

Volume 4, Issue 1

GO 2 KARATE

MAGAZINE

LIVES IN ACTION

Inspiring Journeys of Dedication and Transformation

MASTER YOUR SKILLS

Effective Drills for Continuous Improvement

EMPOWER YOUR MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL

Free Tools and Opportunities for Growth

SPOTLIGHT

Exploring Key Issues and Influential Voices

MASTER CARLOS MACHADO

8th Degree Black Belt





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PUBLISHER'S LETTER

This publication was built with one mission in mind: to serve the entire martial arts community in one place. Within these pages, you will find training insights for students, practical guidance for parents raising young martial artists, and strategic business direction for school owners committed to building strong, sustainable academies.

Martial arts is not just technique. It is character. It is confidence. It is discipline carried from the mat into school, into business, and into life. For practitioners, it builds focus and resilience, sharpens leadership and mental toughness. For school owners, it requires both excellence in instruction and excellence in operations. In 2026, we are taking a major step forward in how we serve this community.

In our next edition, you will meet the Go2 Karate Sentinel. The Sentinel is a digital guide designed to help practitioners, parents, and prospective students find schools in their area, get answers to questions quickly, and even schedule appointments. For school owners, it will serve as a powerful connection tool, helping bridge the gap between interest and enrollment, between curiosity and commitment.

We are excited about 2026. The Sentinel represents our commitment to innovation while honoring tradition. Technology should not replace instructors; it should support them. It should not replace community; it should strengthen it.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Tracy Lee Thomas

Publisher | Founder | Go2 Karate Magazine



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EDITOR'S LETTER

Go2 Karate Magazine shines a light on the people, schools, and stories that make martial arts such a powerful force for good. My goal as editor is simple: to give you something meaningful each quarter that helps you grow, see new perspectives, and feel more connected to this community—on the mat, at home, and in everyday life.

In every issue, you'll find practical training insights, leadership and life-skills content, and real stories about martial artists who live out discipline, respect, perseverance, and service. Whether you're a parent trying to find the right school, a brand-new white belt, or an instructor shaping the next generation of black belts, this magazine is here to help guide you, encourage you, and keep you connected to a larger martial arts community that genuinely cares about helping people reach their potential.

Denise Morin

Go2 Karate Magazine | Editor



As Creative Director, my responsibility goes far beyond layout and typography. It is about honoring the spirit of martial arts through thoughtful storytelling and intentional design. Every issue we produce is guided by a commitment to authenticity, excellence, and respect for the disciplines we represent.

Our editorial team works tirelessly to bring you meaningful features, in-depth interviews, and practical insights from respected instructors and athletes around the world. We believe powerful content deserves equally powerful presentation. That is why our design process focuses on clarity, balance, and visual impact—ensuring every page reflects the energy, discipline, and precision of the martial arts lifestyle.

From the first concept to the final print, we strive to create an experience that informs, inspires, and elevates our readers. Our goal is simple: deliver content that honors tradition while pushing creative boundaries forward.

Jason Smith

Go2 Karate Magazine | Creative Director



Interview with Carlos Machado

By Go2 Karate

Dr. Greg Moody:

Welcome everybody. I'm honored today to be joined by Master Carlos Machado—ten-time Brazilian national champion, eighth-degree coral belt, and founder of the Carlos Machado Jiu-Jitsu Association. You're one of the living legends of our art, sir, and I'm thrilled to talk with you.

Carlos Machado:

Thank you, Dr. Moody. It's truly my pleasure. I've admired your work in the martial-arts community, and I'm happy to be here.

Dr. Greg Moody:

Let's start at the beginning. What was it like growing up in the Machado family and being surrounded by the Gracies?

Carlos Machado:

It was like growing up in a dojo that never closed! My family is directly related to the Gracies. My mother was a Gracie. Jiu-Jitsu wasn't something we did after school; it was part of our identity. My earliest memories are of mats, gis drying in the sun, and my mother driving me to train with Grandmaster Hélio Gracie when I was just four years old. Later I trained with Carlson Gracie, then Rolls Gracie, and finally Carlos Gracie Jr., who became my lifelong instructor and mentor. Imagine cousins, brothers, and uncles all rolling together on the floor every day—competition mixed with affection. There was always a hierarchy on the mat. Everyone knew who the top fighter was that week, and if you relaxed, someone would happily remind you. But it was family. We pushed each other because we loved each other.





Dr. Greg Moody:

So, there was no escape. You were born into Jiu-Jitsu.

Carlos Machado:

Exactly. There was no point when I “started”; I was just in it. We’d train before school, after school, weekends, and holidays. Even at birthday parties we ended up grappling on the living-room floor. It wasn’t only technique; it was lifestyle. We learned respect, humility, and discipline long before we understood those words.

Dr. Greg Moody:

That sounds intense but special.

Carlos Machado:

It was. There was pressure, of course. When your teacher is your uncle or cousin, you feel an obligation to perform. I remember butterflies every class, but that pressure forged character. You learned not to quit.

Dr. Greg Moody:

When did you start competing seriously?

Carlos Machado:

I started to compete in the mid to late ‘60s, and by my teens, I was competing every month. Competition taught me about fear, how to live with it rather than avoid it. In Brazil, especially in Rio, tournaments were tough; there was no mercy on the mat. But competition also built empathy. Win or lose, you learned that everyone there had sacrificed something to be present. That lesson later shaped how I teach—helping students overcome fear, not just perfect technique.

Dr. Greg Moody:

You didn’t initially plan to be an instructor. When did that change?

Carlos Machado:

When I was about fifteen, I became an assistant instructor. At first, I would just cover some gaps in the schedule and help out during the classes. Even back then I spoke English as a second language, so whenever we had visiting foreigners, I was mainly the guy that would teach the class because I was more fluent in English than my instructors. I still remember the spark I felt seeing those students grasp a concept. Teaching gave me a rush I hadn’t felt even from winning matches.



I finished high school, went to college, and then on to law school. I still was teaching throughout, and it came to a point where I had to choose between the suit and the Jiu Jitsu uniform. I thought, the weather's too hot here in Rio for me to sweat in a suit. If I'm going to sweat, I might as well sweat in a gi. My father, a very influential high-court judge, had my career all planned out. He expected me to be a lawyer, but I'd realized the courtroom just wasn't my battlefield. With teaching, I felt that power that you have to influence and change people's lives through the martial arts, and I couldn't back away from that. For me, it was a natural choice. Once I made my decision, the rest was history. I told my father, "Dad, I love you, but I'm going to keep sweating, just not in a suit."

Dr. Greg Moody:

He accepted that?

Carlos Machado:

To his credit, yes. He said, "If this is truly what you want, then do it fully." That blessing gave me courage, and once I started teaching full-time, I never looked back.

Dr. Greg Moody:

That's wonderful. I'm glad you had the better experience than me. When I told my father I wanted to leave my engineering career to open a Taekwondo school, he was mad at me, wouldn't talk to me for a couple of days. He didn't understand what we did or the culture or anything about it. It took him a bit to come around.

Carlos Machado:

I've heard that story many times! I've had students who were in medical school, others like yourself in engineering, and they had their career path. They had envisioned everything that their parents had planned for them, that they had planned for themselves, and then they had a change of heart or a calling, if you will. Parents fear uncertainty for their kids, but once they see your happiness and success, they understand. I tell my students: do what sets your soul on fire, not what others prescribe for you. Running a school is a dream, but it's not easy. You need passion, yes, but also systems, structure, and humility. Many school owners fail not because they lack skill, but because they try to do everything alone. I learned that leadership means investing in people. It took years to realize I must train my staff the way I train my students. You can't plant a tree and walk away; you must water it every day.

Dr. Greg Moody:

That's great imagery.

Carlos Machado:

One of my major successes was focusing on my

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staff more. Many times, in delegating, I'd leave them be when they were not ready to walk on their own feet. That wasn't good for anyone—not me, not them, and not the students. When you've created structure, and you've created a system, the engine will run smoothly whether you are there or not. When you nurture your team, they grow, and the school becomes self-sustaining. Ignore them, and the whole structure collapses. Relationships, I always say, take you to the bliss or to the abyss.

Dr. Greg Moody:

You came to the U.S. in 1990. How did that happen?

Carlos Machado:

My brother Rigan came first, before the original Gracie Academy in Torrance opened. Rorion Gracie asked him to help because Jiu-Jitsu was exploding in Los Angeles. After a year, Rigan returned home for a visit and said to my brother John and me, "You guys need to come and see this." I was doing well in Brazil then, teaching by the beach, enjoying life, but long-term opportunities were limited. In the U.S., there was potential to build something bigger. So, we took the leap. Initially, we helped at the Gracie Academy, but it was crowded and space was limited. We decided to go independent. That's when

fate introduced me to Chuck Norris.

Dr. Greg Moody:

That's quite a connection. How did you meet him?

Carlos Machado:

Chuck had already been training with my cousins. When he heard the Machado brothers were in California, he came to meet us. From the first session, we clicked. He was a dedicated student, arrived early, took notes, trained hard. At that time, he was doing classes with us in our garage, or he would invite us to his home gym, and we would do our training there. By the way, that Total Gym that you see in his commercial, he really does that thing; he was doing amazing workouts with it.

He and Bob Wall owned a shopping center in Redondo Beach and offered us a space rent-free for a year. That generosity gave us a home and the confidence to grow. Later, when Chuck moved to Dallas to film Walker, Texas Ranger, he told me, "Carlos, you should come to Texas. There's no Jiu-Jitsu there. You can plant the flag. I'll even put you on the show until your school grows."

Dr. Greg Moody:

Did you take him up on it?





Carlos Machado:

Of course! I asked if I'd get my own trailer, and he said yes. I moved to Texas and never looked back. On Walker, Texas Ranger, I did several stunt roles—usually getting beaten up by Chuck. There's one episode, Rodeo, where my brothers and I play ourselves, training him in the ring followed by a bar-fight scene. It's still on YouTube. Chuck became more than a friend; he's family. His kindness helped my entire family establish itself in the U.S.

Dr. Greg Moody:

You went from that small school to one of the world's leading Jiu-Jitsu associations. What makes your approach unique?

Carlos Machado:

We run it like a family business built on professionalism. Every affiliate gets structure: curriculum, lesson plans, instructor certification, business guidance, and community support. Beyond the mechanics, we teach how to teach.

Many associations focus on techniques; we focus on communication, empathy, and engagement. Twice a year we host major camps, in the spring and fall, with 300-500 participants. They're part training, part education, and part celebration. We bring guest instructors, motivational speakers, and even vendors from the martial-arts industry. I always have a goal in sight to make sure that people have a uniquely memorable experience. The motto of my seminars is: I don't want you to be the same once we're done. It feels like a family reunion with gis. I also host weekly Zoom calls with affiliates around the world. We review monthly lesson plans, discuss teaching methods, and troubleshoot challenges together. It keeps everyone connected and accountable.

Dr. Greg Moody:

That's impressive!

Carlos Machado:

Thank you. My belief is simple: a rising tide lifts all boats. When my affiliates succeed, we all succeed.

Dr. Greg Moody:

You've coached world champions and complete beginners. How do you adjust for different kinds of students?

Carlos Machado:

I see Jiu-Jitsu as a puzzle with three parts: position, objective, and transition. First, you identify where you are. Second, you understand what you want. Third, you find the safest way to get there. That framework works for anyone.

Control always comes before submission. Beginners chase taps; experts chase control. True power is calmness. I've shown 110-pound women how to neutralize 400-pound men through positioning and leverage. Jiu-Jitsu is physics and patience.

I'm a believer that growth happens in small increments. That's how you really sustain long-term growth. Beginners have a leap; a lot of times

everything's big for them. They learn one little thing here, oh my gosh, I've never dreamed of this move. This is amazing. Then they learn another one. As you build up your knowledge, things get smaller. So, it's not so much about what you know as are you patient? Are you taking your time? Are you securing that position first before you go? Are you anticipating?

I teach the Rule of Three: for every move, imagine three outcomes—best case, worst case, and something in between. If you can adapt among those, you can thrive anywhere, in combat or in business.

Dr. Greg Moody:

That's universal wisdom.

Carlos Machado:

Exactly. I once spoke to corporate attorneys about negotiation using Jiu-Jitsu principles: never meet force with force, redirect it. The art is problem-solving under pressure, and that's life.

Dr. Greg Moody:

Many of our readers come from Taekwondo, Karate, or Krav Maga. How can they benefit from your system?

Carlos Machado:

Traditional schools already excel at structure, discipline, and kids' programs. Jiu-Jitsu complements that beautifully. It brings a new adult audience and keeps existing students longer.

It also protects culture. Too often a school brings in an outside Jiu-Jitsu instructor who builds a following and leaves, taking students with him. By learning the Machado Method, the owner controls the curriculum and the culture. I'll show you my structure, my system, the ranking progression, the chart, the timelines, the lesson plans, and all the things you need to know.

One of my affiliates, a Taekwondo master in South Carolina, began as a white belt in Jiu-Jitsu. Some

people mocked him online: "How can you teach Jiu-Jitsu as a white belt?" Within four months he had eighty Jiu-Jitsu students, more than the black belt who criticized him. He followed the system, stayed humble, and succeeded. For Jiu-Jitsu schools, the reverse is true. They often lack the structure that traditional arts have. When they adopt those systems, they become unstoppable.

Dr. Greg Moody:

You've also done powerful work with veterans and law enforcement. Tell us more.

Carlos Machado:

I've partnered with organizations like AHERO and We Defy Foundation. We use Jiu-Jitsu to help veterans deal with PTSD and reintegration. About a quarter of my students are former military. On the mat, rank and background disappear. You're just another teammate, sweating and improving. That sense of belonging heals.

With law enforcement, our focus is control and restraint—minimal force, maximum safety. We teach officers to de-escalate without striking. It's about keeping both officer and citizen safe while reducing liability for departments. The challenge is time. Most academies give new officers only a few days of defensive-tactics training. You can't master control in three days. So, we give them principles they can retain: balance, posture, and distance management. It's deeply rewarding when officers tell me, "That one move saved my life."

Dr. Greg Moody:

Where do you see Jiu-Jitsu heading in the next decade?

Carlos Machado:

It's expanding faster than ever. You have so many different areas; you have the competition, the self-defense, the lifestyle, the niches like law enforcement, military training, mental health, and therapeutical use of it. It's so vast, but growth brings challenges. The biggest danger is lack of

business understanding, and what system is going to be in place for the businesses to remain solid. During the pandemic, I saw dozens of schools close because they had no systems. In Texas, we reopened sooner, and those with structure survived. Passion is essential, but passion without organization is chaos. The new generation must learn marketing, communication, and leadership. If they combine business acumen with martial-arts integrity, the art will flourish for centuries.

I think the market has been more unforgiving, because there are more schools everywhere. There is more marketing knowledge available. If you don't use it, you are the one who will lose. It's not a race to see who gets ahead, it's a race to see how long those who are not trying to upgrade themselves are going to last if they don't invest in their education and implement what they need to in order to make their businesses better.

Dr. Greg Moody:

So, if they don't continuously grow, they're probably going to die. I think that ties right into my next question: what is your top advice for school owners?

Carlos Machado:

Invest in your education—not just on the mat but learn how to run a business. Study leadership. Hire mentors. If you stop learning, you start dying. There's also a mindset issue I call the poverty mentality—the belief that making money means you've betrayed the martial arts. That's nonsense. Financial stability allows you to help more people, build better facilities, and create careers for your team. Work hard, stay humble, and document everything: curriculum, staff procedures, marketing. Structure gives you freedom. Once systems are in place, you can delegate and focus on what you love most: teaching and inspiring.

Dr. Greg Moody:

That's solid counsel.



Carlos Machado:

It's scary to go out there on your own, and it takes work and effort. I don't know anybody who's accomplished anything in life who didn't have to work hard for it. It may become easier once you get there; you might have more funds to hire more people, delegate more, and create a larger scale where your presence is not as necessary, but until that happens, guess what? You've got to do your diligence before you get the benefits.

I remind instructors: everybody wants to live the dream, but few want to do the work. Early on, I cleaned mats, answered phones, fixed toilets...you

COVER STORY

name it. There's honor in that. Those moments built my foundation.

Dr. Greg Moody:

What do you hope your legacy will be?

Carlos Machado:

I hope people will say I helped them find balance, on the mat and in life. My goal isn't to produce champions; it's to produce better human beings. Jiu-Jitsu is a vehicle for self-discovery. When students realize that control doesn't mean domination but understanding, that's victory.

I also want my instructors to outgrow me. If the next generation surpasses what we built, that's success. The art should evolve. We're custodians, not owners, of Jiu-Jitsu.

Dr. Greg Moody:

That's beautiful.

Carlos Machado:

Thank you. I still consider myself a student. Every seminar, every conversation teaches me something new. That humility keeps me fresh and connected.

Dr. Greg Moody:

This has been incredible. Any final message for our

readers?

Carlos Machado:

Yes. Remember why you started. Whether you're a white belt or a school owner with decades of experience, keep your beginner's mind. Don't let ego or fear stop you from learning and surround yourself with people who share your passion. Martial arts is not a solo journey; it's a collective evolution.

I'm grateful to you, Dr. Moody, and to Grand Master Oliver for what you do, educating, guiding, and inspiring instructors. We're all on the same mission: to use martial arts as a tool to build better communities and better people.

Dr. Greg Moody:

Thank you, Master Machado. Your insights are invaluable, and your humility is inspiring.

Carlos Machado:

Thank you, sir. It's been an honor and a pleasure. I look forward to rolling again, on the mat or in conversation, anytime.

Every quarter, the Go2 Karate Recognition Board



Carlos Machado is one of the most influential pioneers of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu in North America. A member of the legendary Machado family, he trained alongside his Gracie cousins and helped introduce Brazilian Jiu Jitsu to the United States in the early 1990s. Known as the "Godfather of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu" in America, he blends strong traditional fundamentals with modern innovation, making the art effective and accessible to practitioners of all levels.

A multiple time Pan American and World Champion, Carlos has coached thousands of students worldwide, including elite competitors, law enforcement professionals, and celebrities. An 8th Degree Coral Belt, he is the founder of the Carlos Machado Jiu Jitsu Association and continues to empower students through confidence, discipline, and resilience.



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”

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Lifetime Recognition Award

By **Go2 Karate**

honors a martial artist whose life and leadership rise above the ordinary. This month, we recognize a man whose impact reaches far beyond the walls of his schools, Grand Master Sergio Von Schmeling.

Grand Master Von Schmeling is a 9th Degree Black Belt and the founder of Victory Martial Arts, one of the most respected and successful martial arts organizations in the United States and Worldwide. Born in Paraguay, the seventh of ten children, he began working at age seven to help support his family. Though raised in poverty, his parents instilled in him a belief that would shape his destiny. That greatness was possible through discipline, faith, and

perseverance.

At the age of twelve, he discovered martial arts. By eighteen, he had earned his Black Belt and quickly distinguished himself as one of the most accomplished martial artists in his country. He opened his first school soon after, building leaders and expanding into multiple successful locations. In 1993, he brought his vision to the United States. What began as a single school has grown into more than 45 locations nationwide, with the Victory curriculum now taught in over 1,000 schools worldwide.

For more than three decades, his mission has



LIFETIME RECOGNITION AWARD



remained unwavering. That is to inspire, educate, and elevate children, families, and communities to reach their highest potential. His life skills-based philosophy develops confident, disciplined leaders grounded in respect, integrity, and perseverance. He is truly a mentor of mentors and a Master of building people as much as programs. His leadership, wisdom, and example have taught us lessons that extend far beyond martial arts.

His story is also a powerful reminder of how opportunity and exposure can shape a life. Grand Master Von Schmeling often reflects on a moment from his childhood when his family had just moved from the countryside to the city. The school in his poor neighborhood was full, so he was sent to one several miles away in a much wealthier district. There he was invited to a classmate's home and experienced things he had never seen before, electricity and finished floors. That experience opened his eyes to a different way of living and planted a seed that would influence his ambitions for the rest of his life. As he often explains, people cannot want what they have never seen.

That belief continues to guide Victory Martial Arts' culture today. By exposing students and instructors to higher standards, leadership opportunities, and a strong sense of community, he has created an environment where people grow not only as martial artists but as individuals. Over decades of dedication, Grand Master Sergio Von Schmeling has shown that, at its highest level, martial arts is truly the art of living.

It is with great respect that we recognize Grand Master Sergio Von Schmeling for his legacy of excellence and those lives he has truly transformed.



Born in rural Paraguay in 1964, Grand Master Sergio Von Schmeling rose from poverty to become the founder and CEO of Victory Martial Arts, one of the largest organizations in the U.S.. Discovering Taekwondo at age twelve, he opened his first school in Paraguay by eighteen, fueled by a lifelong obsession with growth and faith. Today, he oversees over 40 schools and the Victory Legacy Foundation, dedicated to philanthropy in South America. A dedicated student of Tony Robbins, Sergio continues to innovate, teaching that true martial arts is the “art of living”.

Barefoot on the Mat: Finding Confidence Together

By Sarah Baltuch

When I was nine years old, my parents and I went out to dinner with another family we had been close friends with for years. At the end of the meal, it was time for their son to go to his Taekwondo class, and my parents asked if I wanted to watch. I was incredibly curious because at that time, I was not involved in any sports, and I wanted to see what made this class so exciting for my friend.

After watching him teach his class, I could see that the physical movements, combined with fun drills, exercises, and a competitive spirit, were exactly what I had been missing. I still remember the sharp snap of uniforms as students punched and kicked, the squeak of bare feet on the mat, and the loud, confident shouts that echoed across the dojang. The energy in the room felt electric. I immediately ran back to my parents and begged them to let me try a class. While they were hesitant at first, since I was known to be an incredibly clumsy kid who injured myself quite frequently, they saw how excited I was and agreed.

In that first class, I learned the basics of punching and kicking, how to maintain a strong stance, and the beginnings of a form. Of every sport and activity I had tried before, I had never felt like I immediately belonged. But that night, standing barefoot on the mat in a borrowed uniform that felt slightly too big, something clicked. From then on, I was hooked, and my parents knew that Taekwondo

would be the sport I would stick with for years, and eventually, it turned into a lifelong passion.

Before long, I was at the dojang every night and every weekend, taking classes and stepping into leadership roles with other students. I moved up the ranks, throwing myself into everything I could learn, whether it was traditional forms, weapons training, or self-defense techniques. As I got older, I became more interested in becoming an instructor. I began helping teach classes as a student instructor and fell in love with the sport all over again, this time from the perspectives of both student and teacher.



FAMILY SPOTLIGHT



A year after I started, my mom decided it was her turn to try Taekwondo. She saw how much I enjoyed it and thought it might be something we could do together. She participated in a Mother's Day event where she could take a class alongside me, and we both remember laughing as we trained side by side for the first time. She fell in love just as I had, and for years afterward, we learned and taught together as a mother-daughter duo. We went to tournaments together, taught classes together, and trained at home together. To this day, we both look back fondly on the times we trained in self-defense side by side, tested for our black belts, or went home to practice combat sparring, which usually meant laughing and falling over as we hit each other like we were playing whack-a-mole.

Through our shared passion, experiences, and goals in Taekwondo, my mom felt she had developed a deeper relationship with me. What she truly loved most was seeing how much I grew as a person because of it. I went from being so shy that I could not talk to anyone (my parents had to order for me

at restaurants) to teaching a class of over thirty children at once and leading a week long summer camp. She watched my confidence and self esteem grow tremendously with every belt I earned and every class I helped lead.

For me, the dojang became my home away from home, and the people there became my second family. No matter what else was going on in my life, whether it was bullying at school, the passing of loved ones, or just the everyday stress of growing up, Taekwondo was always what I could turn to find myself and be the truest version of who I am. It gave me discipline, confidence, and a sense of belonging when I needed it most.

My life was forever changed the day we decided to watch that Taekwondo class, and changed again when my mom decided to join me. What began as simple curiosity became a lifelong passion and a bond between us that we will both hold dearly for the rest of our lives.



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THE LONG WAY AROUND: From Antarctica to Leadership

By Dwayne Flees

I didn't enlist in the Coast Guard chasing glory. I enlisted because I was leaving. As a young man unsure of my direction, I was drawn to structure. After working under a demanding German mechanic who valued precision above comfort, I learned that standards build competence. Still, life felt uncertain, so I called the recruiter.

I thought I was running away from my life. What I didn't know was that it would take me all the way to Antarctica.

Lessons from the Service

My first duty station was aboard a polar-class icebreaker homeported in Seattle, Washington. Icebreakers aren't built for speed. They're built for impact. They have thick, reinforced hulls and a blunt bow designed to withstand heavy force. When the ice is too thick to push through, the ship uses a "back-and-ram" maneuver—reversing to gain momentum, then driving forward to break the ice. Icebreakers can force their way through ice up to 22 feet thick.





You knew when you were in the ice. The grinding steel would wake you in the middle of the night, but the mission didn't stop. You coffeeed up and turned to.

Boot camp stripped away my ego, and pressure revealed my character. In boot camp, a four-inch strip of polished chrome ran across the floor. It had to stay spotless. You didn't step on it, you stepped over it. Later, on the ship, you stepped over real watertight hatches for safety. Discipline became habit before it ever became a necessity.

At the USCG Rescue Station Calumet Harbor, I learned integrity under authority. That station taught me what integrity truly means.

From the Deck to the Dojo

Years later, with the guidance of my instructors and mentors, I refined my leadership and integrated it into KarateBuilt Grand Rapids. I kept the structure, standards, and attention to detail I learned in the military, but I left intimidation behind.

In my dojo, that same focus carries through:

- **Proper structure** — strong foundation before force
- **Beginning Position** — preparation before action
- **Full chamber** — complete commitment to movement
- **Focused eyes** — awareness beyond the immediate target
- **Controlled breath** — calm under pressure
- **Holding the stance longer** — strength built through discomfort

The details matter. They always have.

Defining Strength

Resilience is built in controlled adversity. Strength, as I define it now, is steadiness.

It is staying calm when the school is broken into.

It is pivoting to online classes during a pandemic.

VETERAN'S CORNER

Looking back:

- Boot camp taught resilience.
- Antarctica taught perspective.
- USCG Rescue Station Calumet Harbor taught integrity.

The military forged the steel, and martial arts tempered it.

When I enlisted, I thought I was running away from my life, and ended up in Antarctica.

The sound of steel being forged isn't much different than a ship grinding through ice, pressure reshaping metal under force.

Looking back, I wasn't running away.

I was being forged.



Dwayne L. Flees is a U.S. Coast Guard veteran, author of *Life Stinks When Your Kid's a Jerk*, and Sr. Chief Instructor of KarateBuilt Grand Rapids. He has taught martial arts in the West Michigan area for over 20 years, focusing on discipline, integrity, and steady leadership under pressure. In addition to operating his martial arts academy, he serves as a College Assistant Instructor in Criminal Justice, bringing real-world military and leadership experience into the classroom.



GO2KARATE

Free Live Event: Stop Bullying!

...and Get More Students!

Learn how integrating tailored martial arts programs into your curriculum can lay the Groundwork for Lifelong Success

📅 **Date:** April 22nd 2026

🕒 **Time:** 1:00 pm

📍 **Location:**

Go2karate.com/bully-prevention

Join our exclusive webinar for martial arts instructors and learn how to turn bully prevention into a powerful promotional tool for your school. Why more of your kids that come into martial arts are getting bullied.

- The ones that come to your schools and getting bullied...50% of their parents don't know.
- How getting a Black Belt (or equivalent in your style) can be the number one thing parents can do to prevent bullying - and how to promote that in your community.
- How to make sure your kids don't bully others (and more importantly how to prove to parents/schools/organizations you want to work with that martial arts prevents bullying.

Reserve your spot now and take the first step towards becoming a leader in innovative martial arts training for children.

Register Today and Make a Difference



Spaces are limited

– secure your place in this transformative seminar and start making a profound impact in the lives of young students.

A Day in the Life of a Karate Master

By Steven Seme

When people hear “Karate Master,” they picture breaking boards, shouting commands, and pulling off techniques that look like movie scenes. The real life of a Karate Master is built on routine, discipline, responsibility, and service. It’s early mornings and late evenings. It’s having inspiring conversations and cleaning the mats!

My day starts early in the morning with one to two hours of exercise to set the tone of the day. Cardio to build endurance, resistance training to stay strong, and stretching to stay mobile. At this stage in my life, training isn’t about proving anything. It’s personal. It reinforces consistency and sharpens discipline, and it reminds me that progress comes from small, repeated, consistent effort, not

motivation. I can’t ask a student to push themselves if I’m not willing to do it myself. Leading by example is imperative.

After training comes a healthy breakfast and, of course, coffee! A martial arts school doesn’t run on roundhouse kicks alone. It runs on structure. As my workday begins, I review appointments, check my schedule for upcoming enrollment conferences, and start calling new leads. This part of the job requires patience, compassion, and empathy. Families aren’t just buying lessons. They’re looking for guidance, confidence, and structure for their child. My role is to listen carefully and speak clearly. No pressure. No hype. Just honest conversations about whether we’re the right fit.





Mid-morning through early afternoon I focus on community outreach, relationship building, content creation, and marketing. Marketing, when done correctly, is sharing the message that we provide a solution for families looking to help their children grow their discipline, self-control, and resilience. A martial arts school can't serve people who don't know it exists and don't realize the benefits it has to offer.

After lunch, I go to the school. Before the first class begins, our staff meets to review new families joining us for the night as well as discuss existing students who may need extra encouragement or correction. We assign instructors to classes and clarify roles for each staff member. Clear communication of expectations is the glue that ensures the staff is working together to meet the standards set every night. When the staff is aligned, the students feel it.

Once classes begin, every student is greeted by name. Belts are tied, students warm up with good old-fashioned calisthenics, techniques are practiced, and Life Skills are reinforced on the mat in between drills. A good class balances high energy and control but most importantly, it imparts knowledge. Students should sweat, but they should also think and grow. Teaching is the visible part of the job, but it's not a performance. It's leadership. Every correction must be firm but respectful. Every challenge must stretch the student without breaking their confidence. We talk about goals, about behavior at home and school, and we stress commitment. A Black Belt is not a product; it's a process. Families need to understand that from day one.

When the last student leaves, the day isn't over. The staff meets again. We review how the night went. Who had breakthroughs? Who struggled?

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MASTER

What conversations were had with parents? Are there follow-ups needed? Alignment matters. If one instructor sees something important, everyone on the staff needs to know.

Then we clean. Floors are swept and mats disinfected. Equipment is organized, bathrooms are cleaned, and the front desk reset. There's something satisfying about cleaning the space you teach in. It reinforces humility. No matter your rank or title, you take care of the environment that serves your students. As I was once told "Every job has a toilet that needs cleaning!"

I often joke that the life of a martial arts instructor can be summed up like this: "Clean the mats, tie belts, teach wizard stuff, clean the mats." There's truth in that humor! Being a Karate Master isn't standing above others; it's carrying responsibility for them. It's modeling composure when things get chaotic and optimism when challenges appear. It's showing up prepared and doing the unseen work that allows students to grow safely and confidently.

Then you do it again tomorrow.

That's "**Might for Right!**"



Steven Seme is a dedicated martial arts school owner and instructor who has devoted his career to helping children and families grow stronger—both physically and emotionally. As the founder of a thriving karate school, he coaches hundreds of students each week, teaching not only martial arts techniques but also essential life skills such as self-control, independence, resilience, and optimism. He is the author of *Can't Be Broken: Secrets for Raising Resilient Kids*, where he shares practical tools to help parents raise confident, emotionally strong children prepared to overcome life's challenges.

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Building Excellence Beyond the Mat

By Rev Publish

There are martial arts instructors, and then there are leaders who shape families.

Adam Theros has always been the latter. As the driving force behind Northwest Indiana Martial Arts Academy, Theros has spent years working shoulder to shoulder with parents who want more for their children, more confidence, more resilience, more discipline, and more purpose. With the release of his #1 Best Seller Book, *Make Your Kid Do Stuff! How Parents Build Excellence*, he has taken that mission far beyond the walls of his academy.

Published by Rev Publish, the book is not a fluffy parenting guide or a collection of motivational quotes. It is a direct, honest, sometimes uncomfortable conversation about what it really takes to raise strong, capable young people. Theros challenges parents to stop confusing comfort with love and to start embracing structure, standards, and accountability as powerful acts of care.

The response has been undeniable. Becoming an Amazon #1 Best Seller is more than a title. It is proof that families are hungry for this message. In a culture that often leans toward overprotection

and lowered expectations, Theros offers something refreshingly grounded. Excellence is built through challenge. Confidence is earned. Discipline comes before self-discipline. And yes, sometimes you really do have to make your kid do stuff.

What makes Theros' voice resonate so deeply is that he is not speaking from theory. He lives this every day. In the dojang, he watches shy children find their voice. He sees distracted students learn focus. He coaches parents through moments when quitting would be easier than pushing forward. His philosophy is forged in real conversations, real belt tests, real failures, and real breakthroughs.

In the book, he blends practical parenting strategy with the structured



AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

mindset of martial arts training. He talks about empathy without weakness, discipline without crushing a child's spirit, and letting kids fail without rescuing them from every uncomfortable feeling. He reframes parenting as an investment with a real return measured in character, resilience, and long-term success.

That perspective has helped solidify his place as a true influencer within the martial arts world. Influence is not about followers. It is about impact. Theros has influenced instructors to rethink how

they partner with parents. He has influenced families to raise their standards. He has influenced students to see discipline not as punishment, but as a pathway to freedom and confidence.

At its heart, *Make Your Kid Do Stuff!* is not about control. It is preparation, raising children who can handle discomfort, pursue excellence, and grow into strong, capable adults. Adam Theros is not just building black belts; he is helping build leaders, and that influence continues to grow.



Master Adam Theros is the Owner and Chief Instructor of Northwest Indiana Martial Arts Academy. He began training in October 1993 through the World Tang Soo Do Association and has trained continuously ever since. He earned his first-degree black belt in 1998 and was promoted to fourth-degree black belt, Master Instructor, in 2016 after completing the required two-year testing process. Master Theros has been teaching since 2002 and opened Northwest Indiana Martial Arts Academy in 2013, which has grown to serve more than 200 students. He is also the author of the bestselling book *Make Your Kids Do Stuff!* and is known locally for his work teaching anti-bullying programs in schools and the community.

In Memoriam

Honoring the Martial Artists We've Lost

In 2026, we bid farewell to martial arts legends—teachers, pioneers, and visionaries whose impact transcended borders and styles. Go2 Karate Magazine honors their memory, celebrates their legacy, and extends heartfelt condolences to their families, students, and the communities they touched.



GARY ALEXANDER

APRIL 5, 1938 - SEPTEMBER 25, 2025

An American karate pioneer, full-contact competitor, instructor, and author. Known as the “First International Bare Knuckle Contact Karate Champion,” he helped bridge traditional karate with early full-contact competition formats, and he influenced the evolution of modern sport karate.



ISAAC JOHNSON

CIRCA 1994 - NOVEMBER 22, 2025

An American heavyweight Muay Thai and mixed-rules combat sports competitor. His death following injuries sustained during a sanctioned bout brought national attention to fighter safety standards, medical oversight, and emergency protocols in amateur combat sports events.



CARY-HIROYUKI TAGAWA

SEPTEMBER 27, 1950 - DECEMBER 4, 2025

A Japanese-American actor and martial arts practitioner, best known for portraying Shang Tsung in Mortal Kombat and Minister Tagomi in The Man in the High Castle. His work helped bring martial arts villains and antiheroes into mainstream Western cinema.

IN MEMORIAM



YUEN CHEUNG-YAN

1957 – JANUARY 1, 2026

A Hong Kong martial arts actor, stuntman, fight choreographer, and director from the legendary Yuen family. He contributed to the choreography and action design of numerous kung fu films, helping shape the visual style of Hong Kong action cinema for decades.



TADAO YASUDA

OCTOBER 9, 1963 – FEBRUARY 8, 2026

A Japanese sumo wrestler turned professional wrestler and mixed martial artist. A former IWGP Heavyweight Champion, he uniquely bridged the worlds of sumo, pro wrestling, and MMA, and became internationally known after his upset victory over Jérôme Le Banner in PRIDE FC.

ECHOES OF THEIR IMPACT

The loss of these masters leaves us with both grief and gratitude. Their teachings echo each time a student bows onto the floor, finds courage in a sparring round, or chooses respect over rage. As we move through 2026, and as Go2 Karate continues its mission of uniting the martial arts community, let us honor their memory by:

- Practicing with the sincerity they demanded.
- Sharing knowledge freely, as they did.
- Serving our own students and neighborhoods with the same passion for personal growth and service.

May we train harder, live kinder, and bow a little deeper, because giants once stood where we now stand.

Last updated February 19, 2026. If you know of another martial artist who has passed this year and should be remembered, please let the editors at Go2 Karate Magazine know by submitting their information here: <https://wkf.ms/47IUINp>

Martial Arts Isn't Just for Black Belts Anymore

By Go2 Karate

Walk past any strip mall in America, and there's a good chance you'll spot a martial arts studio wedged between the pizza place and the nail salon. And honestly, there's a reason for that. People are showing up: kids, parents, twenty-somethings, retirees, and they're not leaving.

The numbers back it up. The U.S. martial arts industry now has over 72,000 businesses operating across the country. That's not a niche hobby. That's a movement.

But here's what the stats don't tell you: why people are walking through those doors.

For teenagers, it's not always about learning to fight. It's about having somewhere to go where your phone doesn't matter, and nobody's performing for an audience. You show up, you work hard, you earn something. A stripe, a belt, a nod from your instructor, real feedback in a world that's otherwise pretty noisy and fake. Teens are hungry for a grounded, no-nonsense environment.





For adults, a lot of it comes down to burnout. The gym gets old, running gets boring, but sparring with a partner on a Tuesday night never gets boring. Muay Thai, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, kickboxing, these aren't just workouts; they're puzzle-solving with your whole body. You leave exhausted and somehow also lighter.

And for parents? The conversation is changing too. More families are training together now, which a decade ago would have seemed unusual. Mom takes the evening BJJ class while her kid is down the hall in karate. That's just a normal Wednesday now. And when a parent watches their shy eight-year-old walk taller after six months on the mat, they stop thinking of martial arts as an extracurricular and start thinking of it as essential.

What's really shifted is the culture inside these studios. It's less intimidating, more inclusive, and one of the more genuinely welcoming communities you'll find. The old image of a stern, silent dojo is giving way to something warmer, but no less serious about the craft.

Mom takes the evening BJJ class while her kid is down the hall in karate. That's just a normal Wednesday now.

Martial arts have always built discipline. But in a world where so much of life happens through screens, they're also building something most of us are quietly desperate for: connection.

WHY IS EVERY MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL A SEEKING THE GO2 KARATE BADGE?

- **Instant Credibility:** Display these prestigious badges on your website and storefront, instantly setting your martial arts school apart as a top-rated institution.
- **Community Engagement:** Strengthen your bonds with the local community and demonstrate your commitment to empowering individuals through martial arts.
- **Increased Visibility:** Stand out in the world's largest martial arts school directory on Go2 Karate, attracting thousands of potential students seeking the best-rated schools.
- **Inspire Trust:** Gain the trust of prospective students and their families by showcasing your dedication to excellence in martial arts instruction.
- **Business Growth:** Attract more students, increase revenue, and establish a lasting presence in the martial arts world.



GO2 KARATE DISTINCTION AWARD

When searching for a karate school that goes above and beyond, look for the Go2 Karate Distinction Award. This badge signifies a school's exceptional dedication to community enrichment, evident in the valuable content and services they provide online. Their robust digital presence empowers individuals by making high-quality martial arts training and resources accessible to all.



GO2 KARATE COMMUNITY ADVOCATE AWARD

Choose a school that actively makes a positive impact in its neighborhood by looking for the Go2 Karate Community Advocate Award. Schools with this badge stand out for championing meaningful change in their local community while effectively promoting the benefits of martial arts—both on their website and within their training facility.



GO2 KARATE BEST BUSINESS AWARD

If you're looking for a school led by true martial arts visionaries, seek out the Go2 Karate BEST Business Award. This honor highlights institutions committed to sharing martial arts knowledge on a grand scale. By proudly displaying this award, these schools demonstrate their devotion to educating their entire community, both through their physical academy and their online platform.

Sparring 101: How to Start Smart and Stay Safe

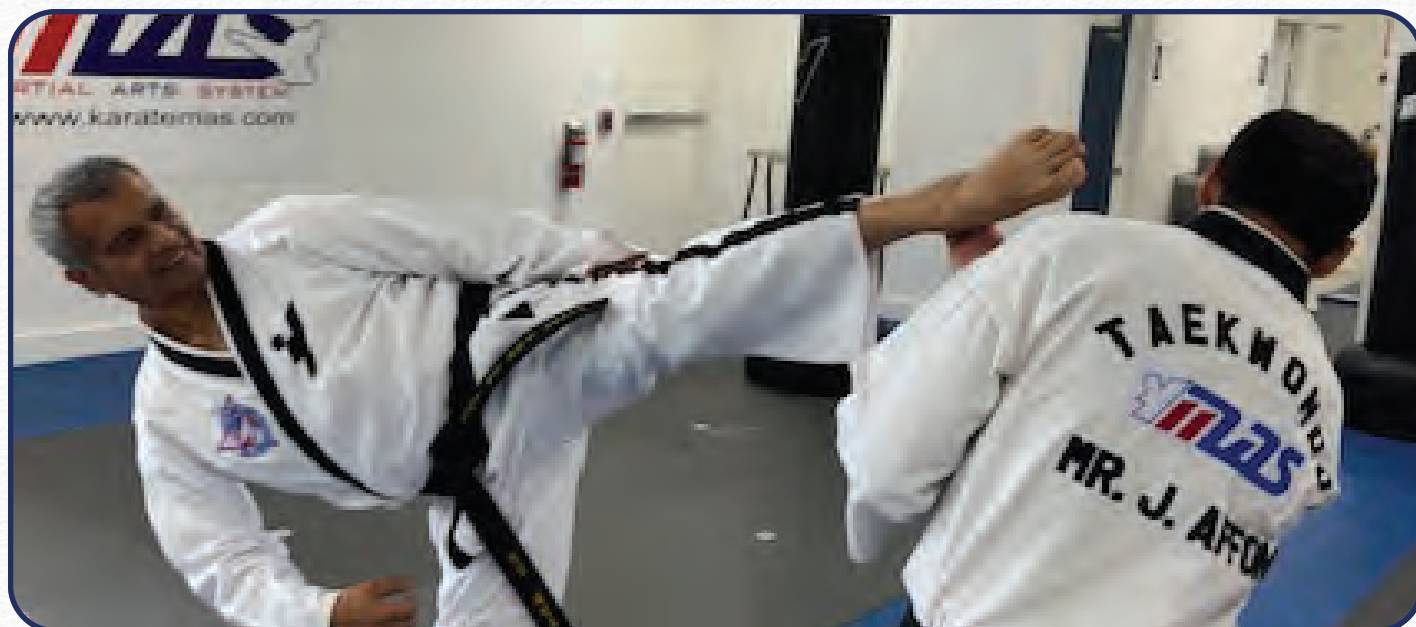
By Cesar Ozuna

Sparring is one of the most valuable learning tools in martial arts when it's practiced with intention, safety, and respect. At its heart, sparring is a relative exchange of techniques between two people, adjusted to each partner's level. Students learn distance, timing, reading an opponent, creating openings, and choosing when to dodge, evade, block, attack, or counterattack. These skills only develop inside a controlled learning environment designed to protect growth, confidence, and progress together.

Just as important is understanding what sparring is not. It is not an attempt to dominate, harm, or humiliate a training partner. It is not losing control, giving in to anger, or treating practice like a personal contest. It is not disrespecting or

underestimating the person across from you. A good instructor frames sparring as a measure of progress and emphasizes restraint outside the school, except as a last measure for safety and learning.

Light sparring provides a low-pressure space to warm up, test unfamiliar movements, and build comfort. Speed and power are reduced so students can focus on distance and strategy without fear. Slow-motion exchanges help partners analyze what comes next and how positioning changes outcomes. For beginners, light sparring bridges drills and freer movement, building confidence while preserving safety and curiosity about trying techniques they may otherwise avoid during early training phases.



SPARRING

Controlled sparring develops precision and responsibility. Practitioners demonstrate techniques with accuracy while stopping short of full contact. The intent is to show that a strike or kick could reach the target without causing harm. This level demands awareness, balance, and restraint, teaching students to manage power while maintaining clean form. Over time, controlled rounds refine judgment and timing, strengthening trust between partners and reinforcing respectful gym culture through consistent mindful practice.

Competitive sparring offers a structured chance to apply training under rules and supervision. Techniques must reach the target, though not necessarily with full contact, and formats vary by martial art. Judges help maintain safety and fairness, creating an environment where students can demonstrate preparation from class. The aim is growth under pressure, learning to perform with composure, awareness, and control rather than chasing outcomes at any cost during supervised rounds with clear expectations.

Safety equipment supports learning by reducing risk for both partners. Modern protective gear can include head, face, hands, feet, chest, knees, and mouth protection, helping soften impact and prevent unnecessary injury. Wearing gear also protects the person executing techniques, allowing commitment without fear of causing harm. Consistent equipment use reinforces a culture in which safety is a shared responsibility and preparation is part of disciplined training in every session.

Etiquette shapes how sparring feels day to day. Partners communicate intensity, reset after exchanges, and acknowledge good control. Being friendly while focused builds confidence and keeps learning collaborative. Students learn to choose the right response at the right moment, whether to defend, counterattack, or attack when opportunity arises. Instructors watch for calm presence,



technical control, and respectful conduct as signals that sparring is serving development rather than feeding ego within healthy training environments.

Early progress is visible in small, steady gains. Students manage distance more reliably, control techniques more consistently, and remain composed while exchanging. Confidence grows as choices improve and reactions become intentional. Friendly engagement replaces tension, and awareness guides when to move, block, or create openings. Instructors recognize these shifts as markers of readiness to advance through sparring levels while preserving safety, respect, and the long view of learning across every training cycle.

SPARRING

A healthy sparring culture depends on instructors setting expectations and students honoring them. Clear guidance helps partners match intensity, protect each other, and learn from mistakes without blame. When boundaries are respected, feedback becomes easier to accept, and improvement accelerates. The room stays focused on development, not dominance, and every round becomes a chance to practice discipline, patience, and accountability in motion together through consistent coaching and shared standards each day during practice.

Ultimately, sparring works when partners treat it as a shared study. Each exchange provides information about timing, distance, and decision-making. Practiced safely, sparring builds skill and character at once, teaching control under pressure and respect for others. When students commit to light, controlled, and competitive formats appropriately, progress becomes measurable and confidence durable, carrying lessons from the mat into responsible choices beyond it within supportive learning communities for everyone involved.



Grand Master Ozuna, born in San Pedro, Paraguay, in 1958, is a distinguished martial artist and founder of the Songahm Taekwondo Federation (STF), which unites over 200 schools across ten South American countries. With a career spanning over four decades, he has significantly influenced martial arts globally, especially after relocating to South Florida in 1997 where he opened six ATA schools. Under his guidance, more than 300 instructors and numerous black belts—including his three daughters—have flourished worldwide. He holds multiple high-ranking black belts, including Grand Master certifications in Moo Duk Kwan and Songahm Taekwondo, and an extensive background in international business and finance. Multilingual and internationally experienced, Grand Master Ozuna is a respected leader shaping martial arts education across continents.



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Why Consistency Is the Most Important Factor in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and in Mastery Itself

By Travis Tooke

When people first start Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, they assume improvement comes from toughness, athleticism, or natural talent. They watch experienced students roll effortlessly and believe those people simply have it, some innate grappling ability others lack.

But after enough years on the mat, one truth becomes impossible to ignore. The students who become great are not the most talented. They are the most consistent.

Not the person who trains obsessively for three weeks.

Not the person who only shows up when motivation is high.

Not the person who studies the most techniques.

The person who improves the most is the one who keeps showing up.

Jiu Jitsu Is Compound Interest for the Brain

Every class deposits a tiny amount of skill into your nervous system.

One class equals understanding.

Ten classes equals familiarity.

Fifty classes equals timing.

Hundreds of classes equal instinct.

You cannot shortcut instinct.

A beginner learning the hip escape thinks through each step. Months later, they do not “do” the movement. Their body automatically moves when pressure appears. The same transformation happens with guard retention, posture inside closed guard, breaking grips, timing sweeps, and finishing chokes.



JIU-JITSU

You do not get better because you learned a technique. You get better because you have encountered the same problem hundreds of times. Consistency creates recognition. Recognition creates speed. Speed creates effectiveness.

A Story Seen Hundreds of Times

I have had countless students who started off very slowly and seemingly were not making any progress for several weeks. They struggled with coordination, timing, and confidence. If improvement were judged early, many would have been labeled “not naturally good at Jiu Jitsu.”

Today, many of those same students are world-class black belts. Nothing dramatic happened. No breakthrough seminar. No secret move. They simply did not quit.

The Development Timeline, What Progress Really Looks Like

White Belt. Survival Stage.

You learn positions such as mount, guard, and side control.

Your goal is to understand what is happening.

Blue Belt. Recognition Stage.

You start seeing problems before they happen.

You escape earlier, not just harder.

Purple Belt. Anticipation Stage.

You predict reactions and guide opponents into mistakes.

Technique becomes connected rather than isolated.

The timeline is not defined by talent. It is defined by exposure.

Why Inconsistency Feels Like Starting Over

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is not memorization. It's reaction speed. Your brain prunes unused pathways.

Long breaks dull timing more than forgetting moves. Training five days a week for a month, then stopping, resets adaptation. Training two or three days every week for years transforms you.

The more the better, but two to three times per



week consistently beats eight to ten times a week, followed by long absences. Frequency builds wiring, and intensity only stresses it.

This Law Applies Everywhere

Jiu Jitsu simply reveals a universal rule of mastery.

Music.

Daily fifteen-minute practice beats weekend marathons. Fingers adapt to repetition.

Fitness.

Regular moderate training builds strength faster than rare extreme workouts.

Language Learning.

Five minutes every day creates fluency faster than occasional studying.

Business and Leadership.

Small daily improvements outperform bursts of motivation.

Momentum always beats intensity.



What Consistency Really Builds

Consistency does not just build technique. It builds perception. You stop thinking about escaping mount, you feel balance shifts before sweeps, and you defend submissions before they tighten. This is unconscious competence, and it only comes from repetition over time.

A Mantra to Remember

“It is not about being better than anyone else in class. It is about being better than who you were yesterday.” Progress in Jiu Jitsu is measured across seasons, not sessions.

For Parents

In the beginning, avoid focusing on wins, taps, or performance comparisons. Instead, support effort, attitude, and teamwork.

Early results vary widely, but over time, results are virtually guaranteed when a student is consistent. Confidence, resilience, and discipline grow naturally from repeated participation, not immediate success.

The Real Goal of Training

The goal of each class is not to dominate rounds, it's to keep the chain unbroken. Every session maintains your learning curve. Every long gap resets it. Mastery belongs to the person who stays in motion long enough for small improvements to compound.

You do not rise to your best day in Jiu Jitsu. You fall to your training frequency.

A Challenge

Commit to consistency, not motivation. Pick a schedule you can maintain, even when tired, busy, or unmotivated, and follow it for six months. Do not evaluate yourself after a class, and do not evaluate yourself after a week. Evaluate after a season. If you follow this, you will not just become better at Jiu Jitsu; you will understand how mastery in anything is actually built



For over 20 years, Travis Tooke has dedicated himself to mastering and teaching the art of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. He is a passionate martial artist committed to serving his students and his community. He is the author of *Jiu Jitsu and Life: Lessons Learned On and Off the Mat* and *Warrior Crucible*. As the head instructor and CEO of Team Tooke Mixed Martial Arts, Professor Tooke has created a program that molds students into athletic martial artists and confident leaders.



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The Armor of the Athlete: A Holistic Approach to Injury Prevention in Martial Arts

By Dr. Mark Shirley

Martial arts—whether Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, Muay Thai, Taekwondo or MMA—demand an extraordinary level of physical resilience. Unlike many traditional sports, martial artists deal with high-impact collisions, agility movements requiring speed and precision in many different planes and axes of motion, extreme joint manipulation, and repetitive ballistic movements. While the focus is often on technique, the most effective shield against injury isn't a better block, a faster kick or better leg sweep; it's the physiological foundation built through fitness, nutrition, sleep, hydration, and recovery.

1. Fitness: Structural Integrity and Sport-Specific Conditioning

Injury prevention begins with structural balance. In martial arts, repetitive motions (like throwing thousands of roundhouse kicks) can lead to muscular imbalances. For instance, strikers often develop overactive anterior deltoids and pectorals, leading to “rounded shoulders” and a higher risk of rotator cuff tears.





Resistance Training: Modern sports science emphasizes that strength training increases bone mineral density and tendon stiffness. A study in the British Journal of Sports Medicine suggests that strength training programs can reduce sports injuries by less than 1/3 and overuse injuries by almost 50% (Lauersen et al., 2014).

Proprioception and Plyometrics: Plyometrics is the “jump training” that involves teaching the body to land and pivot safely. Incorporating plyometrics helps the neuromuscular system handle the “stretch-shortening cycle,” which is vital for preventing ACL tears during rapid changes in direction.

2. Nutrition: Fueling for Resilience

Nutrition in martial arts is often misunderstood as merely a tool for making weight. However, chronic under-fueling leads to Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (RED-S), which significantly increases the risk of stress fractures and illness.

Protein for Repair: High-intensity training causes micro-trauma to muscle fibers. To **facilitate repair**, martial artists should aim for **1.6 to 2.2 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight**.

Micronutrients: Vitamin D and Calcium are non-negotiable for bone health. Research indicates that athletes with Vitamin D levels below 30 ng/mL have a significantly higher incidence of muscle strains and inflammatory injuries.

Anti-Inflammatory Fats: Omega-3 fatty acids (found in fish oil) can help manage systemic inflammation, protecting the joints from the wear and tear of daily grappling or sparring.

3. Sleep: The Ultimate Ergogenic Aid

Sleep is the only time the body truly shifts into an anabolic (building) state. During deep sleep (Slow Wave Sleep), the pituitary gland releases Human Growth Hormone (HGH), which is essential for tissue repair and bone growth.

Cognitive Function: Martial arts require split-second decision-making. Sleep deprivation impairs reaction time and proprioception, making an athlete more likely to mistime a fall, fail to protect their head and fail to maintain “Hands up! Chin down!”

The Injury Threshold: A landmark study published in the Journal of Pediatric Orthopaedics found that adolescent athletes who slept less than 8 hours per night were 1.7 times more likely to suffer an injury compared to those who slept 8 or more hours (Milewski et al., 2014).

4. Hydration: Joint Lubrication and Cognitive Safety

Dehydration is a hidden culprit in martial arts injuries. Beyond muscle cramps, it affects the structural integrity of the body.

Synovial Fluid and Discs: Intervertebral discs and joint capsules rely on hydration to maintain their shock-absorbing properties. Dehydrated discs are more prone to herniation during high-impact throws or grappling scrambles.

Concussion Risk: There is emerging evidence suggesting that dehydration reduces the volume of cerebrospinal fluid, which acts as a buffer for the brain. This may increase the risk of concussions during striking or falls

Electrolyte Balance: Sodium and magnesium are critical for nerve signaling. A deficit can lead to involuntary muscle spasms, causing an athlete to “lock up” mid-movement, potentially leading to acute ligament tears. Hydrate! Hydrate! Hydrate! Ensure your urine is “7-Up” clear.

5. Proper Recovery: The Art of Deloading (i.e. Reducing the Load)

In the “tough guy” culture of martial arts, more is often mistaken for better. However, injury usually occurs during overload, when stress exceeds the capacity of the tissue.

Active Recovery: Gentle movement (like light yoga or swimming) increases blood flow to damaged tissues without adding further mechanical stress.

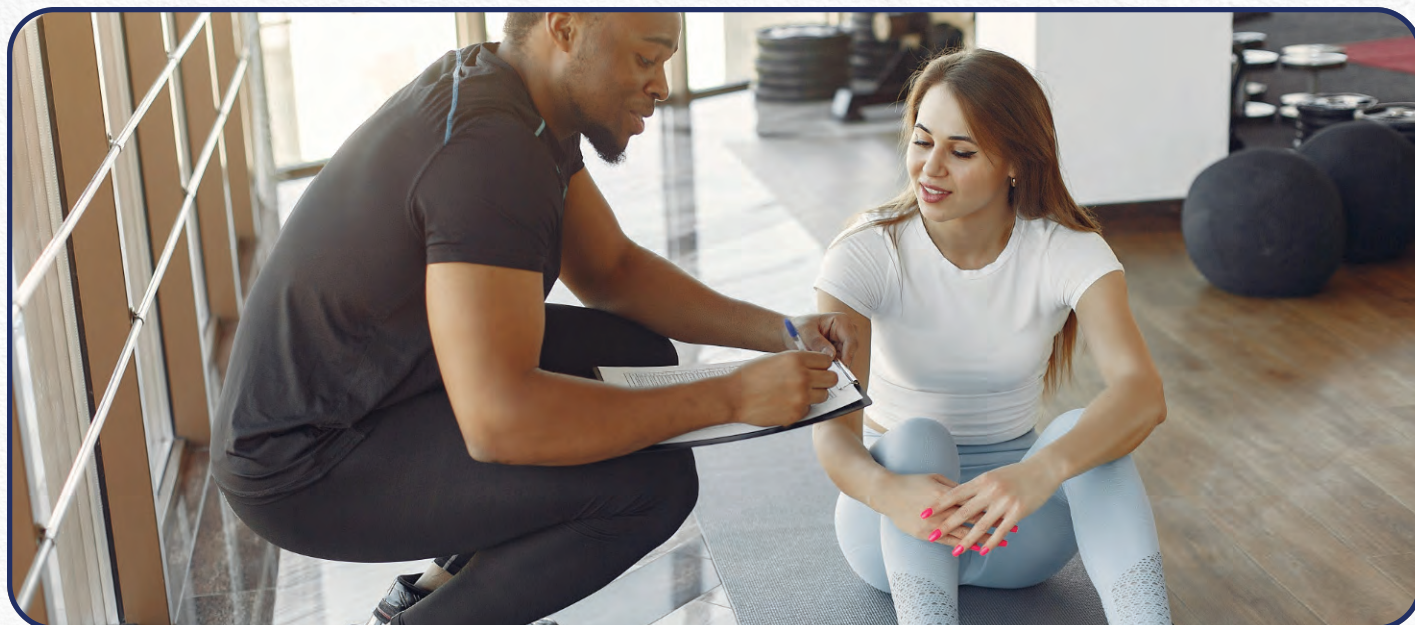
Monitoring Training Load: Utilizing the Acute:Chronic Workload Ratio (ACWR) helps prevent spikes in training intensity. If your training

volume this week is more than 1.5x your average over the last month, your injury risk skyrockets. Injury risk increases when acute load greatly exceeds chronic load. This concept is widely cited in the British Journal of Sports Medicine publications. The take-home point is “avoid spikes” in training volume.

Periodization: Athletes should follow a structured program that includes reduced load weeks— periods of reduced intensity that allow the nervous system and connective tissues to fully catch up to the adaptations of the muscles and recover appropriately.

Conclusion

The martial artist's greatest enemy isn't their opponent; it's the physical breakdown that comes from neglecting the pillars of health. By integrating a scientific approach to strength, fueling the body with precision, prioritizing the restorative power of sleep, and respecting the limits of tissue recovery, an athlete can ensure their longevity on the mats. Consistency is the hallmark of a master, but you cannot be consistent if you are sidelined by injury.



The professional literature supports managing repetition, emphasizing technique and progressive conditioning, and using varied targets—heavy bags can alter impact load (and are useful for conditioning), but they do not remove joint loads entirely; therefore many authors recommend **limiting high-volume maximal ballistic full-extension air-kicking (especially when fatigued or unconditioned)** and instead using a planned mix of target types with strength/neuromuscular conditioning.

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Dr. Mark E. Shirley is an Emergency Medicine physician at Memorial Community Hospital in Blair, Nebraska, with subspecialty board certification in Sports Medicine. He recently retired as a U.S. Air Force Colonel, Flight Surgeon, and State Air Surgeon with the Nebraska Air National Guard after 35 years of service. In that role, he served as the state’s Chief Medical Officer, medical liaison to the Adjutant General, and oversaw the medical readiness of pilots, flight crew, and more than 1,000 service members. His distinguished career earned multiple commendations, including the Legion of Merit, for leadership, innovation, and excellence in military medicine.

A 6th Degree Black Belt and Master of G-Shim Taekwondo, Dr. Shirley is the Sports Medicine Physician and Director of Fitness & Nutrition for Global Traditional Martial Arts (GTMA). With over 46 years of experience as a martial artist, he has been instrumental in advancing training, performance standards, and athlete well-being.

Dedicated to mentorship and service, Dr. Shirley has trained future physicians, guided military medics, and supported community health initiatives. His lifelong commitment to medicine, military service, and martial arts reflects his values of discipline, resilience, and service to others.

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AI in Your Martial Arts School Growth Tool or Time-Wasting Mistake?

By Chief Master Greg Moody, Ph.D.

Artificial Intelligence is not a trend. It is not optional, and it is not going away.

Parents are already interacting with AI before they ever speak to you. Search engines prioritize results using AI, reviews are filtered and ranked using AI, and social media feeds are curated by AI. By the time a parent walks into your school, technology has already shaped their perception of you.

So, let's stop asking whether AI belongs in martial arts schools.

Before we talk about the upside, we need to address the downside...

The Cons: How AI Can Hurt Your School

The first danger is distraction.

There are endless AI tools being marketed to small businesses. Many promise automation, domination, and massive growth. Most create motion, not progress. Owners experiment, tweak, adjust, and chase features that never translate into enrollments or reduced workload. If a tool does not clearly increase revenue or clearly remove labor, it is not an asset. It's a drain.

The second danger is dilution of culture.





Martial arts is human. It is discipline, correction, encouragement, eye contact, tone, posture, and presence. If AI communication becomes robotic, generic, or overly scripted, it weakens the relational strength that makes your school powerful. Parents do not enroll because of clever automation. They enroll because they trust leadership.

The third danger is over-automation.

Some owners install everything at once. Chat bots. Text bots. Automated email sequences. CRM triggers. Calendar integrations. Without structure, these systems overlap. Staff do not know who is responding. Messages double up. Follow-up becomes confusing instead of clear. The result is more friction, not less.

There is also the issue of intellectual laziness.

If you allow AI to think for you, write for you, and

communicate for you without direction, your voice fades. Your philosophy softens. Your conviction gets watered down. AI will happily generate average thinking all day long. If you are not guiding it with clarity, you are lowering your standard. For those of you who are authors, an AI book won't build your authority.

Used carelessly, AI weakens focus, blurs identity, and distracts from leadership.

Now let's talk about using it correctly.

The Pros: Where AI Makes a Strong School Stronger

When applied with discipline, AI strengthens three areas that directly impact growth: speed, consistency, and operational control.

Speed is not a luxury anymore. It is a competitive requirement.

BUILD A BETTER MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL

When a parent fills out a website form at 9:18 PM asking about classes for their six-year-old, that moment matters. Interest is high, and emotion is engaged. If they wait until the next afternoon for a response, the energy drops. Intelligent systems can respond immediately, ask qualifying questions, and guide them toward scheduling. The school that responds first often earns the appointment.

Consistency is where many schools quietly lose money.

A lead inquires. They get one call. Maybe an email. Then nothing. An intro lesson is scheduled but not reinforced. A former student drifts away without structured reactivation. AI is excellent at repetition. It can send confirmations, reminders, follow-up messages, and long-term check-ins without getting distracted, tired, or inconsistent. That structure alone can raise show rates and improve enrollment percentages.

Operational control is the third advantage.

AI can assist with drafting policies, organizing internal systems, outlining curriculum descriptions, and structuring marketing content. Tools like ChatGPT can help refine articles, build workshop outlines, and clarify email messaging quickly. This does not replace your thinking. It accelerates it. The time saved on repetitive administrative work should be reinvested into instructor training, curriculum refinement, and strengthening student experience.

AI also sharpens positioning.

Parents are more informed than ever. They research confidence, ADHD, bullying, discipline, and child development before enrolling. AI-assisted research tools can help you surface credible data to support your messaging. When you communicate with clarity and evidence, your school moves from “activity provider” to “professional development environment.” That shift matters.



Your website should not function as a digital flyer. It should function as a controlled entry point into your system. Intelligent chat, structured lead capture, and automated follow-up strengthen conversion at the exact moment interest peaks. That is not flashy. That is disciplined business.

A Real-World Example: The AI Employee

One practical way to think about AI inside a martial arts school is as a digital team member that handles repetitive communication.

Systems such as Rev Connect 360 are designed to answer calls after hours, respond instantly to website inquiries, text prospects with structured qualifying questions, schedule intro lessons, send reminders, and request Google reviews automatically.

Consider a simple scenario:

A parent asks, "How much are your classes?" Instead of silence or delay, the system responds professionally, gathers the parent's name, identifies whether the lessons are for a child or adult, and guides the conversation toward scheduling an appointment. No missed call. No dropped lead. No gap in response.

This does not replace your front desk or your instructors. It protects opportunities that would otherwise disappear between classes, during evenings, or on weekends. It allows your human team to focus on enrollment conferences, parent relationships, and student development rather than chasing voicemails.

AEO: Where This Is Headed

Now let's talk about where this is really going.

Search is changing fast.

Parents are no longer just typing short phrases into Google. They are asking full questions. They are using AI Overview. They are opening ChatGPT and

asking, "What is the best martial arts school near me for a 7-year-old?" or "Does martial arts help kids with ADHD?"

If your website is not structured for AI to understand and interpret, you will not show up in those answers.

This is where AEO - Answer Engine Optimization - comes in.

Traditional SEO was about ranking on page one. AEO is about being the answer.

AI systems do not think like humans. They do not respond to vague marketing language. They extract structured meaning. They analyze schema markup. They interpret structured data. They evaluate semantic hierarchy. They identify entity relationships between topics, services, locations, and expertise.

If your website simply says, "We build confidence and discipline," that is just noise.

If your website is built with machine-readable schema, clearly defined service categories, structured FAQs, topical clusters around leadership, anti-bullying, child development, and beginner programs - AI can interpret that. It can categorize it. It can summarize it, and it can recommend it.

That is a completely different competitive position.

Modern Go2 Karate websites are engineered for this reality. They are not just visually upgraded templates. They are structured with proper schema layers, clearly defined entities, service-based architecture, location-specific indexing, and semantically organized content that AI systems can crawl and interpret correctly.

That means when AI Overview pulls answers about martial arts training in your city, your school has the technical infrastructure to be surfaced as a credible result.

BUILD A BETTER MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL

When someone asks ChatGPT for recommendations, your platform is structured to be understood.

That is not luck, it's by design, and this is where the gap will widen in the next few years.

Schools that treat their website like a digital brochure will fade into generic listings (if they haven't already). Schools that build structured, machine-readable, authority-driven platforms will be recommended.

You are no longer competing only for rankings - you have to be the right answer!

Artificial Intelligence will not fix weak leadership. It will not compensate for poor instruction, and it will not build culture for you. You have to stay on top of these things.

AI will quietly elevate the schools that combine strong tradition, disciplined systems, and understanding of marketing principles as well as this fast-moving technology.



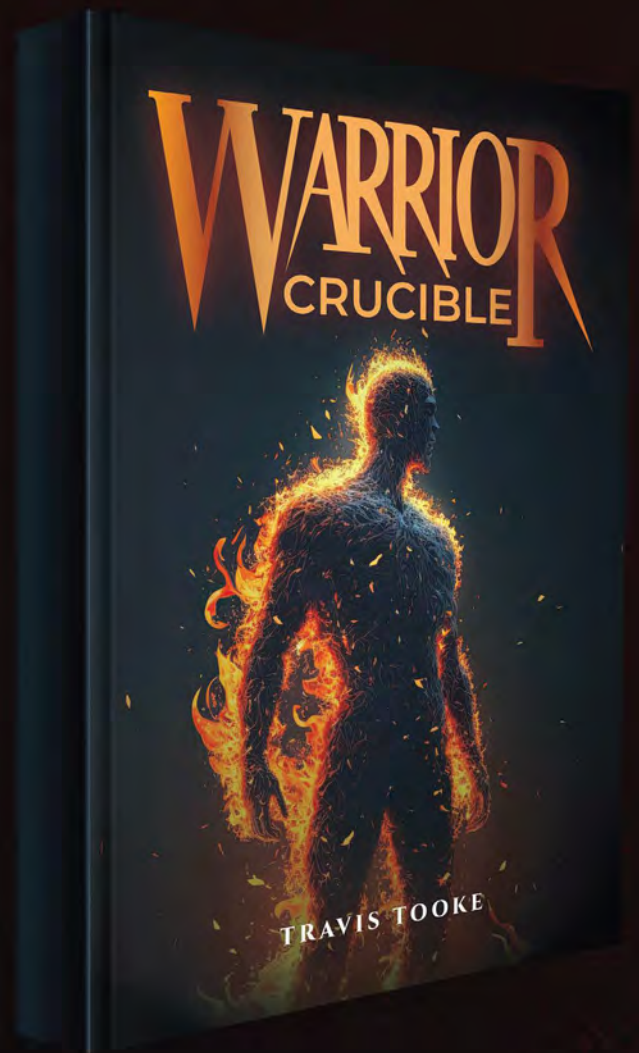
Chief Master Greg Moody, Ph.D., is the author of Parent Action Plan: ADHD! and a nationally recognized martial arts educator. He has combined decades of experience in psychology, education, and martial arts to help families and schools better support children with ADHD. As author, researcher, and instructor, Dr. Moody brings a unique perspective that bridges academic research and practical strategies for parents.

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