

Pittsburgh is the Birthplace of Modern MMA

The Rise and Fall of Modern MMA before UFC

The idea of finding America's ultimate style of fighter was actually created in **Pittsburgh** by two ambitious Martial Artists in the 1970s, Bill Viola & Frank Caliguri. They set out to answer the age old burning question, "Who would win between Muhammad Ali, Bruce Lee, or Bruno Sammartino?" Their answer led them to create the first organized league of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) style competitions in American history. Don't be fooled by the hype, the UFC may have popularize MMA style events, but CV Productions were the first!

Decades before MMA was a household name, The **Godfather's** of MMA were producing what the media dubbed as, "organized, legalized street fighting." Caliguri & Viola (CV Productions) promoted championship fights that pitted grapplers, kick boxers, wrestlers, boxers, martial artists, street fighters, and all around "Tough Guys" against each other... hence their fights began to known as Tough Guy Championships, not to be confused with *Toughman* contests which were purely boxing. They also promoted fights under the banner of "Super Fighters" and the famous "Battle of the Brawlers." The Tough Guy fighters could win by knockout, submission, or a judge's decision. More than thirty years later, CV Production's "Anything Goes" brainchild has become the fastest growing sport in the world!

Early forms of Mixed Martial Arts can be traced back thousands of years ago to ancient Greece. However, it wasn't until **1979** in Pittsburgh, that The United States saw the groundwork for actual organized MMA style fighting. It's a popular misconception that MMA only emerged in the 1990s in America with the founding of the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship). UFC was popularized with the power of both the Internet and Pay-per-view, a luxury that promoters in the 1970s-80s lacked. Thirty years before The UFC, Viola had the vision to take MMA style events mainstream; including a \$100,000 prize fight set for Las Vegas in 1981 (an impressive purse for the time period). Viola wrote the rules, very similar to today's MMA standards... including specific weight classes, open figured gloves, ringside doctors, etc.

As fate would have it, a terrible accident (death) occurred in 1981 during a *Toughman* boxing event had **NO** association whatsoever with CV Productions. Unfortunately the Pennsylvania Legislature used this incident to outlaw Mixed Martial Arts style events, even though it was a gross misunderstanding. The result of the hearings eventually lead to **SENATE BILL No. 632 Session of 1983, banning mixed martial arts style events.** In 2009 Pennsylvania lifted the ban and legalized MMA (Mixed Martial Arts). This ban, unbeknownst to the general public, was instituted in direct response to the popularity of the "Battle of The Brawlers" MMA style events 1979-1981.

Thirty years ago, Bill Viola was a pioneer of MMA. Today he is ready to reclaim the reigns of a sport he helped develop. Viola is partnering with his son, Bill Jr., to promote MMA events in Pittsburgh. Viola Jr. is a renown fitness & martial arts promoter with the distinguish of producing the Kumite Classic, as seen on ESPN International. He has grown up in the fight business, following in the footsteps of his father. Together, the Violas plan on bringing Pittsburgh back to the center of the MMA world!