

## Kickboxing scores a knockout in the CIS

by Nick Haley  
Staff Reporter

Just five years ago, participating in kickboxing was a crime punishable by imprisonment in the Soviet Union. Since that time, however, it has become the fastest growing sport in what is now the Commonwealth of Independent States.

According to Oleg Zirobov, director of the All-Eurasian Kickboxing Federation, the introduction of martial arts into Russia has been a lengthy process. It dates back to 1943 when the state, under Joseph Stalin, declared all such activities illegal (except boxing and wrestling which were not considered martial arts). Karate led the way, receiving legal recognition in 1969. But it wasn't until 1987 that kickboxing was no longer a crime.

"If boxing was allowed, why not kickboxing?" Zirobov said.

Kickboxing became organized and received official recognition from the State Sport Committee in 1989 with the formation of the Old-Union Kickboxing Federation. This allowed the sport to receive government funding.

By 1990, the Russians were ready for the pro circuit, competing against fighters from all over Europe and North America. At the ninth European Championship held in Madrid, Spain, the USSR team won five medals—two gold, a silver and two bronze in full-contact competition. As a team, they took first place in full-contact.

But it wasn't until last year that kickboxing became a widely observed sport in the CIS. This year, thanks to



photo by Rob Weidenfeld

'Bad' Brad Hefton backs away from an aggressive Vitaly Klichko. Hefton lost his super heavyweight title to the Russian fighter.

marquee fighters from the United States, the crowds have been even larger.

"In Kiev, in May we had 11,000 spectators at an event," Zirobov said. "We had an event in Moscow with Chuck Norris where we had 25,000 spectators." Narodov said he predicts kickboxing

will become the most popular sport in the CIS in the next five years. It is already the most popular fighting sport.

Aside from recreation, the state has found other benefits of kickboxing as well. Recently, Russian police forces and the Red Army have begun adding kick-

boxing to their training programs. According to Zirobov, it was an ideal choice.

"It's a pure sport. It develops strength, flexibility, physical development (conditioning), and it's really cheap."

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## Dorsey hands Nechaev first defeat

by Nick Haley  
Staff Reporter

Troy Dorsey scored a fifth-round knockout over challenger Alexei Nechaev to retain his world featherweight kickboxing title Sunday night at the Thomas & Mack Center. The bout marked the end of Dorsey's three-year absence from the sport.

Better known for as former International Boxing Federation featherweight champion, Dorsey clearly had the advantage both in speed and in punching skills. Both fighters came out swinging, with Nechaev landing the first blow of the match, a jab that left Dorsey's right cheek bleeding.

In the second round, Dorsey advanced face-first into a Nechaev's hard right fist and fell to the canvas. Despite his quick rise, the referee gave him a standing-eight count. Dorsey later cited the count as a "wake-up call."

The final three rounds were all Dorsey's. As the match progressed, Dorsey used fewer and fewer kicks, relying mostly on his hands to down his opponent. Nechaev, while still aggressive, appeared unable to land a blow on the champ. A battery of fists halfway through the fifth left the Russian unable to stand.



photos by Herr Wheatfield

At left, Jean-Claude Van Damme star of the action movie 'Universal Soldier' poses with French fighter Dida Diafat. Above, martial arts film star Chuck Norris promotes his 'Kick Drugs Out of America' program.

At 2:07 into the fifth round, Dorsey was declared winner by technical knockout.

Dorsey's fight headlined an International Sport Karate Association kickboxing card titled, "USA vs. The New Russia." The co-main event pitted American "Bad" Brad Hefton, the ISKA world super heavyweight champion, against Russian challenger Vitaly Klichko. Hefton went all 12 rounds with the challenger despite fighting with a bro-

ken left hand. Klichko outswung his opponent nearly every round, winning an easy unanimous decision.

Before the match, he spoke confidently of his return. When asked to compare kickboxing to boxing, he said, "It's (kickboxing) tougher; with kickboxing you try to trick 'em, try to surprise 'em."

About Nechaev, he said, "it will be the toughest fight of his life, I guarantee

that."

In undercard action, Team USA took two of three bouts from the Russians. Chris Brinkerhoff won by TKO when his opponent Victor "The Russian Pitbull" Vargodsky was declared medically unable to continue in the fifth round despite an obvious lead on points. Russian defector Marek Piotrowski made short work of

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