

Train Around your Injury

What's safe, what to adapt and how to improve

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Why This Talk Matters

Most combat athletes will deal with injuries. But the biggest challenge is not the injury itself — it is knowing **when to rest, when to train, and when to get help.**

The Mistake

Fighters either stop completely or push through pain until things get worse.

The Better Way

A structured, evidence-based approach that keeps you training through recovery.



Who This Talk Is For



Combat Athletes Training In

Athletes who want to train **consistently**, manage injuries **properly**, and avoid **long layoffs**.



Muay Thai & Boxing



Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)



Brazilian Jiu Jitsu



Multiple combat sports

How many of you have trained through an injury?

The majority of fighters will experience injuries during their training career. The real question is not *if* you get injured — it is **how you respond when you do**.

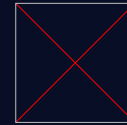
Combat Sports Injuries Are Unique

The demands of combat sports create very specific injury patterns unlike most other athletic disciplines.



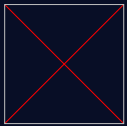
Repetitive Striking Forces

Repeated high-velocity impacts on hands, wrists, shins and feet accumulate over thousands of repetitions.



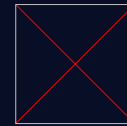
High Joint Stress

Grappling creates extreme joint loading, especially at the shoulders, spine and knees.



High Training Frequency

Multiple sessions per day and week mean recovery windows are short and cumulative fatigue builds quickly.



High Intensity Sparring

Live sparring introduces unpredictable forces that cannot be fully controlled or anticipated.

What the Research Shows

Research from the **UFC Performance Institute** has analysed injury patterns across elite MMA athletes — giving us a clearer picture of where, how, and why injuries occur in combat sports.

Where

The anatomical regions most frequently affected in training and competition.

How

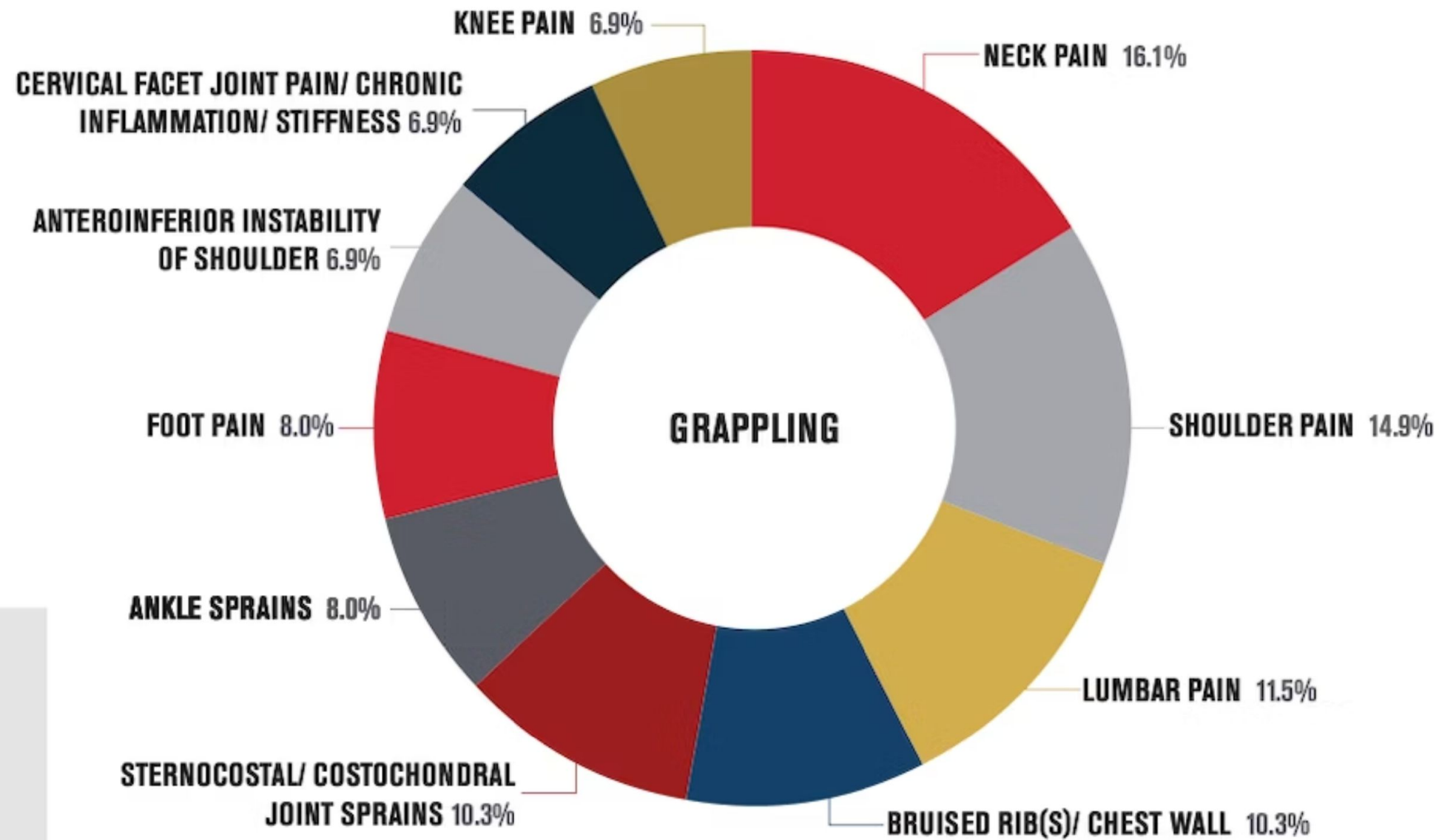
The mechanisms — impact, joint stress, overuse — that drive most injuries.

What Type

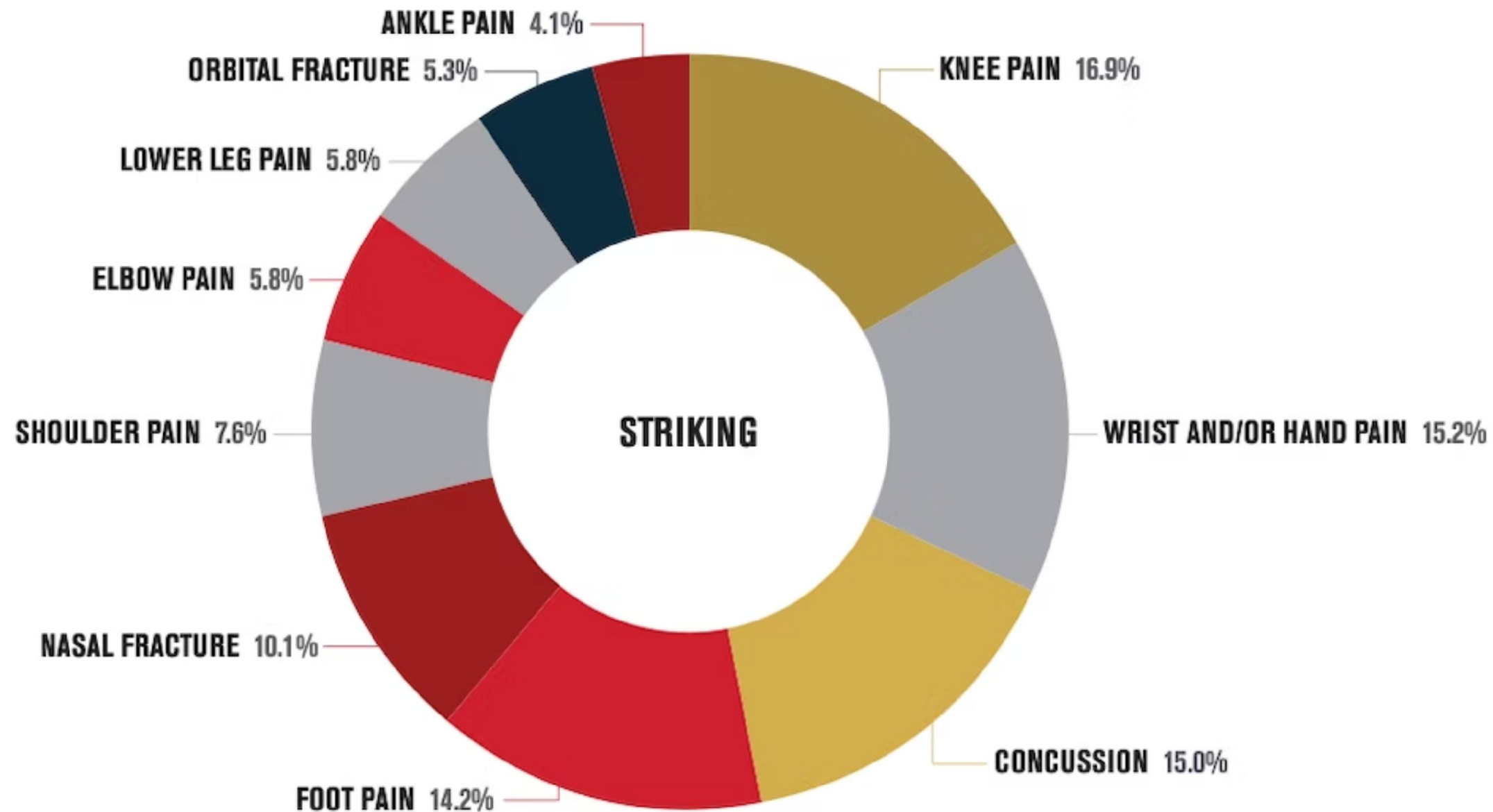
The specific injury classifications fighters are most susceptible to.



Grappling Injuries



Striking Injuries





Why Fighters Stay Injured

The most common mistakes are not about training too hard — they are about **how athletes respond** when something goes wrong.

Ignoring It

Dismissing early warning signs until a minor issue becomes a serious problem.

Training Through Severe Pain

Confusing toughness with recklessness — pushing past limits that signal real tissue damage.

Resting Too Long

Complete rest leads to deconditioning, stiffness, and a slower return to performance.

Returning Too Fast

Jumping back to full training before the body is ready dramatically increases reinjury risk.

The Real Goal of Rehabilitation

A Common Misconception

Rehabilitation is **not** about stopping training. It is about **managing training loads** intelligently while the body heals — keeping athletes active, progressing, and connected to their sport.

- ❏ The goal is never zero training. It is the **right** training at the **right** time.





Introducing the System

To help combat athletes manage injuries effectively, I use a simple, structured framework designed specifically for the demands of combat sports.

The Combat Athlete 4-Phase Rehab System

This system gives fighters a clear understanding of what stage they are in, what training is appropriate, and how progression should look at every step.



The Combat Athlete 4-Phase Rehab System

How fighters safely return to training after injury.

Phases	Goals	Training Capacity	Treatments	Progression Criteria
1. Protect	- Protect Injury - Reduce pain/swelling	No combat. - Cross train.	- Pain Management - Hands-on treatment - Activity & Recovery Education - Isometrics - Pool	- Mild pain levels - Tolerating light exercise - Adherent to daily rehab routine.
2. REBUILD	- Build foundation of strength - Reintroduce training without flare-ups.	Modified training. - Technical, lower intensity training	- Strength training - Balance & control - Return to training planning	- Near full ROM. - Strength testing - Able to tolerate moderate load without symptom increase.
3. POWER	- Restore power/speed and elasticity. - Tolerate most training	Gradual return to full training. Progressive increase in intensity.	- Power/Speed/Plyometrics - Return to spar planning	- Jump/power testing - High-intensity training tolerance. - Pre-injury strength levels - Psychological readiness.
4. PREVENT	- Minimise chance reinjury occurs. - Keep long-term resilience and performance capacity	Full training	- Addressing Risk Factors - Prevention Education - Maintenance of Combat S&C program	- Consistent training with minimal symptoms - Pre-injury power/speed/elasticity - Sustainable Injury prevention plan

☒ PHASE

1

Protect

PHASE	GOALS	TRAINING ABILITY	TREATMENTS	NEXT STAGE
CRITERIA				
1. Protect	• Protect Injury • Reduce pain/swelling	• No combat. • Cross train.	• Pain Management • Hands-on treatment • Activity & Recovery Education • Isometrics • Pool	• Mild pain levels • Tolerating light exercise • Adherent to daily rehab routine.

☒ PHASE 2

Rebuild

PHASE	GOALS	TRAINING ABILITY	TREATMENTS	NEXT STAGE
CRITERIA				
2. Rebuild	• Build foundation of strength • Reintroduce training without flare-ups.	• Modified training. • Technical, lower intensity training	• Strength training • Balance & control • Return to training planning	• Near full ROM. • Strength testing • Able to tolerate moderate load without symptom increase.

☒ PHASE 3

Power

PHASE	GOALS	TRAINING ABILITY	TREATMENTS	NEXT STAGE
CRITERIA				
3. Power	• Restore power/speed and elasticity. • Tolerate most training	Gradual return to full training. Progressive increase in intensity.	• Power/Speed/Plyometrics • Return to spar planning	• Jump/power testing • High-intensity training tolerance. • Pre-injury strength levels • Psychological readiness.

☒ PHASE 4

Prevent

4. Prevent	• Minimise chance reinjury occurs. • Keep long-term resilience and performance capacity	Full training	• Addressing Risk Factors • Prevention Education • Maintenance of Combat S&C program	• Consistent training with minimal symptoms • Pre-injury power/speed/elasticity • Sustainable Injury prevention plan
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The Key Rule for Training With Injuries

A practical guideline every fighter can apply immediately — no equipment or clinical expertise required.

Pain Threshold

Pain during exercise should generally stay at **3 out of 10 or less** on the pain scale.

Next-Day Check

Symptoms should **not worsen the following day**. Morning soreness that subsides is acceptable; escalating pain is not.

Adjust Accordingly

If pain increases significantly during or after training, **reduce loads** before progressing further.



When Should You Seek Professional Help?



Self-managing minor soreness is reasonable — but some situations require professional assessment. Consider seeking help if:



Pain has lasted **longer than couple of weeks**



Pain is **limiting your ability to train**



The **same injury** keeps returning



You are **unsure** how to **modify** training safely

Injuries are part of combat sports. They don't have to stop your **progress.**

Train as your body allows

Any training is better than no training.
Adapt as necessary

Rehab Properly

Follow a structured system that respects
where your body actually is.

Return to Full Performance

After each injury setback learn from coaches and your health team on how to improve as an athlete.



Need help?

If you want to ever chat about an injury - always up for a chat.

My instagram: @combatsportsconsulting



Stride Physiotherapy

In-clinic consultations available.

