

A Student of the Game

by **Chris Staab**

Brazilian jiu-jitsu is not just a sport for the young; it is a sport you can enjoy for life. There are BJJ players in every stage of their lives and some of these athletes even put their skills to work in competition. Under the scorching sun in the Nevada desert, you will find a BJJ player who may be old enough to be your father, but good enough to submit anyone who thinks his age will be a disadvantage.

Meet Sir Raymond Winters, President of JWI (a company that specializes in herbal teas and wellness products). In case you are wondering, there was no typo in his name. He was given the "Sir" title earlier this year when he was knighted in Malta by the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, and in the same place, as was his father in 1984, the late Sir Jason Winters KGSJ. Nelson Mandela and HRH the Queen of England are also members of this same Order. How did they come to receive such a high honor? The Winters family has been working with Prince Charles, among others, for many years on something called "Complementary Medicine." This is simply the practice of combining traditional and alternative medicine, including using herbs and vitamins," explained Sir Raymond. "My father was able to change many lives during the 30 years he pioneered the use of herbal combinations, teas and supplements in order to help people. Sir Jason formulated the Herbal Tea that bears his name in 1977.

Throughout his quest to enhance the quality of people's health and well-being, Raymond has also sought to improve his own. Being an avid fan and practitioner of the martial arts, there is one style in particular that he developed an intense affinity for. "I took judo as a kid and actually attained a green belt," said Raymond, "but when we moved to Australia, I stopped." It wasn't until he was 40 years old before he started training again. "I began studying Krav Maga (an Israeli style of self defense), and I took it for about five years."

Though he thoroughly enjoyed Krav Maga, something happened at his dojo that

changed the way he viewed martial arts altogether, and he wanted to learn more about what he had witnessed.

"One day an MMA fighter came into our club and showed us this jiu-jitsu!" We had never heard of this style, but Raymond couldn't deny its effectiveness. "I was mesmerized by it. The MMA fighter managed to defeat one of our instructors in less than 30 seconds! Once he took him to the ground, it was all over."

Upon seeing this, Raymond and a few friends scouted the local area to find a school that offered BJJ training. Not only did they find a school that offered everything they were looking for ... they found Sergio Penha.

Sergio Penha happens to be one of the most highly respected and talented jiu-jitsu players on the planet. "Sergio is one of only a handful of red and black belts in the world," explained Sir Raymond. "He is an awesome jiu-jitsu player and trainer." He continued to mention that not only does Sergio Penha have great BJJ instruction, but he also offers sound life philosophies to his students. "He leads by example, and he is totally against ANY fighting on the street, unless you are physically attacked. He just has so much knowledge, and Sergio simply wants to pass it on."

Since that day five years ago, Raymond has studied three to five days a week. "My goal is for one day to have Sergio tell me I have finally earned the black belt. That's what keeps me going during hard training when every fiber of my being wants to quit. I give it everything I have, but I tap out of course if I can't get out of a bad position."

Currently, he is climbing those ranks toward his ultimate goal. He believes that while his long-term aspiration may be a speck on the distant horizon, it is his short-term goals that will help him get there. "I am just trying to be the best jiu-jitsu player I can be. I am a purple belt now, and I want to be the best purple belt I can be."

Apparently, his best includes many first place victories in his division at NAGA. According to NAGA's official website, Sir Raymond is ranked first in Nevada and in the West. Though he admits BJJ may be a "young man's sport," he rolls with competent and competitive 20-somethings several hours a day when training. He says that at age 51, it isn't easy keeping up, but he never stops trying. Yet even with the admitted challenges, one can still find him hard at work in the dojo or gym four days a week.

So where does a man of 51 find his bounty of stamina and energy? The answer lies in the work that he has done with his father in researching different herbs and their healing properties, eating well, and understanding how far he can push his body during training.

Together with his father Sir Jason Winters, Raymond has not only developed a full line of teas and supplements, but he uses these products daily. Without them, he feels he would not compete as aggressively, or recover as quickly as he does. "I feel that I am healthier and more energetic than most men my age because I need to stay in shape, so I may compete in jiu-jitsu and not gas out."

While there may not be a "fountain of youth" to anyone's knowledge, Winters believes that with the proper diet and supplementation, one can continue to stay vigorously active as the sands of time inevitably trickle. "My father taught me to try and improve people's lives, to help someone in some way, everyday. Luckily part of my job involves travel around the world to share my father's story. I've trained in those places as well. I have used our products my whole life and I truly believe that with our teas and supplements, people will feel better and have more energy to train harder and recover faster."

In closing, Winters reflects on his emphasis on health as well as his love for his art. "Jiu-jitsu is not just a sport to me. It is a way of life and a philosophy of how one



Raymond and Lance Liu training.



should pass through his life. In this sport, you get out of it what you put into it, and the more you try and the harder you train, the better you will become. I will be practicing jiu-jitsu for the rest of my life. I'll never be so good that I can't learn more. When people say I'm too old to compete, or why do you want to fight at your age, I remember what Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote:

*Though much is taken,
much abides; and though
We are not now that strength
which in old days
Moved earth and heaven,
that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate,
but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find,
and not to yield.*

When reminded that Helio Gracie himself practiced until his passing at the ripe old age of 95, Winters said, "See, I have a few more years left in me yet!"

To learn more about Sir Raymond Winters and Jason Winters International, visit the official website at www.sirjasonwinters.com.

