

## True-2-Form Sparring is making history

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Many [Tai Chi](#) practitioners are surprised when they see a Push Hands [tournament](#). To them, a Push Hands competition has little resemblance to the art they practice. The same comment can also be heard about an external [martial arts sparring](#). With protective gear and heavy gloves, it is extremely difficult for contestants to apply the sophisticated fine maneuvering techniques like Chin Na. Many of the Push Hands, sparring and San Shou tournaments are about punching, shoving, kicking and dragging the opponent down. Don't get me wrong, those tournaments have their own merits too, and the U.S. is not the only country having fights like that.



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Simon Vixathep (Left), Camdida Aguilar (Middle) and Master Clarke (Right)

Violet Li



*Violet Li*

Since true traditional Chinese Martial Arts (CMA) techniques cannot be fully utilized during these types of tournaments, people wonder about the true usefulness of CMA in terms of real fighting. Is CMA just cool looking in demonstrations and movies while possess little application? The internal martial arts, especially Tai Chi, suffer tremendously from this type of misperception.

History has been forgotten; actually CMA was designed to build empires, to protect villages, and to defend oneself. After centuries of re-invention and improvements, CMA has become extremely profound and complicated. It is not easy to learn; nevertheless, they can be powerful and deadly once a practitioner acquires the skills. But to adapt to the tournament rules, martial art schools across the nation change how martial arts are taught. Fighters are trained with a modified curriculum. With this, martial art *connoisseurs* have a genuine concern that the arts have been watered down and gradually their principles and techniques will be lost.

Master **Christophe Clarke** has studied the internal arts from world-renowned masters in China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, and the U.S. He was a champion in many international competitions. He worked as a consultant for the Sports Ministry in the former USSR. He worked for Dan Reeves with the Denver Broncos on coordination and visualization techniques. He also worked with the FBI to teach their SWAT team high-level martial arts techniques. He has established himself as a world respected teacher. He also starred in five martial arts action films.

His passion for CMA runs deep. This year, with his leadership and volunteering effort from many others, ***Legends of Kung Fu & Taiji Legacy World Martial Arts Championship*** agreed to host a True-2-Form (or True-to-form) Sparring division. 19 people participated in the event. A competitor is judged not only

by his strikes against the opponent but also by how true he is to his form. Master Clarke explains that this format is to explore the ability to use and apply one's own martial art system in a light, continuous sparring match. The reasoning is that Taekwondo and Judo practitioners all fight with their own skills and CMA should be no different.

Each True-2-Form Sparring match requires each contestant to do a short demo of her style before sparring. Safety gear is optional. **Rules of Engagement are:**

- 1** A competitor must be able to deliver his techniques with speed, timing and placement, executing them with control and accuracy. Force is not the key to success.
- 2** The referee has total control over the match, directing the pace and assuring safety, while allowing the 3-minute freestyle match to take place. 4 experienced corner judges, look at the competitors every move, taking mental and written notes, and making a decision on the winner.
- 3** Safety is the key. If a competitor shows overly aggressive behavior or poor sportsmanship, he will be cautioned once. A second time will result in disqualification.
- 4 Beginning and Intermediate divisions have some restrictions with** little to no head contact, sweeps (iron broom), ortakedowns.
- 5 Advanced division allows** light contact to the head, excessive contact and poor sportsmanship will not be tolerated. Competitors must fight with integrity.

Choy Lay Fut Grandmaster **Fred Spencer** of California was the head judge, Side judges were Master Al-Waalee Muhammed of Texas of Bagua and Hsing I, Master Stan Johnson of Texas of Bagua, Master Raymond Fogg of Texas of Wah Lum Preying Mantis, Master George Giatrakis of Texas of Choy Lee Fut, and Master Steve Christopherson of Texas of Scorpion **Kung Fu**. Master Clarke was the referee.

It was quite interesting to watch the matches of Scorpion versus Monkey, Five Animal versus Bagua, etc. Spectators cheered constantly during the matches. Most of the contestants had never participated in sparring competition before; they felt that True-2-Form Sparring as much more meaningful. Some senior instructors like David Vidato of Oklahoma, joined the matches. Simon Vixathep of Baton Rouge, LA practioner of martial arts for 21 years, won an advanced division title with his Monkey techniques. Camdida Aguilar of Carrollton, TX, is a 23-year-old lady who has studied **Choy Lay Fut** for almost four years to lose weight. She was the only female adult fighter. She was not afraid to be hit by bigger and taller men. She fought like a champion and won the second place in the advanced Lightweight Division. Of course, this probably would not happen in other types of Sparring. In True-2-Form, all male

competitors were very conscientious. Master Clarke contributed this to their training in CMA, which they learn how to respect women and they will not take advantage of their size nor physical strength to knock out any female competitor. Candida actually won with her technical skills and not by her physical brute force. You can watch a match of the Heavy Weight Advanced Division on the left-hand-side video. For more of the exciting sparrings, you can visit Master Gohring's website

[www.youtube.com/mastergohring](http://www.youtube.com/mastergohring) .

The winners of this first True-2-Form competition are:

- Kids 7 & under: Jaidynne Young (1st)
- Kids 8 -11: Kimberly Birge (1st) and Ty Roberts (2nd)
- Advanced Lightweight: Simon Vixathap (1st), Camdida Aguilar (2nd), David Vidato (2nd), John Piper (3rd), and Brenden Connor (3rd)
- Advance Heavyweight: Dallas Horgeshimer (1st), Kevin Chin (2nd) and Joshua Maseo (3rd)

Since the Dallas event, there have been vivid discussions within the martial arts community. A few have some reservations toward it. Master Clarke acknowledges that this new format is a work-in-progress. As more tournaments are held, rules will be adjusted. Practitioners will receive proper training and be more effectively applying their skills in fighting. With the success of the Dallas tournament, the True-2-Form Sparring has proven itself to be a viable format. As Judge Steve Christopherson commented, this was the best thing that ever happened in CMA. We are excited to see history in the making.

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