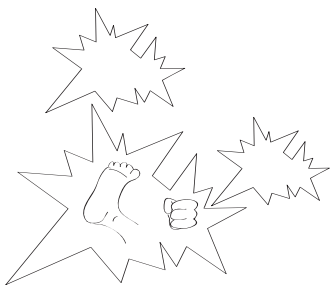


# ***FIGHT SCHOOL***



Jeff Gottesfeld



MEET THE



~~DON~~ DON

**Age:** 12

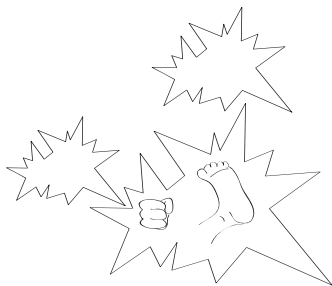
**Pre-fight Ritual:** crushes soda cans

**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

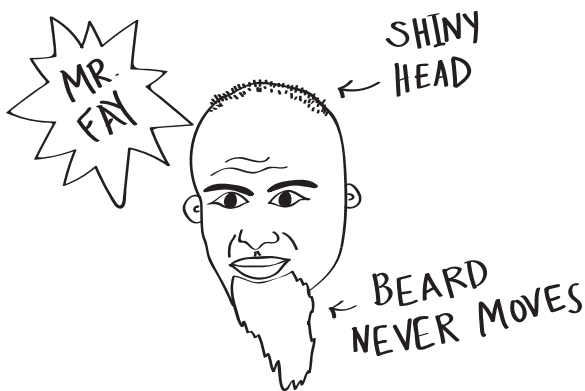
**Future Goal:** wants to be a sports announcer for ESPN

**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!”



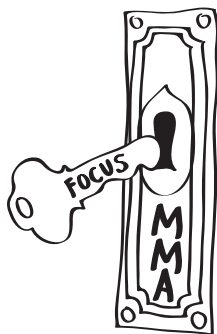
Tommy and Ben dropped to the mat. The other kids did too. Tommy did twenty fast push-ups. So did Ben. They were done before anyone else.

“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.



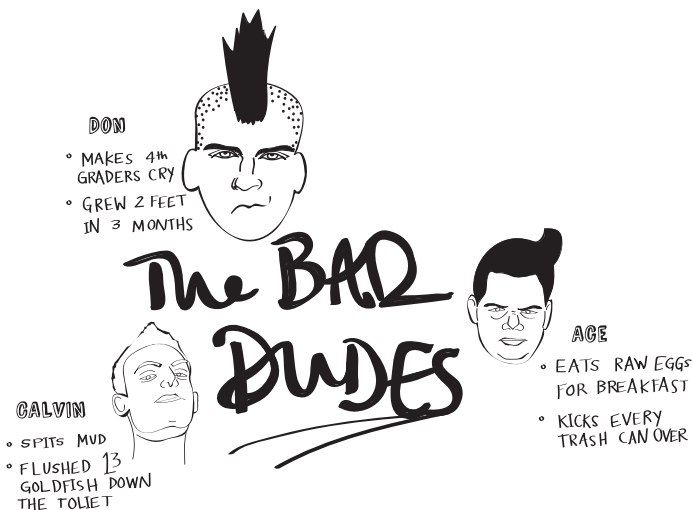
Mr. Fay kept talking. “Here’s the news about the MMA show. One of you will fight too. I just have to choose who it will be.”

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



# 2 CRUSHED!

Mr. Fay explained. The MMA show would have one kids' fight. The kids would be sixth graders. One fighter would come from Stars. The other would be from Bad Dudes MMA. It was across town.

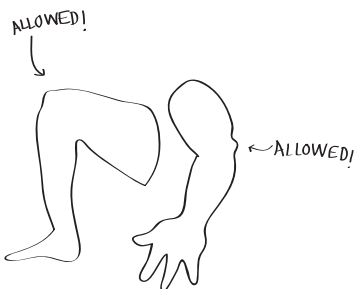


Tommy was excited. To be in the show would be cool. But if he were Mr. Fay, he would pick Ben.

“Let’s see who will be our rep.” Mr. Fay looked at Ben. Tommy thought that was it. Then Mr. Fay looked at Tommy. “Ben? Tommy? Suit up! Let’s settle it on the mat.”

Tommy got to his feet. This was a great chance. He could take Ben. He had to stay calm. Think of one thing at a time. Not choke.

Tommy put on his headgear, pads, and gloves. MMA fighting was wide open. He could kick. He could punch. He could use an elbow. Or a knee. He could wrestle. And so could Ben.



The pads stopped kids from getting hurt. The best way to win in MMA was by “tap out.” A tap out was when one person tapped the mat or the other person. A tap out said, “I quit.” There were holds that caused tap outs. Tommy’s best one was the arm lock. He’d had it done to him. It felt like his arm was ready to break.



There would be a big crowd at the arena. Huge. His mom and dad would come. His big brother, Rich. Tons of kids. He could be cheered. But what if he lost? He could be booed.

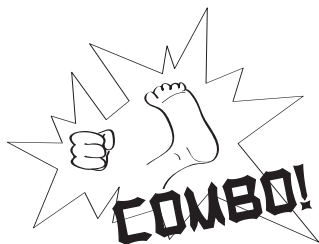
Tommy tried to focus on Ben. But his mind was racing. So many hopes. Dreams. But most of all, fears.

Mr. Fay blew a whistle. Tommy turned. The kids had formed a ring. Ben was in his gear. Tommy looked at him. Ben was a bit bigger than Tommy.

There were two types of MMA fighters. There were strikers. They were good at punching and kicking. Tommy was a striker.

There were grapplers. They were good if the fight went to the mat. Ben was a grappler.

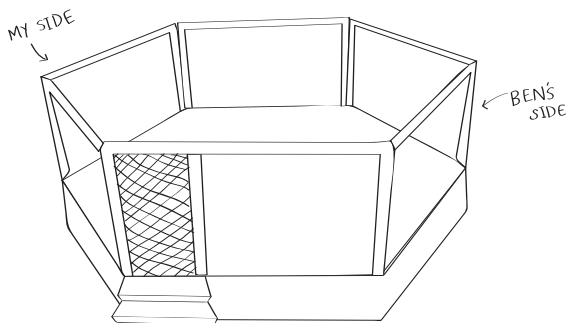
Tommy had to keep Ben from taking him down. He would try a punch-kick combo.



That might bring Ben down. Then he could lock Ben into a tap out.

“I can do this,” Tommy told himself. “I can do this.”

But his mind still raced. He saw himself in the MMA cage—



“Ready?” Mr. Fay asked.

“Ready!” Ben called

“Ready!” Tommy agreed. He felt anything but ready. He had to calm down. Now. Focus—

“Fight!”

Ben came at Tommy. A spinning hook

kick. Two quick punches to Tommy's face. Then a jumping front kick. It hit Tommy in the face.



Tommy came back with two left hooks and a jab. Those moves missed. He tried to think what to do.

“Come on, Tommy. Figure him out!” Mr. Fay called. Other kids shouted too. Tommy tried to listen. The more he listened, the worse he did.

“Focus,” he told himself. Why was he so good in drills? Why was he so bad in a fight?

Ben came at him again. He grabbed Tommy. Tommy tried to get away. He failed.



Ben put a leg behind him. Then pushed. It was a perfect trip. Tommy fell. Then Ben got Tommy's left arm in a lock.

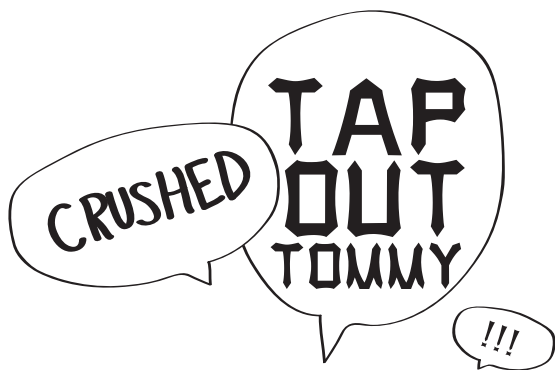
Ow! It hurt so much.

Tommy tapped out. The fight was over.

The kids were dead quiet. Tommy knew why.

It was one thing to lose. It was another to get crushed.

Tommy had just been crushed.



# FIGHT SCHOOL

Nate Nitehawk here.  
You want to be an  
MMA champ like me?  
Well, listen up.



  
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