

ULTIMATE FIGHTING

FIGHTING CHANCE

Taking on one of the UAE's toughest mixed martial artists

Here at *What's On*, we never like to walk away from a fight. Even if that fight is against a mixed martial artist who is better trained, better prepared and basically tougher than us... We'll still, rather stupidly, give it a go.

So when ju-jitsu master Zaid Gerber offered to teach us a few moves before having quick fight with him, common sense was thrown out the window and we agreed.

Zimbabwean Zaid has won all of his 25 ju-jitsu bouts, which puts an emphasis on pinning, choking and strangling techniques – all handy skills to possess in UFC.

So much so, that Brazilian ju-jitsu ace Royce Gracie was one of the first stars of UFC, going on a 12 bout unbeaten run, including winning against a giant sumo wrestler once.

“Ju-jitsu guys used to be the best at UFC, because they were so good at fighting on the floor,” insists Zaid.

“Royce Gracie is like a python. He just wraps himself round his opponents and strangles the air out of them. But now everyone's catching on and so everyone gets good at the floor work and has to know some ju-jitsu.”

So after an intensive warm-up, it's our turn and we start with some actual ju-jitsu moves.

First up, the grapple and throw.

The idea is to get your arm around your opponents' leg, lift him and slam him on the floor.

After some attempts to grab Zaid, he effortlessly manages to hold onto our leg and drops us on the mats. Fighting back the pain – not to mention tears – we dust off and prepare for some floor work. This involves writhing around, trying to get a chokehold on your opponent's neck, before strangling him into submission. It's hugely violent – but



totally legal in UFC.

Again, we wrestle on the ground, before Zaid gets us in a headlock and starts choking the air out of our lungs. With our face turning purple, he finally lets go.

“You're supposed to tap me when you can't breathe,” he informs me afterwards.

Thanks for telling us.

“But some of the fighters refuse to give up, even though they're being choked. They just keep fighting until they pass out,” says a deadpan Zaid.

Enough's enough – we're clearly out of our depth – so we make our excuses and leave. Despite being healthy enough, these UFC guys take fitness, strength and determination to the next level.

We'll stick to the odd gentle jog on the Corniche.

Personal training with Zaid, Dhs270 per session, Dhs2,500 for ten sessions. Tel: (02) 4069404. www.originalfitnessco.com

