



Liberty takes 1st place at Reach the Beach competition

By Tara Rachele

The Jackson Liberty cheer leading team, coached by Tara Rachele and Nicole Carrara, took 1st place in their division at the 2011 American Cheer and Dance Academy's annual Reach the Beach competition in Ocean City, Maryland. 200 teams competed in the tournament and the Lions finished 2nd place overall in the tournament falling just a few points shy of the \$5,000 overall grand prize.

It's a pretty big achievement considering the Lions are competing against schools with long and rich histories. The Liberty cheer program is only in its fourth year and has built a name for itself in the competitive cheer world. They also won 3rd place in an Atlanta, Georgia Cheer Spirit competition and finished in first place in the Gotta Cheer competition.

The squad consists of 17 girls who compete at the varsity level from 9th to 12th grade. Coach Tara Rachele says the girls work very hard to get to this level. The long road begins with tryouts in May. The girls who make the squad then begin practicing their routines from July through February, spending countless hours, five days each week preparing for competition season which runs through January and February.

Aside from competitive cheering, the girls are also required to participate in spirit cheer for the school's football and two basketball teams. At times during the season, on top of their competitive training, there are sometimes two to three games per week which they must cheer for.

"Some people think that cheer is all spirit cheer, but competitive cheering requires training, practice and gymnastics skills," coach Rachele said "The girls put in a lot of work. They've been doing well and they even have a bit of a reputation with other schools for their performance." It's good news for Liberty, a new high school which seems to finally be coming into its own in athletics after living for a few years under the shadows of Jackson Memorial since opening in 2007.

"The success of the program starts with the feeder programs such as Jackson Pop Warner and All Star cheer teams" Rachele said "The coaching is from underneath is amazing."

An interview with UFC Lightweight Fighter **COLE MILLER**



Cole Miller, the 9th ranked UFC lightweight fighter in the world came to Jackson to train with local residents at the Karate Dojo, one of just a small handful of level 3 certified American Top Team training centers in the United States. Miller spent two days with MMA students at the Dojo and showed them some additional skills that are necessary to be able to compete at the top level of MMA competition. Dojo owner Eric Alders also brought in ATT trainer Fernando Falkenbach for a Sunday afternoon session.

What makes American Top Team "better" than other training program in Mixed Martial Arts?
Cole: ATT is more martial arts. It's a more traditional background with emphasis on things like family values, honor and more traditional points of view. It's also quality. When you train with ATT, use our curriculum, you know you're getting a top notch product. You see our fighters fighting all the time in Strikeforce and UFC.

Describe your experience in Ultimate Fighter 5.
For me, my goal was to go into the UF5 as that was a platform to put myself into the UFC hoping they would find me to be skilled and I could get a contract and that's exactly what happened.

What sets UFC apart from the rest of the pack?
UFC pays fighters the best and it's the top notch product. Just like ATT is a great product for fighters and martial arts students in general, the UFC is the super bowl of MMA. It's where you're going to make your name. Like in football, do you want want to play for the NFL or Arena Football?

How has UFC been to you so far?
It's awesome. I love it. It's the best company I've ever fought for. It's the only place I want to fight for.

What kind of advice would you give kids hoping to one day fight at a professional level?
Don't listen to negativity. Follow your dreams. There's going to be a lot of people in life who try to put you down. That's the way it is. People are going to tell you, "You can't do it", don't feed off their negativity, stay positive. Second is to train. You have to train often and you have to compete often. Find a school where you feel comfortable. Find a school that's teaching and staying up to date with new techniques as the sport and martial arts progress.

You been training here at the Karate Dojo for two days now, how does this school compare to others you've been in in your career.
This school is awesome. They're part of the ATT certification program and they're doing a great job here. You can see the students really train hard and their excited to have me here doing the seminar, so it ranks up there for sure.

MMA has a reputation that it's all fighting, kicking, punching and hurting the other guy. What would you say to a mom or dad whose kid wants to get involved in a program like this? I'd say that no parent wants their child to get bullied or get their ass kicked on the playground. Do you want your kid coming home crying? Do you want them coming home bleeding? Kids are mean. Period. There's kids who are going to try to really make life miserable for kids who come up in a normal atmosphere. You want your kids to be prepared. You want to be prepared. It's like a man not wanting to own a gun and be prepared to defend his own household if somebody tried to come in and hurt his loved ones. I think it's important to enroll your kids in martial arts or even MMA. It teaches them confidence, obviously self defense. Not only are they going to be able to de-



Photos by Mike Berry

fend themselves, they'll be able to eliminate the situation and take their opponent completely out of the picture.

How safe is martial arts training when compared to traditional sports and activities like football, hockey, cheerleading and such?
In football, I guarantee you the injuries are way higher. Actually, cheerleading has some of the worst injuries of any sport. It's way more safe. Because in martial arts, you're not teaching your kid to get punched. You're teaching your kid how to not be punched. How is that dangerous?

Where's Frankie Edgar on your radar?
Well, I gotta get some wins and he's the champion. I'm coming off a loss right now, so it's not going to happen any time soon. Probably not even this year. If I fight two or three times in a year and win all of those in a row, it's still probably going to be two years. The way the lightweight division is, one loss sets you back so far. I'm going to have to get some serious wins. That's what sets guys like Frankie from others in the division. What separates Frankie and what makes him special is his consistency. His ability to perform at this high level every day. That's what I'm trying to establish right now. I win 2, lose 1. Win 2, lose one. I'm losing to guys who aren't even as good as the guys I'm coming off wins from. That's kind of rough.

Think anybody out there now can win against Edgar any time soon?
Man, Gray Maynard's proven to be a pretty tough opponent. He's beaten him once and then they also have the draw which created a lot of buzz. They're going to have their rematch. We'll see if Gray can do it.