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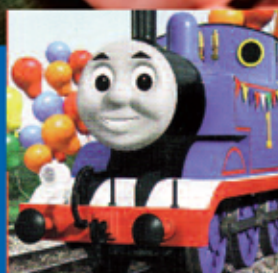


Festival of Trees

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Martial arts the Marcellini way



Thomas the Train returns to Perris



Jewel at Fantasy Springs

PERSONLITY PROFILE

Get safe with martial arts instructor Sam Marcellini

By Karen Eden

They say that a student is only as good as his teacher. Perhaps that's why Instructor Sam Marcellini, of Marcellini's Martial Arts Academy, is known as one of the very few elite self-defense instructors in the country.

Marcellini, who owns and operates his own Gracie Jiu-Jitsu school in Moreno Valley, has trained over 15 years with one of the most respected self-defense instructors in the world, Royce Gracie.

For over 23 years, Royce Gracie, who still lives and teaches in Los Angeles, has taught over 20,000 students, many of whom went on to become world-renowned fighters.

Marcellini is one of only three to receive the coveted Royce Gracie black belt in the state of California. "It was a lot of hard work and dedication, and I am honored," Marcellini said.

The Gracie's of Brazil were the first to introduce "No Holds Barred" and "Mixed Martial Arts" as we know it in the U.S. today. Out of this art form came the very popular UFC style of fighting, which still stands as the most viewed and lucrative sport on pay-per-view TV.

Royce Gracie himself has a historical record of victories in the UFC, K-1 and PRIDE fighting matches, many of which took place live, in front of thousands of spectators and on pay-per-view TV. It's actually not uncommon to find Royce himself teaching classes for Sam at his school here in Moreno Valley.

"If I didn't absolutely believe that the Gracie system of self-defense is the most practical and effective form of self-defense in the world, I wouldn't still be passing this knowledge forward today," Marcellini said.

And he's not alone; law enforcement officers from all walks of life, as well as many federal agencies, have all trained under the Gracie Jiu-Jitsu System.

But it's also because of this, and what people see on TV, that the average person has been scared into thinking that this form of martial art lacks discipline and seems unsafe.

"That couldn't be further from the truth," Marcellini said. "Because Gracie Jiu-Jitsu is mainly ground techniques based of leverage and timing, it's actually safer than most sports practiced in any city across America."

"I've actually never had a child injured in my class from training, but a lot of them will come into class injured from playing soccer or basketball," Marcellini said.

The techniques taught by Marcellini have been set up to teach "regular people" how to effectively defend themselves against tougher and stronger opponents.

"Think about it. God forbid if a woman is going to be attacked, or a child abducted, nine times out of ten it's going to be by somebody bigger and stronger," he said. "There's also a pretty good chance that you're going to have to defend yourself from the ground...that's why Gracie Jiu-Jitsu is so popular for practical self-defense."

In class, Sam also puts great emphasis on maintaining a good balance between learning effective self-defense skills and having the right mental-



Sam Marcellini operates Marcellini's Martial Arts Academy in Moreno Valley.

ty to go with it. "My students know that what they are learning is not to be used outside of self-defense in any way," Marcellini said.

He also says that the internal aspects, such as confidence, focus, patience and persistence, which typically come with training, are considered more important than the physical training itself.

"Martial arts, if taught properly, will instill great character along with getting a student in shape and teaching them self-defense."

Sam says it's not about who is the biggest and the strongest, it's about who understands the technique and how to make it work in his or her favor. "It's a principle that I have come to understand first hand in my 25 years of training," he said.

And he should know. Sam, who also holds four other black belts in other art forms, is an undefeated mixed martial arts competitor himself, and is also in the USA Martial Arts Hall of Fame as "Instructor of the Year."

Marcellini has an extensive background in "stand-up" art forms, and has trained with other well-known martial art greats, such as the 9-time world Thai boxing champion Rob Kaman, and world free-style wrestling champ Rico Chiapperali.

Anyone interested in classes can learn more at www.MMAA.US, or you can call Marcellini's Martial Arts Academy at (951) 485-7077. ■