

FORECAST

Today 64°
Warmer with a couple of thunderstorms.

Tonight 58°
Increasing clouds, breezy and mild.

The Paducah Sun

SUNDAY, March 30, 2008

www.paducahsun.com

Vol. 112 No. 90



ADAM SHULL | The Sun

Jiu-jitsu master Rodrigo Gracie shows siblings James McGee and Anna McGee a martial arts move Saturday at Energy Fitness in a seminar hosted by Three Rivers Martial Arts Academy.

Youngsters flip for jiu-jitsu

BY ADAM SHULL
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Eight-year-old twins James and Anna McGee got to live the dream of every kid with a sibling Saturday.

Inside the gym at Energy Fitness on New Holt Road, James was told to straddle his sister on the ground and choke her.

"You want to apply the pressure here," said Rodrigo Gracie, pointing to a spot on the back of Anna's neck.

After Anna tapped James' arm to let him know air was no longer reaching her lungs, the smiley, soft-spoken girl returned the favor.

"The majority of the kids out here are from our school" said Jason

Hawkins, owner of Three Rivers Martial Arts Academy on Broadway. "But some come to just check us out."

Hawkins confirmed that the 50 or so kids up to age 14 and adults choking, tripping and twisting each other on a large multicolored mat were in fact learning Brazilian jiu-jitsu, not just playing out sibling rivalries.

The Energy Fitness gym played host to the four-hour mixed martial arts seminar for kids and adults and was run by Gracie and the trainers at Three Rivers whom Gracie trained.

"We really just want to let people see what we do," Hawkins said.

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Gracie's ancestors pioneered the style of fighting and self defense he teaches, and if his pedigree wasn't enough to impress, his intensity sufficed.

Through a translator he was asked his favorite fighting maneuver. "The one that finishes my opponent faster. If they tap, it's Gracie jiu-jitsu," he said.

Waiting for the seminar to begin, Brady Phillips, 7, said he knew all about tapping out or the lack thereof.

With three scratches on his face, he said, "I like the cross choke a lot. I practice it on my brother."

Brennan Phillips, 3, pushed

a toy car on the floor as their father, Brandon Phillips, looked at them and said, "Yeah, little brother doesn't tap out a whole lot."

Their mother, Mindy, said the boys started their day of fighting all the way back home in Brookport, Ill., as usual.

She said the seminars and regular classes at Three Rivers are a fun, enjoyable outlet for all the roughhousing.

"He loves it," she said of Brady's jiu-jitsu lessons. "It's his favorite sport. He likes it even more than baseball."

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