

The Evolution of Kickboxing

This article takes you through the history of kickboxing and how it has evolved into the fitness craze that it is today

Kickboxing is a sporting martial art very similar to boxing, except for the fact that it uses both arms and legs for striking. It can be practiced either as a full-contact combat sport or for general fitness. While the term refers to various forms of combat sports, it is generally associated with Japanese and American kickboxing. The term was introduced by Osamu Noguchi, a Japanese boxing promoter.

The History of Kickboxing

Kickboxing is a derivative of karate, boxing, taekwondo and other combat styles and it was created to compete against them. All styles of kickboxing have been first developed in Japan. However, similar influences were taking place in the United States as well and martial artists from toured both Japan and US, developing a common kickboxing standard.

Initial Japanese Development

As a specific form of martial art, kickboxing was inspired from Muay Thai, a combat sport originated in Thailand. Osamu Noguchi, a Japanese boxing promoter, developed it as a competitive style to oppose Muay Thai. He wanted to present to the Japanese people the fighting style that he had discovered in Thailand and in 1966 he took three Muay Thai fighters to compete against Japanese karate fighters. The Japanese won by 2-1. Noguchi and Kenji Kurosaki studied the combat style thoroughly and developed a combined martial art called kickboxing. At first, throwing and butting were allowed in order to distinguish it from the Muay Thai style. However, they were later eliminated.

A few years later, the Kickboxing Association, the first kickboxing organization, was founded in Japan. Kickboxing was broadcast on TV and became very popular in Japan. Back then, Tadashi Sawamura was an extremely popular kickboxer. After he retired, kickboxing started to lose its popularity and stopped being broadcast on TV. He hadn't been on TV until 1993, when K-1 was founded. In 1993, Kazuyoshi Ishii, who was the founder of Seidokan karate, produced K-1 under kickboxing rules (no elbow or neck wrestling). Since then, kickboxing started to regain its popularity and became famous again. Soon its popularity started spreading through North America and Europe as well.

Spreading to North America and Europe

Jan Plas, a Dutch kickboxer, and a few Muay Thai pioneers, initiated Mejiro jym in Netherlands in 1978. He had learned kick boxing in Japan from the famous Kenji Kurosaki. In addition, he was also the one that founded the Dutch Kickboxing Association (NKBB) in 1978, which was the first kickboxing organization in the Netherlands.

Kickboxing & Fitness

Kickboxing has gradually become a fitness craze as well. Kickboxing classes are very popular in European countries also. They are attended by both men and women. It has become very popular among women of all ages who are always looking for new methods to lose weight or stay in shape.

As you walk by a kickboxing class, you will see that most times it is packed. It seems that all you have to bring is yourself and plenty of energy. Kickboxing classes are generally choreographed to house or techno music. The whole class consists of a full hour of punching to the beat. It involves a lot of arm movements, squats, power movements and a good amount of cardiovascular workout. This is what explains its high popularity as a fitness activity. With all the fun, you even forget about the fact that you are actually working out.