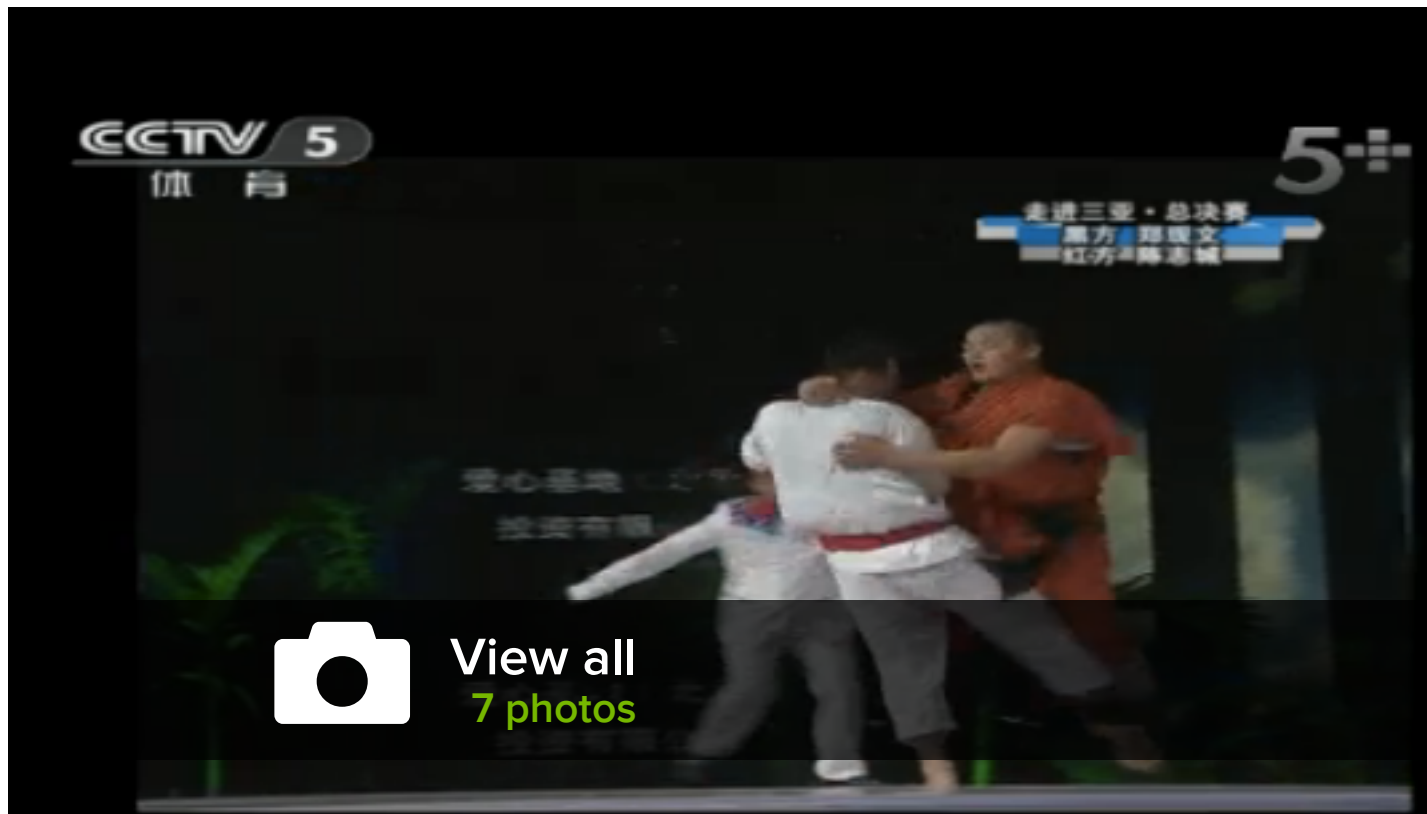


Does Tai Chi have any real martial art value?

September 25, 2012

6:33 PM MST



Shaolin monk Chen Xianwen (orange black-belted) pushed and uprooted Tai Chi Chen Zhicheng (white, red-belted)
CCTV

Most people who never practice [Tai Chi](#) consider it too slow and only for seniors. So when they put 14 young fearless martial champions together, who do you think would win an all-out [Lei Tai](#) fighting tournament?



CCTV

Chinese Central TV Station (CCTV) in China has been hosting annual [Wushu](#) Tournaments in recent years. One of the most exciting annual tournaments is that they include martial artists with diverse backgrounds to fight on the same Lei Tai. This year, CCTV joined venture with the beautiful tropical City of [Sanya, Hainan Island](#) and hosted a series of matches in January and aired them on TV from June 19 to July 31. Only recently the videos of the shows were posted online. All 14 contestants were national champions representing [Shaolin](#), Ba Ji, Hong Quan (or Red Boxing), Tong Bei, Xin Yi and Tai Chi.

Aside from bare-hand fighting, contestants fought with a “weapon” that is a long staff with protected foams on both ends and wore helmets. But in the bare-hand fighting, there was almost no limits what you could do to an opponent; grappling, neck attacks, double arm grabs, sudden arm bars, grabbing around the waist, tripping, throwing, sweeping, disengagement, sudden strikes, full take-down, punching to the chest or kicking to face were all allowed. There were seven male and one female judge. There were two referees and one was a woman. The tournament format was rather nostalgic. The original one-on-one fights generated two defending champions. The later match winner got to choose which defending champion to challenge.

After 40 some exhaustive matches, four finalists emerged and they were Chen Style Tai Chi Chen Zhicheng, Shaolin monk Chen Geng, Shaolin monk Cheng Xianwen and Ba Ji Quan Dai Qianzhen. You can watch the final four games by clicking the [link](http://sports.cntv.cn/20120911/106525.shtml) here <http://sports.cntv.cn/20120911/106525.shtml> . In the first game, red-belted Chen Zhicheng won over black-belted Dai Qianzhen with his superb skills, even though Dai is stronger and more muscular than Chen. The fight was intense and Chen’s shirt was torn. In the second game, red-belted Cheng Xianwen beat his Shaolin brother black-belted Chen Geng. In the third game, black-belted Chen Geng, who sat in the defending throne a couple times during pre-games, eventually overpowered Ba Ji red-belted Dai and won the third place in the tournament.

The 19-year old Tai Chi fighter Chen Zhicheng was 5'8" tall and weighed 159 lbs. His opponent Shaolin monk Cheng Xianwen was also 19-year-old, 5'7" and 163 lbs. Chen Zhicheng won all eight matches in pre-games while Cheng Xianwen lost once but gained the final status by total winning points. Their fighting skills were extremely comparable. After one round of weapon and two rounds of bare-hand fights, red-belted Chen Style Tai Chi Chen Zhicheng was judged as the champion for the tournament.

The gentle-looking Chen Zhicheng is a student of Master [Wang Zhanjun](#). In the west, Wang Zhanjun may not be as well known as other 12th generation Chen Style Tai Chi inheritors. Born to Grandmaster [Wang Xian](#), he is an undefeated heavyweight Lai Tai champion in national and international tournaments. He continued to compete even though he was the oldest one on the Lei Tai. Wang Zhanjun also trained many other Tai Chi martial artists gold medalists in Lei Tai and Push Hands tournaments.

People used to call Tai Chi Cotton Boxing (Mian Quan) due to its softness. Historically Grandmasters [Yang Lu Chan](#), Chen Fake, Chen Zhaopei and a few other masters proved them wrong by winning all style Lei Tai's. In recent decades, Tai Chi has been modified or simplified and many of its martial art applications have been removed. It is good to see that the authentic Chen Style Tai Chi still maintains this art in its entirety. In previous tournaments hosted elsewhere, Chen Style Tai Chi also knocked others out. We certainly cannot conclude that Tai Chi is the most powerful martial art simply based on these results. But we can say with confidence that Tai Chi can be an effective martial art and it processes the explosive features for both defensive and offensive purposes.

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