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The Myth of MMA Fighting Out of Poverty

In Uncategorized on September 3, 2015 at 2:03 pm

By Antonio Graceffo

Rocky Marciano was born poor and died rich. But that was boxing, not MMA.

In 2011 when I took the Cambodian team to fight MMA the first professional tournament in Malaysia, a lot of people were putting pressure on me to sign them to one of Asia's most prestigious MMA promotions, even though the Cambodians had no way to train, learn ground fighting or even eat. I still remember a number of people using the phrase "A chance to fight their way out of poverty." The terms of the contract were 3 fights at \$300 per fight. I don't know where those people learned their economics, but where I studied, I learned that \$900 USD a year isn't exactly a ticket out of poverty. The counter argument was always, "But if they win, they could get more on their next fight." How much more? Double? Triple? Quadruple? That still qualifies as poverty.

In MMA even top fighters will only have a handful of fights at the tens-or-hundreds-of-thousands-of-dollars level. This is true even of the Ultimate Fighting Championships (UFC), which is generally thought to be the best paying promotion in the world.

My theory is that, while it is hard to become rich in other sports, it is nearly impossible to even earn a living in MMA.

MMA Compared to Other Sports

By this point, most people probably know that MMA fighters are paid less than professional athletes in most other televised sports. The three boxers with the highest lifetime earnings are Floyd Mayweather Jr. with \$756 million, Oscar De La Hoya with \$696 million, and in third place, Manny Pacquiao with \$661 million. (Cramer).

The three top earners in pro wrestling earned quite a bit less: The Rock, with \$70 Million, Steve Austin with \$45 Million, and John Cena with \$35 Million. (Campbell)

As amazing as the lifetime earnings are for the outstanding boxers and wrestlers, the average salary for a major league baseball player in 2014 was \$3.82 million. (Badenhausen) And basketball pays even better than baseball. The average NBA player, for example, earns \$4.5 million per year. (Gaines) Because of the higher pay and longer playing life, the lifetime earnings of basketball players exceed those of most other pro athletes. The average NBA player plays 4.8 years and has lifetime career earnings of \$24.7 million. (Gaines) In the history of the NBA, 25 players have had lifetime earnings of over 125 Million each. (Gaines)

While it is obvious that ball players and champion boxers earn a lot, what about an average boxer? According to The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, people who list professional boxer as their profession on their tax return earned an average of \$75,760 in 2012. (Guerra) That's a lot lower than Floyd Mayweather, but still nearly double the lifetime earnings of the average MMA fighter.

The expected lifetime earnings of a professional MMA fighter are \$38,000. (Shmoop)

MMA earnings are low compared to what?

Obviously, not everyone can be a top ball player or a professional boxing champion, but MMA is not even a good career when compared to other jobs. In 2013, the average high school teacher earned \$55,360, with the bottom 10% earning \$37,230.

(Money.usnews.com) Said another way, the lowest paid high school teacher's earnings for a single year were nearly equal to the lifetime earnings of the average MMA fighter.

Of course, being a high school teacher necessitates earning a university degree, which some fighters feel they can't do. But other careers also pay infinitely better than MMA fighting. In 2013, police officers averaged \$90,700, with the bottom 10% earning \$32,670. (Money.usnews.com)

Not everyone can get on a well-paid police force. But nearly anyone who is healthy, free of felony convictions, and has a high school diploma can join the army. The average salary for a soldier is \$21,032 – \$76,175 (Army, U.S.) Maybe you don't want to join the army. Fine, you could be an auto mechanic. The salary for a mechanic ranged from \$20,920 to \$61,210, with an average salary of \$36,710, in 2013. (Money.usnews.com) Ok, let's say, you're a convicted felon, with no high school diploma, who is unable to learn to be an auto mechanic. Fine, you can work in fast food. The average salary for a fast food crew member was \$16,000 per year. (Indeed.com)

Therefore, if you've been paying attention, the lifetime earnings of the average MMA fighter is about the same as what the average McDonalds worker earns in a little over two years.

UFC Earnings

Most MMA fighters aspire to fight in the UFC, the most prestigious MMA organization in the world. But even in the UFC, the average fighter barely earns a living. According to an article published in the MMA Sentinel, the average wage for a UFC fighter is just \$30,500 per year. (MMA Sentinel) "The 18 fighters in the nine undercard bouts at UFC 162 were paid a disclosed total of \$1.167 million, an average of \$64,833.33 per man." (Iole)

Through 2014, the top three lifetime earners in UFC were Michael Bisping \$5,694,000, Anderson Silva \$4,717,000, and Georges St-Pierre \$4,457,000. (Fox) They each had lifetime earnings about equal to what the average NBA player earns in a single year. Of course, for most people, \$5.9 Million sounds like a good amount of money. But in the UFC, the money drops off dramatically as you go down the list. The Number 62 highest earner in UFC history, Thiago Alves and number 63, Chris Leben had lifetime earnings of less than \$1,000,000. And, number 438, Lance Benoit had less than \$100,000. At the bottom was a bunch of people you have probably never hear of, with earnings of \$2,000 each. (Fox)

To achieve his ranking of 438th best paid UFC athlete, and to achieve his less than \$100,000 lifetime earnings, Lance Benoit fought 9 fights between 2010 and 2014. If he had worked as a school teacher, cop, soldier, or auto mechanic for the same five-year period he would have earned well over \$100,000. But he did earn more than the \$80,000 he would have earned if he had spent those five years flipping burgers.

Even in the big show, it's hard to make a living. But not everyone makes it to the big show.

Bellator

After the UFC, Bellator is one of the more respected MMA promotions in the world. The payouts for Bellator 106 looked like this: Michael Chandler was contracted to receive \$95,000 appearance fee, plus a win bonus of \$95,000. Daniel Straus could max out at \$40,000 (\$20,000/\$20,000). Muhammed Lawal and Emanuel Newton, competing for an interim light heavyweight title, could earn \$20,000 (\$10,000/\$10,000). The loser of the "Fight Master" reality show finale would get \$5,000. The winner of the lowest paid fight on the card, Darren Smith vs. Josh Smith would earn \$3,000 (\$1,500/\$1,500). (Bratcher)

While the top salaries in Bellator are admirable for most MMA fighters, they are considerably less than those in the UFC. And once again, the fighters in the middle rungs will barely earn a living. And those in the lower rungs can't possibly survive on fight purses.

One FC

When former Bellator champion, Ben Askren, signed for One FC, he was guaranteed a \$50,000 appearance fee and a \$50,000 win bonus. (Symes) According to his Serdog record, he had 14 fights between 2009 and 2015. And of course, he wasn't paid One FC level money for all of those fights. This is where the low lifetime earnings for MMA fighters come from. Most fighters only receive top payouts for a very small number of fights, at the

peak of their careers. And in this case, top money is \$100,000 for a win.

Ben Askren was highly critical of former UFC fighter and MMA legend, Phil Baroni, whose record is 15 wins and 18 losses. Apparently, in an attempt to rejuvenate his own, failing career, Phil has called Ben out. (Marocco)

“It’s gross how desperate he is to get a fight,” Askren said. “He probably doesn’t know what else he’s going to do with his life, so he’s trying to talk himself (into) a fight.” (Marocco)

Phil Baroni has been fighting since 2000, having fought in many of the top MMA organizations: UFC PRIDE, Strikeforce, Cage Rage, DREAM, EliteXC, and ONE FC. If Ben Askren is right, and Phil Baroni has trouble making a living, how can the average fighter?

Brooklyn Monk, Antonio Graceffo is a PhD candidate at Shanghai University of sport, writing his dissertation on comparative forms of Chinese wrestling. He is a martial arts and adventure author living in Asia, the author of the books, “Warrior Odyssey” and “The Monk from Brooklyn.” Antonio is also the host of the web TV show, “Martial Arts Odyssey,” which traces his ongoing journey through Asia, learning martial arts in various countries.

The Monk from Brooklyn, the book which gave Antonio his name, and all of his other books, the book available at amazon.com. His book, Warrior Odyssey, chronicling Antonio Graceffo’s first six years in Asia, including stories about Khmer and Vietnamese martial arts as well as the war in Burma and the Shan State Army, is available at

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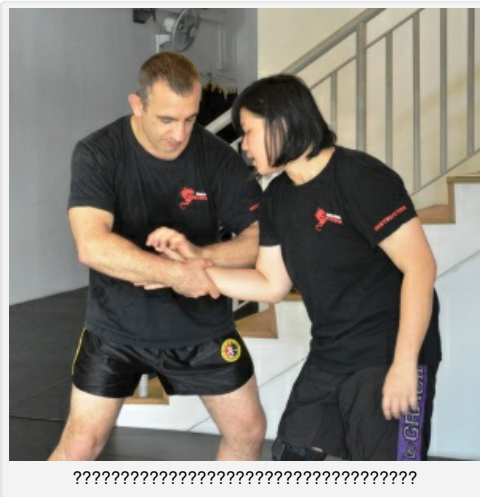
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Booklyn Monk: Catch Wrestling with Yunaquan (Part 1)

In Uncategorized on August 10, 2015 at 2:28 am



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At the Singapore catch Wrestling association, Brooklyn Monk, Antonio Graceffo meets up with Qin Yunquan a leading female catch wrestler and MMA fighter. Catch wrestling is a submission wrestling sport which combines the takedowns and pins of wrestling with submissions, which catch wrestlers call “hooks” or “torture holds.” Catch was born in the mid to late 19th Century in England, but quickly migrated to the US, where it eventually gave rise to professional wrestling and American freestyle and folkstyle wrestling. MMA fighter, Josh Barnett is one of the most famous catch wrestlers fighting today, but most of the big names of early MMA can trace their lineage to Karl Gotch, a European/American catch wrestler who taught catch to pro wrestlers in Japan in the 1990’s. Among his most famous students were Ken Shamrock and Kazushi Sakuraba.

Watch on Youtube: [Catch Wrestling with Yunaquan \(Part 1\)](#)

Watch it on Youtube: [Catch Wrestling with Yunaquan \(Part 2 \)](#)

Watch it on Youtube: Catch Wrestling with Yunaquan (Part 3)

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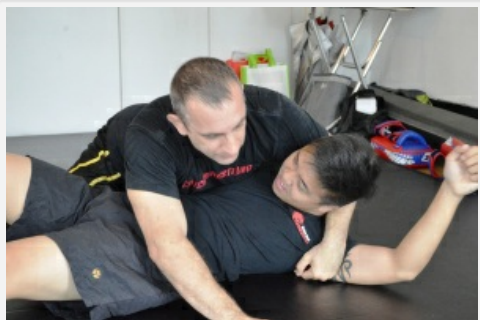
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Catch Wrestling in other Media

In Uncategorized on August 6, 2015 at 7:46 am



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As part of the research for his PhD dissertation on comparative wrestling styles, Brooklyn Monk Antonio Graceffo travels to the Singapore Catch Wrestling Association, to explore the art of catch wrestling. Meet female catch wrestler, Qin Yunquan a leading wrestler and MMA fighter in Singapore. Hear the Monk discuss a chapter of the English version of his dissertation, entitled Wrestling in other media. Catch wrestling has appeared in lots of American TV shows from The Little Rascals, The Munsters, The Flintstones, to Spiderman, and on.

Watch on Youtube: Catch Wrestling in other Media

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Paddy's Fight Club 2015 (Parts 1 and 3)

In Uncategorized on August 3, 2015 at 1:06 am

Paddy Carson has always believed that boxing fundamentals were the cornerstone of fighting. Brooklyn Monk, Antonio Graceffo, began training at the original Paddy's Fight Club, under the Japanese bridge, in Phnom Penh, back in 2004. The club has changed and developed over the years. Now, Paddy even has MMA fighters training in his club which was already famous for Khmer boxing and western boxing. In this video catch a special appearance by grappling coach Alan Mccune. But whether the guys are fighting in boxing, kick boxing, or MMA, Paddy believes the most important element of a fight is having good boxing fundamentals.



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Paddy Carson has been Brooklyn Monk, Antonio Graceffo's boxing coach for more than a decade. While overcoming cancer, Paddy was forced to have the bones in his leg removed and replaced with titanium. After completing physiotherapy, in the true spirit of Bushido, Paddy returned to work as a boxing coach, getting in the ring every day and taking his pros on the pads. After a pad session at Paddy's Fight Club, Phnom Penh, Paddy, a second dan kyokushin black belt, challenged the Monk to a kyokushin-style, bare knuckle, body-blow sparring session. In the Monk's own words, "Paddy's sparring was heroic. Mine was comical." Only one phrase comes to mind when you see a man of Paddy's age, a cancer survivor, missing one leg, beat the crap out of a Brooklyn Monk, twenty years his junior, who outweighs him by fifteen or twenty kilograms, FULL RESPECT!

Watch on Youtube: [Paddy's Fight Club 2015 \(Part 1\)](#)

Watch it on Youtube: [Paddy's Fight Club 2015 \(Part 2\)](#)

Watch it on Youtube: Paddy's Fight Club 2015 (Part 3)

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Brooklyn Monk: Full Respect

In Uncategorized on July 11, 2015 at 4:18 pm



Paddy Carson has been Brooklyn Monk, Antonio Graceffo's boxing coach for more than a decade. While overcoming cancer, Paddy was forced to have the bones in his leg removed and replaced with titanium. After completing physiotherapy, in the true spirit of Bushido, Paddy returned to work as a boxing coach, getting in the ring every day and taking his pros on the pads. After a pad session at Paddy's Fight Club, Phnom Penh, Paddy, a second dan kyokushin black belt, challenged the Monk to a kyokushin-style, bare knuckle, body-blow sparring session. In the Monk's own words, "Paddy's sparring was heroic. Mine was comical." Only one phrase comes to mind when you see a man of Paddy's age, a cancer survivor, missing one leg, beat the crap out of a Brooklyn Monk, twenty years his junior, who outweighs him by fifteen or twenty kilograms, FULL RESPECT!

Watch: Brooklyn Monk: Full Respect

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Brooklyn Monk: Cambodia National Judo Team (Parts 1-3)

In Uncategorized on May 18, 2015 at 12:37 pm

Kru Lach Vuthy, head coach of the Cambodia National Judo Team grappling coach of the Cambodian Ultimate Fighter like TV show, Khmer Warrior Champion (KWC) teaches Brooklyn Monk, Antonio Graceffo, some judo techniques. Antonio is a PhD candidate writing his dissertation on Chinese wrestling. But his research has recently lead him to judo, as a related grappling art.

Watch Cambodia National Judo Team (Part 1) on youtube:

Watch Cambodia National Judo Team (Part 2) on youtube:

Watch Cambodia National Judo Team (Part 3) on youtube:

host of the web TV show, "Martial Arts Odyssey," which traces his ongoing journey through Asia, learning martial arts in various countries.

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Brooklyn Monk: Thailand Judo (Parts 1 through 3)

In Uncategorized on April 26, 2015 at 10:50 pm



Just a few weeks into his formal study of judo PhD candidate, Brooklyn Monk, Antonio Graceffo, a wrestling major, heads to Bangkok, Thailand to train judo with pro MMA fighter and judo instructor, Shane Wiggand.

Watch Brooklyn Monk Thailand Judo (Parts 1) on youtube:

Watch Thailand Judo (Parts 2) on youtube:

Watch Brooklyn Monk Thailand Judo (Parts 3) on Youtube:

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Kaiser the Movie Trailer

In Uncategorized on March 22, 2015 at 10:50 am

Martial arts action adventure movie, shot in Shanghai with an international crew

He seemingly came out of nowhere and put the whole underworld on its toes. Who is Kaiser? Why does he kill? Who will be next...? follow us on twitter and FB to find out about his actions and his mysterious past. He seemingly came out of nowhere and put the whole underworld on its toes. Who is Kaiser? Why does he kill? Who will be next...? follow us on twitter and FB to find out about his actions and his mysterious past.

See the trailer on youtube

See Antonio Graceffo as Vincent the Supplier

Kaiser in its current form is just a proof of concept. You can help make the finished film a reality.

To get involved on <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/kaiser-the-movie/x/10255799>

Follow Kaiser the Movie on Facebook

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Welcome to Brooklyn Monk on Youtube

In Uncategorized on March 13, 2015 at 4:38 am



I'm Antonio Graceffo, the Brooklyn Monk, and welcome to my youtube channel. My two main areas of interest are second language acquisition theory and martial arts.

I am currently a PhD candidate at Shanghai University of Sport where I combine both my interests, taking them to a new level.

I am writing my dissertation, in Chinese, the topic of which is a comparison of Chinese traditional Shuai Jiao wrestling and modern, western wrestling.

As part of my field research, I train daily in several wrestling styles as well as san da and judo. Although I am nearly 50 years old, I still fight in competition from time to time.

Watch Welcome to Brooklyn Monk on Youtube

My channel Brooklyn Monk1 is largely about my own journey though Asia, exploring and documenting languages, martial arts, and ethnic minorities. Beginning in 2001 through the present. I have lived in about 7 countries, learned 5 languages and studied and documented countless martial arts. Along the way, I also fought professionally and amateur, I wrote six books, several hundred magazine articles, published academic papers, appeared in movies and TV shows, and produced hundreds of videos which are available here on my channel. I have play lists dedicated to the various phases of my research including: Martial Arts Odyssey, Linguistics and Language Learning, Interviews, and the War in Burma.

I hope you enjoy my channel and if you're doing research and need some help. Please shoot me a message and let me know. Also, don't forget to follow Brooklynmonk1 on Twitter.

I'm Antonio Graecffo from Brooklynmonk1 reminding you to get in the gym do your reps, do your sets, do your round work, keep training and fighting, and please get in the libery and read a book.

Follow Antonio on Twitter <https://twitter.com/Brooklynmonk>

Contact Antonio@speakingadventure.com

See Antonio's books on amazon.com

AARON, ALAN, ANTONIO, BOXING, BRADAL, BROOKLYN, CAMBODIA, CHAMPION, FIGHT, FIGHTING, GRACEFFO, JUDO, KHMER, KHUN, LEVERTON, MARTIALARTS, MATTHEW, MCCUNE, MIXED, MMA, MONK, ODYSSEY, ONE, PENH, PHNOM, RADIO, SEREYBOX, TALK, WARRIOR, WRESTLE, WRESTLING

MMA Talk on Radio One Cambodia (Parts 1 through 4)

In Uncategorized on March 5, 2015 at 4:52 am



Radio host, Aaron Matthew Leverton, talks to KWC MMA coach, Alan Mccune, and Brooklyn Monk, Antonio Graceffo, about MMA, wrestling, judo, boxing, fighting and other manly stuff on Radio One, Phnom Penh Cambodia

Watch MMA Talk on Radio One Cambodia (Part 1) http://youtu.be/-VXU3_K2ms0

Watch MMA Talk on Radio One Cambodia (Part 2) http://youtu.be/qTRmkKE_Gws

Watch MMA Talk on Radio One Cambodia (Part 3) <http://youtu.be/FWmWe9KQwNI>

Watch MMA Talk on Radio One Cambodia (Part 4) <http://youtu.be/lf72iIT5Tlc>

Brooklyn Monk, Antonio Graceffo is a PhD candidate at Shanghai University of sport, writing his dissertation on comparative forms of Chinese wrestling. He is martial arts and adventure author living in Asia, the author of the books, "Warrior Odyssey" and "The Monk from Brooklyn." He is also the host of the web TV show, "Martial Arts Odyssey," which traces his ongoing journey through Asia, learning martial arts in various countries.

The Monk from Brooklyn, the book which gave Antonio his name, and all of his other books, the book available at amazon.com. His book, Warrior Odyssey, chronicling Antonio Graceffo's first six years in Asia, including stories about Khmer and Vietnamese martial arts as well as the war in Burma and the Shan State Army, is available at

http://www.blackbeltmag.com/warrior_odyssey

See Antonio's Destinations video series and find out about his column on

<http://www.blackbeltmag.com>

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ABOUT

Antonio Graceffo is the host of the web TV show, "Martial Arts Odyssey." To watch the show, please visit his YouTube channel here: <http://www.youtube.com/user/brooklynmonk1> He has studied Kung Fu at the Shaolin Temple in China, and a Muay Thai at a temple in Thailand. He is the author of four ... [Continue reading](#) →

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