

INVICTUS LEO PRESENTS:

PREMIER ISSUE
FALL 2026

ACIES

LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING MAGAZINE

WHERE THE BADGE MEETS THE BELT

BUILDING STRONGER OFFICERS
THROUGH JIU JITSU.



LADY COP COMBATIVES
Women in Jiu Jitsu

THE WARRIOR MINDSET
What's in a Name?

THE LOW MOUNT
Is it the Best Control?

STEM CELLS
Repairing the Body

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Letter from the Editor

When Invictus LEO started in 2019, the goal was simple: bring together law enforcement officers who believed in the value of training. We believed that officers who regularly challenge themselves become more confident, more capable, and ultimately better prepared to serve their communities.

What started as an idea has grown into a movement and we have hosted conferences, seminars, and training events that have brought together thousands from across North America and beyond. We have met patrol officers, supervisors, trainers, instructors, and leaders who all share a common belief: training matters.

As Invictus LEO has grown, so has our desire to create another way for officers to connect, learn, and share ideas. That is the purpose of this magazine.

ACIES Magazine is dedicated to the law enforcement training community. And what is this strange latin word you ask?

ACIES means *"The disciplined battle line where preparation, precision, and purpose converge. The sharp edge of a blade."* (ACIES is pronounced AH-kee-ace or ACE-ee-es)

Within these pages, you will find articles written by officers, trainers, instructors, and subject matter experts who are passionate about professional development. Some articles will focus on Jiu Jitsu and defensive tactics. Others will explore leadership, health and wellness, fitness, recovery, use of force, instructor development, and lessons learned from real-world experience.

There are countless officers throughout our profession who possess valuable knowledge and hard-earned wisdom. Too often, those lessons remain within a single agency, unit, or training group. We hope this magazine helps bridge those gaps.

Thank you for taking the time to read this inaugural issue, and thank you to our contributors, supporters, sponsors, and everyone who has helped make Invictus LEO what it is today. Most importantly, thank you to the officers who continue to invest in their own development and who understand that training is not an event—it is a lifelong commitment.

I hope you enjoy this issue, find value in its contents, and consider becoming part of the conversation moving forward. All we ask is that you share our download link so other officers can discover ACIES Magazine.



A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Ari Knazan".

Ari Knazan
Editor-in-Chief & Director of Operations
ACIES Magazine / Invictus LEO Collective
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ACIES

LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING MAGAZINE

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ACIES Law Enforcement Magazine

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Mission Statement: *ACIES exists to advance the professionalism, preparedness, and survivability of law enforcement officers through education, training, and the relentless pursuit of excellence*

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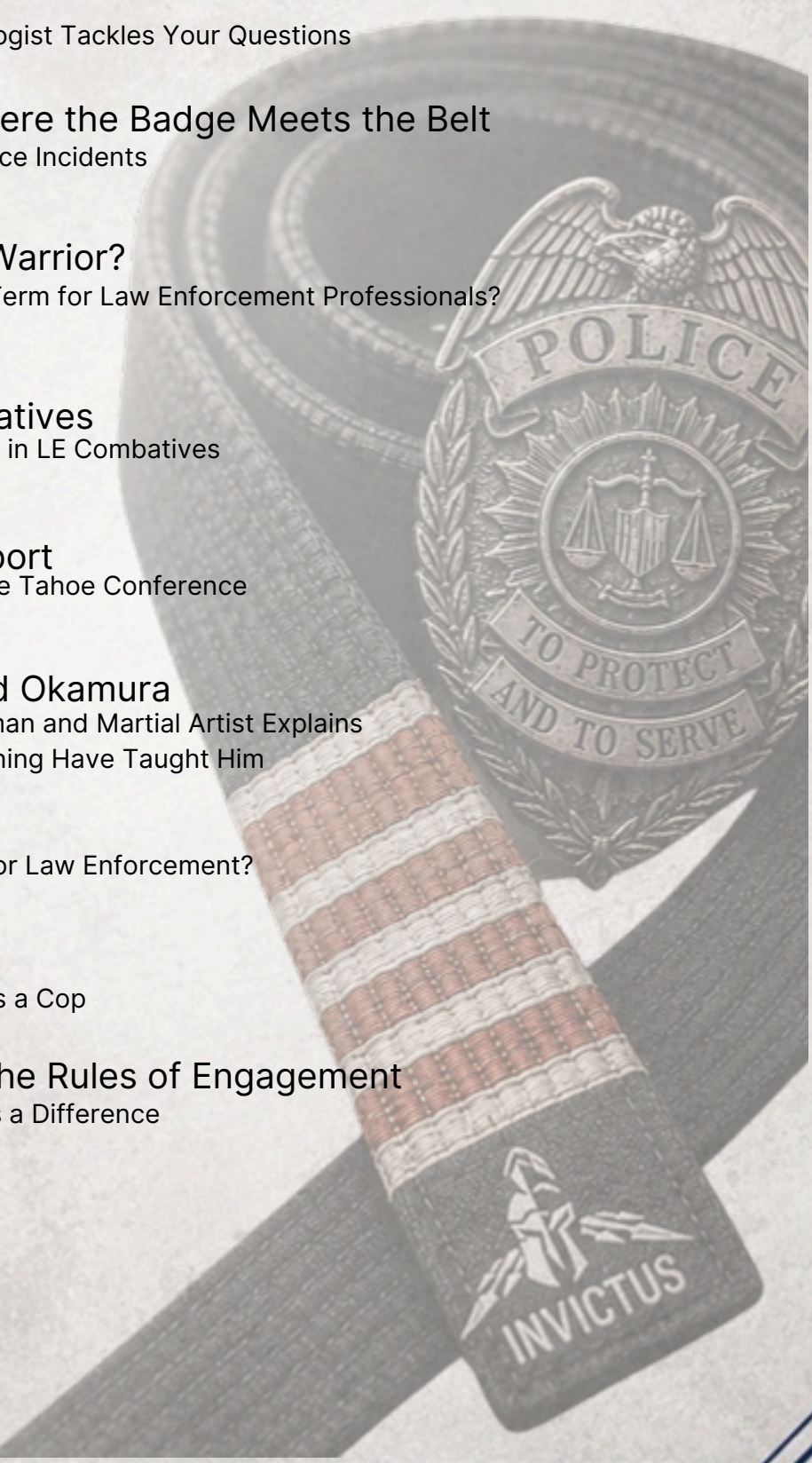
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- A close-up, slightly angled view of a police officer's duty belt. The belt is dark, possibly black or dark blue, and features a large, ornate silver or chrome badge. The badge has a central shield with a scale of justice, surrounded by a laurel wreath. Above the shield is an eagle with spread wings. The word "POLICE" is inscribed on a banner across the top of the badge. Below the shield, another banner reads "TO PROTECT AND TO SERVE". A patch on the belt, partially visible at the bottom right, features a stylized figure and the word "INVICTUS". The background is a light, textured surface.
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Stem Cells: The New Hope for Recovery

BY KEVIN LUCAS

The Unseen Reality of Police Work

You spend 10-hour shifts seated in a patrol car while wearing nearly 50 pounds of gear. A bulletproof vest and duty belt carrying a firearm, TASER, flashlight, handcuffs, zip ties, and other essential equipment make it nearly impossible to find a comfortable position. Your legs, back, and neck become stiff. Your gear digs into your waist while your vest gradually rides into your neck, forcing you to constantly adjust it just to breathe comfortably.

Then the call comes in.

In an instant, after hours of sitting, you are expected to shift into lifesaving mode. Every sense becomes heightened. Every detail matters. Every decision could affect the life of a victim, an innocent bystander, your partner, the suspect, or your own.

You step out of your vehicle and assess the scene. Will you have to chase, tackle, and physically restrain a suspect?

Unlike an NBA or NFL athlete who has time to warm up before performing, you have no such luxury. In a split second, you are expected to perform at your highest level. No warm-up. No stretching. No movement preparation. And unlike professional sports, your performance isn't about winning a game—it's about surviving one.

Cold muscles, tendons, ligaments, and spinal discs are expected to respond instantly to whatever the situation demands. Every call has the potential to push your body beyond its limits, increasing the risk of injury.

The reality is simple: you can do everything right and still get hurt.

A suspect may appear from nowhere and threaten your life or your partner's. A foot pursuit across uneven ground may end with a torn knee or broken ankle. While trying to protect a suspect's head from striking the pavement, the awkward position and sudden force may instead leave you with a herniated disc or a serious neck or back injury.

The public understandably hears about officers who are shot, stabbed, or struck by vehicles. What is rarely discussed are the thousands of career-altering injuries caused simply by the physical demands of the profession.

The number of officers who undergo surgery, spend months away from work, or live with chronic pain because of job-related injuries is staggering. Physical therapy, chiropractic care, massage therapy, exercise, stretching, injections, medications, and countless hours of rehabilitation become part of everyday life. Officers will do almost anything to continue protecting and serving their communities.

Yet despite those efforts, many continue to suffer.

For some, the next stop is the operating room. For others, it becomes prescription pain medication, muscle relaxers, or alcohol—anything to make it through another shift. Careers are cut short. Marriages suffer. Families feel the strain. All because someone chose to put on the vest, buckle on the duty belt, pin on the badge, and answer the call to serve.

At some point in their career, many officers will experience an injury that changes the course of their lives.

Perhaps the saddest part is that many never tell anyone what they're going through. They don't want to lose their job. They don't want to appear weak or be labeled as "that officer" trying to game the system. It becomes a constant battle—damned if you do, damned if you don't.

Is There Another Option?

For decades, officers have been told to push through the pain. Ice it. Stretch it. Take another anti-inflammatory. Get another injection. While these treatments have their place, they often manage symptoms rather than support the body's natural ability to heal.

What if there were another approach?

What if your duty belt no longer meant chronic back pain, or your vest no longer caused daily neck pain? You are not your diagnosis. There is hope. Imagine finishing a shift with enough energy to enjoy your family instead of simply enduring the pain. Regenerative medicine may offer a new path forward.

Stem cell therapy is one of the most promising areas of regenerative medicine because its goal is not simply to reduce symptoms, but to support the body's natural healing processes. While no treatment can guarantee results, and not every condition is appropriate for stem cell therapy, growing research and clinical experience suggest it may help certain patients reduce pain, improve function, and recover from musculoskeletal injuries when used as part of a comprehensive treatment plan.

Whether you've lived with chronic pain for years or simply want to stay healthier throughout a long career, regenerative medicine may offer options that didn't exist a generation ago.

Our mission is simple: help the men and women who protect our communities continue doing what they were called to do with healthier, stronger, and more resilient bodies. Your body was designed to heal. Sometimes it simply needs the right support.

If you're exploring regenerative medicine or stem cell therapy, the team at [New Hope Regeneration](https://newhoperegeneration.com) has performed more than 400,000 treatments. Learn more or schedule a consultation at newhoperegeneration.com



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LEAD: DON'T FOLLOW.

Ask Dr. Jena

A column dedicated to answering police officers' questions about mental health, resilience, and well-being on and off the job.



Column by

Dr. Jena Kiser, Ph.D

Have a Question for Dr. Jena? Email Us
info@aciesmagazine.com

Q: *How do we navigate the stigma around getting help in our profession. I know it's 2026 but there still is this quiet suffering that many cops endure. What's your suggestion?* -John H.

Let them know it's OK to get help, others have received help, they are not alone, and there are options. -Anonymous law enforcement respondent in (Crowe et al. 2022).

Behavior change is a process. When we ask someone to do something new, such as encouraging a first responder to seek mental health treatment, that decision is influenced by barriers. Understanding those barriers is essential to helping people feel safe enough to seek help.

A 2021 study by researchers Hofer and Savell highlights three important findings.

First, willingness to engage in treatment does not always match actual need or desire for treatment.

Second, many factors influence whether someone seeks care, and while some barriers can be modified, others cannot.

Third, many people who receive or are open to treatment report positive outcomes, reflecting gradual improvements in cultural attitudes toward mental health.

One of the greatest barriers to treatment is stigma. Stigma discourages people from seeking, engaging in, and adhering to care by reducing acceptance, limiting opportunities, and negatively affecting health outcomes. In public safety, stigma is reinforced in several ways.

- Agency policies related to confidentiality, relief of duty, or financial costs may unintentionally discourage employees from seeking help.
- Cultural expectations that first responders should always be resilient and unaffected create unrealistic standards.
- Stereotypes that people with anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress are weak, unpredictable, or unfit for duty further discourage treatment.
- Finally, limited mental health literacy contributes to misunderstanding and reduces support.

Stigma often sounds like, "I'll be seen as weak if I get help," "My coworkers won't trust me," or "I won't get promoted if anyone knows I'm struggling." These beliefs reflect a common misconception that needing psychological treatment means someone is incapable of doing the job.

In reality, repeated exposure to trauma places first responders at increased risk for post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, substance misuse, sleep problems, and suicidal thoughts. Seeking help is often necessary for maintaining long-term health and career longevity.

Changing attitudes and organizational culture takes time. It requires more than simply encouraging people to seek help; it requires reducing barriers and creating an environment where help-seeking is viewed as a normal part of maintaining operational readiness.

Agencies play a critical role in that process. Confidential, affordable, and accessible mental health services should be available without fear of career consequences. Mental health education should begin early in a first responder's career and continue throughout employment, with regular discussion of available resources such as trauma-focused treatment, marital counseling, substance use services, and sleep support.

Culture also changes through everyday interactions. Supervisors, coworkers, and family members should receive training to recognize signs of distress and respond appropriately. Leaders can normalize healthy coping by modeling behaviors such as taking breaks, practicing tactical breathing between calls, staying connected with family, or discussing wellness during briefings and debriefings. Small, consistent behaviors reinforce that maintaining psychological health is part of professional readiness.

Individuals also have an important role in reducing stigma. Talking openly about challenges and successes helps normalize common experiences and reduces isolation. Choosing language carefully and avoiding judgment or minimizing others' experiences creates a more supportive environment. Education improves understanding of mental health conditions and increases awareness of available resources. Finally, seeking help when needed models healthy behavior for others and reinforces that asking for support is a sign of professionalism rather than weakness.

Reducing stigma is a gradual process, but it is possible. We can all play a role in creating a culture where seeking help is viewed as a routine part of sustaining a long, healthy career.

“

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SILENCE.
IT'S SEEKING HELP
SO YOU CAN KEEP
SHOWING UP.**

”





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CALENDAR

UPCOMING TRAINING EVENTS

Across North America, law enforcement professionals continue to advance their skills through specialized training designed for the realities of modern policing. From use-of-force and police combatives to firearms, de-escalation, officer survival, and tactical response, these upcoming events provide opportunities to learn, train, and connect with instructors and officers from across the profession. Explore what's coming up and find training that can help you and your agency stay prepared for what happens when it counts.



DATE	TRAINING COMPANY	LOCATION
Sept. 14–17, 2026	Code 4 Concepts (C4CPJJ)	South Portland, ME
Sept. 14–17, 2026	Effective Fitness Combatives (EFC)	Monroeville, PA
Sept. 21, 2026	Elevated Performance Concepts	Corona, CA
Sept. 28–Oct. 1, 2026	Effective Fitness Combatives (EFC)	Amarillo, TX
Oct. 1–3, 2026	Code 4 Concepts (C4CPJJ)	Las Vegas, NV
Oct. 5–9, 2026	Effective Fitness Combatives (EFC)	Auburn Hills, MI
Oct. 6–9, 2026	Effective Fitness Combatives (EFC)	Forest Lake, MN
Oct. 12–16, 2026	Effective Fitness Combatives (EFC)	Dothan, AL
Oct. 12–16, 2026	Effective Fitness Combatives (EFC)	Round Rock, TX
Oct. 16–17, 2026	Invictus Law Enforcement Collective	Red Deer, AB, Canada
Oct. 19–23, 2026	Effective Fitness Combatives (EFC)	Salisbury, MD
Oct. 19–22, 2026	Effective Fitness Combatives (EFC)	Medford, OR
Oct. 19–23, 2026	Effective Fitness Combatives (EFC)	London, ON, Canada
Oct. 26–29, 2026	Code 4 Concepts (C4CPJJ)	Douglas, WY
Oct. 26–30, 2026	Officer Survival Series (OSS)	Hartford, CT
Oct. 26–27, 2026	Jiu Jitsu Five-O	Madisonville, KY
Nov. 2–6, 2026	Storm Training	Foley, AL
Nov. 2–5 & 9–11, 2026	Officer Survival Series (OSS)	Meriden, CT
Nov. 16–18, 2026	Officer Survival Series (OSS)	Meriden, CT
Dec. 14–18, 2026	Storm Training	Groveland, FL

WHERE THE BADGE MEETS THE BELT

RETHINKING POLICE USE-OF-FORCE INCIDENTS

— By C.J. Delaney —

"Why did the officer do that?"

It's a reasonable question. In fact, it is probably the first question most people ask. But what if it's not the most important one? What if, instead of focusing solely on a single decision made in a matter of seconds, we looked deeper? What if we asked what prepared that officer for that moment long before it ever happened? The reality is that every critical incident is the result of countless factors that existed before the camera started recording. Training, supervision, physical fitness, experience, policy, leadership, and preparation all shape how an officer responds under stress. Yet public discussion often reduces a complex event to a single snapshot in time.

We expect police officers to perform at an extraordinary level during the worst moments of someone else's life. We expect them to make split second decisions, communicate effectively, control resistance, protect innocent people, and apply force only when necessary, all while managing their own fear, stress, and uncertainty. In many ways, we expect officers to perform like elite athletes. But there is a difference between officers and elite athletes. Professional athletes train every day. Their competitions are scheduled months in advance. They know where they will perform, when they will perform, and the rules governing the event. Their entire profession revolves around preparation.

Police officers face a very different reality. Their "game day" can happen at any moment—during a midnight traffic stop, a domestic dispute, a mental health crisis, or an armed confrontation. The environment is unpredictable. The opponent is often unwilling. The stakes include injury, death, lawsuits, public scrutiny, and lifelong consequences. Yet despite operating in far more chaotic conditions, officers frequently receive only a fraction of the training that elite performers receive. Competence is not built through certification. It is built through repetition.

“If we expect officers to perform effectively in **chaos**, training must reflect **chaos**.”

One of the biggest misconceptions in law enforcement is the belief that skills learned once can be performed flawlessly years later under extreme stress. Human performance simply does not work that way. When the body perceives danger, everything changes. Heart rate increases. Fine motor skills deteriorate. Decision-making narrows. Perception becomes distorted. Time may seem to speed up or slow down. These are not signs of weakness; they are normal human responses to stress.

The problem is that many officers are still trained in controlled environments where everyone knows what is coming next. A cooperative training partner is not the same as a resistant suspect. A classroom lecture is not the same as a rapidly evolving confrontation. A static drill is not the same as making life altering decisions while adrenaline floods your body.

If we expect officers to perform effectively in chaos, training must reflect chaos. It must challenge decision-making, create uncertainty, introduce resistance, and force officers to think and adapt under pressure. Realistic training develops confidence because it replaces hope with proven competence.

When a controversial incident occurs, the public often sees only the final thirty seconds of a much longer story. What remains invisible are the years of preparation, or lack of preparation, that influenced what happened. This does not eliminate individual accountability. Officers must be responsible for their actions. But true accountability should also include examining the systems responsible for developing those officers. How often was the officer trained? **Was the training realistic?** Did it reflect modern threats and best practices? Was performance actually evaluated, or was attendance mistaken for proficiency? These questions matter because training failures often reveal themselves only when someone is forced to perform under pressure.

The answer, however, is not simply more training. It is better training. Effective training benefits everyone involved in a law enforcement encounter. Officers make better decisions. They communicate more effectively. They gain control sooner and are less likely to be injured. Subjects benefit because skilled officers are often able to resolve situations more efficiently and with less risk of harm. Agencies benefit through reduced liability, greater professionalism, and increased public trust. Everyone wins when competency improves. Preparation extends beyond tactics and training. It includes physical fitness.

Unfortunately, as agencies struggle with staffing shortages, there is growing pressure to lower hiring and fitness standards to fill vacancies. That is a mistake! Physical fitness is not about appearance or athletic ability. It is about performance.

Fatigue impacts nearly every aspect of human functioning. It affects judgment, communication, emotional regulation, reaction time, and the ability to control resistance effectively. An exhausted officer is more likely to panic, rush decisions, miss opportunities to de-escalate, or use force inefficiently simply because their body can no longer keep up with the demands of the encounter. Physical fitness creates a larger margin for error. It allows officers to think more clearly, move more efficiently, and maintain greater control over both themselves and the situation. Lowering standards may solve a short-term staffing problem, but it often creates long-term performance and liability issues.

The next time a controversial use-of-force incident captures national attention, we should absolutely ask whether the officer's actions were lawful, reasonable, and consistent with policy. Accountability matters. It always will. But the conversation should not stop there. We should also ask how that officer was selected, trained, supervised, and prepared for the moment.

If we expect officers to perform under extraordinary stress with professionalism, restraint, and sound judgment, then we must invest in the systems that make those outcomes possible. That means maintaining hiring standards that identify capable candidates, enforcing physical fitness standards that prepare officers for the realities of the job, and providing realistic, recurring training throughout an officer's entire career.

The most important question may not be: "Why did the officer do that?"

It may be: **"How was the officer prepared for that moment?"**

Because in law enforcement, hope is not a strategy. Selection, training, preparation, and accountability are.



CJ Delaney

A 26-year law enforcement veteran from Long Island, NY, and an academy instructor for his agency, he is a third-degree black belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the founder of 10-1 BJJ, which specializes in reality-based training for law enforcement officers.

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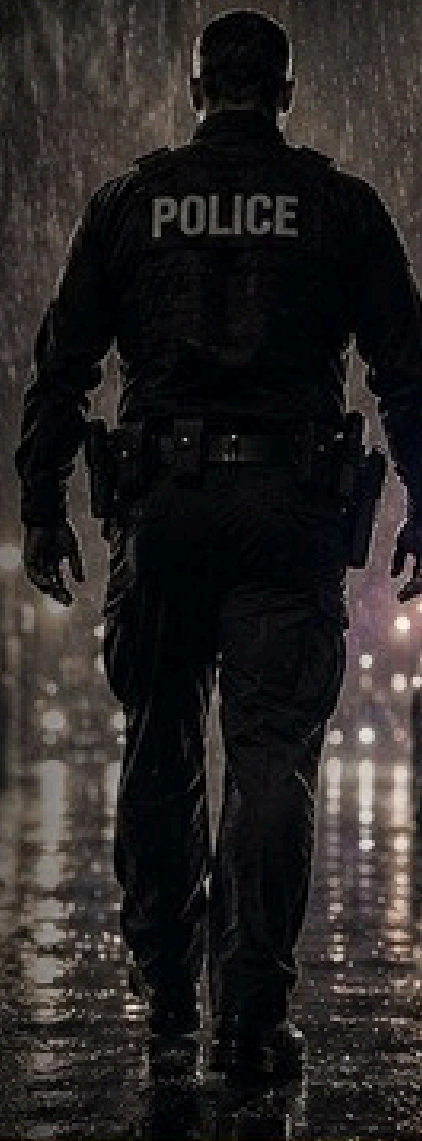


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WHO LOVES THE WARRIOR?



★

WHY OUR PROFESSION STILL NEEDS MEN AND WOMEN
COMMITTED TO MASTERING VIOLENCE IN DEFENSE OF OTHERS.

BY CHAD LYMAN

I have been a police officer since 1998. What I know is that we need men and women capable of performing at a high level on calls for service in the field. Throughout my career, people like this have often been treated as an afterthought—as if they are simply waiting behind the glass marked, "In case of emergency break glass." Then, when something violent happens, people say they "rose to the occasion."

They didn't. They trained. They rehearsed. They performed real missions. They put in the work, day after day, so that when a suspect's actions demanded a warrior, one came through the door.

Over the years, referring to officers as warriors has fallen out of favor. I wrote about this in a previous article titled Warrior Versus Guardian. In it, I argued that the idea that a warrior mindset leads to inappropriate, out-of-policy, or unlawful uses of force has gradually taken hold within the law enforcement community. In some cases, that message has even been promoted by senior leaders.

**THERE HAS
BEEN A
MOVEMENT TO
SAY WE NEED
OFFICERS TO BE
"GUARDIANS,"
NOT
"WARRIORS."**

The result has been a movement insisting that officers should be "guardians," not "warriors."

The irony is that some of the responsibility for poor use of force rests with the very people promoting that message. Agencies routinely expect officers to perform at the highest level during the most dangerous moments of their careers while providing only a fraction of the training required to do so. The men and women who step into harm's way deserve more than slogans. They deserve the preparation that allows them to prevail when it matters most.

The first issue I have with this movement is the idea that officers will somehow use force more appropriately if they are called guardians rather than warriors. There is a huge misconception that videos of unlawful use of force are videos of warriors in action. The inference is that if those officers had been "taught they were guardians", the force would somehow have been appropriate. This is completely false.

The truth is these officers are not warriors, nor are they well trained. In almost every video showing poor use-of-force decisions, we are watching undertrained officers attempt to make critical decisions under elevated heart rates and stress. We are not seeing highly trained warriors attacking random suspects. We are seeing officers equipped with badges, gun belts, academy training, and limited annual training. They have gear, weapons, and a directive to handle violent people. Their equipment and orders do not make them warriors.

If "warrior" status exists, it can only be achieved through hours and hours of training and experience. In those videos, we are watching ineffective force by poorly trained officers.

"What makes you a warrior?"

One answer given is that the warrior has mastered themselves in body and mind. Their power is rooted in self-control. They know when to be aggressive and how to apply appropriate force.

So how has the warrior mastered themselves? Through diligent, consistent, ongoing, strenuous training and actual application in the field. Most officers neither receive nor seek out regular training of that kind.

Even if "warrior culture" were being infused into officers to the detriment of communities, exactly when and where is this happening? I have taught police defensive tactics and use of force to departments around the nation, and at national and international conferences, since 2006. Most officers and departments nationwide receive ten or fewer hours of defensive tactics and use-of-force training annually. Less than ten hours a year. Exactly when and how are these "warriors" being developed?

***IF "WARRIOR" STATUS
EXISTS, IT CAN ONLY BE
ACHIEVED THROUGH HOURS
AND HOURS OF TRAINING
AND EXPERIENCE.***

Civilians, even those complaining about “warrior culture,” would be shocked to see the lack of anything resembling warrior training in police departments. Many departments do not allow contact in combatives training for fear of injuries, and very few physically tax officers or induce an elevated heart rate similar to the field.

The favored word from many police administrators is “guardian.” Certainly, officers serve as guardians from time to time. But to suggest that performing this task under threat of violence, while calling yourself a guardian instead of a warrior, will somehow make the use of force pure or appropriate is laughable.

Ultimately, I do not care if you call an officer a warrior, a guardian, or something else. No title will produce effective, ethical, and lawful force. **What produces high-level performance is continuing, consistent, ongoing training and experience.** No matter what you call them, you will produce professionals and people who are experts at using force when needed. If you are a professional officer, you must have the capability to use force and violence ethically and effectively. To me, anyone who can do this is the definition of a *warrior*.

If people are concerned that officers are becoming warriors, they can rest easy. There are very few true warriors in the world, and most officers will never reach that status. Completing an academy, receiving a badge and gun, and doing annual training does not automatically confirm or verify you as a warrior. Without dedicated, ongoing, focused, and consistent training on your own, you will not reach it.

Long ago, Heraclitus understood how rare warriors actually were. He wrote:

***OUT OF EVERY ONE HUNDRED MEN, TEN
SHOULDN'T EVEN BE THERE.
EIGHTY ARE JUST TARGETS.
NINE ARE REAL FIGHTERS
AND WE ARE LUCKY TO HAVE THEM, FOR
THEY MAKE THE BATTLE.
AH, BUT THE ONE, ONE IS A WARRIOR,
AND HE WILL BRING THE OTHERS BACK.***

In the poem, Heraclitus points out how rare warriors are and estimates this as one out of 100. He also states the warrior's purpose—to bring all the others back. In our society, when the warrior is needed, it is to keep all the others safe and bring them home alive.

I have trained consistently for over twenty years, and I am still a work in progress. By Heraclitus' thinking, I may be one of the nine, but I am not the one, although I have been blessed to work with a few.

We certainly do not have a warrior epidemic in policing, but we would be better off if we did. The issue we do have is ineffective force by poorly trained officers. Ineffective force gives the illusion of excessive force. Many people, upon seeing that illusion, jump to the conclusion that warrior culture is cultivating the craziness they are watching. The truth is, there are no warriors in those videos. They are watching beginners at use of force with gadgets and tools to try to help them.

In my career, the people who have led the anti-warrior sentiment have often been politicians, political groups, and police administrators. Many have not honed personal skill sets and are physically unable to do the things they expect others to do. In general, they do not like the warrior—until they need him.

Who loves the warrior? Only those who need them. Chiefs will even refer to officers responding to an active shooter event as “protectors” who must be prepared to meet violence with “controlled aggression.” The men and women who train consistently to go into harm’s way for people they do not even know are warriors doing warrior things. And they will bring all the others back.



Chad Lyman

A police officer since 1998, Chad currently serves as a Use of Force and Tactics Subject Matter Expert after assignments in Patrol, FTEP, Gangs, SWAT, Homeland Security, and Training. He is a Force Science Advanced Specialist, firearms instructor, Advanced DTI instructor, and a third degree Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu black belt. In 2006, he founded Code 4 Concepts Police Jiu-Jitsu, which has trained hundreds of law enforcement agencies across North America and internationally. His greatest accomplishment is his wife, Kayleen, and their eight children.

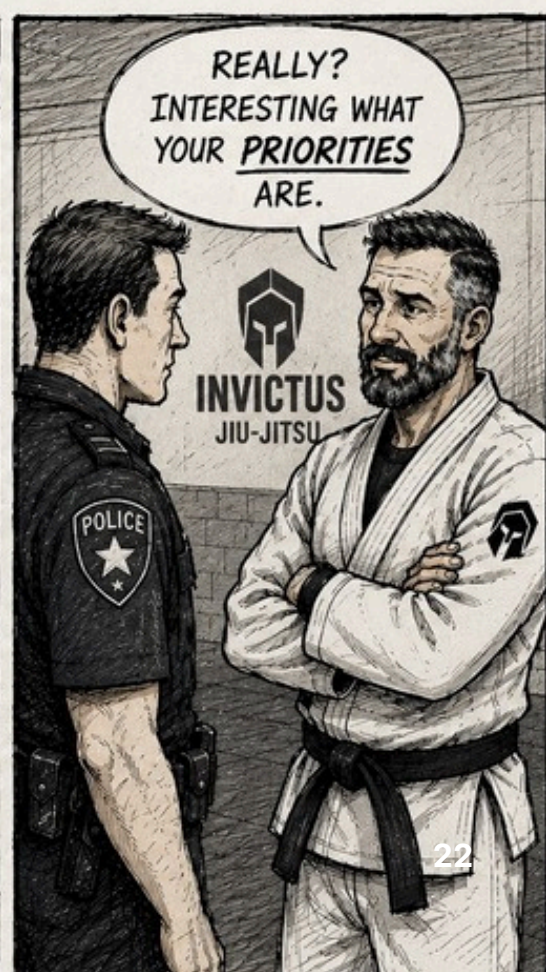
Website: c4cpjj.com | Instagram: @c4cpjj and @c4c_operator

**WHO LOVES THE WARRIOR? NOT THOSE HE HAS FOUGHT FOR,
FOR THOSE HE HAS FOUGHT FOR HAVE SEEN THE STAINS OF
BATTLE ON HIS GARMENT. THEY DRAW BACK WHEN THEY
LEARN OF THE DEED HE HAS DONE TO KEEP THEM SAFE.
IT IS BETTER FOR THEM TO KEEP A DISTANCE FROM THE
WARRIOR SO THE STAIN WILL NOT SPOIL THE PERCEPTION
OF THEIR DIGNITY. YET THE WARRIOR CONTINUES TO GIVE
HIS ALL. HE MUST FIGHT THE BATTLES TO KEEP THOSE
SOULS HE LOVES FREE FROM HARM AND FREE FROM THE
STAIN OF EVIL, FOR HE IS A WARRIOR, THE ONLY SHIELD
BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL. IT IS ONLY THE WARRIOR WHO
LOVES THE WARRIOR.**

*Sergeant Lonn Sweeney
Portland Police Bureau
Portland, Oregon*



THE TRAINING GAP





THE FIGHT WON'T BE FAIR

WHY FEMALE OFFICERS
CAN'T AFFORD AVERAGE TRAINING.

By Christina Gurrola



When I entered law enforcement, I knew that as a smaller female officer, I would have to work harder than most to become proficient in combatives. This job can be violent, and we deal with violent people in unpredictable circumstances. The public expects us to be warriors, and our partners expect us to be reliable, capable backup—and rightfully so. The suspect isn't going to hold back because of my gender or size, and neither will the environment. We have a job to do, and it is our professional responsibility to be mentally and physically prepared for whatever chaos we run toward.

Early in my career, a close friend and fellow female officer introduced me to Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. She told me that if I expected to deal with combative people, I needed more than weightlifting. She was absolutely right.

As a seasoned purple belt, she quickly showed me how much I had to learn about controlling someone on the ground. I watched her consistently hold her own against much larger men, often making it look effortless. That was the moment I realized Jiu-Jitsu could give me the edge I needed on the street.

It took time before I fully committed, but once I did, Jiu-Jitsu became more than a hobby—it became part of my identity. Much like policing, the more I learned, the more I realized how much there was still to learn.

**“THE SUSPECT ISN'T GOING TO
HOLD BACK BECAUSE OF MY
GENDER OR SIZE.”**

“WHAT I DON'T SEE, HOWEVER, IS THE SAME LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION FROM FEMALE OFFICERS.”

Beyond the physical benefits, I noticed something even more valuable: my ability to think under stress improved. In situations where tunnel vision might normally take over, I found myself making calmer, more deliberate decisions. Experience certainly plays a role, but I believe BJJ was instrumental in helping me stay composed during chaos.

Training constantly places you in uncomfortable positions where escape seems impossible. You can tap at any time, but I often found myself asking, Is this really checkmate, or is there still room to move? More often than not, there was. I simply had to slow down, think clearly, and improve my position one step at a time.

That mindset carried directly into police work. The WIN principle—What's Important Now?—became invaluable. Instead of becoming overwhelmed by the entire problem, I learned to focus on the next most important action, execute it, and then move to the next.

BJJ hasn't just improved my ability to control another person physically—it has strengthened my mental resilience. Those lessons eventually led me to become a defensive tactics and arrest-and-control instructor.

As I began teaching, I recognized shortcomings in traditional law enforcement training. Much of the curriculum was outdated, and while sport BJJ offers tremendous value, it is not a complete law enforcement system. Some techniques simply don't translate well to the realities officers face on the street.

Fortunately, experienced officers recognized these same issues and developed programs that apply Jiu-Jitsu principles specifically to law enforcement encounters. Their conceptual, scenario-based approach makes training more practical and applicable to real-world policing.

I have spent much of my own development studying Effective Fitness Combatives, whose methods have provided valuable tools for teaching realistic suspect-control concepts. Several other organizations share this philosophy, and I appreciate the collective effort to raise the training standard throughout law enforcement.

Even with improved methods, our profession still doesn't receive enough repetition. You wouldn't expect to become a professional field-goal kicker by practicing eight hours once a year, so why should we expect officers to become proficient at arrest and control with only annual training? Many agencies recognize the value of frequent, shorter training sessions, but budgets, staffing, and scheduling often make that difficult.

The suspect, however, doesn't care about those limitations. It is ultimately our responsibility to prepare ourselves for the fight. If your agency can't provide enough training, find a local gym and continue developing your skills.

The BJJ academies in my area, I see more law enforcement officers training every year. What I don't see is the same level of participation from female officers. Statistically and physically, female officers may benefit from this type of training more than anyone. If combatives aren't appealing, we need to ask why. Is it complacency? Intimidation? Or have we failed to create the right environment for women to develop these skills?

If Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu or other combative sports don't seem appealing, we need to ask ourselves: What can we do differently?

Eventually, I realized that if I wanted to see a culture change, I had to help create it. I was no longer the new officer trying to figure everything out. I had become an instructor, a leader within my agency, and someone responsible for helping others succeed. It was time to encourage more female officers to train.

I began working with other female defensive tactics instructors in my area and quickly discovered I wasn't alone in my concerns. Together, we explored ways to create an environment that encouraged learning rather than intimidation.

Training in predominantly male classes can present unique challenges. One partner may roll too aggressively because he doesn't want to lose to a woman, while another may go too easy, creating unrealistic training. Neither provides the best learning environment.

We concluded that women-led training could help bridge that gap. That doesn't mean women should only train with women—we still encounter male suspects—but female-focused classes can provide a strong foundation before expanding into broader training environments.

Two years ago, we launched Lady Cop Combatives. Our mission is simple: provide training beyond what agencies can offer, create an environment where women feel comfortable learning, and build a community of officers committed to improving together.

Our classes aren't exclusively for women. We regularly invite experienced male instructors to share their knowledge and provide realistic perspectives. The results have been encouraging. More women are training, building confidence, and improving their control skills.

Perhaps the most rewarding part is that none of this training is mandatory. These officers choose to invest in themselves because they genuinely want to become better.

This profession requires us to be ready for the fight we hope never comes. We don't get timeouts to call a play, and we don't get to tap out when the pressure becomes overwhelming. We took an oath to protect our communities, and we owe them the highest level of professionalism we can provide.

Take the initiative. Prepare yourself before the suspect decides it's time.



Christina Gurrola

Christina has served as a law enforcement officer for 13 years. She currently serves as a patrol sergeant and K9 supervisor in Idaho's Treasure Valley. An instructor in arrest and control techniques, she also holds a purple belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. Christina is a founding member and instructor with Lady Cop Combatives, which provides principle-based combatives training for female law enforcement officers.

Instagram @ladycopcombatives

AFTER ACTION REPORT

2026 INVICTUS LAKE TAHOE CONFERENCE

Held in beautiful Lake Tahoe, Nevada, this year's conference welcomed more than 120 law enforcement officers from across North America for three days of intensive training, networking, and professional development. Officers traveled from a wide variety of agencies and backgrounds, united by a common goal: improving their skills and becoming safer, more capable professionals.

The conference featured instruction from some of the most respected law enforcement Jiu Jitsu and defensive tactics trainers in North America. Attendees were exposed to a broad range of concepts and techniques designed to improve officer safety, enhance control tactics, and develop confidence during high-stress encounters. Training sessions covered everything from standing engagements and clinch work to ground control, positional dominance, and practical problem-solving under pressure.

In addition to law enforcement-specific applications, participants also had the opportunity to explore aspects of sport Jiu-Jitsu. While the focus of Invictus remains firmly rooted in professional application, exposure to sport-based training continues to provide valuable lessons in timing, movement, pressure, and adaptability. The combination of operational and competitive perspectives created a well-rounded training experience for everyone in attendance.



120 OFFICERS • 33 BLACK BELTS • 3 DAYS OF TRAINING

AFTER ACTION REPORT: TAHOE 2026

One of the highlights of the conference was the Invictus Invitational Championship. The annual event showcases talented law enforcement grapplers who test their skills in front of their peers. This year's championship match delivered an outstanding performance by Christian Richer, who captured the title after an impressive tournament run. The competition featured several exceptional athletes, including semifinalist Jay Wadsworth of EFC, whose performance, at 48 years old, earned the respect of competitors and spectators alike.

Beyond the techniques and competition, the true value of the conference was found in the relationships built throughout the week. Officers had the opportunity to exchange ideas, discuss challenges facing the profession, and learn from one another both on and off the mats. These connections continue to strengthen the growing network of law enforcement professionals committed to training and professional excellence.

As the conference concluded, one thing became clear: the momentum behind the Invictus movement continues to grow. What began as a small gathering has evolved into one of the premier law enforcement Jiu-Jitsu events in North America.

Plans are already underway for the 2027 Invictus Lake Tahoe Conference, where officers from across the continent will once again gather to train, learn, and push the profession forward. You can sign up now for next years conference (early bird price expires November 30 2026).

Because when it comes to officer safety, training is not optional, it is essential.



The Championship match of Christian Richer vs Jay Wadsworth. An incredibly technical match.
Invictus Invitational 2026





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Interview:

GERALD OKAMURA

70 YEARS OF MARTIAL ARTS

(YES, YOU READ THAT RIGHT!)

By Ari Knazan

A few years ago, I struck up a friendship with the Legend, **Gerald Okamura**, after discovering he was a regular contributor to a Big Trouble in Little China Facebook group I belonged to. Since I've long considered it one of the greatest films ever made, I couldn't resist reaching out to the man who famously portrayed the Wing Kong's "Golden Six Shooter."

What began as a shared appreciation for the film turned into a friendship. I had the opportunity to design several logos and T-shirts for Gerald, and when the chance came to feature him in this magazine, I didn't hesitate.

With more than 70 years of martial arts experience, Gerald has spent a lifetime learning, teaching, and refining his craft. I've always believed there's tremendous value in listening to those who have walked the path before us, so I asked him to share some of the lessons he's learned along the way.

What I found was far more than technical knowledge.

Gerald is a humble, thoughtful man whose insights extend well beyond martial arts. His perspective on discipline, confidence, humility, and life offers wisdom that practitioners of any style—and people from any walk of life can benefit from.



Gerald Okamura is the legendary martial artist, stuntman and actor who is also known as the "Man of Many Weapons". Photo Credit: @officialgeraldokamura

AK: You have spent more than seven decades studying martial arts. Looking back, what originally drew you to training, and what kept you coming back year after year?

GO: When I was around 12 years old, I began training in judo in Hilo, Hawaii. Around that time, I also explored aikido and kendo. I wasn't formally studying those arts under a sensei—I was simply curious and wanted to experience as much as I could.

After graduating from high school, I joined the U.S. Army. During my service, while stationed in Korea, I had the opportunity to train in taekwondo for just over a year. That experience further fueled my passion for the martial arts.

When I completed my military service, I moved to California where I was introduced to Jimmy H Woo and the art of Kung Fu San Soo. From the moment I began training, I felt like I had found what I had been searching for. Everything Kung Fu San Soo had to offer aligned with what I wanted from the martial arts, and it quickly became my primary discipline.

What kept me coming back was the realization that the journey never really ends. There was always something new to learn, another principle to understand, or another technique to refine through repetition. That constant opportunity to improve became one of my greatest motivations to continue training.

Eventually, that passion led me to open my own Kung Fu San Soo school in East Los Angeles—a journey that all began with the curiosity of a young boy in Hawaii.

**“WHAT KEPT ME COMING BACK
WAS THE REALIZATION THAT THE
JOURNEY NEVER REALLY ENDS.”**



Gerald Okamura as the Wing Kong Golden Six Shooter from the 1986 film *Big Trouble in Little China* Photo Credit: @officialgeraldokamura

AK: What is the most important lesson that martial arts has taught you about life?

GO: For me, the most important lesson has always been the relationship between self-confidence and humility. As your confidence grows, humility must grow alongside it. These two qualities should always travel together.

If you develop confidence without humility, it's easy to end up with a big ego. Build your confidence, but always bring humility with you. Respect people.

AK: Throughout your years of training, were there any techniques, concepts, or principles that consistently proved valuable regardless of style or circumstance?

GO: I don't think there's one particular technique that stands above all the others. Techniques are important, but the principles behind them are what truly last. The longer I trained, the more I realized that martial arts aren't just about fighting—they're about understanding responsibility. You have to know when to use your skills, how to apply them, and be prepared to live with the consequences of your actions.

Confidence is important, but it must always be guided by good judgment.

On a technical level, repetition teaches you how to adapt. A technique that works against one person may need to be modified for someone larger, smaller, faster, or stronger, but the underlying principles remain the same. For me, the greatest lessons have never been about memorizing techniques, but about developing character, adaptability, and respect for others.

AK: You are still active and involved in the martial arts community at 85 years old. What advice would you give practitioners who want to continue training for a lifetime?

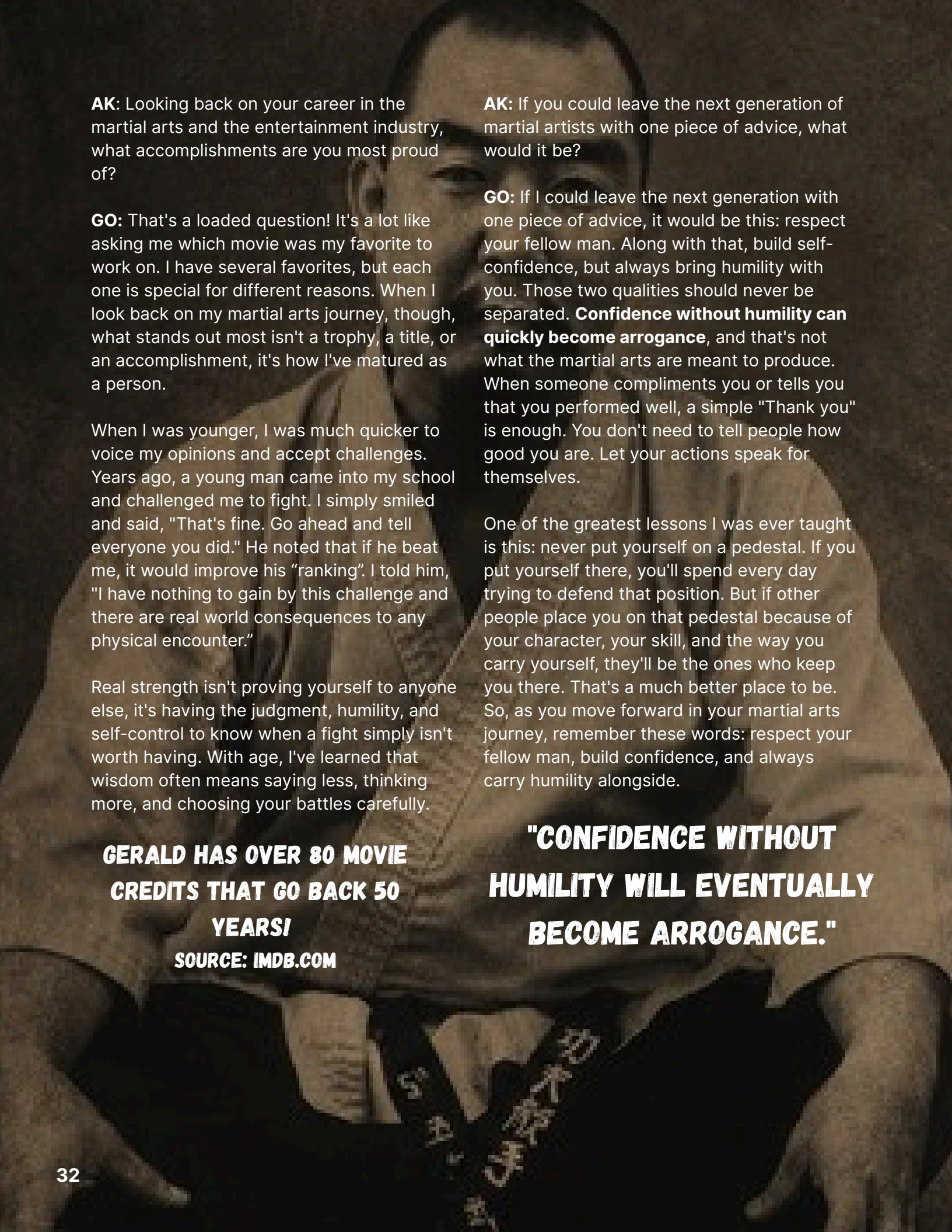
GO: People begin training in the martial arts for many different reasons. Some want to learn how to defend themselves, while others are drawn to the discipline, mindset, or physical benefits that training provides. Whatever your motivation, ***if your goal is to practice for a lifetime, you need to accept that your priorities will change.*** Life happens. Injuries occur, health changes, and as we get older, our bodies simply don't move the way they once did.

The key to longevity is learning to adapt rather than walking away. As the years pass, you may find that full-contact sparring is no longer your focus. Instead, you might place greater value on kata, body mechanics, breathing, coordination, flexibility, or refining your movement.

Martial arts are not something you outgrow—they evolve as you do.

If you're willing to adjust your training to match the season of life you're in, you can continue practicing for decades.

***“IF YOUR GOAL IS TO
PRACTICE FOR A LIFETIME,
YOU NEED TO ACCEPT THAT
YOUR PRIORITIES WILL
CHANGE.”***



AK: Looking back on your career in the martial arts and the entertainment industry, what accomplishments are you most proud of?

GO: That's a loaded question! It's a lot like asking me which movie was my favorite to work on. I have several favorites, but each one is special for different reasons. When I look back on my martial arts journey, though, what stands out most isn't a trophy, a title, or an accomplishment, it's how I've matured as a person.

When I was younger, I was much quicker to voice my opinions and accept challenges. Years ago, a young man came into my school and challenged me to fight. I simply smiled and said, "That's fine. Go ahead and tell everyone you did." He noted that if he beat me, it would improve his "ranking". I told him, "I have nothing to gain by this challenge and there are real world consequences to any physical encounter."

Real strength isn't proving yourself to anyone else, it's having the judgment, humility, and self-control to know when a fight simply isn't worth having. With age, I've learned that wisdom often means saying less, thinking more, and choosing your battles carefully.

**GERALD HAS OVER 80 MOVIE
CREDITS THAT GO BACK 50
YEARS!**

SOURCE: IMDB.COM

AK: If you could leave the next generation of martial artists with one piece of advice, what would it be?

GO: If I could leave the next generation with one piece of advice, it would be this: respect your fellow man. Along with that, build self-confidence, but always bring humility with you. Those two qualities should never be separated. **Confidence without humility can quickly become arrogance**, and that's not what the martial arts are meant to produce. When someone compliments you or tells you that you performed well, a simple "Thank you" is enough. You don't need to tell people how good you are. Let your actions speak for themselves.

One of the greatest lessons I was ever taught is this: never put yourself on a pedestal. If you put yourself there, you'll spend every day trying to defend that position. But if other people place you on that pedestal because of your character, your skill, and the way you carry yourself, they'll be the ones who keep you there. That's a much better place to be. So, as you move forward in your martial arts journey, remember these words: respect your fellow man, build confidence, and always carry humility alongside.

**"CONFIDENCE WITHOUT
HUMILITY WILL EVENTUALLY
BECOME ARROGANCE."**



Kurt Russell and Gerald Okamura behind the scenes from the 1986 film Big Trouble in Little China.

Photo Credit: @officialgeraldokamura

AK: Any parting thoughts Gerald?

GO: Yes! One of the ***greatest piece of advice I was ever given was to 'be a garbage disposal.'*** At first, it sounds like an unusual lesson, but it's one I've carried with me throughout my life. Every martial art, every instructor, and every experience has something to offer. Some of those lessons will fit your personality, your goals, and your journey. Others won't. The key is to keep your ears open and your mind receptive. Listen to everyone, because wisdom can come from unexpected places.

The mistake many people make is believing there is only one right way. There isn't. Take what is valuable, what helps you grow, and what aligns with your principles. Leave behind what doesn't serve you without criticism or resentment. Learning isn't about accepting everything you're taught, it's about having the maturity to recognize what belongs in your journey and what doesn't. Be willing to listen to everything, keep what makes you better, and let the rest go down the garbage disposal. That's how you continue to grow, not only as a martial artist, but as a person.- Shaka!!

visit www.geraldokamura.com

**“THE MISTAKE MANY PEOPLE MAKE IS
BELIEVING THERE IS ONLY ONE RIGHT WAY.
— GERALD OKAMURA**

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LOW MOUNT:

A BETTER GROUND CONTROL SOLUTION FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

BY Jay Wadsworth

When a law enforcement encounter goes to the ground, the officer's first priority is establishing control, not handcuffing. Custody becomes possible only after control has been achieved.

Officers generally encounter three primary ground-control positions:

- Supine — subject on their back
- Lateral — subject on their side
- Prone — subject on their stomach

Each position has advantages and disadvantages depending on the circumstances. This article focuses on prone control and why I believe the low mount offers one of the most effective ground-control solutions available to law enforcement.

After more than 22 years in law enforcement and hundreds of arrests, I have found the low mount consistently provides the best balance of control, officer safety, and practicality within the legal and environmental realities officers face.

Why We Use the Prone Position

The prone position remains a standard control position for several important reasons.

1. The Subject Faces Away

Keeping the suspect facing away immediately limits their ability to attack or track the officer's movements while placing the officer in a superior tactical position.

2. The Ground Becomes a Tool

Officer pressure combined with ground friction significantly reduces mobility, making it more difficult for the suspect to access or present a concealed weapon.

3. Better Weapon Protection

A prone suspect has fewer opportunities to reach an officer's firearm, TASER, or other equipment. Keeping the chest toward the ground naturally limits many weapon-grab attempts.

4. It Allows Forced Handcuffing

Perhaps the greatest advantage is that prone control consistently allows officers to handcuff a fully resistant suspect.

Unfortunately, officers don't always have the luxury of waiting for voluntary compliance. Encounters occur on roadways, in crowded residences, parking lots, bars, and other unpredictable environments where delaying custody may increase risk.

I've personally encountered suspects under the influence of methamphetamine who continued violently resisting for hours, even after being placed in restraint chairs. Waiting simply isn't always a realistic or safe option.

Eventually, custody must be established. For a fully resistant suspect, prone control often provides the safest path to accomplishing that goal.

Understanding the Risks

Ground restraint has received considerable attention in recent years. Current research, including work analyzed by the Daigle Law Group, suggests that no single restraint position is solely responsible for adverse outcomes. Instead, prolonged physical struggle appears to be the primary contributing factor.

That distinction is important.

The objective should never be to rush handcuffing at the expense of safety. At the same time, officers must recognize that allowing unnecessary prolonged struggles increases risk for everyone involved.

Efficient control that shortens the overall encounter benefits both the officer and the suspect.

Why the Low Mount Works

The low mount is essentially the folkstyle wrestling crab ride, adapted for law enforcement. It's simple and repeatable. The crab ride is taught to young wrestlers across the country. That matters.

Simple techniques are easier to teach, easier to retain under stress, and easier to execute consistently during real-world encounters.

Law enforcement training should prioritize high-percentage skills that officers of every athletic ability can perform.



Full Lower-Body Control

The low mount allows officers to:

- Control the suspect's hips with their own hips.
- Pin the legs using the shins.
- Separate and manage the lower body with the feet.
- Keep both hands free to fight for wrist and hand control.

With balance provided by the lower body, the officer's hands remain available for what matters most, controlling the suspect's upper body.

Win the Inside Position

The most important concept we teach is simple:

Win the inside position with both hands. Whether controlling the wrists (B-grips) or the hands (A-grips), inside control dramatically limits the suspect's ability to:

- Build back to their knees.
- Roll the officer.
- Access a concealed weapon.
- Continue meaningful resistance.

Once inside control is established, everything else becomes easier.

Why We Stay Low

Traditional high mount certainly has applications, but it presents several disadvantages for police work.

Using hooks instead of over-the-top shin pins allows officers to remain lower on the suspect's body.

Staying low improves stability, maintains hip control, and reduces the likelihood of being rolled or reversed while still providing excellent control. For law enforcement, lower is generally better. Double Underhooks vs. the Seat Belt

Many grappling systems emphasize the seat belt grip for back control. For law enforcement, I believe double underhooks provide a better solution.

Limitations of the Seat Belt

Because the seat belt places one arm across the shoulder and neck, officers must constantly ensure they remain within department policy regarding vascular neck restraints.

The position also commits both hands, and often the officer's head, to one side of the suspect, reducing visibility while making it more difficult to monitor the suspect's free hand.

That free hand may be reaching for a concealed weapon.

Finally, the seat belt often causes officers to climb too high on the suspect's back, increasing the chance of losing position or being reversed.



Jay Wadsworth

Co-Owner/ Director of EFC with 22 years of law enforcement experience (patrol, SWAT TL, and Undercover unit. A 3rd Degree Black Belt in BJJ with MMA experience who continues to teach nationwide. @wadsbjj @efcombatives

Why Double Underhooks Win

Double underhooks allow officers to:

- Break the suspect back down if they begin building a base.
- Maintain inside control.
- Keep the suspect's hands away from potential weapons.
- Stay lower and more stable.
- Transition more easily if the position fails.

The question officers should always ask is: If this position fails, am I still in a neutral, or better yet, advantageous, position to continue controlling the suspect or disengage if necessary?

The low mount answers that question better than many traditional control positions

Final Thoughts

No single technique solves every problem. Every use-of-force encounter is dynamic, and officers must continually adapt to changing circumstances.

However, the low mount offers an exceptional combination of simplicity, stability, weapon awareness, and control. It is effective across a wide range of skill levels, works within modern legal and policy considerations, and reinforces the principle that matters most:

Control first. Custody second.

Throughout every encounter, officers must also continually monitor the suspect's condition while maintaining the safest possible path to custody.

BEYOND SURVIVAL

— DEALING WITH CANCER AS A COP —

By Jon “JD” Daige

Dealing with cancer as a cop was relatively easy in some ways. When I say easy I mean I was being carried in the sick bank so I was getting paid when I was out and I was in good care while being treated at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. I was a Worcester cop for six years when I was diagnosed with testicular cancer. I needed Immediate surgery and then a second very invasive lymph node dissection.

Once I was in recovery I was able to get back to being a cop again. It was not an easy task to get healthy but I made it my priority to get back up to what I thought was ready for anything. I got diagnosed with stage 4 cancer when it spread to my chest and lungs. I needed to have chemo 8hrs a day for five days a week for five months. Then I needed the top and bottom lobe of my right lung removed and ten percent of my left lung removed from tumor residue. Then the cancer spread to my brain twice where I needed brain surgery and brain radiation.

After being out of work I went back straight to patrol. The support I had from family, friends and people in the department was amazing and it helped me get through some hard times being in the hospital.

The best way to navigate cancer is gaining as much knowledge as you can about your disease. Every time you go in to the doctors office bring a list of ten questions with you. It seems foolish until you're sitting there checking off the questions you put down on your phone and leave feeling better about the next step in your journey. Lessons learned is that the only thing that matters is your health plain and simple.

Recently, I was diagnosed with CML (chronic myeloid leukemia). While I was off work dealing with this new diagnosis, I didn't receive a single phone call from my sergeant, lieutenant, captain, deputy chief, or chief. For nearly a year, I lived in limbo, unsure whether I would ever return to the job. Eventually, after 18 years of service, it became clear that retirement was the path ahead.

Looking back, I know I gave everything I had. I spent three years driving the paddy wagon, seven years on patrol, eight years on the SWAT team, and also served in the motorcycle and mounted units. Along the way came more than a few unforgettable stories. I can honestly say I left knowing I had done my job and served my community well.

Officers diagnosed with cancer can expect to feel completely derailed when they hear the news. Most cops are men, and let's be honest, we're stubborn. We ignore aches and pains because we don't want to believe something is wrong, and we certainly don't want to miss work. I'm not saying every pain is cancer, but early detection can save your life. My testicular cancer spread to my chest, lungs, and brain. Caught early, it's highly treatable. Ignored, it can become deadly.

Roughly 5,800 Americans are getting diagnosed with cancer every single day! That number is gross and needs to change. The only chance we have is when we hear that news. The sooner, the better. There are early detection tests people can take that show markers if they're at risk for cancer.

After battling cancer from 2012 to 2015, I turned to cycling to rebuild myself both physically and mentally. That journey led me to create Thin Blue Ride, a team that participates in the Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC), a bicycle ride from central Massachusetts to Provincetown that raises money for cancer research and a cure.

Our first team had only four riders, yet we raised \$26,000. In 2016, Thin Blue Ride became an official 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to helping veterans, first responders, and their families who are battling cancer. Over the past decade, we've raised more than \$1 million and helped over 60 families across the country.

We raise funds through our website and social media, then provide financial assistance directly to families facing the burden of a cancer diagnosis. Whether it's paying bills, taking a much-needed vacation, or covering everyday expenses, the goal is to ease some of the stress. Money isn't a cure, but it can provide hope and relief when families need it most.

Last year I published my book, **Beyond Survival: What Comes After the Fight**, and have since shared my story through public speaking to educate, encourage, and inspire others to keep fighting.

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Never Stop Fighting! JD



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UNDERSTANDING RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

WHY GRAPPLING, MMA, CIVILIAN SELF-DEFENSE,
AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ARE NOT THE SAME FIGHT

By Rob Magao

One of the most common misconceptions about martial arts, self-defense, combat sports, and police use of force is the belief that all violence exists under the same conditions and therefore requires the same solutions.

It does not.

A Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu match is not the same as an MMA fight. MMA is not the same as civilian self-defense. Civilian self-defense is not the same as law enforcement combatives.

Although these environments share many technical skills, they operate under dramatically different rules of engagement. Each has its own objectives, legal standards, environmental realities, acceptable risks, and tactical priorities.

The mission determines what success looks like.

A world-class grappler is not automatically prepared for MMA. A great MMA fighter is not automatically prepared for civilian violence. Likewise, an experienced civilian defender is not automatically prepared for the responsibilities of a police officer.

Understanding this distinction is essential because tactics that work in one environment may be ineffective, inappropriate, or dangerous in another.





Grappling: Control Within Agreed Rules

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, wrestling, and submission grappling represent some of the purest forms of physical control. Participants voluntarily enter contests governed by detailed rules, referees, medical supervision, weight classes, and clearly defined victory conditions.

The objective is to control, dominate, submit, or outscore another trained athlete.

Because strikes and weapons are absent, grappling emphasizes positional dominance. Inside position, head position, posture, angle management, grip fighting, balance, and technical efficiency become primary concerns. Energy conservation matters. Precision matters. Small positional advantages often determine the outcome.

While grappling develops exceptional control and problem-solving under pressure, it does so in a controlled environment where both participants understand the rules and willingly engage. Those conditions rarely exist outside the gym.

MMA: Integrating Striking and Grappling

Mixed Martial Arts changes the equation immediately by introducing strikes.

Once punches, elbows, knees, and kicks become legal, posture changes, distance changes, and positional priorities shift. Wrestling becomes the bridge between striking and grappling, often determining where the fight takes place and who controls the pace.

Bottom position becomes significantly more dangerous because gravity is now combined with striking. Entries that may be safe in pure grappling can become high-risk when punches are involved.

Fighters must constantly manage kicking, punching, clinch work, takedowns, and ground fighting while defending against continuous attacks.

MMA represents one of the highest expressions of athletic combat, but it remains a sporting contest. Competitors know when the contest begins, train specifically for the event, warm up beforehand, and compete under rules designed to prevent catastrophic injury.



Civilian Self-Defense: Survival, Not Victory

Civilian self-defense introduces an entirely different objective. The goal is not to win a contest. The goal is to survive.

Unlike sporting events, real-world violence often involves surprise, environmental hazards, multiple attackers, concealed weapons, and serious legal consequences.

Avoidance becomes one of the highest-level skills. Awareness, positioning, verbal communication, and recognizing pre-assault indicators may prevent violence altogether. When violence cannot be avoided, creating an opportunity to escape safely often becomes the priority.

Weapon awareness is critical. Unknown hands, concealed waistbands, pockets, and improvised weapons fundamentally change how close-range encounters must be managed.

Ground fighting, while valuable, carries greater risk because mobility is reduced and additional threats may emerge. The goal is not domination for its own sake, it is surviving the encounter and returning home safely.

Law Enforcement: Resolution Under Extraordinary Responsibility

Law enforcement operates under the most demanding rules of engagement of all. Police officers cannot simply walk away from dangerous situations. They are expected to move toward danger, protect innocent people, control violent individuals, enforce the law, and resolve encounters professionally while operating under constant legal, ethical, and public scrutiny.

Unlike athletes or civilians, officers carry firearms, TASERS, OC spray, batons, radios, and handcuffs. Every one of those tools creates additional tactical considerations, making weapon retention a constant priority.

Officers must also transition seamlessly between verbal communication, empty-hand control, less-lethal options, deadly force when legally justified, handcuffing, and medical response, sometimes within seconds.



FEATURED ARTICLE

Their objective is rarely to defeat an opponent. Their objective is to lawfully resolve chaos.

One of the most important distinctions between combat sports and law enforcement is the difference between causing damage and achieving control.

Combat sports reward knockouts, submissions, and decisive finishes.

Police officers are expected to restrain, stabilize, contain, and control while using only the amount of force that is objectively reasonable under rapidly evolving circumstances.

Superior grappling and positional control often allow officers to resolve encounters with fewer injuries to officers, suspects, and bystanders.

Control, not destruction, is the goal.

The Duty to Preserve Life

Perhaps no responsibility better illustrates the uniqueness of policing than what happens after force is used.

An officer may be legally justified in using force including deadly force when necessary to stop an imminent threat and moments later become responsible for preserving the life of the very person against whom that force was used.

Once the scene is reasonably safe, officers may immediately begin controlling severe bleeding, requesting emergency medical services, monitoring the suspect's condition, and providing lifesaving care.

Combat athletes do not medically treat the opponent they have just defeated. Most civilians acting in self-defense do not immediately assume responsibility for rendering aid.

Police officers often do.

That extraordinary transition from stopping a threat to preserving life is one of the defining characteristics of professional policing.



“Their objective is rarely to defeat an opponent. Their objective is to lawfully resolve chaos.”



Violence Has No Referee

Combat sports begin with mutual readiness. Competitors know the time, place, rules, and conditions. They prepare mentally and physically before the contest begins. Real-world violence offers no such courtesy. Police officers may be interviewing witnesses, writing reports, conducting traffic stops, making arrests, or attempting to de-escalate situations when violence suddenly erupts.

There is no referee. No agreed starting point. No guarantee of fairness.

Real violence may involve larger opponents, multiple attackers, concealed weapons, environmental hazards, emotional crises, or individuals under the influence of drugs or suffering from severe mental illness. The officer does not choose the location, weather, lighting, or timing. They simply respond.

More Than Fighting

Police combatives represent only one small part of an officer's profession.

Unlike professional fighters, officers must also master criminal law, constitutional law, communication, report writing, emergency driving, firearms, investigations, medical response, mental health crises, ethics, policy, community interaction, and decision-making under stress.

No combat athlete is expected to master all of those disciplines simultaneously.

Police officers are. This operational reality requires broad competence rather than narrow specialization.

Human Performance Under Stress

Real-world force encounters occur under intense physiological and psychological stress. Tunnel vision, auditory exclusion, time distortion, attentional narrowing, and impaired fine motor skills are well-documented responses to extreme stress.

Despite these limitations, officers must make lawful, reasonable decisions in rapidly evolving situations where information is incomplete and consequences are immediate.

The public often analyzes those decisions differently.

Body camera footage may be viewed repeatedly, slowed frame by frame, and judged months or years later by individuals who were never present, never experienced the stress, and possess information unavailable to the officer at the time.

This creates a disconnect between real-time decision-making and retrospective analysis. As the United States Supreme Court recognized in *Graham v. Connor*, force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, not through the clarity of hindsight. The totality of the circumstances matter.

Deadly Force: A Reality Outside Sport

Even the toughest combat sports are designed to prevent death. Real-world violence is different. For civilians acting in lawful self-defense, and especially for police officers, deadly force may become legally justified when confronting an imminent threat of death or serious physical injury.

The objective is never to kill. The objective is to stop the threat.

That possibility fundamentally separates law enforcement and real-world self-defense from sport. It also carries significant legal, emotional, moral, and psychological consequences that can extend long after the confrontation has ended.

Winning Versus Resolution

One of the greatest differences between combat sports and policing is how success is measured. Athletes seek victory. Police officers seek lawful resolution.

An officer may physically “win” an encounter while creating unnecessary injuries, legal complications, policy violations, or public distrust. Professional policing demands more than physical dominance. It requires judgment.

The best officers know when to communicate, when to disengage, when to control, when to transition between force options, and when to de-escalate. Technical skill alone is not enough. Confidence, emotional regulation, adaptability, restraint, and sound decision-making often determine the outcome of critical incidents more than any individual technique.



The Mission Determines the Training

Each environment discussed in this article including grappling, MMA, civilian self-defense, and law enforcement, demands different priorities because each serves a different mission. Grappling asks, “How do I control another trained grappler?”

MMA asks, “How do I defeat an opponent using integrated striking and grappling?” Civilian self-defense asks, “How do I survive and protect the people I love?”

Law enforcement asks, “How do I lawfully resolve danger while protecting lives, managing force, preserving evidence, rendering aid, and remaining accountable for my decisions?”

These are fundamentally different questions. They require different training philosophies. Combat sports pursue fairness. Real-world violence does not.

Violence is chaotic, emotional, asymmetrical, unpredictable, and legally complex. Realistic training must therefore develop more than technical ability. It must build confidence, composure, communication, emotional control, judgment, adaptability, and the ability to make lawful decisions under extraordinary pressure.

These components create the foundation of De-escalation Through Confidence.

This philosophy has guided the Officer Survival Series from the beginning. Real confidence allows officers to remain calm. Calm officers make better decisions. Better decisions create better outcomes.



Rob Magao

Rob is a retired 25-year law enforcement veteran, Founder and Head Instructor of the Officer Survival Series (OSS), and owner of Bushido Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Academy in Connecticut. A former SWAT officer and detective, Rob is a 3rd Degree Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Black Belt under Master Pedro Sauer and a Combatives Black Belt under Matt Larsen. He has trained thousands of law enforcement professionals nationwide, combining Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, modern combatives, and real-world experience to improve officer safety, decision-making, and performance under pressure.

JAILHOUSE ROCK

THE PRISON FIGHTING SYSTEM

Martial arts are usually associated with formal schools, ranked belts, established curricula and recognized lineages. However, **Jailhouse Rock** emerged from a very different environment. Also known as *Jailhouse Boxing*, the *52s* or *52 Hand Blocks*, it is commonly described as a fighting tradition shaped by prisons, city streets and communities where practical survival mattered more than sporting rules or ceremonial form.

Its precise history remains difficult to establish. Jailhouse Rock was transmitted largely through personal instruction and oral tradition rather than manuals or governing organizations. Some practitioners trace its roots to African fighting traditions carried into the United States and blended with bare-knuckle boxing, “knocking and kicking,” and other forms of American folk combat. Other accounts place its recognizable development in prisons and urban neighbourhoods during the 1960s and 1970s.

Martial-arts scholar Thomas A. Green describes the “52s” as a contemporary martial art whose prison origin is central to its oral history, while also noting its later transformation into a cultural heritage and fitness practice.

The name Jailhouse Rock does not necessarily identify one uniform system. It can function as an umbrella term for fighting methods associated with different institutions, regions and groups. Names such as Comstock, San Quentin Style, Brick City Rock and 52 Blocks have been connected to this broader tradition, although claims regarding their exact origins and relationships are frequently disputed. This uncertainty is part of the subject: prison combat knowledge is informal, secretive and constantly adapted by the people using it.



The best-known expression is 52 Blocks. It combines elements recognizable from Western boxing, head movement, compact punching, covers, parries and shoulder defence, with distinctive elbow shields, forearm blocks, rhythmic movement and deceptive changes of angle. The hands and arms may be positioned close to the head, allowing the fighter to protect himself while remaining able to strike. Practitioners often emphasize flow, improvisation and the ability to move directly from defence into offence.

These characteristics reflect the environment in which the system is said to have developed. A prison cell, shower, corridor or crowded dayroom offers little room for wide stances, elaborate kicking combinations or prolonged movement. A practical prison fighting method therefore tends to favour compact mechanics, balance, close-range striking and protection against sudden attacks. Surprise, environmental awareness and the ability to function while crowded against a wall may be considered as important as technical elegance.

Jailhouse Rock is not limited to one-on-one violence. It also incorporates ambush tactics, deception, and coordinated group attacks intended to overwhelm correctional officers, police officers, and other authority figures before they can organize an effective response. One person may create the distraction, another may control an arm or access equipment, while additional attackers close distance from the sides or rear. The effectiveness of the tactic comes less from technical sophistication than from timing, surprise, numbers, and the willingness of the group to act simultaneously.

As the saying goes, "The pack is trained to fight against the individual, but the individual is rarely trained to fight against the pack." Officers need to understand that a confrontation involving one aggressive subject can change into a coordinated assault within seconds. Awareness of positioning, escape routes, available backup, crowd movement, and attempts to isolate an officer must therefore be treated as survival considerations rather than minor tactical details. Training should prepare officers not only to control one resistant person, but also to recognize the early indicators of an ambush and respond when multiple attackers attempt to divide, distract, disarm, or overwhelm them.

What makes Jailhouse Rock important is not simply whether it can be placed beside boxing, karate or jiu jitsu as a formalized style. Its significance lies in how marginalized communities created and preserved fighting knowledge under conditions of confinement. Jailhouse Rock is better understood as a family of related fighting traditions than as one universally standardized curriculum.

Jailhouse Rock remains an often misunderstood and underestimated fighting system, one that continues to evolve and be passed between inmates inside correctional institutions. Officers should be aware of its existence and recognize that individuals with penitentiary experience may have developed practical, deceptive, and highly aggressive methods of violence that do not resemble conventional martial arts. No opponent should ever be underestimated, particularly someone who has spent years in an environment where awareness, surprise, and the ability to inflict harm may have been essential to survival.



Ari Knazan

A police officer in Canada who has served as a patrol member, use of force instructor, domestic violence officer and road supervisor. He is the owner of Invictus Leo Collective, Editor in Chief of Acies Magazine and Podcast co-host of No Zoo Lions. A 3rd degree BJJ Black Belt under Keith Owen (RIP) and Pedro Sauer and a 6th Degree Black Belt in JJJ under Steve Hiscoe, Ari continues to train and teach nationwide. @thearikay

INVICTUS

BY WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

I AM THE MASTER OF MY FATE:
I AM THE CAPTAIN OF MY SOUL.



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UNDERSTANDING REACTION GAPS,
FLINCH RESPONSES, AND
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TRAINING FOR THE MOMENT
THINGS GO WRONG.

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DE-ESCALATION
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