such as during interventions against brawls and criminals, these skills are of great importance. MMA fight resembles a confrontation of two people during a brawl, that is why proper behaviour and using the right techniques are desired in such situations. Therefore MMA becomes more and more popular in Poland, also among the workers of the uniform services. It can be observed in the growing number of participants in Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services, which have been organized since 2013.

METHODS

The following methods of research were employed when preparing the paper: analysis of historical sources and the monographic method. The paper uses the following research methods: analysis of historical sources, induction, deduction, synthesis and a comparative method. In addition, the paper has been prepared with the use of printed sources, newspapers and reference books moreover it was made a interview with main organizer of events. The research question was: Are hand-to-hand combat skills useful to the workers of the uniform services during their work and if so, to what extent?

RESULTS

I. Martial arts in the Uniformed Services

The history of wars and fights confirmed the great need for hand-to-hand combat skills of the soldiers. Physical fitness, endurance and suitable features of personality were also required [1].

Combat sports are the ones that impose a burden on an individual during each training. They require high endurance level, complex motive actions in a short time, readiness to react quickly in a given situation. Combat sports should therefore be one of the components of physical education for the uniformed services[1]. Sports activities are associated with achieving the largest amount of successes which can be gained by competing with other people. One can also compare his / her results with the results of others. It should, however, be remembered to apply comparative criteria at the moment of the comparison, namely: the level of advancement, weight category and age. However, the goals which are to be achieved by an athlete and a member of the uniformed services are significantly different[2]. Prevention is the largest achievement in defensive actions in the democratic world, that is fighting without a fight. Therefore officers cannot provoke confrontation with others, but using their skills they should be able to solve difficult situations so that every intervention ends the way they wished[2].

Training in combat sports is based on comprehensive development of the body, abilities to assess and adapt to different situations. These things are necessary to fight well and win, however, the work of a field operative officer is impossible without these skills. Skills acquired in the training of combat sports, in this case MMA, are very useful in time of defensive actions. In modern MMA, a competitor aspiring to become one of the best fighters must possess high-level skills of a cross-cutting nature, taken from different sports disciplines. These are mainly

skills deriving from Olympic sports such as boxing, judo, wrestling, but also Brazilian ju-jitsu (then: BJJ), ju-jitsu, kickboxing and muay Thai.

Each of the skills of the mentioned Olympic sports is important, but nowadays the most important are wrestling techniques allowing to control the fight. Frequently MMA fight is compared to real fight, such as often takes place during a brawl. The fight consists in direct contact of two or more persons when the person with the stronger psyche wins in many cases. Certain patterns of behavior, both in a fight and during the intervention, have to be learned by systematic, conscious and intelligent training. Furthermore, peace of mind and the ability to adapt to the current, dynamically developing situation are extremely important in both cases. The peace of mind guarantees faster recognition of the opponent's intentions[1].

Both in the context of the preparation for the fight as well as the confrontation for defense purposes, the high-level efficiency of an officer is essential. Consequently, also such features as: speed, agility, strength are very needed for the actions to be successful.

The success in sport with no rivalry is impossible to achieve, in the same way it is impossible to solve a critical situation without the officer possessing suitable skills. Sports fight according to the rules or the fight in defence is the point connecting both sport and the defensive area.

II. The beginnings and circumstances of the organization of the first Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services in MMA.

In June 2013, on the initiative of the workers of the Municipal Guard Intervention Group in Toruń, the KSM TEAM sports club was established. One of the goals of the club is organization of Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services in MMA: *I, as the officer, started the KSM Team club, I am the president of this club together with three colleagues from the intervention group. We are the club, we can obtain sponsors for competitions. The headquarters also makes the organization of the competitions easier, helping a lot logistically* - says Adrian Tabor, the organizer of the competitions.

The most important event for members of all uniformed services in Poland are Championships in MMA, which aim at promoting principles, skills, coping with emotions and fear, and also more effective acting in emergency situations. The competitions are an excellent test of knowledge and skills of martial arts. They are also trying to answer the question whether officers from Poland, including the ones from Toruń, feel responsible for the technical preparation and what physical condition they are in. The Championships assemble the leading Polish MMA contestants, including the ones well-known for the fans, such as Szymon Bajor fighting for KSW (KSW - KSW Federation promoting MMA fights), Rafał Błachuta KSW at present FEN (FEN - Fight Exclusive Night, federation promoting MMA and K1 fights), Dawid Kotewicz PLMMA (PLMMA - Professional MMA League, federation promoting MMA fights) and others [3].

The exact circumstances of the organization of the first competitions are described by Adrian Tabor, the organizer of the event: *In years 2000-2005 I was stationed in the Foreign Legion in Corsica where I saw how such events between units were organized. Foreign services integrated in such a way. When I began to work in Toruń, people in the Municipal Guard Intervention Group came up with the idea to organize a small tournament in kickboxing or K1. I did not deal with MMA from the beginning, I did more of stand-up fights. The tournament was supposed to be for the Commander of the Municipal Guard Cup, held in Toruń. At first the authorities were very skeptical about this idea, being concerned about likely injuries of their subordinates. When a new commander was appointed, everything changed. With time the attitude to such competitions evolved, the superiors started to treat their subordinates' fights more favorably* [4]. Every superior, whose subordinates took part in these competitions had different opinions on the subject, as it is also mentioned by the organizer of the Championships: *At first the superiors were skeptical about the competitions as they did not know*

how these fights would end. From the beginning a conviction prevailed that the competition would not take place because of the fear of injuries, it was said that MMA was too brutal. MMA was also believed to have been a kind of "set-ups" for people from the underclass who liked fighting. Our aim is in fact to check ourselves in a fight with opponents presenting various skills, often professionals fighting in MMA galas, in an octagon [4].

Year by year more and more officers take the part in competitions, which results in the competition becoming more prestigious. However, in next editions the organizers plan to expand the number of participants with the officers from abroad: *The hitherto editions were all-Poland, everyone could participate. Last Championships, according to competitors, were marvellous. The competitors said that the organization was better than during some other galas. The next edition of Championships will be international one. In octagon it is possible to meet such formations as: the Police, the Army, Fire Service, Municipal Guard, Prison Service, JWK Lubliniec, Military Gendarmerie, Government Protection Bureau. We will invite uniformed services from other countries e.g. Austria, France. The representatives of various services fight. We also co-operate in the professional field, we exchange experience necessary at work [4].* Every edition of competitions shows better skills of the officers as hard work and trainings bring effects. Adrian Tabor also notices it: *The final fights were at a very high level. The remaining fights could also be the great performances in more than one gala. During Championships the fights consist of two 3-minute rounds, so there is no time to calculate and a competitor has to do his best which makes the fights more open. Everyone wants to show the best. The limitations and rules are also specific: We have the limited senior formula i.e. helmets and shin-guards (leg-guards) are obligatory. We cannot resign from them because we have to work off site after championships. We cannot also fight the original MMA version because of the risk of injury. Moreover, there are no strikes to the head when a fighter is on the ground [4].*

The issue of women rivalry in Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services is also touched on by the officer organizing the competition: *Women, at the time when recruitment to the contest is announced, call us and ask questions. However, when it is time to apply, everything changes. This year the officer from the Railroad Guard arrived to the contest, as the only one. She received the trophy and medal. She took the first step towards the participation of women in such competitions. The second woman also applied, but the night before weighing, she decided not to come [4].*

III. The best in the Championships.

The first competitions of the uniformed services officers took place on the 19th and 20th October 2013, in Toruń, and 49 competitors participated. The results of the contest were as follows, with the division into weight categories:

Category to 73kg:

- I - Piotr Płotka - the Army
- II - Filip Insadowski - Fire Service
- III - Emil Kosień - the Army and Przemysław Bartosiewicz - Fire Service

Category to 80 kg:

- I - Rafał Błachuta - Fire Service
- II - Piotr Leśniak - Prison Service
- III - Krzysztof Zygoń - Prison Service and Sebastian Wilkołaki - Military Gendarmerie

Category to 87 kg:

- I - Marcin Chałaśkiewicz - Fire Service
- II - Dawid Kotewicz - the Army
- III - Paweł Pilarz - the Police and Paweł Sobolewski - Prison Service

Category to 96 kg:

- I - Rafał Jama - Prison Service
- II - Michał Wołczyk - Prison Service
- III - Adrian Tabor - Municipal Guard and Jakub Ryczko - Municipal Guard

Category open (over 96 kg):

- I - Szymon Bajor – the Police
- II- Grzegorz Janus - Prison Service
- III - Hubert Lech - Prison Service and Paweł Mirek - Prison Service [5].

The official website of the Fire Service described the Championships: *On the 19th and 20th October 2013 took place the First Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services in MMA in Toruń, organized on the initiative of the workers of Municipal Guard in Toruń. This event was for all the officers of uniformed services in Poland. There were 49 competitors in five weight categories, representing the Polish Army, Military Gendarmerie, the Police, State Fire Service, Prison Service and Municipal Guard [6].*

The District Fire Department also wrote about the victory of the representative of Fire Service in Malbork: *The fireman Rafał Błachuta represented the District Fire Department in Malbork (Pomeranian Voivodeship) in the category to 80 kg. In the final fight he defeated by submission the representative of Prison Service and won the Championships in his weight category. Rafał Błachuta is the fireman of the District Fire Department in Malbork, he serves in JRG State Fire Service Malbork. He trains at No Limits Kwidzyń club. The competition, except for the opportunity for sports rivalry, was the excellent form of integration of the officers of uniformed services, allowing to perfect the skills useful for the implementation of tasks in everyday service [6].*

The second edition of competitions took place on the 11th and 12th October 2014, also in Toruń. 48 officers participated. The results of the contest were as follows, with the division into weight categories:

Category to 73 kg:

- I - Boduszek Tomasz – Prison Service
- II - Płotka Piotr – the Army
- III - Christ Szymon – JWK Lubliniec

Category to 80 kg:

- I - Christ Łukasz - JWK Lubliniec
- II - Błachuta Rafał – Fire Service
- III - Iwanowski Mateusz – Government Protection Bureau

Category to 87 kg:

- I - Kotewicz Dawid – the Army
- II - Pilarz Paweł – the Police
- III - Chałaśkiewicz Marcin – Fire Service

Category to 96 kg:

- I - Kaszczyński Janusz – the Police
- II - Kubiak Tomasz - JWK Lubliniec
- III - Kęsicki Sławomir – Fire Service

Category open (over 96 kg):

- I - Bajor Szymon – the Police
- II - Janus Grzegorz – Prison Service
- III - Lech Hubert – Prison Service and Pietrzak Bartosz – the Police [5].

Gazeta Ostrowska also mentioned participation of the officers: *Policemen from Ostrów proved again that they were good on mats. In the Second Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services in MMA in Toruń senior sergeant Bartosz Pietrzak, representing the Police Department in Ostrów, was the third. The second of our policemen, senior sergeant Michał Torz – debuting in such an event and fighting in the category to 87 kg, was just behind the podium. Although he did not reach the podium, he performed well. According to him, the experience he gained in the competition will bring good effects in next tournaments. Michał Torz has been a policeman for 7 years, he has been training martial arts for 13 years, and the style typical for him is modern ju- jitsu [7].*



Fig. 1. The Second Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services in MMA medallists (source: organizer's own collection)

The Third Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services in MMA took place on the 17th and 18th October 2015 in Toruń. 63 officers participated. The results of the contest were as follows, with the division into weight categories:

Category to 73 kg:

- I - Zyra Karol - the Army
- II - Płotka Piotr - the Army
- III - Ślęczka Sebastian - Border Guard

Category to 80 kg:

- I - Zysk Tomasz - the Army
- II - Szaja Paweł - the Police
- III - Błachuta Rafał - Fire Service

Category to 87 kg:

- I - Skrzypiec Artur - the Army
- II - Kotewicz Dawid - the Army
- III - Iwanowski Mateusz - Government Protection Bureau

Category to 96 kg:

- I - Kaszczyński Janusz - the Police
- II - Małecki Ariel - the Army
- III - Maniak Piotr - the Army

Category open (over 96 kg)

- I - Bajor Szymon - the Police
- II - Kieliszewicz Radosław - Military Gendarmerie
- III - Hałaszczak Paweł - Municipal Guard [5].



Fig. 2. The Third Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services in MMA medallists (source: organizer's own collection)

The superior organizer of the Championships in Poland, the commander officer Mirosław Bartulewicz believes that the competition is a good idea and more and more people get convinced to it: *Year by year, it gets better and better. First of all, the competitors become convinced to the competition, second of all, their supervisors do. MMA training helps them to be more effective in everyday duties.*

The website from Ostrołęka also wrote about the Ostrołęka soldier's victory in the competition: *Last week the Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services in MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) took place in Toruń. The Fight Academy Ostrołęka member - Karol Zyra participated in them again. He did a great job, being the first in his weight category! (...) On Sunday our representative only had to fight in the final combat which was a hard task. The combat ended with two play-offs, but Karol Zyra could at last raise his hands in the gesture of triumph - he became the Polish champion of the Uniformed Services. This is not Karol Zyra's first success of this type - in March he became the brown medallist of the Polish Army Championships. He also fought in the fights of the evening at Sparta Combat Sports Gala in Baranów, and took part in the MMA Amateur League [8].*

The first female medallist in the history of the championships became the officer of the Railroad Guard - Sylwia Sitnik (Photo 3). The competitor from Itawa reached the top of the podium. The Railroad Guard Headquarters informed about the officer's success: *The officer of the Railroad Guard from Itawa, Sylwia Sitnik, participated in the Third Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services in MMA which took place in October. As she says, the competition was fierce, and the level of the competitors was very high.*

The officer was unbeatable and won the gold medal. 'I would like to thank all who helped me to prepare for the competitions, my colleagues and superiors from the Railroad Guard who supported me strongly' - said Sylwia Sitnik when the competitions finished. 'I have been training MMA for over two years. It gives me great satisfaction' - she summed up [9].



Fig. 3. Sylwia Sitnik – the first female medalist in The Third Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services in MMA (source: The Railroad Guard Headquarters official website)

Over time each type of the uniformed services started to delegate more of their officers to the championships, in 2015 the representatives of the Army also did well during the event. The Polish Army Headquarters related on their subordinates' performances in the following way: *The Third Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services in MMA took place on the 17th and 18th October 2015 in Toruń (...) not only soldiers or policemen took part in the competitions, but also the municipal, border, prison and railroad guards or Government Protection Bureau officers.*

Among 63 competitors from all over Poland, the representatives of the Blue Brigade appeared for the first time: captain Michał Wilczyński, corporal Damian Krysiak, private Marcin Narkiewicz (all from the 14th Regiment of Jazlowiec Uhlans), senior private Robert Lisicki, private Piotr Maniak (from the 1st Battalion of the Polish Legions), senior private Michał Piwowarski and senior private Krzysztof Markiewicz (from the Logistics Battalion), and also private Hubert Stachowiak from the Reconnaissance Company.

The level of the competitions was very high, among the participants there were many professional competitors of various combat sports, also MMA. It did not, however, discourage our „blue warriors” and none of them gave up without the fight. The first part of the competitions was verification of skills, four of our soldiers made it to the next stages of the competitions. There, unfortunately, they had bad luck during the drawing, and three of them had to fight with later winners in their weight categories. Only private Piotr Maniak from the 1st Battalion of the Polish Legions reached the podium and brought the bronze medal to Szczecin.

One of the representatives of the Army claims: *I did not expect so high level. We had analysed recordings from fights from the previous years, however, this year many professional competitors came to Toruń. Nobody, however, surrendered without the fight, and we gave a good performance to the spectators. For sure we made a good impression and we can count on the invitation next year.*

Another participant also confirms that the organization and sports level of the competitions was high: *In March we took part in the Polish Army Championships. There were more competitors then, however, the technical level in Toruń was definitely higher (...) [10].*

CONCLUSIONS

The growing popularity of mixed martial arts and the growth in the number of participants in Championships of the Polish Uniformed Services are a firm evidence that this sport begins to be perceived in a different way than it used to be. The skills acquired during MMA trainings often help in self-defence or in fights with an opponent. The idea of the organization of the championships shows that mixed martial arts are accepted by superiors who even delegate their subordinates to participate.

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