Here at LiverKick.com we may like to keep our focus on the world of kickboxing and Muay Thai, but there's no denying that this weekend's big fight takes place in MMA where **Anderson Silva** meets
Vitor Belfort
at UFC 126. And while some MMA fights may not hold much interest for kickboxing fans, this is a stand up battle that intrigues me. Silva and Belfort are two superb stand-up talents, and their championship showdown on Saturday should pique the interest of kickboxing fans everywhere.

In the past weeks, there have been mountains of analysis on this fight, but we wanted to take a look at it from a slightly different angle. Today and tomorrow, we'll take a look at how each man has fared in exclusively stand-up competition – Silva in Muay Thai and boxing matches, and Belfort in boxing.

Now, before we dive in, let me just say that the style of striking used in boxing or Muay Thai competition is going to need to be adjusted when making the transition to Mixed Martial Arts. There are so many things you have to concern yourself with in MMA that employing what would be perfect technique in a boxing match can lead to your quick defeat under MMA rules. When you use purely Muay Thai criteria to criticize a MMA fighter's striking ability, you often fail to recognize that these are similar, but different sports. So this is not intended as a way to comprehensively assess each man's MMA striking – many MMA pundits have handled that. Instead, this is an alternative way to look at one of the most kickboxing focused MMA championship fights we are likely to see this year.

Today, we kick things off with a look at the Muay Thai and professional boxing career of the dominant, brilliant UFC Middleweight champion Anderson Silva.

Even if you are an MMA fan who knows little about full Muay Thai, it should come as no surprise that Silva has competed under these rules. He still uses a variety of Muay Thai techniques in his UFC career – the most notable being the Muay Thai clinch (or Plum Clinch as it is somewhat controversially known in MMA circles), which he used most effectively in his two destructions of Rich Franklin. He also has some nasty Muay Thai styled elbows in his arsenal, one of which he used to great success against Tony Fryklund:

Unfortunately, the world of Muay Thai competition is hard to fully document, so while Silva has definitely trained Muay Thai extensively, it's hard to know exactly how many professional fights he has competed in under these rules. Only one exists on the web, this fight against Tadeu Sammartino. No clue when this is from, but judging Silva's build I would guess somewhere around 2004-ish.

What strikes me in this fight is that although Silva is often cited as having a strong Muay Thai background, he fights here like a K-1 rules style kickboxer instead of a traditional Muay Thai fighter. He's very active on his feet, bouncing around and using a lot of side to side movement. This is a sharp contrast to the more Muay Thai style of planting your feet and checking strikes instead of evading (for a great analysis on this difference check out this discussion on Silva at My Muay Thai).

He also relies heavily on his hands, which are the lowest scoring strike in traditional Muay Thai. Silva does use kicks, but he doesn't always swivel his hips to throw them with full power, instead using them largely to get his opponent off balance in order to set up the punches. And like many of his MMA fights, it's the punches that do the real damage, including a quick punch he uses to land the first knockdown here that is very reminiscent of the Forrest Griffin KO.

Finally, while Silva is praised for his knees in the clinch, you see here that he primarily uses those knees when he has the clinch around the back of his opponent's head. On a few occasions, the two men have a body clinch, however we do not see the exchange of knees to the body so often used in Muay Thai. He has taken the aspects of Muay Thai that work for him, but is far from a traditional MT fighter.

With Silva's use of punches, and his very vocal appreciation for Roy Jones Jr., it's no shock he has tried his hand at professional boxing. The Spider is 1-1 as a pro boxer. His first fight was a loss way back in 1998, two years before his MMA debut. He faced Osmar Luiz Teixeira, 11-2 at

the time. Silva was stopped in the 2nd; I don't believe footage of this fight exists. His more well known 2nd bout took place in 2005, less than a year before his UFC debut. Here, he faced Julio Cesar De Jesus, a Brazilian fighter who has never fought before or since.

Once again, we see Silva's very active footwork on display here. As in the previous bout, Silva is constantly on the move, coming in and out of range throughout the fight. For boxing, this is a common style, and Silva uses it well. What impresses me with his movement is his knowledge of when to move and when to plant his feet in order to land power shots.

One aspect of his game that this fight really points out is Silva's defense. In this fight, as in many others, Silva relies on a combination of speed and a tough chin as his primary defense. He doesn't use his hands much to block punches, and gets tagged with a few good shots here as a result – the most notable being in the first round after Silva decides to try a little showboating. He has a tough chin, so he wades right through those shots, but they do land. This could be a concern on Saturday, as Vitor Belfort is a fighter who only needs the smallest of openings to finish a fight – just ask Wanderlei Silva or Rich Franklin what happens when you let Vitor land one good punch.

Be sure to check back tomorrow for a look at the boxing career of Vitor Belfort.