

Jiu-Jitsu in the Amazon - Brief history of its start in 1977

By Reyson Gracie, founder of Amazonas Jiu-Jitsu. Second pole of this sport worldwide.

I visited Amazonas for the first time in 1976, invited by Arthur Virgilio Neto. He was spending vacations there. I stayed for about 20 days. There wasn't any Jiu-Jitsu academy in Amazonas, and the word "Jiu-Jitsu" was completely unknown for the most the public.

The invitations made were almost all by Judo academies. The most important were Armando Jimenes and Tetsuos Fujisaka's Academies, the last the Brazilian judo champion.

The well-known heavy-weight Nilsão, five times College Brazilian champion, whom was rehearsing a certain kind of Jiu-Jitsu based on muscular strength, which was efficient only in short terms. This was confirmed by my student Fernando Fonseca, in his final match for Amazonas championship in 1977.

The Famous teacher Armando Jimenes, in spite of training Jiu-Jitsu in the Gracie Academy, saw in Judo a shortcut to developing a serious work. The reason why we should thank him the most is that he offered his academy for advertising as a Jiu-Jitsu Academy. The support of his children, also teachers, Armandinho and André helped as much.

Dr. Adrião Severiano Nunes Netto, besides the big friend, revealed himself as great Public Relations when created the Jiu-Jitsu Federation of Amazonas. The president was the mega-entrepreneur, Roberto Caminha Filho, highly competent.

The academy Competition Team was formed, the most of it, by the swimmers of Atlético Rio-Negro. Besides the great discipline they didn't smoke nor drink. Luiz Façanha, in a short period of time became the number one of the academy.

It is good to know that Jiu-Jitsu of Amazonas only had a chance of success when we had an academy and a federation of our own. Otherwise, Jiu-Jitsu would be a privilege of a few who could go to Rio de Janeiro in the vacations period.

When I left Amazonas, after a year, Luiz Façanha took control of the Academy. He created great athletes, whom would later join teachers from Rio de Janeiro. The most important were: The Monteiro brothers, Humberto Barbosa Jr., Nonato Machado, Cássio Façanha, Luiz Falabela (wrestling) e many others.

Luiz Façanha's merit is undeniable. He was strategically more important than me. Nowadays there are two strong sides in Amazonas Jiu-Jitsu: Royler Gracie's through the Monteiro Brothers and Master Osvaldo Alves, whom counts with Humberto Barbosa Jr., Orley Lobato and others.

Amazonas today is recognized as the second better place in the world for the practice of Jiu-Jitsu. When somebody ask me if I am proud of something, besides my work, I'm forced to answer yes, for my daughter Kendra was born in Amazonas soil. But that is strictly personal.

To conclude I would like to say that in this extraordinary journey I had help of dozens of local aficionados. I have never had a partner or a predecessor.