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FACT: MIXED MARTIAL ARTS IS DERIVED FROM AN ANCIENT GREEK SPORT

Human cockfights or sport?

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Special to amNewYork

Move over Rocky. Here comes MMA.

Mixed martial arts — banned in New York and derided as “human cockfighting” by Sen. John McCain — is going mainstream.

MMA officials just launched a campaign to eliminate an 11-year ban on competitions in New York.

On Friday, the sport will explode onto the big screen with the release of “Never Back Down,” starring Sean Faris and Djimon Hounsou.

At the Renzo Gracie Jiu-jitsu Academy in midtown, enrollment in its Brazilian jiu-jitsu classes has jumped threefold in two years. MMA includes many of the techniques found in Brazilian jiu-jitsu. The academy has produced some major MMA fighters — including members of the famed Gracie clan.

MMA resembles a bar brawl, complete with kicks, punches and blows to the head. The matches end with a takedown where the loser



Gregor Gracie performs a choke on brother Igor. Both are mixed martial arts fighters.

is choked in a stranglehold or forced into submission by a limb lock.

That said, MMA fighters shrug off the danger.

“MMA looks violent, but the fighters are pros,” said MMA fighter Igor Gracie.

“Anyway, there are good doctors,” he added.

He should know. Gracie has suffered a broken nose, and his head’s been stitched up a few times. Still, he said

the sport is not all about brute force, and that it is 30 percent physical, 30 percent technique and 40 percent mental.

The Gracie name is synonymous with MMA, but the sport’s roots go back to an ancient Greek sport called pankration, which combined boxing moves with wrestling techniques. There were few rules in a fight: no biting or eye goug-

ing. Fights often ended with the loser’s death.

Its modern equivalent never goes that far. The Ultimate Fighting Competition, the largest and most prestigious MMA competition, outlaws groin attacks, fish hooking, head butting, eye gouging and spitting.

Even with restrictions, a typical fight makes wrestling matches look like some fantasy role-playing sequence.



Soaking raw French fries in water may reduce acrylamide, a possible cancer-causer. (iStockphoto)

Lessen cancer risk by soaking potatoes

A wet tater is a healthy tater.

Rinsing or soaking raw French fries in water before frying may reduce levels of acrylamide in the crunchy product, according to a team led by investigators at Leatherhead Food International, a research and consulting company.

Acrylamide, which is created in small amounts during production of French fries, has been linked to cancer in

rodents, and some researchers believe it may be carcinogenic to humans.

The study found that soaking potatoes for two hours reduced acrylamide levels by 48 percent. Washing potatoes reduced acrylamide by 23 percent.

Scientists are still debating the consequences of acrylamide but largely agree on one point: Overdosing on the salt and fat in fries isn’t good for you.

(Los Angeles Times)