

YOUR GUIDE TO A LIFETIME OF ENJOYING & IMPROVING YOUR BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU

By Five-Time World Champion Bernardo Faria

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INTRODUCTION

My name is Bernardo Faria, I was born and raised in Juiz de Fora - Minas Geraes, Brazil, the youngest of three boys in a very happy family raised by our parents. I had what most would consider a nice childhood. I did well in school, had a lot of good friends, and played sports like soccer. I was pretty good too, but certainly not the type of athlete that any of my peers or coaches really noticed. I started training in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) in my hometown when I was 14 years old. My brother's friend suggested that I follow him to BJJ class and something just clicked. I have trained steadily ever since. I'm writing this e-book because I think my message is powerful in that I always considered myself to be just a regular guy. Early on I didn't consider myself to be exceptionally talented and my teachers seemed to have agreed. Even when I started BJJ I used to feel like I had no physical talent at all – I still can't do a cartwheel!

One of the things that made me fall in love with BJJ was when I realized that untalented guys could excel if they put forth the necessary amount of effort and dedication. This is a sport that emphasizes technical mastery that almost anyone can learn, unlike soccer where God-given speed and coordination are musts. My goal is to give you a roadmap of how you should properly learn BJJ, some guidance that will help you to reach your full potential, and some hope that you'll enjoy BJJ your whole life.

In 2015 I started sharing all I have done in my career with the world. If you want to learn more you can view my instructionals [here](#).



Here I am in 2002, my second year in BJJ when I was a yellow belt.

WHERE TO TRAIN, HOW TO PICK A SCHOOL, & HOW TO IDENTIFY A GOOD INSTRUCTOR

I will start with where to train, and how to identify a good instructor. I believe one of the most important points of my BJJ career happened when I chose my training school. When I started BJJ in 2001, my brother's friend invited me to train at his school, which was regarded as the best in my hometown. I tried a class, but keep in mind that I didn't know anything about BJJ. I thought that all the schools were the same. As I was lifting weights in my gym, I saw that there was a BJJ program, and I decided to start there, instead of at my friend's school. Luckily, when I went to ask the instructor questions, he was very rude to me. I asked him what time the classes were and he replied very quickly and was quite impolite. I got a bad feeling from the guy and I never went back. Sometimes the decisions you don't make are the best ones of your life. So always trust your gut: TRAIN WHERE YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE! And if you don't feel comfortable at a school – don't train there.

Then I decided to give the art a shot at my friend's school, and when I got there, I met my first teacher, Ricardo Marques, who graduated me in all my belts. When I saw him for the first time, he gave me a big smile and said, "Welcome to my academy. How old are you?" I said, "I'm 14," and I had a friend with me who was also 14. Then I asked about the schedule and he replied, "Hmmm, for you, it will be ... Monday, Wednesday and Friday 5 pm to 6 pm." I asked, "Why for me? Who is in the class?" And he said "The class is you and you" (pointing to my friend). I realized that he didn't have a class for youths, but he was starting it now with me and my friend. I felt welcome right away and it turned out that the wonderful treatment he gave me in the first minutes of meeting him would just never end.

The way he treated me was important for me, because I could feel how authentic he was, and how cool he was to me and my friend. So, I want to emphasize that the most important part in choosing a training school is to make sure that we pick a school where the main instructor is a nice guy because I have come to learn that in any school, the head instructor sets the tone. IF THE INSTRUCTOR IS A NICE GUY, ALL THE STUDENTS WILL BE NICE TOO. The environment of the school will be welcoming and a great place to learn, and it will probably become like your second home, and there you will love BJJ. Once you have a welcoming environment where you can practice, it is much easier to progress. Everything we love to do in life is what we tend to excel in. I thank God every day that I started BJJ in the right place with Ricardo. If I had started in the wrong place, I would have hated BJJ, and I would not be where I am today. The positive environment and tone are more important than the instructor's accomplishments on the mat.



In my hometown with my first instructor Ricardo Marques who graduated me from white to Black Belt

BEGINNERS: WHICH POSITIONS YOU SHOULD FOCUS ON

When I started BJJ, I didn't know anything about the sport, and I didn't have any martial arts background, so I'm very glad that my instructor focused on the very basic techniques. My teacher came from the Carlson Gracie Academy line, and most of the people who come from this training, have a solid and basic BJJ game. They might develop some modern techniques but all of them are well schooled in fundamentals. This is something that has been important in my career and that has helped me at every level. I BELIEVE THAT IF YOU KNOW THE FUNDAMENTALS VERY WELL, IT MAKES IT MUCH EASIER TO LEARN ANY MORE ADVANCED TECHNIQUE IN BJJ. Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu has no limits on the techniques you can develop and create for your own body, but first you must have a good understanding of the fundamentals. Here is what I mean:

- Self Defense from Standing
- Closed Guard
- Passing the Guard
- Side Control
- Mount
- Back Attack

If you want to excel in Jiu-Jitsu, here are some techniques that you will need to become proficient in:

- Two ways to pull guard (one placing the foot in the hip and the other one jumping in the closed guard)
- Three or four sweeps from the closed guard (the basic ones - scissor sweep, hand on the belt sweep, pendulum sweep, trap sweep)
- One to two sweeps from any type of open guard
- One to two sweeps from half guard
- Three or four submissions in the closed guard - choke from the closed guard, armbar from the closed guard, kimura from the closed guard
- One way to set up a posture, and one way to open the closed guard
- Three or four basic ways to pass the guard - torreando pass, stack pass, passing getting the half guard. One way to take the back (seat belt)
- Three to four submissions from the side control - armbar, kimura, choke
- Two attacks from knee on belly
- Three or four submissions from the mount - armbar, Americana, choke
- Two to three ways to escape from the side control
- Two to three ways to escape from the mount
- Two to three ways to escape from the back
- Three to four self-defense techniques from standing

Once you can do all of these well, you are going to give everyone problems – even the black belts. It doesn't really matter which ones you become good at, just as long as you have some moves you have mastered.

TOURNAMENTS HELP YOU TO IMPROVE

Okay, once you have the fundamentals down, it helps to test your knowledge. I know that competing is not for everyone, it is something that has to come from inside, because it is costly, stressful and requires a much bigger commitment than simply going to class. Going to tournaments is a sure way to improve faster, because the competition intensity is unlike anything you will engage in during training. The stress of competing brings your focus to 100% and your memory will be seared with what went right and what went wrong. In training everyone knows each other, so maybe your techniques work on your opponent, or maybe they don't, but because your opponents in class are your good friends, it is hard to know if they truly work or not. When you go out to compete, you can see where you are and how effective your techniques are on new opponents. Conversely, you can see how well you defend what you aren't used to facing. After the tournament, whether you won or lost, you will always come home with several things to fix and work on. The intensity and stress of the competition will show you clearly what needs to be improved. And seeing the winners' circle will make you want to get there the next time – this fire will fuel the effort you need to improve quickly. Perhaps you have heard this quote: "DIAMONDS ARE CREATED UNDER PRESSURE." I am a believer that the pressure of competition is a big factor in improving your BJJ. UNDER PRESSURE YOU WILL DO THE BEST OF YOUR BEST, AND YOU WILL FIND OUT THINGS THAT YOU WOULD NEVER REALIZE THAT YOU CAN DO OR KNOW HOW TO DO.



*Purple Belt Open Class World Champion
2006*

HOW TO MAXIMIZE YOUR LEARNING

One thing that has helped me in my career is the way I tried to maximize my learning. At some early point in my career, when I was still a yellow belt (2002), I quickly realized that I didn't have any special talent for BJJ. I was the type of guy who always compared myself to everyone, and I saw that I was not naturally flexible, I wasn't freakishly strong I had a hard time learning how to roll. So, I always wanted to learn BJJ in the most effective way to make up for the physical gifts I didn't have so that I could still beat the more talented guys. I started to think about how many techniques there were in BJJ. Over 1,000? Over 10,000 techniques? Including details and different variations, I bet that there are tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands or even millions. So, when I was around 15, I started to realize that it would be very hard for me to become good at all of those techniques. There are some people who seemed to learn quickly and if they were shown 10 techniques per day, they quickly learned them and wouldn't forget (looking back, this might not have been true) I was definitely not one of them, I was the guy who might learn three techniques, and if I didn't like them too much would forget them all by the next day. So instead, I TRIED TO FOCUS ALL MY GAME ON ONLY CERTAIN TECHNIQUES. As I became more proficient with those techniques, they started to work on the guys who had more talent than I did, but weren't as focused. In Malcolm Gladwell's book "Outliers" he talks about the need to spend 10,000 hours on a skill to master it. That was kind of my thinking – without having read the book.

Now, here is a common mistake when it comes to mastering a position: the key is not going to the gym and drilling a certain pass or sweep the same way 10,000 times. After you do it a certain number of times a day: say 10 or 20, there are diminishing returns and after a while you aren't doing any good by simply repeating the same thing over and over. THE KEY is to learn how to ENTER INTO YOUR FAVORITE TECHNIQUE FROM ANY POSITION. Once you become very good at a technique, say half guard or pressure passing, and you can get there from many different spots – then you will start winning – a lot. Say you are under side control, and you continually drill a way to get to your type of half guard, now your opponent has to worry. When you are in the middle of a roll, it only matters who is better in a particular spot, and if you can keep the contest in places where you are strong, and keep getting back there, then you are going to win often. This is when Jiu Jitsu starts to become fun and pay off.

I like to picture certain positions and spend all my time on those in order to become a specialist.

So that is why I developed a relatively narrow game: Pressure Passing/Over-Under when I am on top, and half guard (Z-Guard and Deep Half Guard) when I am on bottom. Coincidence or not, if you start paying attention to the best BJJ athletes in the world, most of them are specialists in one type of game. Marcelo Garcia's techniques, 80% of the time start from butterfly guard. Ricardo De La Riva uses the game that became his name. Roger Gracie based his game on the basic positions that all white belts learn in the first week of BJJ. It is rare to find a guy like Marcus Almeida "Buchechea" who can be considered a phenomenon in several styles: he has mastered a variety of techniques.

Always remember that to be able to excel, you first need to master the fundamentals, because you can only develop advanced techniques, strategies and game plans if you have a solid understanding of the basics.



*Double Gold Worlds
2015*

HOW TO SET UP A GAME PLAN

Now that you know how to do the fundamentals very well and that you have picked some positions to specialize in, it is time to set up your game plan for training and competition. This is a key part of the process, because maybe you are a specialist in closed guard, but in competition or training you never get to close the guard. Then it becomes very hard for you. So, your game plan could be a matter of how to get to your positions before your opponent gets to theirs, and how to bring your opponent to your positions as soon as you start rolling or competing! **Realize, IF YOU CAN BRING YOUR OPPONENT TO PLAY YOUR GAME, YOUR CHANCE OF WINNING IS MUCH HIGHER, because he will be forced to play against the techniques that you have spent hours mastering, whereas he might have only spent a little time in those spots. Hence, the chance that you get to score or submit from there is much higher than the chance of him scoring on or submitting you.**

Another important thing to consider is how to connect one technique to the other. For example, maybe you are good at the butterfly guard, and passing with torreando but bad on passing half guard. So, if every time you get a sweep you end up in the half guard, your positions are not well connected because you are getting a sweep (your strong point) going to half guard (your weak point). The idea is to set up a way that when you sweep you fall right over in your favorite pass, and you keep your opponent always playing against your best positions. As soon as I get one of my sweeps I try to go right away to the over-under pass, keeping my opponent always one step behind me. **SO THE KEY OF THE GAME PLAN IS: BRING YOUR OPPONENTS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO YOUR BEST TECHNIQUES, AND CONNECT YOUR BEST TECHNIQUES.**

HOW TO PICK WHO YOU ARE GOING TO TRAIN WITH

Now let's talk a little bit more about training and how to approach it to make sure you reach your goals.

This topic has two different angles depending on your goal. There are people who do BJJ to become the best in the world. But there are also people who practice BJJ only as a hobby.

I'm going to focus first on those who only want to do the sport as a hobby. For these practitioners, I would put the emphasis on keeping BJJ fun. I would not force myself to train only with tough guys. I would concentrate more on working out, learning BJJ, and enjoying the sport as much as possible.

But If your goal is to become a World Champion, I would repeat what we have talked about first: Learn the fundamentals well, try to compete to make sure you learn faster, try to specialize in certain techniques, and make sure to set up a good game plan. BJJ is a commercial sport, it is still not professional, so in most of the schools, the classes are run so that everyone, hobbyists and professionals alike, can train at the same time. So as an athlete you have to try to control what you can, meaning you can control which guys you train with. You will need to roll hard when it is time to spar. I would say, **FOCUS ON TRAINING ONLY WITH THE GUYS WHO ARE GOING TO GIVE YOU A HARD TIME.** I can say that, from my first year of BJJ in 2001 until 2013 or 2014, I don't remember one roll in which I called some lower belt or lighter guy because I was tired and wanted to rest. I always picked the toughest and heaviest guys. Once again, I must point out that diamonds are made under pressure, if you don't train until you feel exhausted, until you reach your limit, it will become impossible for you to reach your full potential. Picking the people who you are going to train with is essential. Many times, I see people who say that they want to become a World Champion, that they train three or four times a day, that they eat like a champ, and this and that, and when I see them rolling, they only choose the guys they know they can beat. When they train with someone very tough, later they go with someone easy so they can rest. If you do this you are wasting your time. You will not become a World Champion. BJJ is a constant fight against your ego. Your ego can be your biggest enemy, your ego will be the one telling you to rest all the time, telling you not to compete, telling you not to go against that tough guy in training. But you have to fight against taking the easy road, you have to get used to "losing" in the gym so that you can win the big tournaments.



to

With Bernardo's three Instructors – Ricardo Marques, Fabio Gurgel and Marcelo Garcia

HOW TO DEAL WITH THE FRUSTRATION WHEN YOU FEEL YOU ARE NOT LEARNING

This has happened to me hundreds of times. You are training a lot, but your techniques are not working, it seems like you can't learn anything effective anymore. During these trying times it can look like you just stopped progressing, and you became a white belt again. Everyone in the school is smashing you, and your technique doesn't work anymore. BJJ is fun, and most of the time when I feel this way, very soon I have a pic. Most of the times I feel this way I compete very well, and sometimes when I feel good, I compete poorly. My theory: You train at your school with the same people every day, so it is normal that during some sessions your favorite positions will stop working for a while. Everyone will figure out what you do well and how to defend it, but resistance will teach you to adapt your technique when it isn't working and make you that much better. Your training partners will adapt to you and that will force you to evolve: this is the process of learning. This is why we should never give up. Most of the time when we are struggling, we can be close to a breakthrough and we need to remember, "NO MATTER HOW LONG THE STORM LASTS, THE SUN ALWAYS SHINES BEHIND THE CLOUDS."



One of Bernardo's favorite pictures

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU TRAIN?

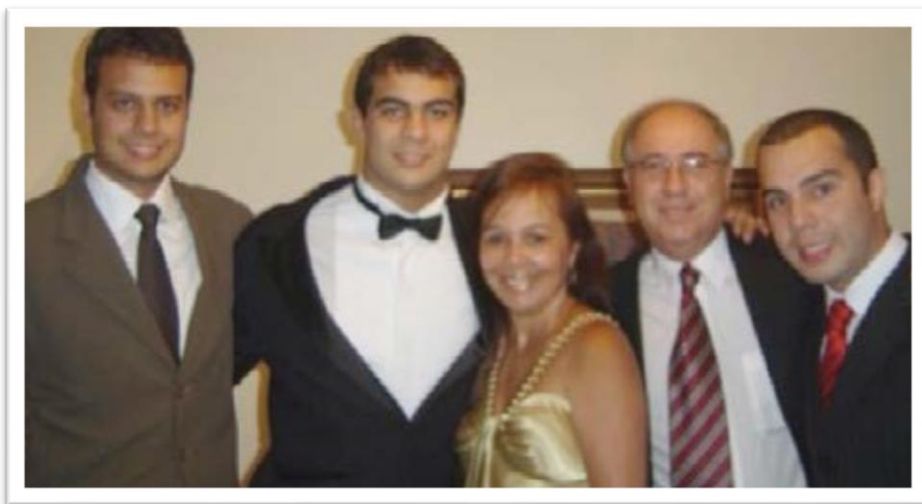
The questions that I receive most are “How often do you train?” and “How often do you think should I train?” Once again it depends on your goal.

If your goal is to train JUST FOR A HOBBY, I WOULD SUGGEST BETWEEN TWO AND FIVE TIMES PER WEEK. Definitely not less than two, because if you don't train at least that much it will be hard to keep your body ready, and your mind fresh to retain techniques learned.

IF YOUR GOAL IS TO BECOME A WORLD CHAMPION IN THE MASTER DIVISION, FOR EXAMPLE, I WOULD SUGGEST BETWEEN FOUR AND EIGHT TIMES PER WEEK. FOUR TIMES CAN BE ENOUGH, IF YOU DO IT CONSTANTLY...

IF YOUR GOAL IS TO BECOME A WORLD CHAMPION IN THE ADULT DIVISION, I WOULD SUGGEST BETWEEN 10 AND 15 TIMES PER WEEK. You can mix it up with BJJ, physical conditioning, wrestling, judo, everything counts as training. But it is really important to feel how your body is reacting and also to remember that it is more important to focus on the quality of training. It comes back to what we have discussed in the sections “How to pick who you are going to train with,” and “How to work out off the mat.” In my experience, when I lived in my hometown and got my Black Belt, because I was busy going to college, I used to train around 10 times per week. Then when I got my black belt and moved to Sao Paulo to train under Fabio Gurgel, I started training around 13 times per week, including physical conditioning and judo once a week.

Since 2015 I have reduced my training to around nine times per week, because I'm getting older and have been hitting my body so hard for a long time, I started to get a lot of injuries. Now I'm trying to balance how I train, to make sure I can train 12 months a year, so I train very hard during the tournament season (January-May), about 10 times per week. In the off season I train only once a day to make sure I keep my body healthy. This lighter offseason schedule helps me to recover from injuries and get ready for the new season. It is important to note that I started backing off in the offseason seven years after competing in the black belt adult division. I want to stress that once you get your black belt, the first thing you need to do is get your name out there. And newer black belts in most cases cannot afford the luxury of taking six months off.



When Bernardo finished his college degree in business, with his parents and his two brothers

HOW TO AVOID INJURIES

Injuries are a big obstacle to watch out for on this BJJ journey. Compared to other grappling sports like wrestling and judo, BJJ is pretty safe, but injuries are still a huge factor. As we train more, the chances of an injury increase. Most people train two or three times per week when they start, but as they become more addicted, they often start training every day and sometimes even more than once per day. Injuries become increasingly likely because we start hitting our body very hard and sooner or later one will happen. If you are in your 30's or 40's, injuries are even more likely as your body stops healing as well.

Here are my specific tips to avoid injuries:

- Focus on the warmup: Make sure you are warmed up before you roll, most injuries happen in the first roll, because the body is cold and not ready yet for the intensity that we are going to put on it.
- If you can, try to work out off the mat to make sure you make your whole body strong, and ready to train BJJ hard. Working on your muscles can help you handle the BJJ routine.
- If for some reason you had to stop training BJJ for a while, make sure when you restart not to go very hard in the first week. Your body forgets what training hard is like, so make sure you go kind of easy, to prepare your body for training again.
- Try to deal with the small injuries: do not stop training. When we train regularly, we will always have some small injuries and we need to get used to that. If you stop training every time you have a little pain, you basically never train at all. So, try to be tough! Your love of the sport will get you through.



After my meniscus surgery

HOW TO GET A SPONSOR

This is a tough topic, and only for those who want to do BJJ for a living, or as a professional. The truth is that sponsors in BJJ still do not support the athletes as professionals by and large. Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is still a very small sport, and the companies are looking at relatively low sales compared to other sports. If you are a black belt, competing in the adult division and winning, you can get some sponsorships to defer some of your costs, but it won't be enough to live off of. Unfortunately, BJJ is still at this level. If you are a blue, purple or brown belt, trying to make your career happen, I would suggest focusing on getting "Help/ Sponsorships" from the people who see how hard you train, how much dedication you put into this sport, and how much love you have for what you do. There are business owners who will want to sponsor you, but in truth, they don't really want to sponsor you, they want to HELP you. They will ask you to represent their business by wearing patches and talking about them in social media. It could be one restaurant that will give you free meals, or it could be a small salary, or any form of financial help. Remember, BJJ is not a high-paying sport yet, and if you are a blue, purple or brown belt, you are not in the first division of the sport yet. In my case, when I lived in my hometown, I had a supplement store that used to pay for my trips and tournaments. Also, there was a business owner who helped me with all my international trips. This was how I used to be able to compete a lot when I was young. Don't forget one thing: Once you make it big: NEVER FORGET THOSE WHO HELPED YOU TO BECOME WHAT YOU HAVE BECOME.



Bernardo's current sponsors

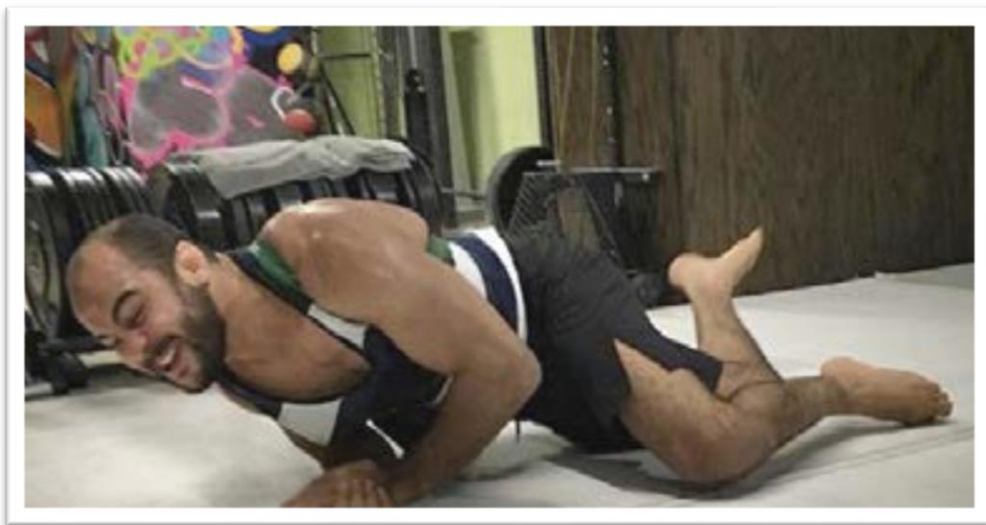
[BJJ Fanatics](#)

HOW TO WORK OUT OFF THE MAT

People ask me, "Bernardo do you do any type of workout? How is it? How often do you do it? Which type of exercises do you use?"

The answers can vary. Marcelo Garcia, for example, doesn't do any type of off-mat physical conditioning, and he is super successful, maybe the best in history. I also know a lot of people who have off-mat programs and it works very well for them. In my case I like doing it twice a week. I'm very lucky to have Kevin Paretti on my side. He is a physical therapist and conditioning coach, so he can work on both with me in the same session, fixing my injuries and doing my conditioning. There are many styles of physical conditioning you can use: lifting weights, functional training, CrossFit, running and others. What I believe works best for BJJ is having a planned workout, so, it is important to have a professional like my trainer Kevin ("KP") to help you out. You don't need a

professional personal trainer on your side every day, but at least someone who will make a plan and tell you what to do so that you can do it by yourself. As I said, there are many different types of workouts, but as long as you have someone to help MAKE YOUR PLANS ACCORDING TO YOUR GOALS.



Bernardo working out at Kinephys with his Coach Kevin Paretti

IN BJJ THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG

One thing that I never get tired of saying is that in BJJ there is no right or wrong. THE RIGHT WAY IS WHATEVER WORKS FOR YOU AND THE WRONG WAY IS WHATEVER DOESN'T WORK FOR YOU. So, you should test everything you learn in life, make your own laboratory and see what works for you best and what doesn't. Remember, you will learn lots of techniques, tons of details, and many coaches will tell you different things. You will find people and coaches with completely different styles, and some things will work for you and some will not. You have to be able to filter the good and the bad. Always remember that the most important part of this journey is to have fun and enjoy the process.



Against Leandro Lo, World's 2015

CONCLUSION

I would like to thank you for spending your time reading my first book. I hope you enjoyed it and I hope it has helped you to enjoy this amazing BJJ journey even more. Also, I would like to thank my sponsor [BJJ Fanatics](#) (best online store for BJJ instructional videos).

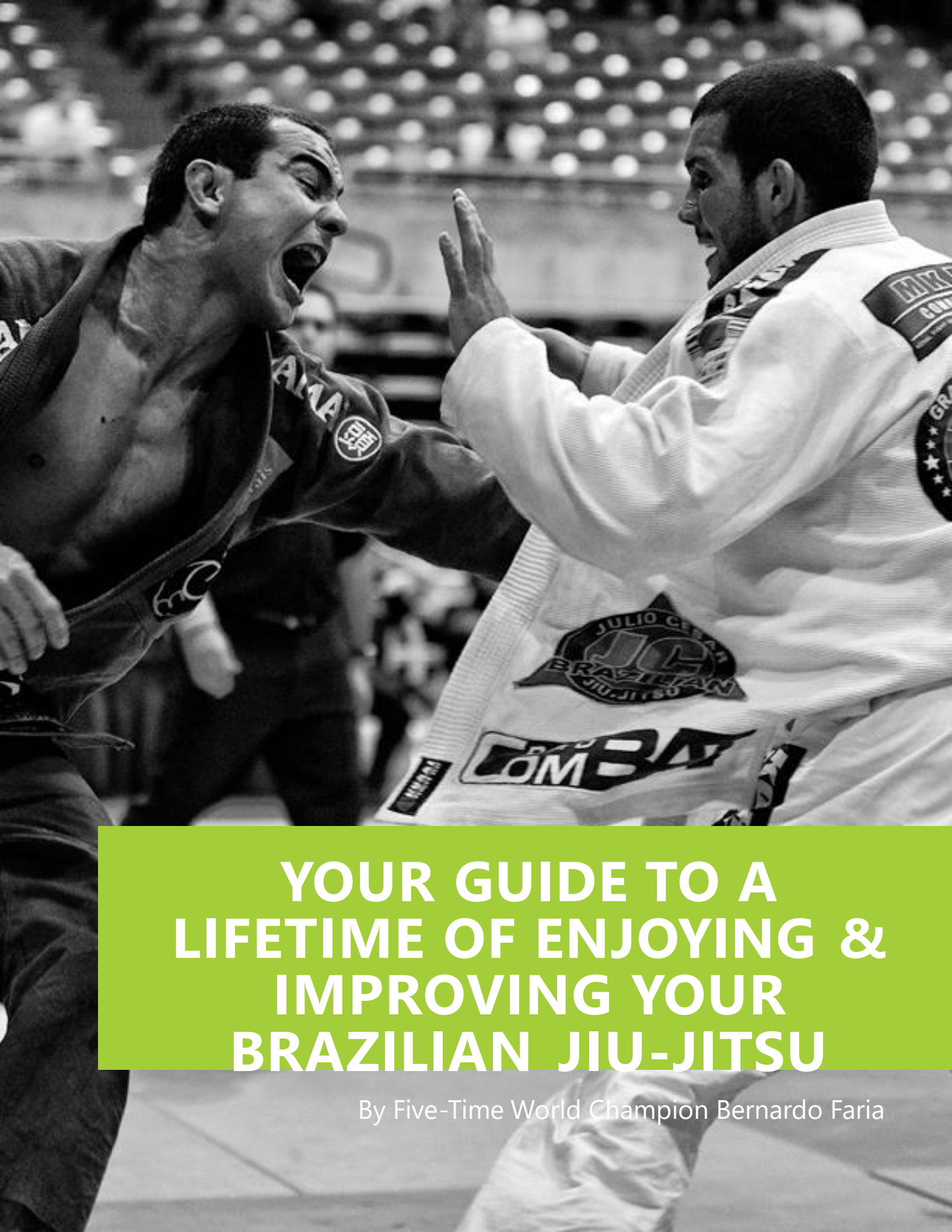


Training...

[CLICK HERE](#) TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BJJ INSTRUCTIONALS BY BERNARDO FARIA



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YOUR GUIDE TO A LIFETIME OF ENJOYING & IMPROVING YOUR BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU

By Five-Time World Champion Bernardo Faria