

Hughes

>From A6

structor Michio Grubbs.

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is an important part of Hughes' ground fighting training. Jiu-Jitsu is loosely translated as "the gentle art," and while it is safe for children to learn, it is still an asset in the cage because it teaches a fighter to use his opponent's energy against him.

The martial art even attracts attention from females interested in defending themselves.

"It's the ultimate self-defense because if a woman gets attacked it's going to end up on the ground," said Christie Philips, 37, who initially started martial arts for fun and exercise.

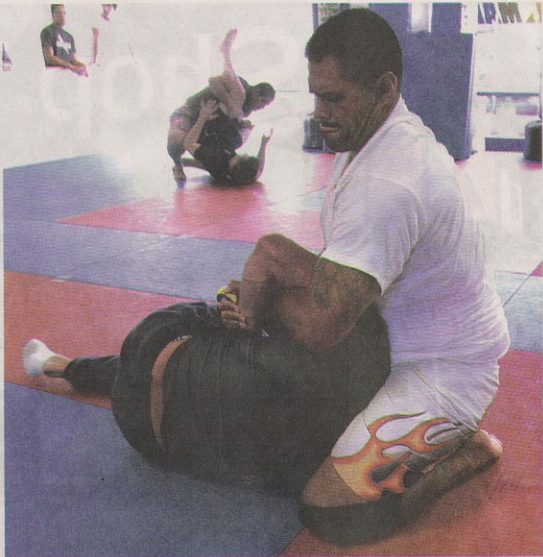
"Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is very detail-oriented and it emphasizes positions before submissions," Grubbs said. "It's a special feeling you have when you have a 200-pound guy trying to squish you and you divert his energy."

While it's pretty friendly on the practice mat, a strawberry-red face emerging from a choke hold is a pretty good reminder of the potential power Jiu-Jitsu has.

In training, Hughes practices at the energy level of his partner. In a fight, however, it's a different story.

"The first guy I fought, I hurt him — broke his nose," Hughes said. "It felt good actually."

Although Hughes has sustained some injuries from fighting (his second fight was stopped by a doctor due to his cracked forehead, which required eight staples), overall fighting



Johnny Hughes, right foreground, works out with sparring partner Ryan Hackney, 25, of Camp Pendleton, June 23 at a training center in Vista. Sean DuFrene | sean@tlnews.net

has improved his body and spirit.

When Hughes started training around four years ago, he weighed 280 pounds — he now weighs 205. A week before the fight, Hughes plans on losing more weight so he can compete at 185.

"I think it's done him a lot of good. I think it's changed him

for the better," said Hughes' wife, Jessica.

Hughes' fighting has had a positive effect on the whole family. Everyone from Hughes' grandfather to his 3 1/2-year-old daughter keeps up on the action.

"She understands it. She comes to practice," Hughes said. "She tried to do Jiu-Jitsu."

The upcoming competition will be his third fight.

"(I hope) to win. If not, (I hope) to have a good fight, come out of it safe — for both of us, me and him," Hughes said.

King of the Cage is an MMA competition televised on Pay-Per-View. The match will be Aug. 4 at Soboba Casino.

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