Mixed Martial Arts Rules Committee

MMA Officials Handbook

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ASSOCIATION OF BOXING COMMISSIONS AND COMBATIVE SPORTS
UNIFIED RULES OF MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

AS APPROVED APRIL 2001. AMENDED 2010. AMENDED AUGUST 3, 2016. AMENDED WITH PROCEDURES JULY 26, 2017. AMENDED WITH PROCEDURES AUGUST 1, 2018. AMENED WITH PROCEDURE AUGUST 1, 2019. AMENED WITH PROCEDURES AUGUST 1, 2023. AMENDED WITH RULE CHANGES JULY 23, 2024, REQUESTED IMPLEMENTATION DATE OF NOVEMBER 2024.

Note: These are the Official Unified Rules of MMA. Any other form of these rules may not be called the "Unified Rules of MMA" and shall be referred to by the name of the commission sanctioning the/an event.

1. Each round shall consist of a five (5) minute duration (professional), with a one (1) minute rest period between rounds.
    a. No contests shall exceed five (5) rounds and/or twenty-five (25) minutes.
    b. Bouts may consist of one (1), two (2), three (3), four (4), or five (5) rounds, with a five (5) minute duration.
    c. No contestant shall exceed competing more than five (5) rounds and/or twenty-five (25) minutes of fighting in a twenty-four (24) hour period.
2. The referee is the sole arbiter of a bout and is the only individual authorized to stop a contest. This shall not preclude a video or other review of a decision under the procedure of the applicable regulatory authority if a protest is filed claiming a clear rule violation.
    a. The authority of a referee begins when the inspector(s) exit the cage/ring and does not end until the inspector(s) re-enter the cage/ring, upon conclusion of the fight.
3. Instant replay may be used to review a "Fight Ending Sequence" and shall only be used after a fight has been officially stopped. Once instant replay has been used to review a fight ending sequence, the fight shall not be resumed.
4. All fighters are required to wear a mouthpiece during competition. The round cannot begin without the mouthpiece. If the mouthpiece is dislodged during competition, the referee will call time and have the mouthpiece replaced at the first opportune moment, without interfering with the immediate action. Points may be deducted by the referee if he/she feels the mouthpiece is being purposefully spit out.
5. If an MMA bout is being conducted in a ring and is a fighter is knocked out of the ring, the fighter must return to the ring unassisted by spectators or his/her seconds. If assisted by anyone, the fighter may lose points or be disqualified with such a decision being within the sole discretion of the referee. Once knocked from the ring, the competitor will have five (5) minutes to return to fighting surface, similar to an accidental foul, but shall be examined by the ringside physician before returning to action.
6. The reapplication of petroleum jelly or another similar substance, to the face, may be allowed between rounds and shall only be applied by an approved cutman or licensed cornerman.
7. In instances where the fight has to be concluded due to unforeseen, non-combat related issues, the fight may go to the scorecards if:
    a. If the bout is scheduled for 3 rounds, 2 rounds of the contest must be completed
    b. If the bout is scheduled for 5 rounds, 3 rounds of the contest must be completed

8. Hand Wraps.
   a. A maximum of one roll (no more than 2" wide by 15 yards in length) of white, soft, cloth gauze is permitted per hand. The gauze may not exceed the wrist of the competitor's glove. The exposed thumb is an option to be protected.
   b. A maximum of one roll (no more than 1.25" wide by 10' in length) of white athletic tape is permitted per hand. The tape may not exceed the wrist of the competitor's gloves. Tape may be placed through the fingers but may not cover the knuckles. The exposed thumb is an option to be protected.
   c. A single layer of elastic or flex-type tape is allowed to be applied over the completed wrap.
   d. Approved tape/gauze of all brands may be allowed.
9. Joint/Body Coverings.
   a. Other than the competitor's hands, there will be no taping, covering, or protective gear, of any kind, on the upper body. This includes, but is not limited to: joint sleeves, padding, or any form of brace/body tape.
   b. A competitor may use a soft neoprene type sleeve to cover only the knee and/or ankle joints. Approved sleeves may not have: padding, Velcro, plastic, metal, ties, or any other material considered to be unsafe or that may create an unfair advantage. Tape, gauze, or any materials other than the approved sleeves are not permitted.
10. Cage/Ring Attire.
   a. All mixed martial artists will be required to wear such protective gear as deemed necessary by the Commission.
   b. Male contestants shall not wear any form of clothing on their upper body.
   c. Male and female mixed martial artists shall wear the appropriate trunks, mouthpiece, and gloves. Male mixed martial artists shall also wear the appropriate groin protection.
   d. Female mixed martial artists shall wear a short sleeved (above the elbow) or sleeveless form fitting rash guard and/or sports bra(s). No loose-fitting tops and/or breast protectors shall be allowed. Female competitors will follow the same requirements for bottom covering as the male competitors, minus the requirement for groin protection.
   e. The hem of the trunks may not extend below the knee.
   f. Fighting shorts/trunks shall not have exposed Velcro, pockets, or zippers.
   g. Mixed martial artists in the same match, contest, or exhibition may wear different color trunks or be designated by glove taping and/or glove coloring to the corner they are assigned.
   h. Mixed martial artists shall not wear shoes in the cage or ring.
   i. When deemed necessary by the referee all mixed martial artists shall have their hair secured in a manner that does not interfere with the vision and safety of either contestant.
      i. No object can be worn to secure the contestant's hair which may cause injury to either contestant.
   j. The wearing of jewelry will be strictly prohibited during all contests.
   k. Wearing body cosmetics shall be prohibited during all contests. Wearing facial cosmetics shall be at the discretion of the commission and/or referee.

Standing up or Breaking Fighters

The Referee shall either stand up or break the fighters when neither fighter is able to or fails to demonstrate real, significant and/or sustained effort to advance towards finishing the fight by any method. Simply maintaining what may be perceived as a superior position will not be considered effort to advance towards finishing the fight nor grounds for a guaranteed opportunity to maintain that position.

Fouls

1. Butting with the head;
   a. The head may not be used as a striking instrument in any fashion. Any use of the head as a striking instrument whether head to head, head to body or otherwise is illegal.
2. Eye gouging of any kind;
   a. Eye gouging by means of fingers, chin, or elbow is illegal. Legal strikes or punches that contact the fighter's eye socket are not eye gouging and shall be considered legal attacks.
3. Biting or spitting at an opponent;
   a. Biting in any form is illegal. A fighter must recognize that a referee may not be able to physically observe some actions and must make the referee aware if they are being bit during an exhibition of unarmed combat.
4. Fish Hooking;
   a. Any attempt by a fighter to use their fingers in a manner that attacks their opponent's mouth, nose or ears, stretching the skin to that area will be considered “Fish hooking”. Fish hooking generally is the placing of fingers into the mouth or your opponent and pulling your hands in opposing directions while holding onto the skin of your opponent.
5. Hair pulling;
   a. Pulling of the hair in any fashion is an illegal action. A fighter may not grab a hold of his opponent's hair to control their opponent in any way. If a fighter has long hair, they may not use their hair as a tool for holding or choking in any fashion.
6. Spiking the opponent to the canvas onto the head or neck (pile-driving);
   a. Any throw with an arc to its motion is to be considered a legal throw. It does not matter if the opponents head hits the canvas. A pile driver is considered to be any throw where you control your opponent's body placing their feet up in the air with their head straight down and then forcibly drives the opponents head into the canvas or flooring material. It should be noted when a fighter is placed into a submission hold by their opponent, if that fighter is capable of elevating their opponent, they may bring that opponent down in any fashion they desire because they are not in control of their opponent’s body. The fighter who is attempting the submission can either adjust their position or let go of their hold before being slammed to the canvas.
7. Strikes to the spine or the back of the head;
   a. The back of the head starts at the Crown of the head with a one (1) inch variance to either side, running down the back of the head to the occipital junction.
   b. This area stretches out at the occipital junction (nape of the neck) to cover the entire width of the neck. It then travels down the spine with a one (1) inch variance from the spine’s centerline, including the tailbone.
8. Throat strikes of any kind and/or grabbing the trachea;
   a. No directed throat strikes are allowed. A directed attack would include a fighter pulling his opponents head in a way to open the neck area for a striking attack. A fighter may not gouge their fingers or thumb into their opponent's neck or trachea in an attempt to submit their opponent. If during stand-up action of a fight a strike is thrown and the strike lands in the throat area of the fighter, this shall be viewed as a clean and legal blow.
9. Fingers outstretched toward an opponent’s face/eyes;
   a. In the standing position, a fighter that moves their arm(s) toward their opponent with an open hand, fingers pointing at the opponent’s face/eyes, will be a foul. Referees are to prevent this dangerous behavior by communicating clearly to fighters. Fighters are directed to close their fists or point their fingers straight up in the air when reaching toward their opponent.

10. Groin attacks of any kind;
    a. Any attack to the groin area including, striking, grabbing, pinching or twisting is illegal. It should be clear that groin attacks are the same for men and women.
11. Kneeing and/or Kicking the head of a grounded opponent.
    a. A grounded fighter is defined as:
    *A fighter shall be considered grounded and **may not** be legally kneed or kicked to the head when any part of their body **other than** their hands or feet **is** in contact with the canvas (ground).*
12. Stomping of a grounded fighter.
    a. Stomping is considered any type of striking action with the feet where the fighter lifts their leg up bending their leg at the knee and initiating a striking action with the bottom of their foot or heel**.**
    b. Axe kicks are not stomping. Standing foot stops are NOT a foul. As such, this foul does not include stomping the feet of a standing fighter.
13. Holding opponent's gloves or shorts.
    a. A fighter may not control their opponent's movement by holding onto their opponent's shorts or gloves. A fighter may hold onto or grab their opponent's hand as long as they are not controlling the hand only by using the material of the glove, but by actually gripping the hand of the opponent. It is legal to hold onto your own gloves or shorts.
14. Holding or grabbing the fence or ropes with fingers or toes;
    a. A fighter may put their hands on the fence and push off of it at any time. A fighter may place their feet onto the cage and have their toes go through the fencing material at any time. When a fighter's fingers or toes go through the cage and grab hold of the fence and start to control either their body position or their opponent's body position it now becomes an illegal action. A fighter may not grab the ropes or wrap their arms over or under the ring ropes at any time. The fighter may not purposely step through the ropes. If a fighter is caught holding the fence, cage or ring rope material the referee may issue a one-point deduction from the offending fighters scorecard if the foul caused a substantial effect in the fight. If a point deduction for holding the fence occurs, and because of the infraction, the fouling fighter ends up in a superior position due to the foul, the fighters should be re-started by the referee, standing in a neutral position.
15. Small joint manipulation;
    a. Fingers and Toes are small joints. Wrists, Ankles, Knees, Shoulders and Elbows are all large joints. Grabbing the majority of fingers/toes at once is allowed.
16. Throwing an opponent out of the ring or caged area;
    a. A fighter shall not throw their opponent out of the ring or cage.
17. Intentionally placing a finger into any orifice, or into any cut or laceration of your Opponent;
    a. A fighter may not place their fingers into an open laceration in an attempt to enlarge the cut. A fighter may not place their fingers into an opponent's, nose, ears, mouth, or any body cavity.
18. Clawing, pinching, twisting the flesh;
    a. Any attack that targets the fighter's skin by clawing at the skin or attempting to pull or twist the skin to apply pain is illegal.
19. Timidity (avoiding contact, or consistently dropping the mouthpiece, or faking an injury;
    a. Timidity is defined as any fighter who purposely avoids contact with his opponent or runs away from the action of the fight. Timidity can also be called by the referee for any attempt by a fighter to receive time by falsely claiming a foul, injury, or purposely dropping or spitting out their mouthpiece or other action designed to stall or delay the action of the fight.

20. Use of abusive language in the fighting area.
    a. The use of abusive language is not allowed during MMA competition. It is the sole responsibility of the referee to determine when language crosses over the line to abusive. It should be clear that fighters can talk during a match. The mere use of auditory language is not a violation of this rule. Examples of abusive language would be (Racially motivated or Derogatory language).
21. Flagrant disregard of the referee's instructions;
    a. A fighter MUST follow the instructions of the referee at all times. Any deviation or non-compliance may result in the fighter's disqualification.
22. Unsportsmanlike conduct that causes an injury to opponent;
    a. Every athlete competing in the sport of MMA is expected to represent the sport in a positive light emphasizing sportsmanship and humility. Any athlete that disrespects the rules of the sport or attempts to inflict unnecessary harm on a competitor who has been either taken out of the competition by the referee or has tapped out of the competition shall be viewed as being unsportsmanlike.
23. Attacking an opponent after the bell has sounded the end of the period of unarmed combat.
    a. The end of a round is signified by the sound of the bell and the call of time by the referee. Once the referee has made the call of time, any offensive actions initiated by the fighter shall be considered after the bell and illegal.
24. Attacking an opponent on or during the break;
    a. A fighter shall not engage their opponent in any fashion during a time-out or break of action in competition.
25. Attacking an opponent who is under the care of the referee;
    a. Once the referee has called for a stop of the action to protect a fighter who has been incapacitated or is unable to continue to compete in the fight, fighters shall cease all offensive actions against their opponent.
26. Interference from a mixed martial artist's corner or seconds;
    a. Interference is defined as any action or activity aimed at disrupting the fight or causing an unfair advantage to be given to a corner's combatant. Corners are not allowed to distract the referee or influence the actions of the referee in any fashion.

A. Intentional Fouls

1. If an intentional foul causes an injury, and the injury is severe enough to terminate the bout immediately, the fighter causing the injury shall lose by disqualification.

2. If an intentional foul causes an injury and the bout is allowed to continue, the referee shall notify the authorities and deduct two (2) points from the fighter who caused the foul. Point deductions for intentional fouls will be mandatory.

3. If an intentional foul causes a laceration and/or swelling and the bout is allowed to continue, and the injury results in the fight being stopped in any round after ½ of the scheduled rounds, of the fight has been completed, by either another legal or illegal strike, the injured fighter will win by TECHNICAL DECISION if they are ahead on the score cards; and the bout will result in a TECHNICAL DRAW if the injured fighter is behind or even on the score cards.

4. If the fighter injures himself/herself while attempting to intentionally foul their opponent, the referee will not act in their favor, and this injury shall be the same as one produced by a fair blow.

5. If the referee feels that a fighter has conducted themselves in an unsportsmanlike manner, they may stop the action of the fight to deduct points or stop the bout to disqualify the fighter.

B. Accidental Fouls

1.If an accidental foul causes an injury severe enough for the referee to stop the bout, the bout will result in either a NO CONTEST or DISQUALIFICATION if stopped before ½ of the scheduled rounds

2. If an accidental foul causes an injury severe enough for the referee to stop the bout after ½ of the scheduled rounds, the bout will result in a TECHNICAL DECISION awarded to the fighter who is ahead on the score cards at the time the bout is stopped.

i. Partial or incomplete rounds will be scored. If no action has occurred, the round should be scored as an even round. This is at the discretion of the judges.

3. If a fighter, during the course of a round, visibly loses control of bodily function (vomit, urine, feces), the fight shall be stopped by the referee and the fighter shall lose the contest by a Technical Knockout (TKO) due to Medical Stoppage.

i. In the event a loss of bodily function occurs in the rest period between rounds, the ringside physician shall be called in to evaluate if the combatant can continue. If the combatant is not cleared by the ringside physician to continue, that combatant shall lose by a Technical Knockout (TKO) due to Medical Stoppage.

ii. If fecal matter becomes apparent at any time, the contest shall be halted by the referee, and the offending combatant shall lose by a Technical Knockout (TKO) due to Medical Stoppage

C. Foul Procedures: If a foul is committed, the referee shall:

1. Call Time;

2. Check the fouled mixed martial artist's condition and safety; and

3. Assess the foul for potential point(s) deductions and/or time considerations.

4. During all time out procedures, there shall be no coaching of a contestant permitted.

D. Eye Poke Foul Procedure:

1. Once the Referee calls time for the foul, the fighter is permitted the use of a cold compress or wet towel on the injured eye.

2. Unless the fighter requires immediate medical attention the Referee and Ringside Physician shall allow the fighter time to compose themselves so the fighter can then give a verbal "yes" or "no" that they can see.

- ***<u>This procedure does not preclude the Ringside Physician from being able to evaluate the injury at any time during the timeout.</u>***

E. Time Consideration:

1. If a foul to the groin or eye poke occurs and the competitor is able to continue, the fouled contestant may have up to five (5) minutes to recover.

2. Fighters injured severely enough by a foul to require medical consultation may be given up to five (5) minutes, at the referee's discretion, for evaluation by the ringside physician before a decision to continue is rendered.

3. At no time may a referee call a timeout to evaluate the impact of a legal strike, other than when a laceration is present.

F. Utilizing a Cutperson after a foul but during a round:

1. When a Fighter is the recipient of either an accidental or intentional foul and receives a laceration from the illegal action, the Referee in charge after calling time and putting the fighters into neutral corners MAY call upon the cutperson assigned (or in regional shows a corner with no coaching permitted) to the injured fighters corner to enter the cage during the 5-minute break and administer aid to the cut to help stop the bleeding. Then when cleared by the Ringside Physician the fighter can return to the action, with no more than the 5-minute time elapsed. The cutperson may only work on the cut or cuts associated with the foul.

A. Judging Criteria

a. All bouts will be evaluated and scored by a minimum of three (3) judges.
b. The 10 Point Must System will be the standard of scoring about.
i. Under the 10-Point Must Scoring System, 10 points must be awarded to the winner of the round and nine points or less must be awarded to the loser, except for a rare even round, which is scored (10-10).
c. Judges shall evaluate Mixed Martial Arts techniques, such as effective striking/grappling(Plan A), effective aggressiveness(Plan B),and control of the fighting area(Plan C).Plans B and C are not taken into consideration unless Plan A is weighed as being even.
d. Evaluations shall be made in the specific order in which the techniques appear in (c)above ,giving the most weight in scoring to effective striking/grappling, and effective aggressiveness, and control of the fighting area.
e. Effective striking is judged by determining the impact/effect of legal strikes landed by a contestant solely based on the results of such legal strikes. Effective grappling is assessed by the successful executions and impactful/effective result(s)coming from: takedown(s), submission attempt(s), achieving an advantageous position(s) and reversal(s).
f. Effective aggressiveness means aggressively making attempts to finish the fight.
g. Fighting area control is assessed by determining who is dictating the pace, place and position of the bout.

1.Thefollowing objective scoring criteria shall be utilized by the judges when scoring a round:
(i) Around is to be scored as a 10-10 Round when both contestants have competed for whatever duration of time in the round and there is no difference or advantage between either fighter;
(ii)Around is to be scored as a 10-9 Round when a contestant wins by a close margin; where the winning fighter lands the better strikes or utilizes effective grappling during the round;
(iii)A round is to be scored as a 10-8 Round when a contestant wins the round by a large margin by impact, dominance, and duration of striking or grappling in a round.
(iv)A round is to be scored as a 10-7 Round when a contestant is completely dominated by impact, dominance, and duration of striking or grappling in a round.

2. Impact: A judge shall assess if a fighter impacts their opponent significantly in the round, even though they may not have dominated the action. Impact includes visible evidence such as swelling and lacerations. Impact shall also be assessed when a fighter's actions, using striking and/or grappling, lead to a diminishing of their opponent's energy, confidence, abilities and spirit. All of these come as a direct result of impact. When a fighter is impacted by strikes, by lack of control and/or ability, this can create defining moments in the round and shall be assessed with great value.

3. Dominance: As MMA is an offensive based sport, dominance of a round can be seen in striking when the losing fighter is forced to continually defend, with no counters or reaction taken when openings present themselves. Dominance in the grappling phase can be seen by fighter staking dominant positions in the fight and utilizing those positions to attempt fight ending submissions or attacks. Merely holding a dominant position(s) shall not be a primary factor in assessing dominance. What the fighter does with those positions is what must be assessed. In the absence of dominance in the grappling phase, as set forth in paragraph 3 of the promulgated rules, to be considered dominate, there must be a singularly or in combination, some types of submission attempts, strikes, or an overwhelming pace which is measured by improved or aggressive positional changes that cause the losing fighter to consistently be in a defensive or reactive mode

4. Duration: Duration is defined by the time spent by one fighter effectively attacking, controlling, and impacting their opponent; while the opponent offers little to no offensive output. A judge shall assess duration by recognizing the relative time in a round when one fighter takes and maintains full control of the effective offense. This can be assessed both standing and grounded.

5. Scoring of Incomplete Rounds: There should be scoring of incomplete rounds. If the referee penalizes either contestant, then the appropriate points shall be deducted when the scorekeeper calculates the final score for the partial round

B. Types of Decisions

a. Submission by:

i. Tap Out: When a contestant physically uses of their body to indicate that he or she no longer wishes to continue; or

ii. Verbal Tap Out: When a contestant verbally announces or voluntarily/involuntarily screams in pain or distress to the referee that they do not wish to continue;

iii. Technical Submission: When a legal submission act results in unconsciousness or broken/dislocated bone(s)/joint(s).

b. Technical Knockout (TKO) by:

i. Referee Stoppage: the referee stops the contest because the combatant IS NOT INTELLIGENTLY DEFENDING HIMSELF/HERSELF;

1. Strikes
2. Laceration
3. Corner Stoppage
4. Did Not Answer the Bell

ii. TKO due to Medical Stoppage.

1. Laceration
2. Doctor Stoppage
3. Loss of control of bodily function.

c. Knockout (KO) by:

i. Referee Stoppage: the referee stops the contest because the combatant CANNOT INTELLIGENTLY DEFEND HIMSELF/HERSELF.

1. Due to Strikes

d. Disqualification:

i. When an injury sustained during competition as a result of an intentional foul is severe enough to terminate the contest, multiple fouls have been assessed, and/or there is flagrant disregard for the rules and/or referee's commands.

e. No Contest:

i. When a contestant is prematurely stopped due to accidental injury and a sufficient amount of time has not been completed to render a decision via the score cards.

f. Decisions:

i. Unanimous Decision: When all three judges score the bout for the same contestant;
ii. Split Decision: When two judges score the bout for one contestant and one judge scores for the opponent; or
iii. Majority Decision: When two judges score the bout for the same contestant and one judge scores a draw;
iv. Technical Decision: When a bout is prematurely stopped due to injury from an accidental foul and a contestant is leading on the score cards;

g. Draws:

i. Unanimous Draw – When all three judges score the bout a draw;
ii. Majority Draw – When two judges score the bout a draw; or
iii. Split Draw – When all three judges score differently and the score total results in a draw;
iv. Technical Draw - When an injury is sustained during competition as a result of an intentional foul and the bout is allowed to continue, then later the injury requires stoppage from either a legal or illegal strike to the affected area after ½ of the scheduled rounds has been completed, if the injured contestant is even or behind on the score cards at the time of stoppage, the decision is a Technical Draw.

Weight Classes

Atomweight	up to and including 105 lbs.
Straw Weight	over 105 to 115 lbs.
Flyweight	over 115 to 125 lbs.
Bantamweight	over 125 to 135 lbs.
Featherweight	over 135 to 145 lbs.
Lightweight	over 145 to 155 lbs.
Super Lightweight	over 155 to 165 lbs.
Welterweight	over 165 to 170 lbs.
Super Welterweight	over 170 to 175 lbs.
Middleweight	over 175 to 185 lbs.
Super Middleweight	over 185 to 195 lbs.
Light Heavyweight	over 195 to 205 lbs.
Cruiserweight	over 205 to 225 lbs.
Heavyweight	over 225 to 265 lbs.
Super Heavyweight	over 265 lbs.

*a. **Allowances within Division:** there are no allowance restrictions if both combatants weigh-in within the same contracted division.*

*b. **Weight Miss Catch Weight:** If a person misses the contracted weight and the two competitors are in different weight classes, the heavier opponent shall not exceed five (5) lbs. of the lower weighing fighter.*

*c. **Contracted Catch Weight(s):** there is no weight spread allowance between contracted catch weight fighters, so long as both competitors are below the contracted weight. Commissions may deny Catch Weight fights if they see the weight differential as a large enough disparity to the safety of either of the fighters.*

Mission Statement from The ABC MMA Rules Committee

To evolve Mixed Martial Arts Judging Criteria to focus on the result of action (versus action itself), it must be stated that criteria is to be used in specific order. These criteria may not move from one to the next without the prior criterion being 100% even in the judges' assessments.

Effective Striking/Grappling shall be considered the first priority of round assessments. Effective aggressiveness is a "plan B" and should not be considered unless the judge does not see ANY advantage in the Effective Striking/Grappling realm. Cage/Ring Control ("plan C") should only be needed when ALL other criteria are 100% even for both competitors. This is an extremely rare occurrence.

PRIORITIZED CRITERIA

Effective Striking/Grappling

Legal blows that have immediate or cumulative impact with the potential to contribute toward the end of the match, with the IMMEDIATE weighing more heavily than the cumulative impact.

Successful execution of takedowns, submission attempts, reversals, and the achievement of advantageous positions that produce immediate or cumulative impact with the potential to contribute to the end of the match, with the IMMEDIATE weighing more heavily than the cumulative impact. It shall be noted that a successful takedown is not merely a changing of position, but the establishment of an attack from the use of a takedown. Top and bottom position fighters are assessed more on the impact/effective result of their actions, more so than their position.

This criterion will be the deciding factor in a high majority of decisions when scoring a round. The next two criteria must be treated as a backup and used only when Effective Striking/Grappling is 100% equal for the round.

Effective Aggressiveness

Aggressively making attempts to finish the fight. The key term is effective. Chasing after an opponent with no effective result or impact should not render in the judge's assessments.

Effective Aggressiveness is only to be assessed if Effective Striking/Grappling is 100% equal for both competitors.

Fighting Area Control

Fighting Are Control is assessed by determining who is dictating the pace, place, and position of the match. Fighting Area Control shall only be assessed if Effective Striking/Grappling is 100% equal for both competitors. This is assessed very rarely.

ROUND SCORING

10-10 Round

A 10-10 round in MMA is when both fighters have competed for whatever duration of time in the round and there is no difference or advantage between either fighter. A 10-10 round should be extremely rare and is not a score to be used as an excuse by a judge who cannot assess differences in the round.

A 10-10 round in MMA is a necessity to have for the judge's possible score, mainly due to scoring incomplete rounds. It is possible to have a round where both fighters engage for 5 minutes and at the end of the 5-minute time period the output, impact, effectiveness, and overall competition between the two fighters is exactly the same. It is possible, but highly unlikely. If there is any discernible difference between the two fighters during the round, the judge shall not give the score of 10-10. Again, this score is extremely rare.

10-9 Round

A 10-9 round in MMA is where one combatant wins the round by a close margin.

A 10-9 round is the most common score a judge assesses during the night. If, during the round, the judge sees a fighter land the better strikes or utilize effective grappling during the competition, even if by just one technique over the opponent, the judge shall give the winning fighter a score of 10 while assessing the losing fighter a score of 9 or less.

It is imperative that judges understand that a score of 9 is not an automatic numerical score given to the losing fighter of the round. The judge must consider:

- Was the fighter engaged in offensive actions during the round?
- Did the losing fighter compete with an attitude of attempting to win the fight, or just to survive the offensive actions of their opponent?

A score of 10-9 can reflect an extremely close round or a round of marginal domination and/or impact.

10-8 Round

A 10-8 round in MMA is where one fighter wins the round by a large margin.

A 10-8 round is not the most common score a judge will render, but it is essential to the evolution of the sport and the fairness of the fighters that judges understand and effectively utilize the score of 10-8. A score of 10-8 does not require a fighter to dominate their opponent for 5 minutes of a round. The score of 10-8 is utilized when the judge sees verifiable actions on the part of either fighter. Judges shall ALWAYS give a score of 10-8 when the judge has established that one fighter has dominated the action of the round, had duration of the

domination, and also impacted their opponent with either effective strikes or grappling maneuvers that have diminished the abilities of their opponent.

Judges must CONSIDER a 10-8 round when a fighter shows dominance in the round even though no impactful scoring against the opponent was achieved. MMA is an offensive-based sport. No scoring is given for defensive maneuvers. Using smart, tactically sound defensive maneuvers allows the fighter to stay in the fight and to be competitive. Dominance of a round can be seen in striking when the losing fighter continually attempts to defend, with no counters or reaction taken when openings present themselves. Dominance in the grappling phase can be seen by fighters taking DOMINANT POSITIONS in the fight and utilizing those positions to attempt fight-ending submissions or attacks. If a fighter has little to no offensive output during a 5-minute round, it should be normal for the judge to consider awarding the losing fighter8 points instead of 9.

Judges must CONSIDER giving the score of 10-8 when a fighter IMPACTS their opponent significantly in a round even though they do not dominate the action. Effectiveness in striking or grappling that leads to a diminishing of a fighter's energy, confidence, abilities, and spirit. All of these come as a direct result of negative impact. When a fighter is hurt with strikes, showing a lack of control or ability, these can be defining moments in the fight. If a judge sees that a fighter has been significantly damaged in the round the judge should CONSIDER the score of 10-8.

10-7 Round

A 10-7 round in MMA is when a fighter completely overwhelms their opponent in Effective Striking and/or Grappling and stoppage is warranted.

A 10-7 round is a score that judges will rarely give.

It takes both overwhelming DOMINANCE of a round, but also significant IMPACT that, at times, causes the judge to consider stopping the fight. Judges shall look for multiple IMPACTFUL blows or knockdowns that diminish the fighter, and/or grappling maneuvers that place the fighter in dominant situations with impact being inflicted that visibly diminishes the fighter's ability to compete.

- **Impact**

A judge shall assess if a fighter impacts their opponent significantly in the round, even though they may not have dominated the action. Impact includes visible evidence such as swelling and lacerations. Impact shall also be assessed when a fighter's actions, using striking and/or grappling, lead to a diminishing of their opponent's energy, confidence, abilities, and spirit. All of these come as a direct result of impact. When a fighter is impacted with strikes, by lack of control and/or ability, this can create defining moments in the round and shall be assessed with great value.

- **Dominance**

As MMA is an offensive-based sport, dominance of a round can be seen in striking when the losing fighter is forced to continually defend, with no counters or reactions taken when openings present themselves. Dominance in the grappling phase can be seen by fighters taking dominant positions in the fight and utilizing those positions to attempt fight-ending submissions or attacks. Merely holding a dominant position(s) shall not be a primary factor in assessing dominance. What the fighter does with those positions is what must be assessed.

- **Duration**

Duration is defined by the time spent by one fighter effectively attacking, controlling, and impacting their opponent, while the opponent offers little to no offensive output. A judge shall assess duration by recognizing the relative time in a round when one fighter takes and maintains full control of the effective offense. This can be assessed both standing and grounded.

The Criteria for Scoring an MMA Round "10-8"

Recognizing that nearly 95% of rounds shall be score 10-9, the score of 10-8 needs to be used judiciously to reflect rounds where there is a significant amount and/or an appropriate combination of Damage, Dominance, and Duration. If two of these three variables are significantly evident, then the score of 10 – 8 may be considered (discretionary). Judges shall give a score of 10 – 8 when one fighter has dominated the action of the round, had duration of that domination, and has also damaged their opponent with either effective strikes or effective grappling that diminished the abilities of their opponent (obligatory).

Note that in rare circumstances, judges may consider giving the score of 10-8 even though only moderate damage is achieved, when the opponent had little to no offensive output.

Defining our evaluative variables:

Damage:

A judge shall assess if a fighter damaged their opponent significantly in the round, even if they may not have dominated the action. Damage includes visible evidence such as swelling and lacerations. Damage shall also be assessed when a fighter's actions, using striking and/or grappling, lead to a **diminishing of their opponents' energy, confidence, abilities and/or spirit.** All of these reflect "damage" which is the result of successfully striking/grappling. When a fighter is damaged with strikes, resulting in a lack of control and/or ability, this may be viewed as a defining moment in the round and shall be assessed with great value.

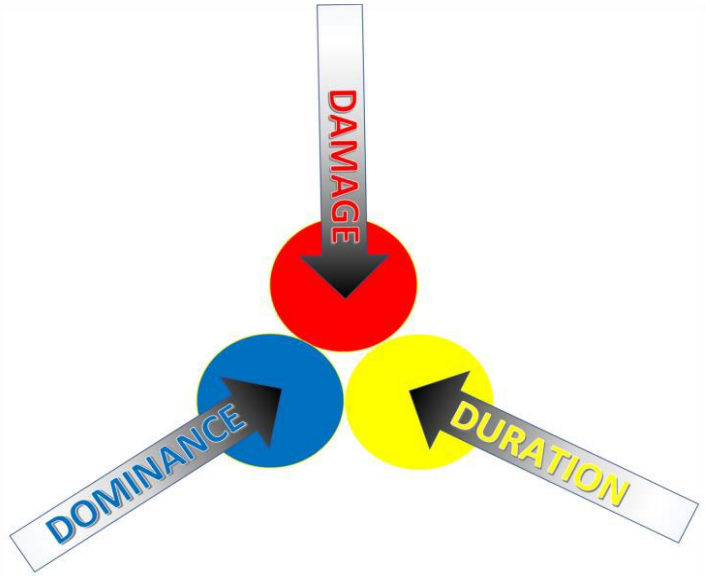
Dominance:

MMA is an offensive based sport. Dominance of a round can be seen in striking when the losing fighter is **forced to continually defend, without countering** or taking advantage of openings to attack when they present themselves. Dominance in the grappling phase can be seen by fighters **taking dominant positions in the fight and utilizing those positions to attempt fight ending submissions or attacks.** Merely holding a dominant position(s) shall not be a primary factor in assessing dominance. What the fighter does with those positions is what must be assessed. There must be a singularly or in combination, some types of submission attempts, strikes, or an overwhelming pace which is measured by improved or aggressive positional changes that cause the losing fighter to consistently be in a defensive or reactive mode

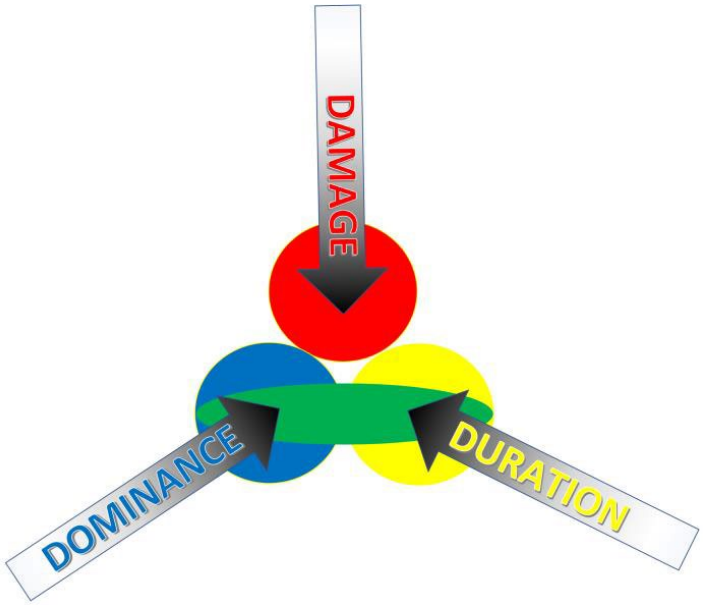
Duration:

Duration is defined by the **time spent by one fighter effectively attacking, controlling, and damaging their opponent**, while the opponent offers little to no offensive output. A judge shall assess duration by recognizing the relative time in a round when one fighter takes and maintains full control of the effective offense. This can be assessed both standing and grounded.

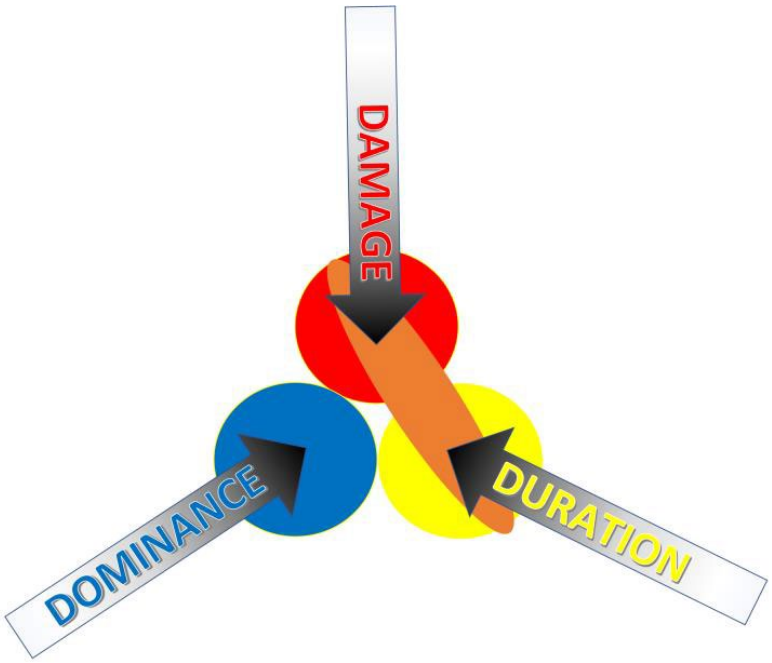
Accept this as a graphic representation of the 3 variables that shall be evaluated in consideration of scoring a round 10-8.



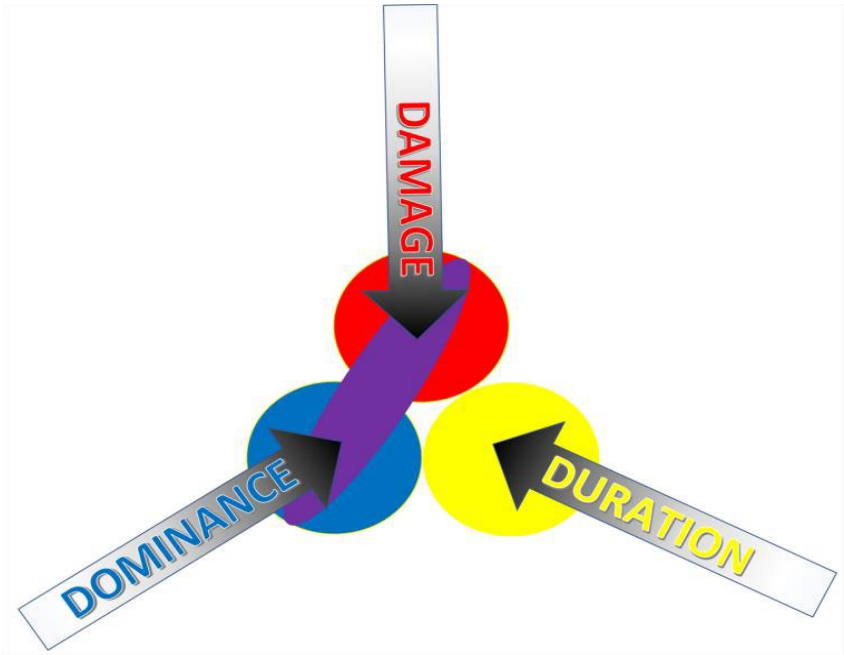
This graphic represents a round where there was both significant **Dominance** and **Duration** but perhaps only slight Damage. This would likely not be scored a 10-8 unless the losing opponent had little to no offensive output. (*discretionary)*



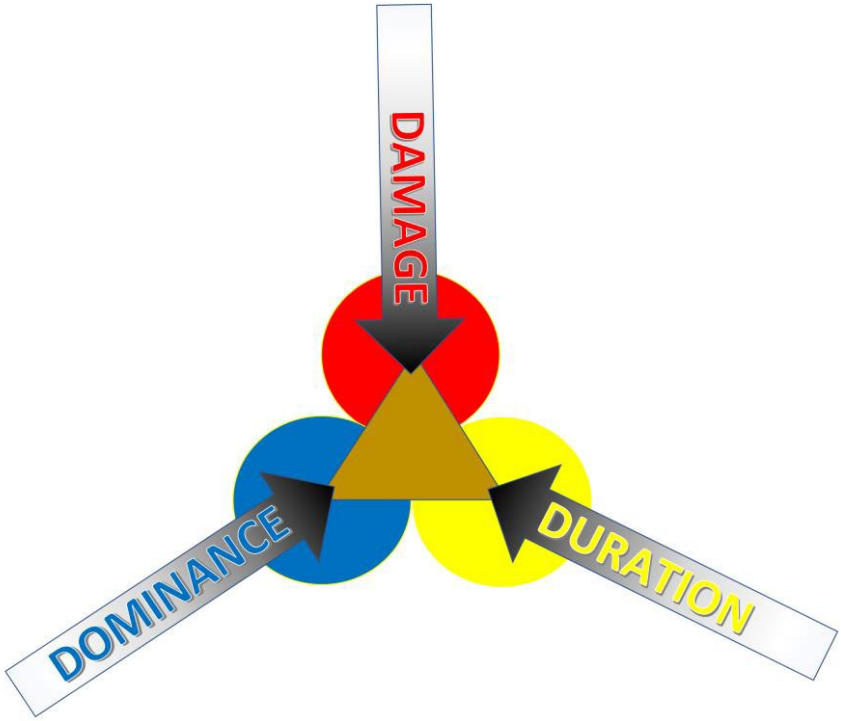
This graphic represents a round where there was both significant **Damage** and **Duration** but perhaps only moderate Dominance. This would more likely be scored a 10-8 as compared to the previous example because “damage” is a result of successful striking/grappling but still requires judicious evaluation because all 3 variables were not significant to the scoring of the round. *(discretionary)*



This graphic represents a round where there was both significant **Damage** and **Dominance** but perhaps only moderate Duration. This would be more likely be scored 10-8 as compared to the first example because “dominating by method of damage” truly reflects successful striking/grappling, but because all 3 variables were not considered significant in the round it still requires judicious evaluation. *(discretionary)*



This graphic represents a round where there was significant **Damage, Dominance, and Duration.** This **must** be scored 10-8. “Dominating by method of damage for duration” literally defines the criteria for scoring a round 10-8. **(***obligatory)*



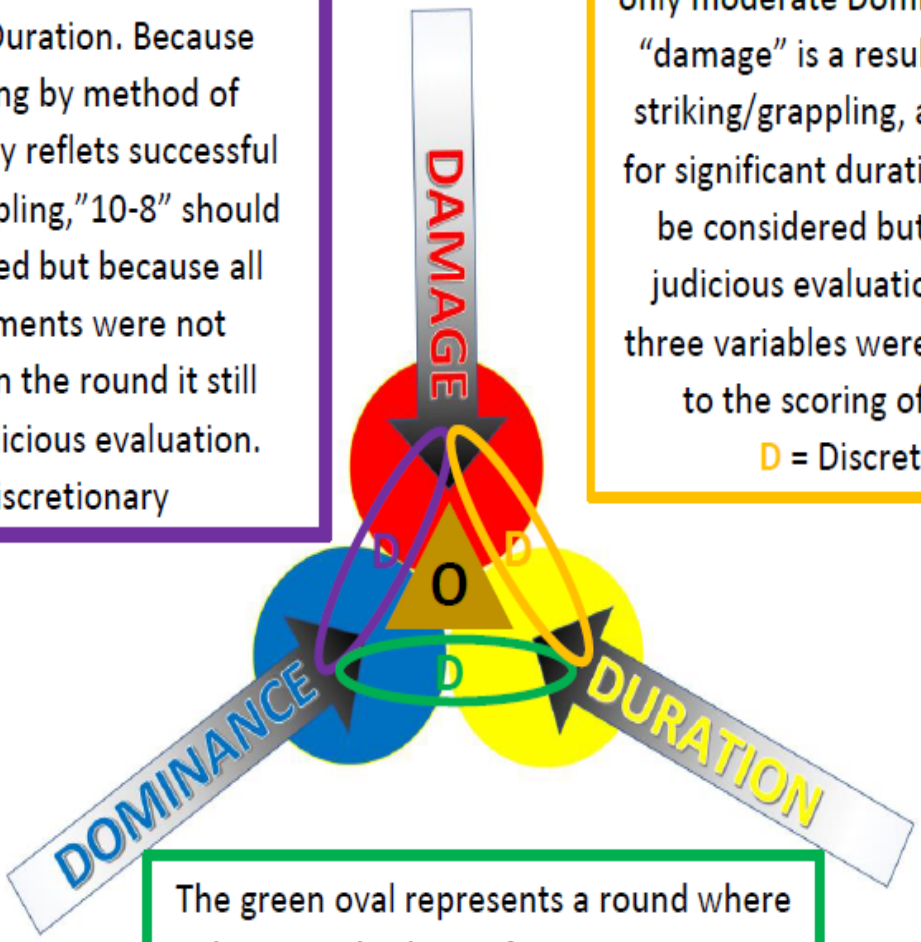
Recognizing that **nearly 95% of rounds shall be score 10-9,** the score of **10-8 needs to be used judiciously** to reflect rounds where there is a significant amount and/or an appropriate combination of **Damage, Dominance, and Duration**. If two of these three variables are significantly evident, then the score of 10 – 8 may be considered (discretionary**). Judges shall give a score of 10 – 8** when one fighter has **dominated** the action of the round, had **duration** of that domination, and has also **damaged** their opponent with either effective strikes or effective grappling that diminished the abilities of their opponent (obligatory). Note that in rare circumstances, judges may consider giving the score of 10-8 even though only moderate damage is achieved, when the opponent had little to no offensive output.

The purple oval represents a round where there was both significant **Damage** and **Dominance** but perhaps only moderate Duration. Because "dominating by method of damage" truly reflets successful striking/grappling,"10-8" should be considered but because all three elements were not significant in the round it still requires judicious evaluation.

D = Discretionary

The orange oval represents a round where there was both significant **Damage** and **Duration** but perhaps only moderate Dominance. Because "damage" is a result of successful striking/grappling, and it occurred for significant duration, "10-8" may be considered but still requires judicious evaluation because all three variables were not significant to the scoring of the round.

D = Discretionary



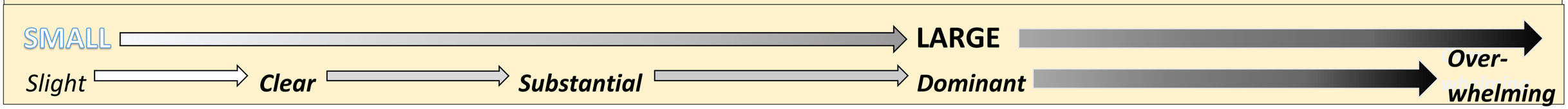
The green oval represents a round where there was both significant **Dominance** and **Duration** but perhaps only slight Damage. This would likely not be scored 10-8 unless the losing opponent had little to no offensive output.

D = Discretionary

The GOLDEN TRIANGLE represents a round where there was significant Damage, Dominance, and Duration. This must be scored 10-8. "Dominating by method of Damage for Duration" literally defines the criteria for scoring a round, 10-8.

O = OBLIGATORY

MMA SCORING MARGIN OF ADVANTAGE CONTINUUM



MMA SCORING LADDER

NO DISCERNABLE ADVANTAGE
10-10

The option to score a round 10 – 10 is a necessity for judge's mainly due to the occasional requirement to **score incomplete rounds** where the action or time elapsed in the incomplete round should not impact the overall scoring of the bout.

SLIGHT ADVANTAGE by Fighting Area Control
10-9

FIGHTING AREA CONTROL is not even considered unless both combatants fail to <u>establish even a slight advantage</u> in Effective Aggressiveness, Effective Grappling or Effective Striking. Winning a round based solely on Cage Control shall earn a score of 10-9

SLIGHT ADVANTAGE by Effective Aggressiveness
10-9

EFFECTIVE AGGRESSIVENESS is not even considered UNLESS both combatants fail to establish <u>even a slight advantage</u> in Effective Grappling or Effective Striking. Winning a round based solely on Effective Aggressiveness shall earn a score of 10-9

SLIGHT ADVANTAGE In Effective Grappling and/or Effective Striking
10-9

Winning a round by a SLIGHT advantage in Effective Grappling and/or Effective Striking shall earn a score of 10-9 and render any comparison of Aggressiveness and/or Cage/Ring control as *irrelevant*.

CLEAR ADVANTAGE In Effective Striking and/or Effective Grappling
10-9

Winning a round by a CLEAR advantage in Effective Grappling and/or Effective Striking shall earn a score of 10-9 and render any comparison of Aggressiveness and/or Cage/Ring control as *irrelevant*.

Nearly 95% Of All Rounds Will Be Scored **10-9**

SUBSTANTIAL ADVANTAGE In Effective Grappling and/or Effective Striking
10-9

Winning a round by a SUBSTANTIAL advantage in Effective Grappling and/or Effective Striking shall earn a score of 10-9 and render any comparison of Aggressiveness and/or Cage/Ring Control as irrelevant

DOMINATING ADVANTAGE In Effective Grappling and/or Effective Striking
10-8

Winning a round by a DOMINATING ADVANTAGE reflected by a significant duration of domination combined with damage that significantly diminishes the opponent's ability to compete shall earn a score of 10-8

Less than 5% Of All Rounds Will Be Scored **10-8**

OVERWHELMING ADVANTAGE In Effective Grappling and/or Effective Striking
10-7

Winning a round by an OVERWHELMING ADVANTAGE reflected by near or complete dominance combined with multiple damaging or near-debilitating strikes landed shall earn a score of 10-7. **The use of this score is <u>EXTRAORDINARILY RARE.</u>**

MMA PRIORITIZED SCORING CRITERIA

Effective Striking is defined as, "Legal blows that have immediate or cumulative damage with the potential to contribute towards the end of the match". Effective Grappling is defined as, "Successful execution of takedowns, submission attempts, reversals and the achievement of advantageous positions that produce immediate or cumulative damage with the potential to contribute to the end of the match.

In both Effective Striking and Effective Grappling, IMMEDIATE damage shall weigh more heavily than the cumulative damage."

Note that in Effective Grappling, a successful takedown is not merely a changing of position, but the establishment of an attack from the use of the takedown. The effectiveness of top and bottom position fighters is evaluated more on the damaging results of their actions rather than by their relative positions.

Effective Striking/Grappling is the top criteria by which judges will evaluate each round and will be the deciding factor in a high majority of rounds scored.

DAMAGE

Note that the word "damage" as used in the scoring criteria should be viewed as "a result of legal actions that diminish the opponent's ability or will to continue the contest". Damage includes visible evidence such as swelling, bruising and lacerations. Damage shall also be assessed when a fighter's actions, using striking and/or grappling, lead to a diminishing of their opponents' energy, confidence, ability, and/or spirit.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF
PRIORITIZED CRITERIA
AS IT APPLIES TO CORRECTLY SCORING AN MMA BOUT

We accept that MMA Bouts shall be scored based on a comparative evaluation of each fighters:

- **EFFECTIVE STRIKING/GRAPPLING**
- **EFFECTIVE AGGRESSIVENESS**
- **CAGE/RING CONTROL**

But NEVER as a RANDOM or SUBJECTIVE BLEND of These Evaluative Categories

When one fighter **demonstrates even a Slight Advantage in EFFECTIVE STRIKING/ GRAPPLING,** that fighter shall win that round **without any regard** for either fighter's Aggressiveness or Cage/Ring Control

ONE FIGHTER DEMONSTRATES AN ADVANTAGE IN EFFECTIVE STRIKING/GRAPPLING

SHALL NOT BE CONSIDERED ~~**EFFECTIVE AGGRESSIVENESS**~~ *SHALL NOT BE CONSIDERED*

~~**CAGE RING CONTROL**~~

ONLY when neither fighter demonstrates even a Slight Advantage in EFFECTIVE STRIKING/ GRAPPLING should the judge consider an advantage in **EFFECTIVE AGGRESSIVENESS** to determine the winner of that round.

NO ADVANTAGE IN EFFECTIVE STRIKING/GRAPPLING

EFFECTIVE AGGRESSIVENESS

SHALL NOT BE CONSIDERED ~~**CAGE RING CONTROL**~~ *SHALL NOT BE CONSIDERED*

Only when neither fighter demonstrates even a Slight Advantage in EFFECTIVE STRIKING/ GRAPPLING or **EFFECTIVE AGGRESSIVENESS** should the judge consider an advantage in **CAGE/RING CONTROL** to determine the winner of that round.

NO ADVANTAGE IN EFFECTIVE STRIKING/GRAPPLING

NO ADVANTAGE IN EFFECTIVE AGGRESSIVENESS

CAGE RING CONTROL

In each round, **Effective Striking/Grappling** shall be considered the **first priority** in assessing the relative merits of each fighter performance. **Effective Aggressiveness** is a **'Plan B'** and should not be considered unless the judge has determined that there was no advantage in Effective Striking/Grappling. **Cage/Ring Control ('Plan C')** should only be applicable when a judge determines that both fighters have failed to establish an advantage in either Effective Striking/Grappling **OR** Cage/Ring Control. This will be an extremely rare occurrence.