

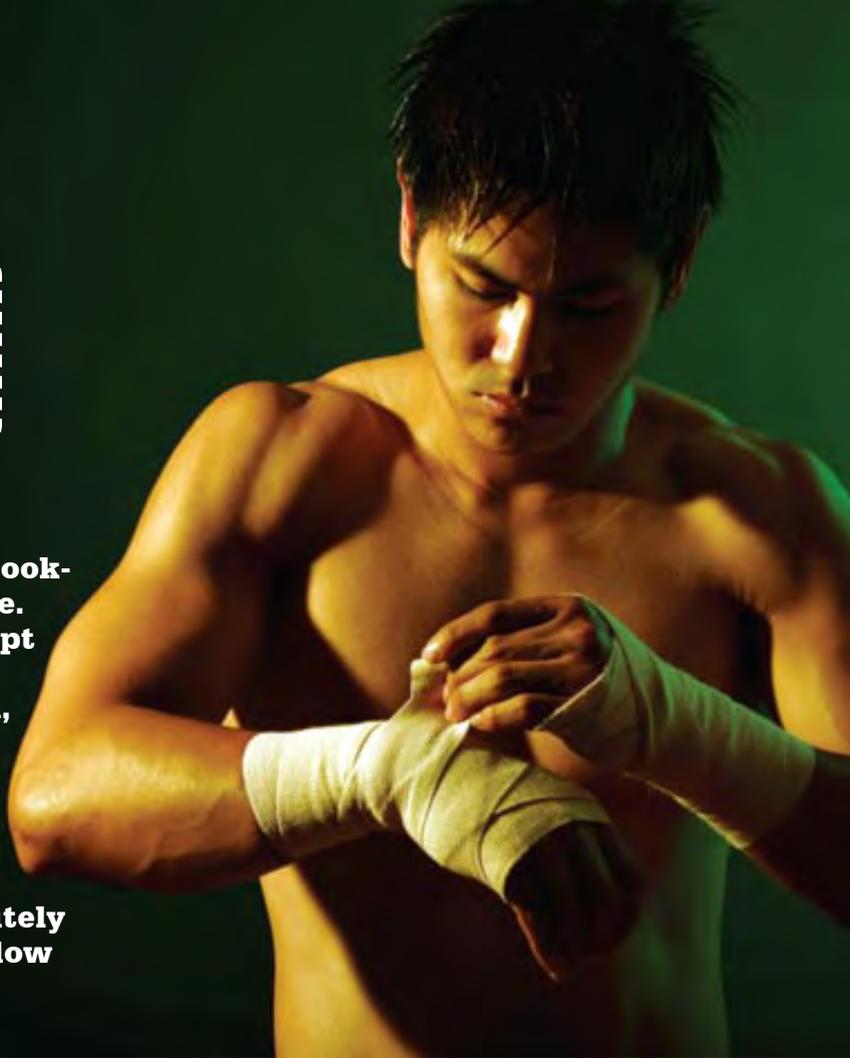
# A FIGHTER'S PHYSIQUE



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By Jamison Hill CPT

**A fighter steps up to the scale looking pudgy, soft and out of shape. Little is known about him except for his apparent unimpressive physique. Interestingly enough, he is exuding more confidence than any of the other fighters. It seems as though he knows something everyone else is oblivious to. His opponent, equally as confident, steps up absolutely ripped from head to toe – very low body fat.**



Everyone watching the weigh-in automatically counts the pudgy fighter out, mainly because of his inferior physique. Come fight night he faces his chiseled counterpart with fearless inhibition and trained swagger. The only apparent difference between the two fighters is looks – one is ripped, while the other is not. When the action begins it is no contest – absolute dominance. The fighter with the impressive physique is easily knocked out in the first round.

It is easy to judge a fight based on the physical appearance of those fighting. However, it isn't a smart strategy to practice and typically backfires. Picking the winner of a fight based on body type is the equivalent of betting on a horse with an alluring name. Yes, sometimes it pays off, but very rarely and when it does its only by luck. In this regard, a fighter's ap-

pearance can be just as illusive as his fighting maneuvers. Sure, muscle is always a good indication that a fighter has a size advantage, but more often fat is a cloak over-shadowing their athleticism and technical skill set. A fighter with thick layers of fat covering his muscular build can be just as strong, if not more than, as his leaner opponent. Obviously, size, strength and power have distinct advantages for a fighter. More so, trained skills are what separate the elite fighters from the mundane. For this reason, the aforementioned skills should always be factored into a fighter's worth. Also, it is important to note that a fighter's skill set is much more than physical in looks and ability.

Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) is a sport that is both physical and mental in nature. In other words, the dumbest, yet most physically imposing fighter will doubtfully be the most dominate.

A fighter without a repertoire of submissions and maneuvers or the dexterity to use them when necessary will likely fail. These days, fighters have to be a complete package. Interestingly, that package doesn't always require an outstanding physique.

Technical skills are a huge part of MMA and most fighters' arsenal. While, roughly 35% of MMA fights end in knockout (K.O./T.K.O.), submissions end a close 29% of fights. Technical skills and the athleticism to carry them out are essential to fighters, but the point remains, these skill sets have little to do with physical features or vice versa. MMA skills are definitely physical, but a fighter's actual physical appearance has little correlation with how they perform. As anyone who watches MMA knows, the underdog or pudgy-looking fighter has been known to shock his opponent and the viewers of a fight with a



dominant performance. Despite what some think, being athletic and being ripped are not the same thing. A completely unassuming fighter can overwhelmingly dominate his opponent in a matter of seconds.

◆ **How does this happen? Although he looks inferior, a pudgy exterior essentially hides his undeniable set of technical skills and athleticism.**

A fighter that trains in mixed martial arts for years – even decades, but never sees the weight room will likely display a soft, pudgy physique. Excessive calorie intake can also

contribute to a fighter's chubby appearance. This is not to say, he won't dominate in his matches though. In fact, some fighters actually dupe their opponents into underestimating their inadequate physique.

◆ **Although it's strategy that works quite well, the question still remains, why don't all fighters have stellar physiques? A successful and dominant fighter doesn't need an eye-popping physique for much besides visual appeal. Anyone who follows MMA knows fighting is not a beauty contest – judging by the blood and bruises involved. Fighters are**

more concerned with technical skills and experience than how they look – as they should be. This is never more apparent than with those outlandish fighters that sport tattoos and Mohawks dyed different colors. Great fighters spend hours each day perfecting their craft and when the time comes to showcase that hard work – taking the emphasis off their physical appearance – the result is all about skills not what they look like.

Look at fighters like George St. Pierre and Shane Carwin, they undoubtedly excel in their fights and showcase amazingly ripped and muscular physiques in the process. They are the epitome of performing, while also looking the part. It's doubtful that these guys emphasize training for looks, but they probably aren't complaining when their skill level and physique are both on point.

◆ **To answer the question does a fighter's physique matter? It really doesn't - it might matter to their ego or everyone's perception of them. But when it comes down to who has their hand raised at the end of the fight, it just as likely could be the pudgy fighter, while his opponent stands aside looking like he got his head rammed into a door. Next time you have no background information on who's fighting, think again before picking the ripped fighter or at least don't put money on him. If you do, don't be shocked when he submits to a guillotine in the first round. Fighters and their physiques come in many different physical appearances, experience levels and athletic abilities. While, physical appearance is one characteristic that many often predominantly take into account, by no means should it be the only consideration. We've all heard the clichés about judging based upon looks, so the next time you attempt to foresee the end of a fight, resist the urge to count out the pudgy guy. 📌**