

Dr. Tsai - Ringside at Mixed Martial Arts Events

The fast growing sport of mixed martial arts is now regulated by the State of Wisconsin, which means events are both larger and safer for the participants. One of the primary regulations Wisconsin demands that each event have a licensed ringside physician. Davis Tsai, MD, an orthopaedic surgeon with the Kennedy Center in Oshkosh, has recently been assigned by the State to be the ringside physician for the upcoming Combat USA final 8 Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) competition to be held at the Oneida Casino in Green Bay on March 5. The day prior to the event, Dr. Tsai will perform physical exams on the fighters to confirm they are in good physical condition.

According to Dr. Tsai, “Mixed Martial arts basically evolved out of street brawling. With state regulation, mixed martial arts have become a legitimate sport – if not an art form.” It combines the best aspects of Muay Thai kick boxing, Karate, Greco-Roman wrestling, European boxing, Russian Sambo and Brazilian Jui-Jitsu.

Until recently, the unregulated sport allowed promoters to hold fights in bars and clubs with no oversight. Today, MMA competitions are held at much larger venues, have regulations similar to boxing and must have a physician available who can stop the fight if they determine a fighter cannot continue physically.

“I am currently treating four patients in my practice who participate in mixed martial arts,” says Dr. Tsai. “They enjoy the sport because it is so physical, so ‘in your face’. But because it is such a violent physical activity, participants can get injured and require the services of a trained physician.” Unlike boxing which has two “zones of concern”, the head and neck and the trunk of the body, MMA has six zones for attack – head and neck, truck, right and left arm and right and left leg. Participants

have 300% more body parts at risk for injury – in essence fighters have a greater risk of injury and a greater need for a ringside doctor.

Dr. Tsai's has been ringside physician in the past for amateur boxing. His interest in MMA stems from having trained in Judo and Karate in his youth. It was a natural evolution for him to from covering boxing to MMA as cage fighting has come out of the shadows to become a legitimately sanctioned and regulated sport.