

# Jitsu Canada

Newsletter  
January 2010



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## Congratulations!



Firstly, congratulations to all the successful Jiu Jitsuka who graded for belts at various locations around the country in December.

Secondly, special congratulations go out to Ben De Witt, *Sensei*, Joanna Yu, *Sensei* and Chris Olson, *Sensei* who were successful in obtaining the ranks of Nidan, Shodan and Shodan respectively at the recent *Yudansha* grading.



# Upcoming Events

## **Standard First Aid with Level 'A' CPR**

16th & 17th January, Peterborough.

Content tailored to cover typical Jiu Jitsu injuries in more depth while still meeting Canada Labour Code and WSIB requirements. Certification is valid for three years. The significantly discounted price of \$55 includes first aid manual and all materials, and is only available to members of Jitsu Canada.

Course size is limited to 18 participants and will be filled on a first-come first-served basis. Register by email to [info@jitsucanada.com](mailto:info@jitsucanada.com).



## **Assistant Instructor & Instructor Courses**

Sunday 31st January, Peterborough.

Learning to teach is an integral part of the study of Jiu Jitsu. Although both being taught and practicing Jiu Jitsu are essential, you will find when you begin teaching or helping to teach, your depth of understanding of the principles behind the techniques improves vastly. This is fundamental to progression in the art, so much so that completion of these courses is a requirement before progressing to advanced student grades.

Course cost is \$60 and the registration deadline is January 15th by email to [info@jitsu-canada.com](mailto:info@jitsu-canada.com).

## **Ontario Provincial Course**

6th & 7th March, Kingston.

The provincial course is an opportunity for all members of Jitsu Canada clubs to meet for a weekend of training. This course provides students with the chance to train with many different people from the various clubs. The event is open to everyone, from beginner to black belt. Accommodation on the Saturday night is provided by members of the host club, and a social event is organized for the Saturday night.

The Saturday will be a full day of training covering a variety of Jiu Jitsu topics. Sunday will include both a training seminar, and the annual groundwork competition. The competition gives members the opportunity to participate in friendly competition against each other in groundwork bouts. Great fun, and you get to practice with people other than your regular training partners.

Cost for the weekend is only \$45, if registered and pre-paid by February 28th (\$65 with registration after this date).



### ***Spring Boot Camp***

28th to 30th May, Kinmount.

Don't let the name fool you, this weekend event provides an opportunity for students of all styles to train and socialize together in a cooperative and non-competitive manner. Training outdoors, often on uneven ground, adds a valuable new perspective to training. After the day's training, there is also swimming in the lake for those who are brave enough. The event takes place on a 400 acre hunt camp, which we have to ourselves for the weekend. BYOB for the Saturday evening camp-fire.

Cost for the weekend including meals is only \$45.

Once again, we will offer cutting practice to interested students. Cutting mats are available at a cost of \$10 each (or 3 for \$25) for those wishing to take part in cutting. You should be able to get 4 or 5 cuts per mat. Mats must be pre-ordered and pre-paid by 8th May.



### ***Canadian Summer School***

16th to 18th July, Peterborough.

The first annual national summer school. Guests attending from the USA and UK. More details soon...

## ***Teaching the Art of the Angry White Pajamas (Reflections on the AI Course)***

~ By Katie Lin ~

Once in a while, you'll experience something that completely upsets the comfortable, familiar bubble of a world you've built around yourself. And it can be difficult to adjust to the aftermath of that upset: the sudden unfamiliarity of everything you thought you once knew. Psychologists like to call it "cognitive dissonance" – the uncomfortable feeling caused by the reshuffling of long-held beliefs – but I like to call it a reality check.

And, at least for me, the Assistant Instructor (AI) course was definitely one of those reality check moments in my admittedly fledgling Jiu Jitsu career.

The fall 2009 AI course was held on Oct. 4, 2009, in Peterborough under the instruction of Andy Dobie, *Sensei*, Mark Yourkevich, *Sensei*, and Kenn Gibb, *Sensei* (with a special guest appearance by Steve White, *Sensei* in the role of an undercover novice whose extreme breakfalling prowess allegedly developed

from “falling down. Like, a lot”). The AI course is a requirement for Jiu Jitsuka before they are permitted to grade to purple, and it’s essentially a course that addresses the teaching aspects of Jiu Jitsu. Students participate in an active discussion about the role and methods of teaching Jiu Jitsu to others, and are then given a short period of time in the Dojo to put those ideas into practice by instructing a small group of peers (often including planted pseudo-novices or troublemakers for the assistant-instructor-in-training to deal with). Personally, I found the course to be both challenging and educational in a way that I hadn’t really anticipated.

I’ve never been a particularly outspoken person and it’s something that I struggle with constantly. I know that the introverted aspect of my personality holds me back from a lot of opportunities. I grew up in a very traditional environment that more or less enforced the values of timidity, respect, humility, and obedience. Since I was conditioned to such an environment at a very young age, it’s been a struggle for me to adjust to certain new environments where I am required to step way out of my comfort zone and expose my weaknesses before a group of peers. But all the same, I know that it’s an important struggle to face in order to move forward as a Jiu Jitsuka on the mats, and as an individual off the mats.

Jiu Jitsu is a martial art that doesn’t simply ask for participation – it demands 100% commitment from its practitioners (with formidable punishments of the push-up variety should you fail to deliver). And it demands that commitment without hesitation or reservation. That commitment is, I think, what lies at the core of the AI course, and what made the course especially challenging for me.

Even on the best of days, I have trouble teaching people (at least outright). I’m a naturally quiet, shy person (on the outside, which speaks nothing about the dialogue that runs inside my head), so when I’m told that I need to get up in front of a group of people that I know will be judging my performance, and when I’m told that I need to assume a position of authority on top of that, I freak out just a little inside. Well, more than a little, really. A lot. And yet that’s exactly what the AI course is all about.

Not only was the course enjoyable, but it was also sobering. Just as Internationals gave me a whole new perspective of the Jiu Jitsu community, and the level of commitment that its senior belts and *Sensei* have laid down for its cause, the AI course taught me just how much work, time, thought, and careful consideration are exercised by any *Sensei* or *Sempai* who step out on the mats to share knowledge with (hopefully) eager students. The silliness, the comfortable camaraderie, the clear-cut technical breakdowns – these things that seem so simple when you’re part of the student audience are anything but simple from the other side of the instructor-student dynamic. The discipline and poise required to simplify techniques and present them effectively and engagingly represent the culmination of endless hours of physical and mental preparation both on and off the mats.

I think the most important lesson that I have taken away from the AI course is the awareness of just how much commitment it requires to stand at the head of a class of students – all of whom are looking to you for guidance – and to help each and every one of those students feel like they belong in your dojo, regardless of race, gender, age, background, personality, experience, or personal fears.

It’s very humbling. And it’s a challenge that I think everyone who commits to Jiu Jitsu for the long haul faces – although sometimes it does take a bit of a prod to recognize the challenge. Up until attending the AI course, I trained with literally no consideration for the teaching aspect of our martial art, because I never really envi

sioned myself standing at the head of a group and manning the proverbial helm. The AI course was my prod. It pushed me to recognize that teaching is an integral part of Jiu Jitsu as a martial art, not only because it keeps the art alive, but also because it plays such a significant role in deepening one's own understanding of the art itself.

Whether you're struggling with some of the same things I am, whether you're debating the merits of attending an AI course yourself at some point in the future, or whether you were simply curious about one student's impressions of a very worthwhile experience, I hope that you found something meaningful in this article (if not, you're welcome to track me down on the mats and try to sock me in the head for wasting your time. I hear it's the best way to meet other people in Jiu Jitsu, and I'm sure I'd appreciate meeting you).

As a final note, though, I would like to mention that while my first teaching session was... a little rough around the edges (I spent most of my time slot teaching kote gaeshi. With my back to the students. While awkwardly contorting my body so that I could project my voice in what I prayed was their general direction.) I hope that, at the very least, I've taken my first baby steps towards the next leg of my Jiu Jitsu career.

And I use the phrase "Jiu Jitsu career" very deliberately here, because that's precisely what Jiu Jitsu becomes. It is so much more than a club, or a self-defence tool, or an excellent cardio workout. It's a coming together of different people from all walks of life who have somehow, in this mess of every-day existence, found this one, unifying thing that they all love and love to share with one another. And, as ridiculously corny as it sounds, I'm so glad that this is the martial art that I happened to stumble into and fall in love with.



# Random Acts Of Southern Violence

~ By Mark Yourkevich, Sensei ~

It was in the middle of my third day of training at the Jitsu International Course this summer that it happened. Unexpectedly, I experienced something I would remember forever. It was one of the single most exciting, energizing and inspiring events of my Jiu Jitsu career; and it all started with a tap on the shoulder....

...from Brooks *Sensei* who requested that Gibb *Sensei* and myself follow him. We rei'd off the mats, collected our zori and made our way out of the large, matted ballroom that was set-up to host the main event. We followed him across the hall and into what appeared, at first, to be a storage closet. We veered slightly to the left, just past the pile of cardboard boxes that the tatami for the event had arrived in, and carried on into a smaller space with no more than a dozen mats laid out. Also in that room was a table that sat Hamer *Sensei*, MacDonnel *Sensei*, Soren *Sensei* and Walker *Sensei*.

Three other Dans milled about the room. Jamnik *Sensei* (Canada), Strother *Sensei* (UK), and Cook *Sensei* (South Africa) were already on the mats. Noticing their respective lack of Hakama, I realized I was overdressed for whatever occasion I'd just walked into and so I quickly folded mine and tucked them away.

I rei'd onto the mats and once we'd all collectively rei'd to the panel, Walker *Sensei* spoke up and said, matter-of-factly, "right, so you all know why you're here."



I admit that my first thought- “umm, I don’t,” was one that I’m glad not to have voiced. Instead, I started doing some preliminary calculations and realized that this little room had all the trappings of a Senior Grading.

Dour looking fellows in Black Tops and Hakama- Check

Mats- although not very many – Check

A pile of assorted weapons – Check

Tangible thrum of anxiety in the air - Check

This was a grading alright. Secondary calculations confirmed, thankfully, that this was not a grading (or pre-grading) directed toward me, but that some other poor soul’s number had come up. My own anxiety dissipated and my excitement rose. I started looking around for candidates and it was then that I spotted them. Christian (a dark blue belt from South Africa) and Robert (brown from the UK) were at the foot of the line and they both bore the unmistakable visage of individuals for whom luck has taken an inhospitable turn. The same expression can be noted on the faces of animals that stray onto interstate highways in the dead of night.

Then I remembered...the previous night at the Instructor’s Dinner there had been a fair bit of conversation surrounding Robert’s very long career as a Brown Belt Club Instructor. Conversation with that particular crowd was more akin to verbal-abuse, however despite the cajoling and harassment of many of the Senior Dans at the table, Robert was taking the position that he “was quite happy as a Brown- Belt, Thanks!” Andy Mac had rebutted, “You’d best hope we don’t just decide to grade you while we’re all here,” gesturing to his fellow tertiary board members, and it was left at that.

Now it was perfectly clear to me why we were there. Robert should have had the good sense to take the abuse and keep his mouth shut, that’s why. It was clear to me now that somewhere between the first round of pre-dinner drinks and last call at the hotel a plan had come together to make this International Course an especially unique event.

All humour aside and without divulging details that would surely violate the Jitsu Confidentiality Clause, I’ll say that what I experienced in that room was truly exceptional. Gradings of all sorts are powerful experiences designed to make individuals face their fears and realize their potential. What made this one stand-apart to myself and to all of us in the room that day was the fact that we were, each of us, representing our caliber of Jiu Jitsu on an international stage among near-strangers. Despite the anxiety in the room, there was an unspoken and absolute trust in one another’s capabilities and an understanding that we all ‘belonged’ there by virtue of our experiences of Jiu Jitsu throughout the world.

None of us on the mats that day had gotten to know one another very well in the short time since we’d arrived in Spartanburg, but moments into that random act of southern violence it felt like we were training among old friends. It was a sentiment that was echoed among all of us for the rest of the weekend and which continues to resonate in the months since. It was my honour to be a part of such a memorable occasion. In the end, both Robert and Christian proved successful and they left their surprise grading with new belts and, like the rest of us, with new friends.

# Japanese Words

Every *Jiu Jitsu* practitioner has unique obstacles to overcome, but one thing we all have in common is a difficulty with the Japanese language. So to make your life easier, here is a list of Japanese words you may run into during your experiences with *Jiu Jitsu*!

<i>Japanese</i>	<i>English Translation</i>
Aiki	<i>Harmonizing (Blending with Energy)</i>
Atemi	<i>Strike</i>
Budo	<i>"Way of the Martial Arts"</i>
Bushido	<i>"Way of the Warrior"</i>
Dan	<i>Rank of Black Belt (Literal translation: "Step")</i>
Dojo	<i>Training Hall</i>
Gaeshi	<i>Reversal or Change</i>
Hai!	<i>Yes!</i>
Hajime	<i>Begin</i>
Kamae	<i>Ready Position</i>
Katana	<i>Japanese Sword</i>
Kiai	<i>Forceful Shout</i>
Kokyu	<i>Breath</i>
Mokuso	<i>Silent Meditation</i>
Mune	<i>Chest</i>
Mushin	<i>Empty Mind</i>
Nage	<i>Throw</i>
Randori	<i>Free-Practice or Sparring</i>
Rei	<i>To Show Respect</i>
Seiza	<i>Formal Sitting</i>
Sempai	<i>Senior Student</i>
Sensei	<i>Teacher ("One who was Born Before")</i>
Shiho	<i>Four Corner</i>
Tai-Sabaki	<i>Body-Movement</i>
Tatami	<i>Japanese Training Mat</i>
Tori	<i>Thrower</i>
Uke	<i>One Who Receives</i>
Ukemi	<i>Falling</i>
Waza	<i>Technique</i>
Yoko	<i>Side</i>
Yudansha	<i>Person(s) who Hold Black Belt Rank</i>
Zanshin	<i>Awareness</i>
Zori	<i>Sandals</i>



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# *Jiu Jitsu Resolutions!*

~ By Joanna Yu, *Sensei* ~

Traditionally, the start of a new year is often a time for making resolutions and setting goals. Here is a short list of some things that came to mind:

- \* Always train with 150% effort. (Of course this goes without saying)
- \* Do at least one set of push-ups, sit-ups, and squats a day. Additional training to improve physical fitness can be beneficial and can range from going for a swim, a run, or even rock climbing. Personally I find that rock climbing helps me strengthen my forearms (which makes my wrists stronger) and core, and also allows me to work on my balance, but above all I find it really really fun.
- \* Plan to attend at least 1 course each semester. Check our website and pencil in all events so you can plan accordingly. Note: Jiu Jitsu Toronto will be hosting a sponsored throw event during the summer. Exact details to be determined. Everyone is invited and if you are interested in attending please contact me or any of the Toronto Jiu Jitsuka.
- \* Do some Jiu Jitsu reading. Some favourites include Angry White Pajamas and The A to Z of Judo. Next on my to read list is The Pyjama Game.
- \* Spread the word about Jiu Jitsu. Encourage interested friends to come out to a session and see if it is for them. Lastly, start your own personal fundraising campaign for 2012 Jiu Jitsu Internationals in London, England. Take a jar and each month throw in whatever amount you can spare.

I am looking forward to seeing you all on the mat this year. If ever you find yourself in the Toronto area, feel free to drop by our dojo. As Fairweather *Sensei* always says, "The kettle is always on."

Hope to see you soon,

Joanna

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## *Submit to the Newsletter!*

*Thanks for reading! Remember that the Jitsu Canada Newsletter survives on submissions from Jitsu Canada members. Topics can be on anything relating to the Martial Arts. The next newsletter will be published soon - start your articles today!*