



# FIGHTING FIT

By JOEL GERSON

**L**OOKING to mix up your fitness routine? Gym not working out for you? Join the club. It's a tough grind to finish a long day at work or with the kids and then have to come up with a workout routine that both motivates and delivers results you need.

The hottest trend out of California – the defacto fitness and beauty capital of North America – is Mixed Martial Arts. MMA, as it is known by its followers, is about as hot as molten lava right now, and getting hotter.

In MMA, you fuse all the best elements from boxing, kick boxing, Brazilian jiu jitsu, wrestling and judo, into the triathlon of combat fitness. The beauty is that not only will you eventually be able to handle yourself in a dangerous street situation should the need ever arise, but by cross training in these different arts, your body quickly becomes a lean, mean, hardened piece of tensile steel. And you don't have to be on the treadmill staring at red dots for 45 minutes every day to make it so.

Don't like getting hit in the face? Neither do most sane people. You don't have to get hit to get fit, providing you find a professional facility that caters to 'regular people' and not to 'fighters'. The difference is that they'll know your fitness goals do not involve one day fighting in a cage, and should have classes that focus on technical instruction and fitness.

MMA athletes are not like other athletes. It's not like basketball, where if you're tired, your coach benches you and puts another player out. In MMA, the drills and exercises get you into such amazing shape, because your survival is on the line.

Some clubs now even offer MMA for kids. In a safe and constructive way, your child will learn how to defend him/herself, get fit and develop real confidence and self-esteem, all while working toward a Black Belt.

The tricky part is to sniff out the imitators. Since the surge in popularity, many gyms and martial arts clubs offer MMA or MMA-type classes without the instructor having real credentials in any of the above mentioned styles. Try to learn as much as you can about whoever is teaching the classes before you join, and try to watch a class in action.

Nothing beats actually being in the class, but keep in mind it usually takes a few sessions to get the hang of it – whether it be kick boxing, Brazilian jiu jitsu, boxing, or an MMA class. In the end, when this type of training is done right, it becomes addictive. Be prepared to sweat like crazy, laugh, and grow as a person. Next time you're at the gym, ask if they have a machine that can make you do THAT. **W**

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