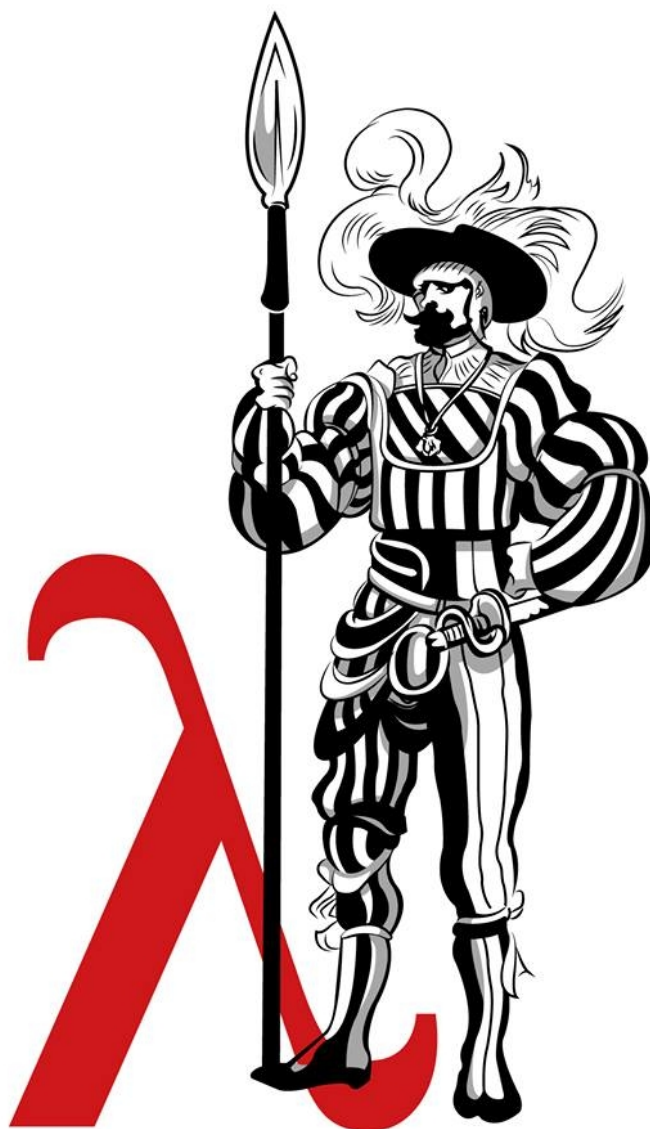




The B.J.J.

Self-mastery is an arduous and essential journey, a masterpiece for the lansquenet spirit

Luigi Mazzetti di Pietralata



"Where there is discomfort, there is fear. In these very difficult positions, you find yourself in a small corner of hell. And through this daily suffering, you learn how to survive in those situations. You must become comfortable in uncomfortable situations. You must be able to live your worst nightmare. Jitsu puts you in situations where you must be fully focused to find a solution to the problem. This trains the mind to build concentration, increase awareness, and enhance your problem-solving ability. Sometimes, you won't win. You can't always win. But this has nothing to do with defeat".

Rickson Gracie

A BIT OF HISTORY:

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu or BJJ (also written jujitsu or jujutsu) is a martial art of Japanese origin that essentially uses joint locks, twisting, pressure and choke holds to subdue an opponent to the ground, even one with a great physical advantage. In fact, by forcing your opponent to the ground you can cancel out physical differences thereby dominating and subduing taller and stronger opponents.

The word *jū* in Japanese means "softness", "sweetness", and *jutsu*, "art", "technique", hence its nickname: "gentle art" or more commonly "arte suave".

Its origins are centuries old, and as with almost all ancestral martial arts, it's origins cannot be precisely identified. Similar fighting styles were found in various populations, from India to China, in the 3rd and 8th centuries. What is known is that its development and improvement took place in the schools of the samurai, the warrior caste of feudal Japan.

It was created due to the fact that, on the battlefield or during a clash, a samurai could find himself without sword or spear, thus requiring an effective method of self-defense without the use of weapons. Because mortal blows were not effective in this type of combat, since the samurai wore armor, the techniques of throw downs, and those of joint locks, as well as the techniques of suffocation began to become popular thanks to their effectiveness. Jiu-Jitsu, therefore, was born from its opposition to kenjitsu and other so-called rigid arts, in which the fighters carried swords or other weapons. The martial art took new directions when a famous instructor of the Japanese Kodokan school decided to conquer the world and demonstrate the effectiveness of his choke holds and submission techniques against opponents of all sizes and fighting styles, his name was Mitsuyo Maeda, son of a sumo wrestler born in the village of Funazawa, a city located in Hirosaki, Aomori, Japan, on November 18, 1878, and died in Belém do Pará on November 28, 1941.

A long time defender of the self-defense techniques of Jiu-Jitsu, Maeda embarked for the United States in 1904, in the company of other teachers from the school of Jigoro Kano, the founder of Judo.

At the time, thanks to the political and economic ties between Japan and the USA, Japanese techniques found great admirers on American soil, for example in 1904 President Theodore Roosevelt took lessons from the Japanese Yoshitsugu Yamashita.

In the USA, the agile Japanese began to amass numerous victories in many of his fights, thus being able to demonstrate the effectiveness of JJ, fighting in several countries such as England, Belgium and Spain, where his noble posture gave rise to the nickname that made him famous, Count Koma.

In July 1914, according to legend, the brave Japanese man who was 1.64 meters tall and weighed 68 kg landed in Brazil to put down roots and change the history of this sport.

Maeda settled in Belém do Pará. To demonstrate the effectiveness of JJ techniques, one day he faced the challenge of a capoeirista known as "Pé de Bola", who was about 1.90 m tall and weighed almost 100 kilos. Maeda won by defeating the capoeira champion, from that moment on numerous contests were held with the aim of confirming the potential of JJ.

It was also Koma who promoted the first Jiu-Jitsu championship in the country, a tourney of fights and challenges to promote this unknown sport where specialists from various martial arts gathered, Boxing, Wrestling Capoeira Taekwondo etc etc.

In 1917, a teenager named Carlos Gracie (1902-1994) saw for the first time, in Belém, an exhibition of a Japanese capable of dominating and subduing the giants of the region. A friend of his father, Gastão Gracie, Maeda agreed to teach the restless boy the art of self-defense. In his classes he taught Carlos and other Brazilians the concepts of his art which involved both standing on one's feet and falling to the ground, taking advantage of the opponent's strength to one's advantage using the principle of action/reaction.

A classic movement to get close to the opponent was the use of low kicks and/or elbow blows to confuse the opponent, by lowering the level of attack on the opponent's body, one penetrated inside the opponent by grabbing the legs (a technique called Baiana) and threw the opponent to the ground, then progressing in the fight until the submission of the opponent which could happen by surrender or by fainting or by dislocation of a limb.

A faithful student, Carlos Gracie embraced Jiu-Jitsu once and for all and, to the regret of his mother who dreamed of seeing her son a diplomat, he began to instill in his brothers the love for this fighting art.

Carlos opened, in 1925, the first Jiu-Jitsu academy of the Gracie family. In the newspapers the ad was a masterpiece of marketing: "If you want to have a broken arm, look for the Gracie gym".

The great master Gracie went on to have 21 children, 13 of whom would become black belts. Each member of the family then began to develop the art and add another link to the chain created by the great master Carlos, founder and leader of the clan, as well as the first member of the family to engage in a fight without rules, which he called "Vale Tudo".

It was 1924, in Rio de Janeiro, when Carlos Gracie faced the dock worker Samuel, a well-known capoeira athlete, winning and becoming a legend of the time. Helio Gracie, one of his brothers, was also a great fighter who brought great technical innovations to this art of fighting, thanks to his indomitable spirit, which did not correspond to his slender build, he was a popularizer of BJJ.

In line with Conde Koma's tactics, the Gracies continued, in Rio de Janeiro, to challenge dock capoeiristas and bullies of all origins and sizes, champions of other martial arts or combat sports. If these brutes were scary on their feet, on the ground they became easy prey for the joint locks or choke holds that led to victory most of the time in these contests. The rivalry between BJJ and

Freestyle Wrestling academies was always famous, leading their respective practitioners to real challenges both on the beaches of Ipanema and on the streets of Rio de Janeiro.

The victories of the family in free for alls piled up and became legendary and made headlines on the front pages. In addition to the matches, the leagues between different practitioners were established, utilizing exclusive rules of Jiu-Jitsu, involving dozens of different academies. In the 60s, when Carlson Gracie had already taken over from his uncle Helio as the first member of the clan in MMA, an important step was taken towards the consolidation of Jiu-Jitsu competition. In 1967, the Guanabara Jiu-Jitsu Federation was created in Rio de Janeiro, with the authorization of the National Sports Confederation of the country.

The president of the Federation was Helio Gracie and the president of the Advisory Council was Carlos. His eldest son, Carlson, was the director of the technical department.

In the 90s, the art experienced a new boom on two fronts: the Ultimate Fighting Championship created by Rorion Gracie in 1993, gave rise to BJJ known today as MMA. Starting with the idol Royce Gracie, and with the hard work previously done by brothers and cousins like Rickson, Renzo, Ralph, Royler, Ryan, Carley, they clearly demonstrated that BJJ and knowing how to fight while lying on the ground brought certain victory over opponents who were unfamiliar with this martial art. Jiu-Jitsu was consecrated as a combat technique and after its success in MMA/UFC, it was brought into the American army and taught in special units such as the Green Berets, the Rangers and Navy Seals.

On another front, Carlos Gracie Jr. He followed his father's work by organizing tournaments and developing the art as a regulated sport. Thus, in 1994, the International Jiu-Jitsu Federation and the Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Confederation were created, affiliated with the Brazilian Olympic Committee, which today promotes tournaments for more than 3 thousand athletes from

more than 50 countries, such as the World Championship, which has been held every year since 1996.

A century after Count Koma's landing in Brazil, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu can now be practiced from Alaska to Mongolia, from Abu Dhabi to Japan.

After this brief historical introduction, I would like to talk more specifically about what BJJ actually is.

WHAT BJJ TEACHES:

First of all, BJJ teaches self-defense, in fact, as we noted previously, BJJ was born as an art of self-defense against bigger and stronger opponents. Bjj teaches one to persevere in the face of difficulties and to remain calm under pressure by thinking in a strategic way, therefore Bjj teaches and strengthens a Mental Resilience and a Strategic Mind. Bjj with its rigorous and demanding training, promotes interactions with training partners as well as Masters, thus creating and teaching, personal discipline, respect for others, self-esteem, self-control and self-confidence.

THE BENEFITS OF BJJ:

The BJJ practitioner will certainly have excellent physical shape, increasing Strength, Explosive Strength, endurance, flexibility and coordination. It improves the ability to concentrate, it develops patience and problem

solving in situations of great psychophysical discomfort, as well as the formation of a pragmatic and strategic mind. Those who practice BJJ are joined to a community where strong social bonds and a sense of belonging are created. In fact, by hard daily training, sweating, suffering and sometimes injury, bonds of mutual respect and admiration, wedded to a healthy competition are formed, the whole group can elevate themselves by growing in technical proficiency and strengthening the personal character of the participants, thus creating a cohesion in the group, thus becoming a "Family".

BJJ SPORTS COMPETITION

BJJ has become over time, thanks to the federation of the Grand Master Carlos Jr. Gracie, a competitive activity, where there are 8 age categories Adults (Up to 30 Years) and Masters divided into Masters Level 1,2,3,4,5,6 and 7. All age categories are divided into sub-weight categories, there is also the possibility of a weight category called Absolute where there are no differences in weight. So even people who are no longer young, for example like me, but with a still strong and combative warrior spirit, can try their hand at matches and tournaments, thus experiencing the emotion of the challenge and the competition, feeling the adrenaline flowing through their veins. Those who practice competition in BJJ are a very small percentage of BJJ practitioners, in fact the competitive fighter must have characteristics that many do not have, such as the ability to expose themselves to criticism, a strong will to Fight and obtain Victory, a great tolerance for suffering due to exhausting physical and technical training, courage, as well as an ability to and talk a bit about the techniques a bit about the competitions, sometimes we make fun of mistakes accept defeats sportingly. I can personally say that one defeat teaches more than a hundred victories because defeat, if it occurs to a person with a competitive nature, is the necessary fuel that allows one to improve technically in a sport that can never be totally mastered, in fact no BJJ practitioner even at the highest level is able to say "I know everything".

HOW A BJJ LESSON TAKES PLACE:

We start at a set time, we line up in order of rank from black belt to white belt with the Master before the lineup and who is greeted with a salute. Afterwards there is a warm-up of about 15 minutes consisting of various movements which are employed in a competition. Then the Master explains the technique of the week and the technique is then repeated by the students divided into pairs, for this phase we also spend 15/20 minutes. After which, practice of the technique shown by the Master begins, at this point we are ready to begin medium to low intensity fighting whichever the fighting pair mutually agree upon, after 20/30 minutes we prepare for what is called "Randori", contests between fighters where each fighter selects the fighting method according to their own training strategy, usually there are 5 or 6 rounds of 5 minutes each with a 1 minute interval. At the end of the lesson we form a line again, the Master gives a salute and from first to last we shake hands thanking each other for participating in the training session. Then comes the usual routine, we sit on tatami mats we made in training, we joke and kid each other over mistakes made during the training session and we talk about this and that, this is usually done by the most advanced practitioners.

TYPES OF FIGHTERS:

In Bjj we have two distinct figures, considering that a good fighter must be able to fill both roles, but certainly according to a natural instinct that is based on the physical characteristics of each individual practitioner, one is the fighter who defends (Guardiero) and the fighter who attacks (Passador). The Guardeiro will fight on his back to the ground using different types of defense of which there are infinite variations. The Passador instead focuses on the techniques learned to overcome defense, holding a firm position and pressing forward until his opponent is subdued

A Bjj fight is really a chess match between two fighters, as a matter of fact the most astute, skilled, and strategic fighter, who manages to impose his type of fighting, will certainly have the greater chance of defeating his opponent.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FIGHT:

The BJJ fight, which let me remind you can be done either with the Kimono (Gi) or without Kimono (No Gi) always begins standing, whoever is strong in defense will try take a defensive stance and from there start to develop his fight style, whoever is an attacker will have to throw his opponent to the ground and then start subdue his opponent. As mentioned, many times the objective of BJJ is submission leading to the surrender of one's opponent who will signalize his surrender by tapping his hands or feet three times on the tatami mat or on the body of his opponent. Sometimes due to the skill of the fighters it is not possible to reach a clear decision so the Federation has created a point system which takes into account the actions of the fight. The points are as follows:

Throw downs and reverse throw downs (with back to the ground you rise to your feet and throw your attacker to the ground), 2 Points. Attacks earn 3 points, pinning your opponent to the ground and placing your knee on his stomach earns 2 Points, Montada (when you throw your opponent to the ground and straddle him) and the back clutch (when you clutch your opponent from behind and immobilize him by enveloping his lower body with a leg hold) 4 Points. These last two positions are the maximum of domination, in fact, if you get to this point victory is virtually assured.

BELTS IN BJJ:

In the adult category there are 5 belts, White Blue Purple Brown and Black. In this martial art it is not like other arts like Judo, Karate etc etc the progress is very slow precisely because it is a very technical discipline where it is necessary to develop instincts that come to the fore spontaneously under pressure during the fight. Generally and depending on the specific school the length of time necessary to master each category are as follows, for the white belt a year and a half to two years, for the blue belt from two to three years, purple two years and brown two years. During each time

interval the student gains a grade up to a maximum of 4 according to his skill level after which he is ready for promotion. In the case of competitors who are exceptional and who win many competitions and titles the master will accelerate the promotion process in order to graduate him as soon as possible to the most important category, the black belt. From black belt onwards the first three levels are earned every three years, starting from the 3rd level up to the 6th level and every 5 years from the 6th to the 7th level. Seven years must go by before you can advance to the next level and earn a red and black belt, then after another 7 years you earn a white and red belt, finally to get to the last belt which is the coral belt it takes 10 years, so from black belt up to the Coral belt the total number of years sums to 48. The greatest number of dropouts occur in the blue and purple belt levels, a very small percentage of those who commence training make it all the way to the black belt level. The sport is very demanding, and in the beginning, very arduous.

CONCLUSION:

BJJ is a very demanding fighting sport but with consistency and perseverance it rewards you with a lot of satisfaction as it is the only combat sport that uses highly deadly or highly disabling techniques, which once you have brought the opponent to surrender, gives you a feeling of dominance and power, because you know that in real extreme situations involving life and death you are sure to overcome any threat.

BJJ is the only combat sport in which practitioners actually fight during every training session, this allows you to always be prepared, knowing what to do if you are forced into a physical confrontation in everyday life.

PALMARÉS

Luigi Mazzetti di Pietralata, born in 1962, started in middle age (47 years old) and is a 2nd degree black belt with several titles of which listed below are only the most important.

EUROPEAN KIMONO CHAMPIONSHIP

GOLD

2013 Blue Belt Master 4

2015 Purple Belt

2019 Black Belt Master 6

2023 Black Belt Master 7

SILVER

2014

2016

2018

2022

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP WITHOUT KIMONO

GOLD

2023 Black Belt Master 7

SILVER

2013 Blue Belt Master 4

2018 Brown Belt Master 5

2019 Black Belt Master 6

INTERNATIONAL MASTER CHAMPIONSHIP WITH KIMONO

GOLD

2017 Brown Belt

2018 Brown Belt

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

BRONZE

2016

2017