

# The Birth of PANKRATION MMA in Sri Lanka

**T**he birth of Pankration MMA in Sri Lanka. It all began in Iran 2010 when Sifu Zaya along with his Black Belt Senior Student Mr Samir Odisho, head Coach of WBC Academy visited Iran for two reasons:

The first reason was that Sifu Zaya and Samir were set for International Certification Examination in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and Vale Tudo under a 7th Degree Leandro Heck Gemeo from Brazil, a Master in MMA (Samkak) Vale Tudo, Pankration and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu.

Second reason was that Sifu Zaya was also nominated and selected to be the Australian Representative of the National Martial Arts of Persia (for further reading, the story on TOA Martial Arts of Persia was published in MMA SPORTS issue 33).

**MMA SPORTS:** Sifu Zaya firstly, can you tell us about the results of these examinations for yourself and Samir?  
**Sifu Zaya:** For Brazilian Vale Tudo MMA, I passed with no problems due to my ten years of background in Pankration, and with over five years in Submission Grappling I did well for BJJ. In regards to Samir he has a very good MMA base from Pankration and from fighting experience, and as for Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, he's a master and passed with flying colours.

**MMA SPORTS:** Ok Pankration from Australia to Iran to Sri Lanka, tell us about that?

**Sifu Zaya:** We were in Iran for ten days and from day one, two of the examination committee members were Sri Lankan Masters. The Sri Lankan Masters were involved in our workshops and examinations and all the way they just loved Pankration. Even so that as soon as we got back home to Australia, the emails kept coming and did not stop and kept asking me when can I visit them in Sri Lanka, they want Pankration. Eventually I received an official invitation from Master Bandula Karunathilaka, the Kurunegala District Tae Kwon Do Association Secretary General and from Master Clement De Zoysa, the President of World Shitoryu Karate Do Federation, Sri Lanka Martial Arts Federation, Coach of Sri Lanka Navy and the President Security Division.

**MMA SPORTS:** How long were you in Sri Lanka and how many seminars did you do?

**Sifu Zaya:** I was in Sri Lanka a total of nine days conducting eight four hour Seminars of Pankration MMA. Participants included Senior Black Belt and Coaches of Tae Kwon Do, Karate, Judo and members of Police, Navy and the Presidential Security Division.

**MMA SPORTS:** Were there any Special Guests?

**Sifu Zaya:** Guests included the Sports Commissioner, Police Commissioner, and the Sri Lankan President's Right hand man, Chief of the Presidential Security Division Mr P G R Gunathilaka, who presented me with gifts on behalf of the Presidential Security Division and Special gifts from the President of Sri Lanka, Mr Mahinda Rajapaksa.

**MMA SPORTS:** What were the gifts that you received from the President of Sri Lanka?

**Sifu Zaya:** His book of Visions for the Future of Sri Lanka and a (Topaz) Natural Gemstone of Sri Lanka.

**MMA SPORTS:** Now tell me about your 5th Degree Karate Certificate?  
**Sifu Zaya:** I was surprised to find out that Master Clement was planning to present to me an honorary black belt certificate on the last day of the seminar. My last karate certificate was in 2005 which I was a certified instructor in the Jeff Speakman's American Kenpo Karate Systems in Australia. I kindly declined the honorary offer to a real certification, so on one particular seminar dedicated to Karate style, I was actually being tested especially by members of the Police and the Presidential Security Division particularly, so as Karate were practically more in their field of combat.

**MMA SPORTS:** So is there now a Pankration Organization in Sri Lanka?

**Sifu Zaya:** Yes it's in the process, that was the purpose of my invitation to Sri Lanka. The development of the Sri Lanka Pankration Federation and for introducing the competition sports of Pankration and MMA in Sri Lanka. I think that they were looking for something to bring all the Martial Arts Organizations and Clubs in Sri Lanka together, and somehow it happened to be the right time that I came along and presented Pankration to them. Pankration is a Universal Combat Martial Art that all clubs, organizations can be involved with and in accordance will be following one set of rules and regulations, and I know that both Master Clement and Master Bandula will be great ambassadors for Pankration and MMA in Sri Lanka.

**MMA SPORTS:** Do you have plans for more trips to Sri Lanka?

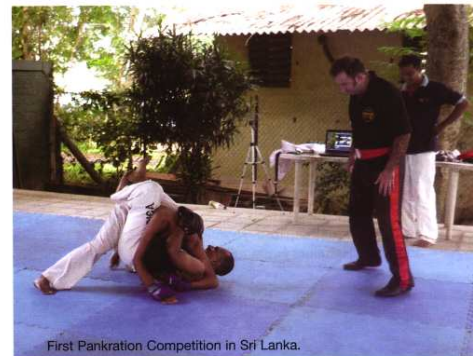
**Sifu Zaya:** Oh yes, my next trip is next year to bring them up to level two in Pankration, Pankration Championships event, and on the agenda we also have plans to do a Warriors Quest fight night promotion there, God willing.

**MMA SPORTS:** Sifu Zaya thank you very much for your time and we will be looking forward to your next experience in Sri Lanka.  
**Sifu Zaya:** Thank you Elie and MMA Sports Magazine.

Iran 2010 Master Leandro between Sifu Zaya and Samir Odisho with International Examination Committee.



Kurunegala Camp.



First Pankration Competition in Sri Lanka.



The First Pankration Champions of Pankration in Sri Lanka.



Nittabuwa Camp.



Sifu Zaya with Camp Organizers Master Clement and Master Bandula.

Sifu Zaya Receiving Gifts from Chief of Sri Lankan President Security Division Mr P G R Gunathilaka.



Nittabuwa Camp Senior Coaches and Black Belts.

