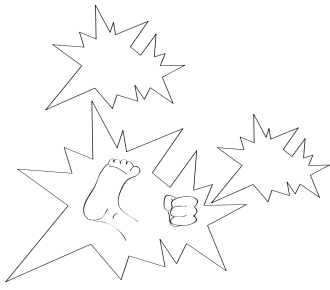


FIGHT SCHOOL



Jeff Gottesfeld





MEET THE



~~DOA~~ DON

Age: 12

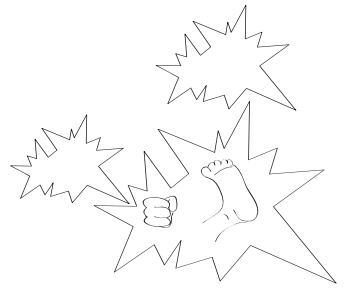
Pre-fight Ritual: crushes soda cans

Parents' Jobs: dad is a pro wrestler, and mom is a roller derby team captain

Big Secret: just adopted two rescue kittens

Best Quality: intensity

CHARACTERS



TOMMY ROBBINS

Age: 12

Favorite School Subject: American history

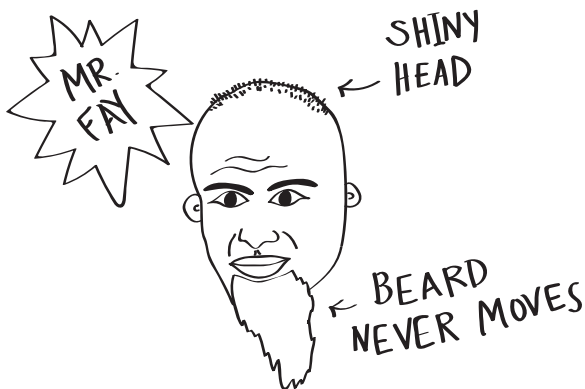
Future Goal: wants to be a sports announcer for ESPN

Favorite Food: breakfast burritos

Best Quality: eager to learn

1 THE BIG NEWS

Mr. Fay used to be a mixed martial arts pro. Now he ran Stars MMA Fight School for kids. MMA was mixed martial arts. Mr. Fay's voice was as big as his body. And he had a giant beard.



“Be strong!” he yelled at the kids. “Strong body. Strong mind. Strong heart. This is not a place for wimps. This is a fight school! Whose fight school?”



Tommy Robbins stood there. He was twelve. He had been coming to Stars MMA for two years. Tommy loved Mr. Fay. All the kids did. He was a great teacher. But Mr. Fay had never acted like this before.

“I said, ‘Whose school?’ No answer?” Mr. Fay pumped a fist. “Twenty push-ups!”

Tommy looked at Ben Wong. Ben was his

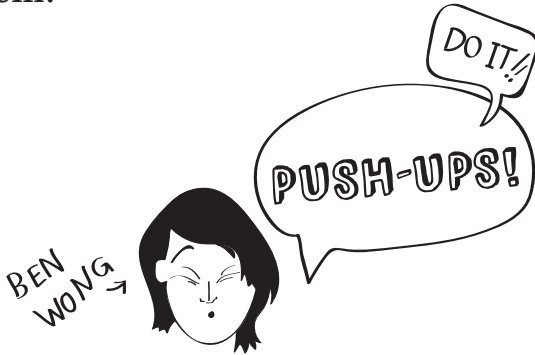
good bud. They were the best in the class.

Tommy had the best skills. Tommy was the best puncher. He was the best kicker. He was the fastest. But he was not as good in a fight as Ben. Ben could beat guys twice his size. Tommy was always good in drills. But he lost when it mattered. It was like he had a mental block. He could not focus. He choked.

Some kids said MMA was bad news. But Tommy knew better. MMA was hard. It hurt to get kicked. Or hit. The goal of fight school was to make a strong body. A strong mind. A strong heart. The kids all wore pads. And there was always a ref on the mat.



“Push-ups!” Ben called to the other kids. He and Tommy were the fight school leaders. “Do them!”



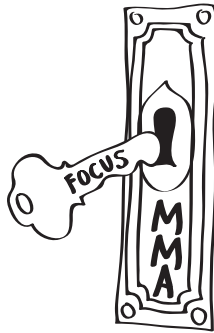
Tommy and Ben dropped to the mat. The other kids did too. Tommy did twenty fast push-ups. So did Ben. They were done before anyone else.

“Good, Ben and Tommy,” Mr. Fay told them. “The rest of you? Come on! Move it! Faster.”

The others did their reps. Tommy was friends with three of them. Mac, Shelly, and Hugo. They were great kids. Hugo was

good at math. Shelly was an artist. Mac could sing. They were at fight school to get strong.

Mr. Fay's voice got nicer. "Good job. Did I scare you? Put you off your game? Make it hard to focus? Focus is the key to MMA. And to life. When I ask whose fight school? There is only one answer. *'Our fight school.'* Whose fight school?"



The kids shouted, "Our fight school!"

"That's right," Mr. Fay nodded. "Here, we focus."

Tommy bit his lip. Mr. Fay always said Tommy had the skill to beat anyone. But focus was hard for Tommy. His mind would go here and there. He would always choke.

“Sit down.” All the kids sat in a circle. “I have news. About Saturday night. It’s good. Great, even.”

Saturday night was a big MMA show in the city. Mr. Fay was taking all the kids. The arena would be packed.



Mr. Fay kept talking. “Here’s the news about the MMA show. One of you will fight too. I just have to choose who it will be.”

Tommy hoped it would be him. But he was also scared. What if he choked?

