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MKTG 420

## **Collection of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Field Notes**

### Overview/characteristics of participants

- short & tall (mainly short)
- athletic - some are MMA fighters
- military - mainly Navy and Marines
- tattoos all over body
- mid 20s to late 40s
- some bulky/some slender
- 98% male, 2% female
- stolid faces

It was a diverse group of people in regards to looks. There were varying heights and weights, but they all had an athletic enough build in order to keep up with the fighting. We attended two different schools. The Arena and 4s Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Academy. The Arena was not specifically revolved around BJJ, it was a fight gym meaning various types of fighting styles practiced there. Where as 4s Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Academy was only based on BJJ. There were a lot of current and ex-military because it was a common practice in the military and they wanted to keep it up. Everyone had a very stolid demeanor which made it was uncomfortable to approach anyone. Depending on what class you wanted to take depended on what you would wear. BJJ classes require Gi's unless it is a fundamentals class. Both gyms had a heavy male influence and was mainly male based. There were maybe 5 females in the gym at most and 60 males when taking classes at the Arena.

### Overview of practice

- technical
- fast paced
- hard/intense
- very obvious belt level of everyone
- disciplined
- competitive

After first seeing the BJJ tournament we thought that it was a lot of move repetition and that it would be pretty easy to learn but after taking our first class we realized how difficult and intricate everything is. If your hand is above the arm versus under then a move cannot be executed properly and ultimately throws off the movement (Allison was trying to flip Kaitlin but she put her arm in the wrong position and ended up falling on Kaitlin's head). It was also very hard to understand why people were doing the moves they were doing. For every specific situation there are different combination of moves you need to do and in competition there are specific moves you respond with. When we were practicing we were just hoping to not hurt the other person or ourselves. After our first class we were bruised and sore because of the level of aggressiveness needed, even if you aren't trying to be.

All of us were out of breath after each of the practice rounds and by the end we looked like we were just rolling around on the ground. It is very obvious when different belt levels grapple with each other, each level is allowed to execute different moves (the higher the level the more dangerous moves allowed) so white belts cant compete well with blue belts and so on. When we tried to do it with white belts it was difficult to keep up and respond because we only knew the 1 or 2 moves taught in that specific class while the white belts knew all the moves.

One terrifying aspect was fighting people who actually knew what they were doing and were disportionately larger. In competition you go by weight class but in practice you fight everyone. There was a 350lb pound in classes and he was larger than all the guys and especially the girls, the instructor made sure not to put us in his rotation because we could actually get injured.

### Common themes

- Focus
  - Respect
  - Team Atmosphere
  - Before walking onto the mat, you must bow to show sign of respect. Bow when leaving the mat as well.
  - Folkway: Fist bump gestures, Grunts, Barefoot, Bow before getting on the mat, After the match
- Healthy competition

both competitors shake opponents coaches hands.

-More: Level of skill laws

-Taboo: Intentionally hurting the opponent.

-Right of Passage: Graduation through the belt system

In general, the atmosphere was calm but intense when we would go into any training session. At first the regular members stared at us because we were obvious outsiders. They would not really engage in conversation with us at the beginning and it took a lot of coaxing in order for them to answer any of our questions. It is such a close knit group, they treat each other like family. They are always looking out for whoever they are competing with because they know any injury is detrimental in training. I think they look at new people so strange because they don't have that trust established yet.

Members are very loyal to whatever gym they train at, when we asked for recommendations for other gyms most had said they had not tried others out or if they had they left early in their training. This shows the tight bond all the members have at their gym. To wrap up each training session there would be an inner and an outer circle. They would grapple for 3 minutes with whoever was across from them in the opposite circle and when the time was up, the outer circle would move one person over. Everyone was so comfortable with each other.

Throughout each training session it was obvious there were certain "rituals" you had to follow. For warmups, everyone stood in lines and the more prestigious belts would be in the front while the less prestigious belts stood in the back. Everything was done in conjunction to rank.

How the Class is Held:

- 1) Bow
- 2) Line Up according to order
- 3) Coach greeting
- 4) Warm-up (Flying somersaults, rolling, sliding, inch worming on back, running, jump lunges)
- 5) Grappling

- 6) Wrap-up/ Thank you (Shaking hands/ fist bump with everyone)
- 7) Bow when leaving the mat

## Interviews

- Jack Gnosca (24) Blue Belt → The Arena Member
  - Last trained in Japan
  - Has practiced for 4 years
  - When leveling up a belt color you have to walk through a tunnel of people and they hit you with their belt, it symbolizes all the hard work that has been done in order to level up and also foreshadows the pain it will take to level up to the next belt.
  - Started BJJ because he is in the Marine Corp, continued with it because he loved the workout and the intensity
  - Hopes to be a black belt
  - Encourages women to learn BJJ because of how you can use your leverage and it's not about shear strength
- Nghia Pham (43) Purple Belt → 4s Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Member/Instructor
  - Nghia Pham is the founder and owner of Optimum Training and Performance. Nghia was born in Vietnam and came to the US at the age of 11. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after high school, served on active duty for 7 years with 2 tours of the 2 tours of combat.
  - Practiced for 12 years
- Eric Do - Purple Belt → The Arena Member
  - Started 3 years ago
  - Previous Tae Kwon Do black belt
  - Traveled to Vietnam and Brazil for BJJ training
  - His life revolves around work, BJJ, and yoga

- Strong believer in the Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu culture and lifestyle

#### Extra information

- Had to convince general manager to let us take a month of class for free in exchange for advertisement for the class
- Those also in the class were surprisingly helpful in teaching us the moves...the instructors were not
- Very hard for a women to take classes → extremely uncomfortable in regards to personal space
- When non-training women walk in everyone stares and continues to stare and watches throughout the entire training
- Can be used as self defense and is not solely used in competition