

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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NO MORE EXCUSES

LOGAN SKINNER BECOMES FIRST BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU BLACK BELT IN EASTERN OREGON

By **BRETT KANE**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Nestled along Main Street in Pendleton is the Solid Base Grappling Academy — a gym that hosts aspiring grapplers of all ages. And among them is one of the highest-ranked fighters in all of Eastern Oregon.

Logan Skinner, 27, is the gym's first-ever black belt recipient, which he earned in Brazilian Jiu-jitsu. At 5-feet, 6-inches and 160 pounds, Skinner's accomplishment came after a decade of rigorous training.

"It's pretty surreal," Skinner said of his achievement. "When I first started, I didn't think it was possible."

The athlete that Skinner is today isn't at all like the kid he once was. Born in Anchorage, Alaska, he and his family moved to Pendleton when he was 2 months old. He said his interest in martial arts started at an early age, when he was first exposed to the "Power Rangers" television series, as well as movies like Jean-Claude Van Damme's "Bloodsport" and Bruce Lee's "Enter the Dragon."

"(Lee) was the epitome of the art," Skinner said. "With him, it was technique over everything. That's what gravitated me towards Jiu-jitsu. I like it because you can get proficient at it faster than other forms of martial arts. It's grappling, but there's not as much striking. You won't walk out of practice with brain damage. It's more developed for small people grappling against a bigger person. It evens the playing field."

Brazilian Jiu-jitsu is a martial art centered on grappling and ground fighting. It focuses on controlling the opponent until they are forced to submit.

"It's like collegiate wrestling," Skinner said. "I didn't have the strength, but I wanted to fight."

But there was one thing in his way of taking that next step:

Confidence.

"As a kid, I wasn't very confident in myself," Skinner recalled. "I was small — I didn't reach 100 pounds until I was 16."

Skinner said that his lack of confidence in himself was hard on his personal growth.

"I was good at making excuses for myself," he said. "I would always tell myself, 'He's bigger than you are,' or, 'He's faster,' or 'I'm just not feeling too good today.' When things weren't going



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Logan Skinner holds his newly earned black belt at Solid Base Grappling Academy in Pendleton. Skinner was the first academy member to earn a black belt.

my way, I would try to find a way out of it. But you can't lie your way out of a fight."

At 17, Skinner joined the St. Andrew's gym in Mission, where he met Brandon Dames — an instructor from Pilot Rock, who would eventually be the one to award Skinner his black belt.

"At first, he made me nervous," Skinner said of Dames. "He was so big. But he's actually super nice. Our paths kept crossing, and eventually, we became friends. He's really good at instilling confidence in me. He helped get me to where I am today."

Dames eventually moved to Florida, and Skinner to Boise, Idaho, where he continued his training at Combat Fitness and received his purple belt in 2015.

But when his father got sick, Skinner returned to Pendleton and back to the Solid Base Grappling Academy. The academy, which first opened its doors in 2011, is home to roughly 50-60 prac-

ticing fighters. Johnny Picard, the original owner and instructor, stepped down in 2015, placing his class in the hands of Skinner.

Gorge Martinez, 28, took over as the owner.

"He's a hell of an athlete," Martinez said of Skinner. "I thought getting a blue belt was hard enough. Ten years is a commitment."

And on Friday, June 7, that commitment finally paid off.

Dames made the trip all the way back to the Solid Base Grappling Academy to officially promote Skinner. A small group of friends, family, and students were in attendance.

"(Dames) told me how proud he was of me, and how impressed he was that I managed to improve without other black belts to train against," Skinner said.

And with that, Skinner became the

highest-ranked Jiu-jitsu practitioner in Eastern Oregon.

"I thought the black belt would be the destination," he said, "but there's so much more to achieve, both in my technique and my coaching. Honestly, I feel like this is only the beginning."

Skinner, who also works as a corrections officer at the Umatilla County Sheriff's Department, has a few other goals set in mind. He'd like to earn his certification in defense tactics for the county, to start. He also wants to take his skills to California, which he calls the "Mecca" of the sport.

And as for the academy?

"Everything we have here is just us. I like the isolation," Skinner said. "It's cool seeing people come in and watching them progress. I get a lot of pride in helping them develop. I want to train and coach as long as my body lets me."

Pendleton All-Stars claim Oregon District 3 Little League titles

By **BRETT KANE**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Evan Lehnert tallied 15 strikeouts and gave up just one run to aid in the Pendleton 10/11/12 All-Star team's 3-1 victory over Hermiston on Thursday.

With the win, the Pendleton Little League team claimed the Oregon District 3 championship title.

Lehnert was key on both sides of the ball for Pendleton, putting them on the scoreboard early on in the bottom of the first inning

when he sent a hard ground ball to left field, scoring Kaden Moore and Anson Dressler.

Although Lehnert would end the inning stranded on second base, Pendleton put up their third and final run two innings later. Rylen Bronson doubled on a line drive to center field, scoring Keegan Kline, who was courtesy running for Tyler Hall.

Lehnert posted a stellar fifth inning as well, hurling a no-hitter, including two back-to-back strikeouts.

Next up, the Pendle-

ton team heads to the state tournament in Kalamath Falls starting on Friday, July 12.

And they're not the only team with a district title in tow.

On Tuesday, Pendleton's 10/11/12 All-Star softball team defeated Grant County 3-2 for a trip to the state tournament in Keizer on Saturday, July 6.

Pendleton's 8/9/10 softball team will also vie for a state title after their Wednesday defeat of Pilot Rock. Their state run begins on July 12 in Portland.



Photo courtesy of Pendleton Little League

Pendleton's 10/11/12 baseball team poses after winning the Oregon District 3 championship game on Thursday in Pendleton.

SPORTS SHORTS

Rapinoe stands by statement about not going to White House

PARIS (AP) — Megan Rapinoe said Thursday that she stands by previous comments that she would not visit the White House if the United States wins the Women's World Cup.

"I stand by the comments that I made about not wanting to go to the White House, with the exception of the expletive," she said. "My mom would be very upset about that."

Rapinoe spoke at a previously scheduled news conference a day after President Donald Trump called out the U.S. women's national team star on Twitter. Trump referenced a video that surfaced on Twitter in recent

days, posting: "Megan should never disrespect our Country, the White House, or our Flag, especially since so much has been done for her & the team."

Trump said he would invite the U.S. team "win or lose."

Rapinoe's initial comments were made during an interview for a magazine in January in which she was asked if she was excited about the prospect of going to the White House. In a video excerpt of the interview posted Tuesday, she can be seen using a profanity when she says she's not going. She also expressed doubts the team would be invited.



AP Photo/Anne Peterson

U.S. women's national team soccer player Megan Rapinoe speaks at a news conference on Thursday in Paris, France.