

## My Judo & Jiu Jitsu Journey

Written by Pete Araujo

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My training in judo first began training 2002 at [Goltz Judo](#) in Claremont, California, under [Sensei Gary Goltz](#). After about a year of training, life pulled me away from the mats until 2012, when I returned at age 33. From then on, I trained consistently for six years, competing in local tournaments plus the renowned [Winter Nationals](#). In 2020, I was awarded my Shodan (1<sup>st</sup> degree black belt) by Sensei Goltz.

During this time, I was also living in San Diego and training at [Atos Jiu Jitsu Academy Headquarters](#) under Professor André Galvão. Atos is recognized as one of the top Jiu Jitsu teams in the world. I arrived as a blue belt, but despite my judo background, I struggled at first to adapt judo to the jiu jitsu environment. Many jiu jitsu players use wrestling stances or anti-judo tactics that would normally draw a shido in judo competition. This forced me to rethink my approach.

Through years of trial, error, and constant training—often five days a week on Atos’ massive mats—I learned how to adapt my Judo for Jiu Jitsu. I focused on off-balancing, timing, and committing to throws using traditional grips, rather than abandoning Judo for guard pulling. Along the way, I also began sharing Judo with my teammates at Atos who wanted to learn. I often encourage them to visit the San Diego Judo Club, where Senseis Leilani Akiyama and Jacob Flores—both former USA Judo National Team members—teach world-class Judo.

In 2022, I tested my Judo at the IBJJF World Masters in Las Vegas, facing a former Division 1 wrestler in my first match. Lacking the right kumi-kata (gripping) strategies at the time, I lost, but the experience motivated me to continue improving.

After that tournament, I began focusing on throws and setups that worked well against negative or wrestling-style stances. I put a lot of time into Yoko Otoshi, Kata Guruma, Sumi Gaeshi, and Ken Ken Uchimata, while also refining a “sticky foot” setup to create openings.

I even began experimenting with the Tenri grip on Uchimata, which Jacob Flores helped me refine and better apply against opponents who stayed low or defensive. Training with high-level athletes like world-class competitor and fellow Judo black belt Dominique Bell further sharpened my skills.

Returning to the IBJJF World Masters in 2023, I fell short, eliminated in my first match. Still, I didn't quit. On August 28, 2025, I entered the World Masters for the third time. This time, I was ready. After eight weeks of intensive preparation, including private lessons to refine guard sweeps, leg lock defense, and pin escapes, I faced four tough matches, including against the #3 and #4 seeds in my division.

Relying heavily on my judo, using kumi-kata strategies, I gassed out opponents who depended on arbitrary grips, then executed throws when they fatigued. My osaekomi skills allowed me to neutralize sweeps and apply heavy pressure. While I improved my jiu jitsu ground game, I never once had to pull guard. My judo, combined with guard passing fundamentals from Atos, carried me through.

I won the 2025 IBJJF World Masters Championship in the Masters 4 Brown Belt Super Heavyweight Division, proving to myself that a judo based strategy can thrive at the highest levels of Jiu Jitsu competition.

Thanks,

Pete

## Judo at Atos Jiu-jitsu Academy

**BLACK BELT**  
WORLD'S LEADING MAGAZINE OF MARTIAL ARTS

By [Gary Goltz](#)

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My judo student Pete Araujo upon earning his shodan (1<sup>st</sup> degree black belt) and relocating to San Diego has been practicing Brazilian Jiu Jitsu at the well-known Atos Academy for the several years. There he has successfully connected these two sister martial arts which I believe is the key to growing judo here in the United States.



Pete was promoted to nidan (2<sup>nd</sup> degree black belt) by me in February of 2025

The growth of judo is a topic that is often discussed by members of the judo community in the United States. Feelings regarding judo's current status often bring in-depth ideas on how to grow judo and the idea of building a cooperative partnership with the Brazilian Jiu jitsu community. In the past, jiu jitsu academies and judo clubs often failed to find common ground, and many did not support their students cross-training arts for a variety of political and business reasons.

Of course, there are exceptions to this like [San Diego BJJ](#) operated by Paulo Augusto, [Milestone Martial Arts of Las Vegas](#) operated by Leandro de Lorenzo Lima, the [Camarillo Jiu Jitsu Academy](#) operated by Dan Camarillo, [Harrisburg BJJ & Judo](#) operated by David Brogan, and the [Anaconda Academy](#) operated by Jovany Varela.

While there are several well know judo dojos in this area San Diego, California is often called the “Mecca” of jiu jitsu as it is saturated with private academies. However, top judo players in this area have been more than willing to share their knowledge with jiu jitsu practitioners.



Most recently the San Diego based [Atos Jiu Jitsu Academy](#) which is known for being a warehouse of jiu jitsu world champions under legendary Abu Dhabi, Combat Champion and International Brazilian Jiu jitsu World Champion Professor, Andre Galvao began a judo class. Professor Galvao has shown his support for cross-training by allowing his student, instructor, and competitor, Professor Dominique Bell to open his academy's doors so he could share his knowledge of judo.

Professor Bell is an accomplished jiu jitsu competitor in gi and no-gi competitions. He is also regarded as a very technical and detail orientated jiu jitsu instructor at Atos. Watch a [Judo Instagram Video](#) showing effective throws from judo in BJJ.

Professor Bell began training judo intensively and almost daily about 3 years ago because he realized the need to improve his takedown skills for competition and wanted to teach his students judo to prevent them from pulling guard as a reaction in a street situation. Professor Bell has trained under U.S. Olympic Coach Justin Flores at Studio 540 and attained a brown belt. He also trained with other judokas in the San Diego area which provided him a way to further develop his judo skillset.

Over the past three years his judo skills have grown rapidly because of the frequency of his training and the efficient way he trained judo on his own. In his small circle of regular judo training partners, he became known as the shodan killer because he frequently used high level techniques to consistently throw his shodan or higher training partners for ippon. His throw of choice is usually uchimata, inner thigh sweep.

Professor Bell's fascination with judo is depicted in this [popular video clip](#) aimed at BJJ practitioners.

Professor Bell was recently promoted to shodan by Sensei Ross MacBaisey from the San Shi Judo Club. He is now known at Atos on Sundays as “Sensei Dom.” The promotion ceremony brought judokas and jiu jitsu players together to celebrate his hard-earned promotion. As a result of the promotion, many others have become inspired to begin their path towards learning judo.





Professor Bell's judo class on Sundays is growing by the numbers every week. The judo "class" is not structured as many traditional judo club's classes are. Students spend the first 45 minutes warming up by their selection of uchikomi, technique with movement, or practicing throws on a crash pad. Judo black belts from nearby clubs are often present and assist new students with proper judo techniques.

One of the primary differences is the environment Professor Bell has embraced in his judo class, and this is what other judo clubs should look at to learn from. In a short amount of time, the Atos Jiu Jitsu Academy's judo class has indirectly grown judo and drawn a combination of high-level jiu jitsu competitors, jiu jitsu hobbyists, past and present judokas together onto the mat to train judo.

Professor Bell has modeled the way for others to grow judo with an open-mindedness, respect, efficient training, and cooperation that has given those around him an understanding of the philosophy of jita kyoei (win/win). Anyone interested in training judo at Atos can contact Professor Bell via Instagram direct messaging. He's known on social media as *Dubious Dom*.

These pictures depict some of the highest-level jiu jitsu players in the world taking off their jiu jitsu black belts and replacing them with a judo white belt. Solutions to the growth of judo do not need to be overly complicated. The keys are flexible attitudes, controlled egos, and an openness to the techniques of both arts. This bring people together and encourage the growth of judo.