

From: Cesar Lazcano
Sent: Thursday, August 28, 2008 6:00 PM
To: Gary Goltz
Subject: You'll love this.

Sensei:

Here's an interview I had with Judo Gene for my new job at University Affairs Magazine.

[Gene LeBell](#) Answers Questions from Cesar

Gene LeBell is known as one of the "toughest men alive". He is one of the top Hollywood's top Stuntmen, a former Heavyweight Pro Wrestling Champion who trains dangerous and aspiring MMA superstars at the Hayastan Academy in Hollywood. He is 76 years of age and shows no signs of slowing down. In fact, he was recently promoted to 10th Dan by the legendary [Jon Bluming](#) of the Netherlands.

Gene always tells anyone he meets to "keep smiling". Gene shares with us many memories and reasons why he himself keeps smiling. Gene also takes the time to wax philosophic with me on whether or not he is better looking than Gary Goltz, host of the 2008 Judo Winter Nationals in Southern, California

UA: You were the referee in the legendary Mohammad Ali vs. Antonio Inoki match, a boxer vs. wrestler match. How was that?

GL: I think Inoki could have won but he wouldn't tackle. Ali had boxing gloves on, and he couldn't grab either. I think if Inoki could have tackled him, he could have tapped Ali out. Mohammad Ali should have gotten closer and knocked him out. It was a defensive match, but people don't want to see that. People already know how a bull fight ends, but people are there for the spectacle and enjoy it. I thought it was going to be a predetermined fight, but it was legit. That was in 1976. If it had been an MMA fight nowadays, Ali would have had gloves allowing him to grab Inoki, and I think it would have been more exciting.

UA: Would you have liked to have gone one on one against either of these men? And how do you think you'd fare?

GL: Absolutely, I would have loved to be one of those contestants, Ali took home, \$6M, Inoki took home \$2M and the referee got \$5,000. If I'd been a contestant then I'd be too rich to talk to you now. But seriously, it would have to be a modern Mixed Martial Arts event. And you have to have the modern rules. Inoki got on his back a lot, its good as defense since Ali didn't know what to do. Inoki was one of the best wrestlers; I think he fought a bad match. Karl Gotch was in Inoki's corner and could've broken Ali.

In modern MMA one has to know Boxing, Wrestling, Judo, all different forms of Karate. I like Muay Thai. I was in the first televised Mixed Martial Arts event in 1963. I fought [Milo Savage](#). There are photographs of the fight in my book, *The Godfather of Grappling* available with my other books at [GeneLeBell.com](#). There's an unauthorized book floating around out there by another name, people have come and asked me to sign it for them before, and I tell them the complete story is in color.

UA: Why isn't Judo as big as a sport as it is say in France or of course Japan?

GL: I believe Judo in the U.S doesn't have enough quality coaches, I mean those that would be on par with the likes of Hayward Nishioka, the Chair for the Teacher's Institute of the USJF.

I think that he has to be one of the most knowledgeable people in the sport. I seldom go to Judo tournaments, because of the politics involved, but I go to some. They need teacher from Japan on Tachi Waza. Then some for Ne Waza, Osaekomi. The United States needs the best of the best, from Japan, France, and Holland.

Ronda Rousey just won the Olympic bronze medal and her mother also was the world champion in Judo. I thought (Ronda) was the best. She lost at overtime against the gold winner. But it could have gone either way. Jim Bregman, I can respect if he coached, but it's a full time job. A lot of people don't have the time. If the US Judo team could pick up a great coach like Jimmy Pedro, former world champion out of Wakefield, MA, or even the '96 Atlanta coach Mike Swain come on full time it still be a boon to the sport in this country.

UA: How did your pink gi get pink?

GL: In a Japanese tournament, in 1955 the local women used to wash gis by hand. Mine happen to come back pink that night. The next day the Mamichi newspaper says, "[radish] wins!" So when they said pink, I thought they meant my hair, but they didn't. They teased me. I said the heck with it. I wear it when I teach now. It's a running joke. I don't take it seriously.

UA: The Japanese crowd was livid when they saw you compete with the pink gi, how did that make you feel at the time?

GL: I didn't mind. The Japanese were so nice to me. They treated me better there, than anyplace else. I some pro wrestling while I was in Japan. Last time I was there was with my son, (at the time he was) 12 years old, we visited the Honda raceway, and Suzuki fun centers of and we rode [motor] bikes.

UA: At 165 pounds, you fought in the heavyweight division, did you have something to prove?

GL: No, my coach told me that I did well with heavyweights. He thought the heavyweights weren't very good; they weren't as fast as the 180 pounders. In the 1954 and 1955 championships I was lighter, and we fought through the round robin, to the overall championship in all weight classes.

UA: Do you ever wish you would have had the chance to go to the Olympics?

GL: Yeah, when I specialized in Judo, Judo wasn't an Olympic sport yet and, in my time, pros couldn't participate in Olympic wrestling. In 1980, I worked out with Russians; during the cold war, our governments didn't like each other politically. You wouldn't know it if you had seen us. We gave each other hugs, handshakes, and advice. I'd say if there's a war, let's have the two leaders of the countries fight it our alone.

UA: What is your all-time favorite wrestling move?

GL: Anyone that works!

UA: How do you feel about the direction professional wrestling has taken?

GL: Well, one of my teachers, Lou Thesz, went against these WWE guys, he would have called them clowns and beat them up. It's a show business. To get money, Vince McMahon has done a great job of taking wrestlers and making them into actors. Karl Gotch wouldn't wrestle a clown. I like legitimate wrestling, but I make my money on stunt work. I did well as an amateur, but all the trophies don't make one house payment. I've worked over 1,000 shows as a stuntman. I wrestled in Japan; there is no clowning around there.

UA: Who right now in MMA has the ability to be a major star and why?

GL: The best now is this kid from Russia. He was in P.R.I.D.E. (which was bought by the UFC); the most versatile guy; Fedor Emelinko, he does Boxing, Sambo, Judo, etc. I can spot a great athlete if he's been around for a few good years. There are a lot of good guys. And MMA really has become popular. Arnold Schwarzenegger supported making Mixed Martial Arts legal in California and now it's legal in most other states. I give credit to Arnold. Mixed Martial Arts in the USA outdraws professional Boxing and Wrestling hands down. All sanctioned by state Athletic Commissions.

UA: You worked with [Bruce Lee in the Green Hornet](#) series. From then on, the two of you shared a friendship. What did you learn from Mr. Lee? What did Mr. Lee learn from you?

GL: I learned a lot from him like the fancy spinning kicks and using your arms, mostly for the movies and I taught him judo and wrestling. He called me and said, "I'm filming Enter the Dragon, you should come." They offered me \$200 a week over there but I told him that I was making \$1,000 a week here. Bruce got me into three or four shows because I was a tumbler. What a great guy. Brandon Lee was a very good martial artist. I was one of the bad guys in one of his movies. I told him to kick me and throw me around, he said, "the script needs you to be shot." Nice kid. Shame they both died so young, they were great athletes. They could've done so much for martial arts and movies. Bruce said wrestling never will go anywhere. Wish he was still alive to see it.

UA: What is your favorite cuss word?

GL: Cuss word... uh, I try not to say anything bad. Because when people respect you, you're their idol. Everyone says a little something bad when they have their toes stepped on, but anytime I cuss I have to give a quarter to my grandson, Jimmy James LeBell.

In our school if someone gets out of line, Gokor and I give "attitude adjustments" to anyone who needs it. Other schools I know of don't have such sadistic instructors, but I recommend Benny Urquidez, John McCarthy, Machado, and Bas Rutten if you want to play by the rules.

UA: McCain or Obama and why?

GL: I think they both would do a great job. I think they have different values. You never know. Muhammad Ali vs. Joe Luis? Karl Gotch vs. Lou Thesz? Who knows? I'd pay to see 'em though.

I hope whoever gets in does a good job. It's time for a change. Politics is a strange breed. I hate that one puts the other down. (Hilary) Clinton said Obama wasn't qualified, now McCain says that. I think he [McCain] gets a lot of sympathy because he's a [war] hero. Buy it's not about what he did then, it's about what he can do for us now.

UA: Who is better looking you or [Gary Goltz](#)?

GL: Why don't you mention someone else? That's no contest. Why don't you put in Frankenstein? But as ugly as he is, and I would never tell him this, I have lots of respect for his many abilities. He just needs some plastic surgery done to his face. I love that man!

-Cesar Lazcano

From: Gary Goltz
To: Gene LeBell
Sent: Tue, Oct 4, 2011 9:51 pm
Subject: Breaking News: Fuji's New Pink Gi!

You need to tell these guys the pink gi was your invention!

Gary

FUJI'S PINK ALL-ROUND GI



Fuji and Ronda Rousey is celebrating National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

The Fuji All-Around Pink BJJ Gi was designed by women for women, and features shorter arms, tapered sleeves, tapered pants, and thinner waistline for a truly comfortable fit. This unique gi comes embroidered with the Breast Cancer Ribbon in white on both the jacket and the pants which will show you are supporting Breast Cancer research. A percentage of every sales of the Fuji Pink Gi will support breast cancer research including the Susan G. Komen Foundation.

From: Gene LeBell
Sent: Wednesday, October 05, 2011 6:11 PM
To: Gary Goltz
Subject: Re: Breaking News: Fuji's New Pink Gi!

My license plate says. PINK GL... Besides imitation is the greatest form of flattery.

Gene

From: Gary Goltz

Sent: Thursday, June 28, 2012 5:11 AM

To: Gene LeBell

Subject: Found rare ultrasound image of you in the womb with your twin brother & more!



Love this shot of you on the old Superman TV series from the 50's



Have you seen these videos of me doing your move on [Robert Young](#) as well as [on you](#)?



All the best,

Gary