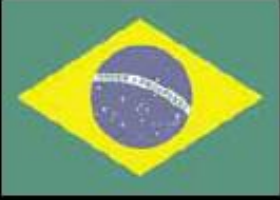
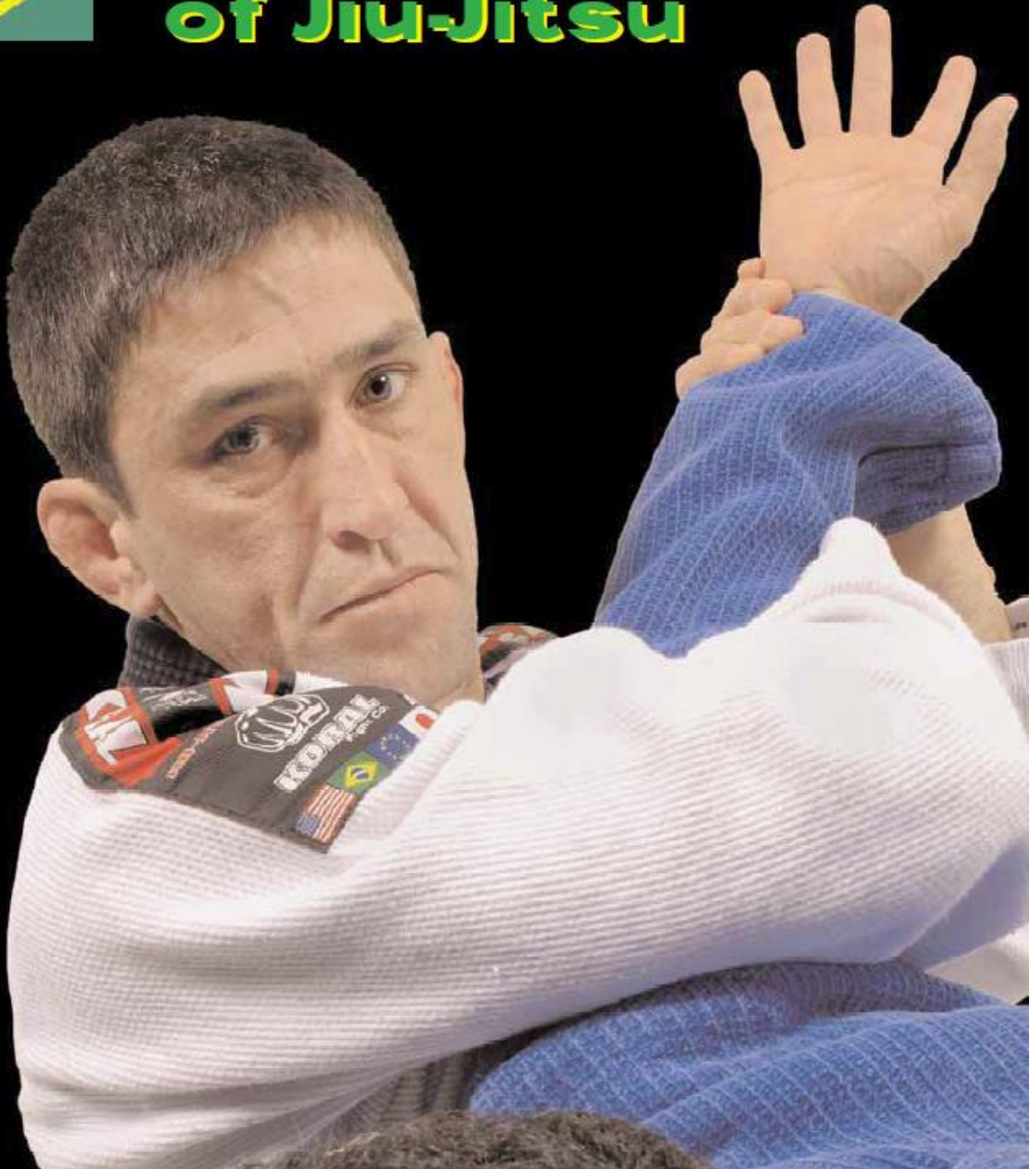


Gym Spotlight

Written by Marc Forsyth & Mike Hoernlein



"OLD SCHOOL" of Jiu-Jitsu



Marcelo Alonso BJJ

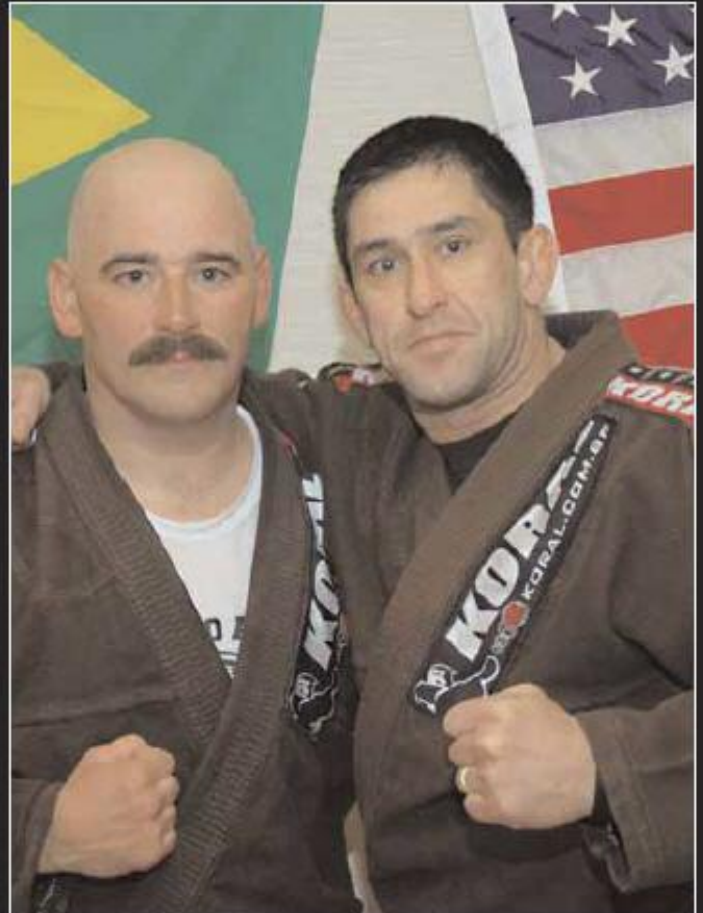
Photography by Mike Rhine & Mike Renouard

A not so well publicized fact is that the Northwest has one of the world's top teachers of Brazilian Jiu-jitsu living here and training some of the region's top MMA fighters. The Marcelo Alonso BJJ Academy, fighting under the Carlson Gracie banner and with two locations in Seattle and Tacoma, is headed by the legendary Marcelo Alonso, whose list of students, past and present, includes some of the best BJJ specialists on the planet.

Marcelo grew up in Brazil, where he befriended a young Carlson Gracie Jr., whose father, Carlson Sr., was already a prominent figure in the world of jiu-jitsu. Marcelo recalled observing Carlson's students after class, with envy, as they wore their uniforms and appeared to be having an endless amount of fun. He eagerly began taking the class when he was eleven years old and has continued his training with the Gracie family for 29 years this December. In what he refers to as the "old-school" of jiu-jitsu, Marcelo remembered when the primary goal of each class was to submit another student.

As a child, Marcelo was graced with the opportunity to train under the likes of Carlson Gracie Sr., Rolls Gracie, Carlos Gracie Jr., Rigan Machado, Rickson Gracie, and Barra Gracie. In his eyes, the best way to train was to learn from all different sides of the family which then would help him to have a more complete, technical game. He was also privileged to train with Renzo Gracie, Wallid Ismail, Murilo Bustamante, Vitor Belfort, and Mario Sperry. In fact, he used to teach Mario Sperry when Sperry was a blue belt in Brazil. Aside from learning from the best, Marcelo has also helped to train the best. Actually, many of the American Top Team fighters, at one time or another, have received instruction from Marcelo Alonso.

From January 1989 to January 1997, Marcelo was Carlson's top instructor in Rio de Janeiro. In that time, he trained over 200 jiu-jitsu champions at all levels of rank. When Marcelo left Brazil to come to the United States, some of his former students missed him so much, they decided to jump from Barra Gracie and American Top Team so they could train with him once again.



Now that Marcelo is done competing himself, he takes pride in coaching his younger athletes. According to Marcelo, he's had *his time* already and he now wants to pass his experience on to the next generation to develop their skills which, in turn, will create a more well-rounded fighter.

Although Marcelo trains his fighters hard so that they can be their best, his teaching style comes with a great sense of humor that makes the training extremely enjoyable. Brown belt Jon Harding, who has trained with Marcelo since '97, had this to say about his comical attitude: "...I think it may be the Carlson side of the family, with Carlson Senior and Junior. They're both funny so maybe that rubbed off on him as well."

According to one of his fighters, Chris Davis, who's been training with Marcelo for about five years, and recently captured Alaska's AFC welterweight title, Marcelo can find a way to explain and teach jiu-jitsu to anyone, regardless of how hard they are to teach. After all, he's had a lifetime of learning and teaching jiu-jitsu.



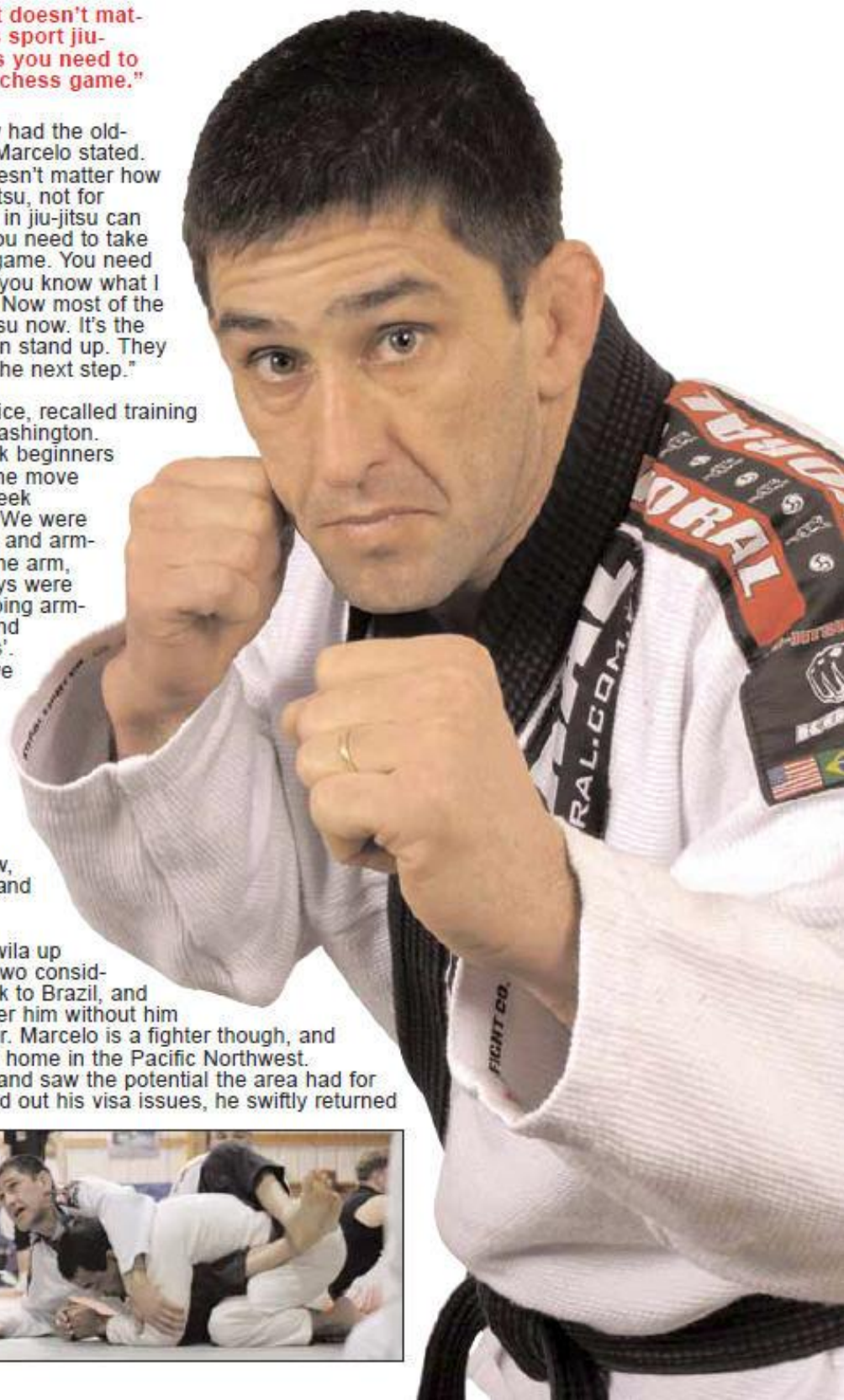
Gym Spotlight

"You go until you tap another guy. It doesn't matter how long it takes, because this is sport jiu-jitsu, not for strong guys. Sometimes you need to take your time, you need to play the chess game."

"I started to learn jiu-jitsu when they had the old-school, when they had no time limits", Marcelo stated. "You go until you tap another guy. It doesn't matter how long it takes, because this is sport jiu-jitsu, not for strong guys. It's so little guys who train in jiu-jitsu can win against the big guys. Sometimes you need to take your time, you need to play the chess game. You need to make the bread soft before you eat, you know what I mean, you need to make the guy tired. Now most of the guys cross-train. Most guys know jiu-jitsu now. It's the same as the jiu-jitsu guys having to train stand up. They have to because they need to jump to the next step."

Marcelo's Assistant instructor, Maurice, recalled training with Marcelo when he first arrived in Washington. "Marcelo had a structure. He said, 'Look beginners learn this. XYZ.' And we would work one move here... you know, an armbar... For a week straight, we'd do nothing but armbars. We were all purples [belts] at the time you know, and armbar, armbar, armbar, a 1000 reps, on one arm, you know... and finally, some of the guys were saying to Marcelo, 'Look we've been doing armbars, morning class, afternoon class, and night class... doing nothing but armbars'. By midweek we were [begging], 'Can we see some new techniques besides the armbar?!?' So he [Marcelo] said, 'Fine, no problem, show me the armbar.' So a guy would get an armbar [against Marcelo] and he'd yank it right out. 'You [next student] show me the armbar' He'd yank it right out. Next guy same. 'OK, you guys still need to work the armbar.'" (Laughter) "And you know, we were looking for the flying triangle, and our armbars sucked!!!" (All Laugh)

After building his first school in Tukwila up to 140 students strong, Marcelo faced two considerable obstacles. He was deported back to Brazil, and his Tukwila gym was sold out from under him without him receiving any compensation whatsoever. Marcelo is a fighter though, and he was determined to return to his new home in the Pacific Northwest. Marcelo had made many close friends and saw the potential the area had for martial arts champions. Once he worked out his visa issues, he swiftly returned to Washington. He started training everyone from Special Forces, to Rangers, to Policemen and, of course, to jiu-jitsu and MMA fighters. Marcelo also helped shape the U.S. Army's School of Combatives program.





One of Alonso's students who's also a Seattle Police Officer had this to say about Marcelo: "I'm in a very proactive unit that deals with narcotics and gangs. We get into a lot of scuffles, a lot of fights. Marcelo's ground teachings and his skill techniques are phenomenal because I've put them to use. I've been in about 500 street fights, and out on the street it's all jiu-jitsu."

Marcelo's students all echo the same sentiments about his teaching style. Whether a student's goal is to become a competitive fighter, or simply to lose weight, build confidence, or coordination, Marcelo has the capability of helping each individual meet their personal goals. All are welcome to be a part of this world class team.

Some of Marcelo's personal achievements include:

- 6-time Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Champion
- 28 1st place, 10 2nd place, and 6 3rd place finishes in jiu-jitsu tournaments
- 4th degree Carlson Gracie Black Belt
- Black belt in Judo
- Led the Carlson Gracie Team in Brazil to multiple championships

Marcelo Alonso's BJJ Academy has 2 locations: in Seattle (4211 Winslow Place North) and in Puyallup (13716-A Canyon Road E). To reach Marcelo's Academy call (206) 618-6024 or email mabjj@hotmail.com. More info can also be found online at www.mabjj.com.



"They need to make themselves better than others. It's very important that you open your mind and train all different styles, all different martial arts."

BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU

MARCELO ALONSO

CARLSON GRACIE TEAM