



David Zwanetz

With a loud “CRACK!” the surly Howard County police officer brought his heel down hard in the middle of the skateboard, snapping it cleanly into two useless pieces. The 14-year-old skater punk, David Zwanetz, watched in disbelief as the board that took months of re-gripping golf clubs to earn enough to buy, was reduced to splinters.

David wasn’t a bad kid, it’s just that the skateboarding opportunities near the Columbia, Maryland Lakefront were irresistible to a 14-year-old. The cop on duty didn’t seem to care as he kicked the remains of David’s hard-earned

skateboard into the bushes with a smirk, and sent him home.

His grandparents had immigrated to the United States from Italy and Russia in the early 1920’s, eventually settling in Philadelphia. After moving to Howard County, David grew up in a blue-collar household and was the first person in his immediate family to attain an education beyond college. He learned to prioritize education, hard work, and sacrifice to obtain one’s goals.

Once, when David was barely 9 years old, his grandfather pulled him aside, looked him straight in the eye and said, “We came from Russia to give you a chance. Your father moved to Maryland to advance our family and to give you an opportunity. If you do not take advantage of that it will be a disgrace to our family.” That chance conversation left an indelible mark in his mind.

Immediately after the skateboarding incident, David went to his father and explained what happened. His father said flatly, “No one is going to listen to you. You’re a punk kid skateboarding where you’re not supposed to, and this cop broke your skateboard. There’s nothing you can do about it.”

The next sentence out of his father’s mouth lodged in David’s mind like a splinter: “The only way for you to fix this problem is for you to become educated and become an attorney and make sure this doesn’t happen to other people. That’s it. That’s all you can do.”

Little did he know, this statement would determine the course of David’s life and career from that point forward.

Although he battled dyslexia on a daily basis, David excelled in English, Fine Arts, and sports during his high school years. He spent much of his time drawing, painting, and traveling the east coast playing hockey for the Howard County Huskies and the Chesapeake Chiefs. In the off seasons, David trained and played hockey at Notre Dame University in Indiana.

After graduating high school, David focused on British Literature at Salisbury University, and remained on the Dean's list from 1998 to 2001. David studied Fine Arts and Italian Literature for a semester at the University of Florence, in Florence, Italy in 1998. He was inducted into the National Literary Honors Society in the year 2000. While in Italy, David studied and excelled in Tae Kwon Do, fell in love with combat sports, and soon returned to the United States to train and compete in both Taekwondo and American Boxing.

David began his legal studies at Widener University School of Law in 2002. During law school, David realized that Widener's Italian American Legal Society was lacking. He contacted the Order Sons of Italy in America (a 650,000 member worldwide Italian American organization), and was granted permission to start his own OSIA branch at Widener.

David created the first ever law school based branch of OSIA and was duly recognized by several national publications. During his last semester, David was admitted early to the Delaware Bar, to participate in the Delaware Volunteer Legal Services where he focused on assisting victims of domestic abuse.

Upon completion of law school, David returned to Howard County to prepare for and take the Bar exam. While awaiting his results, he tended bar and managed at Historic Ellicott City's Cacao Lane. Ten days before David is sworn in as an attorney, tragedy struck and he lost his longtime girlfriend to a tragic car accident not 5 minutes from their home.

Despite a learning disability, a less-than-perfect upbringing, and suffering personal tragedy, David was admitted to the Maryland Bar on December 15, 2005, and immediately hired by Jason Shapiro and Paul Mack, which had been his goal since his off-chance meeting with Jason Shapiro in 1999.

David quickly progressed in his time with Shapiro & Mack trying a multitude of criminal cases throughout Maryland. In fact, David has the rarified distinction with Jason Shapiro, of together trying and getting dismissed all charges against a client accused of First and Second Degree Murder, and Manslaughter. This case, tried jointly by Mr. Shapiro and David, is the only murder case dismissed in its entirety by the Office of the State's Attorney in this century.

Possessing a fighter's spirit from early childhood and honed from years of combat sports, David began training daily at Crazy 88 Brazilian Jiu Jitsu in 2007, under the tutelage of Julius Park, and started competing immediately. A few short years later, he placed 2nd in the World Championships of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu as a Blue Belt. David, now a Brown Belt, still trains daily, teaches, and competes.

Today, David is an active participant in the Howard County Bar Association, the Maryland Criminal Defense Attorney's Association, and the National Criminal Defense Attorney's Association and sits on the board of Howard County non-profit organization HC Drug Free. In 2008, he was formally recognized by the National College for DUI Defense for his efforts in the defense of citizens accused of driving under the influence. In 2013 he was named a "Superior DUI Attorney" by the National Advocacy Center for DUI Defense.

David has found a way to let his eccentricities work for him in a positive way as he fights zealously in court and out of court to protect Shapiro & Mack's clients and most

importantly, the Constitutional rights afforded to all US citizens. He runs a thriving YouTube channel with a mission to inform the public about little-known Constitutional Protections. David prides himself on his work ethic and dedication to his clients in a personal capacity. He truly believes that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

He and his wife Cathy were married in September 2007, October of 2013 their son Xander was born and in November 2015 their daughter Zoë came into the world. On May 6, 2014, on David’s 35th birthday, he became a Partner at Shapiro & Mack.

David has this to say about how the events of his life have influenced his career:

“For me, the greatest thing that could ever happened to me is some crooked cop violated my rights as a 14-year-old because it propelled my entire career. He underestimated me and I am thankful for that. Without that who knows what would’ve happened or where I would be today. That single event planted a seed of determination in me that drove me to work hard to defend my clients. I think that is very funny.”

“If I were to justify where I am right now in my career, a lot of it has to do with my martial arts training at Crazy 88 Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. I view being a BJJ practitioner and a zealous lawyer as one in the same. I attribute much of my success to Master Julius Park, who I consider a best friend. We believe that our purpose is to improve our surroundings with the improvement of ourselves.”

From Seiko to Rolex: Lessons Learned from White to Brown.

By: David Zwanetz

I have been asked a lot of interesting great questions since I have been promoted to Brown Belt.

One good one is: How difficult has it been?

Difficulty is subjective so this is a fairly difficult one to answer. I often measure the struggle of a thing by comparing it to my experience in Law School. Not necessarily because Law School course load is exceedingly difficult, but because the time-honored arrangement of the system of obtaining a Law Degree is outright grueling. It was probably grueling when it started and those that go through it ensure that it stays so to keep the culture alive.

Well, here it is: I went off to Law School in 2002 and graduated with a J.D. in 2005. This was a noteworthy achievement in my life. I began my Jiu Jitsu journey in 2007 and, in the same time window as my entire law school career, I graduated with a BLUE BELT. Thus, on my scale, moving through the Crazy 88 Belts is difficult – very difficult. But this is precisely the reason why I love Crazy 88 and why I am so very honored to be considered a Crazy 88 Brown Belt.

Another great question I have been asked is: What were the lessons you took from each Belt?

It is simply impossible for me to recount all that I have learned from White to Brown, but I can surely share some stories from my journey that help illustrate some of the valuable BJJ and life lessons I obtained along the way.

THE BEGINNING - A GLEAMING WHITE BELT

In early 2007, my college roommate and close friend, Chris, also a student at Crazy 88, called me and told me that he started Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. Having a friendly rivalry with him in almost all things, the notion that he could be learning to beat me up faster peaked my interest. Coincidentally, around that same time, I met another guy (Brian) at the gym who had previously done BJJ and insisted that he was quite good.

Within weeks I set up an informal training/sparring session in a racquetball court inside of Lifetime Fitness gym. I invited Chris and one other guy that I met. We actually sweet-talked a gym employee into allowing us to use Lifetime's kids' space

gymnastics mats to spread on the hardwood floor of the racquetball court. Both Chris and the other guy outweighed me substantially, but I was honestly still convinced that I would be able to fend them off. Brian wore a Gi and Chris and I were in gym attire. Upon reflection, this is a very insane thing to do. The racquetball courts have a glass wall so obviously people were staring as we set up to fight. I got a few lessons in the mechanics of a guillotine, a double leg takedown, and a head and arm choke and we clapped hands. Of course, I was taken down, controlled, and choked repeatedly by both of them. This actually happened.

The feeling of being handled so easily stuck with me. I decided soon after that I had to find a place to train and that is what led me to Google, which led me to Crazy 88's website, which led me to a one-on-one phone call with a man who changed my life forever – [Julius Park](#).



This guy hurt Dave Z and made him enroll at Crazy 88. It's Complicated.

I hope you find this story as enjoyable as I do reminiscing, but I wrote about it for more than just laughs. I think my very beginning encompasses a lot of what it means to be a White Belt. I was very curious and excited about Jiu Jitsu from the beginning, like buying camouflage Gi's and ankle braces. That is one of the most memorable things about being a White Belt to me. I was just so excited. I was also very crazy and out of control. Next to being excited, when I think of the way that I grappled when I first started, I can only shake my head.

That being said, as illustrated by finding a way to grapple on gym mats in a racquetball room, I was also willing to make some sacrifices to figure out what it was all about. Being a White Belt to me was learning that I really could devote as much time as I needed to my passions. Lastly, my story shows that I was (am) willing to take a beating and get up and brush myself off. This is a HUGE part of White Belt. You have to learn that to learn you must get beat up and learn to like it. Experiencing these lessons and qualities and how to identify them in myself, in and out of BJJ, was to me what was so great about being a Crazy 88 White Belt.

I MUST PUT MY EGO ASIDE AND TRAIN!

I was a White Belt for about two and a half years. When I first started training, I had planned to balance [BJJ training](#) and weight-lifting by splitting my days between the two. Within the first few months, however, I stopped lifting at a traditional gym and dedicated five to six days per week to Crazy 88. I was also a fairly new attorney and husband, so this time surely had to be fought for.

I recall that within my first month of training, I decided (or was told to) to compete. In those days there was a fair amount of local non-IBJJF tournaments to choose from. I vividly remember my first match ever. I was sick with fear the night before and was physically trembling from the moment I stepped into the venue, a high school gym, all the way up until my match began. I clapped hands with my



David Zwanetz in his younger years. If he can do it, you can too!

opponent, sat guard, and spastically pulled him into my legs to lock up my favorite move – a triangle choke. I squeezed and squeezed and just like that, I won!

I continued to compete as a new White Belt after having an early win. This was not at all unusual though. A large majority of the Academy competed at that time. When we went to a tournament, we basically all went. I actually did fairly well at White Belt in competition, but I recall viewing the upper Belts (Blue Belts and only two Purples) as superheroes and having zero idea that I could ever be an upper Belt myself. However, I can actually pinpoint the moment that I realized that I could progress to the next level and beyond. It was a scenario that gave me the tools I needed to progress and I am sure it was no accident. It was at a tournament called the Diamond State Games and I believe it was in Virginia.

I rode to the tournament with Julius and Malcolm Vaughn, both of whom knew that I was very sensitive, in other words terrified, about the notion of fighting up, i.e., fighting people above my weight; which, at that time and even now, is the lowest weight class conceivable. Upon arriving at the tournament, we were informed that there was no one in my weight class or the one above. I assumed that I would be watching my friends battle and, deep inside, I was relieved that my stress levels would be returned to normalcy. That is when Julius and Malcolm informed me that I would be fighting up two weight classes. I was terrified and wanted to object, but as I admired Julius and Malcolm and was receiving a directive from a superior, I simply did as I was told.



One of the key elements of being a White Belt is to have a full complement of Spandex outfits.

I did what every nervous grappler does and started relentlessly asking questions about my game plan, the rules, the time limits, the best way to tie my Belt, the length of my Gi sleeves, if it was a good idea to drink water, and if certain moves were legal. I am sure they found this either extremely funny or extremely annoying. I remember seeing my opponent in the warm up area. He had red hair, tattoos, and a big red beard. I convinced myself that red hair and tattoos meant that he was going to kill me. Despite my fears, I simply pressed on. Match one of three in the big guy division - I won via triangle choke. Match two of three in the big guy division – I won via triangle choke. Match three of three – I synched up arm lock on my opponent but he tossed me off like a rag doll and passed my guard – I lost by points. I almost pissed my pants over the weight issue and I lost in the finals by points. I thought, What?

I vividly remember something changing in my mind that day. Besides being generally proud, I realized that I would not die fighting almost anyone in a BJJ match. More importantly, I realized that I was severely limiting myself by trying to partake in matches that I had the best chance of winning. I am sure this is a natural thing to do, but, upon reflection, I know that doing what is easy is never the way to get better and to progress. My ego was blocking my progress as egos often do. I decided at that moment that I would just listen to my coaches and put myself in more difficult scenarios, like fighting up or choosing matches that I would probably lose rather than visa-versa. This was a turning point for me and an extremely valuable BJJ and life lesson. I know it was the Diamond State Games, Julius and Malcolm, and the redheaded Andre the Giant that allowed me to make the mental leap required for me earn my Blue Belt and, thus, my Brown Belt. Interestingly, I believe these players and lessons are also responsible for me progressing in my career, as I was limiting myself as an attorney in very similar ways until Diamond State.

HOLY CRAP, I CAN DO THIS!

I was extremely blessed to have come up alongside some amazing teammates. Aside from Julius and Malcolm, I got to train daily with a group that is now, for the most part, all World medalists. That is quite a remarkable accolade and, while it is common at Crazy 88 to be around World medalists, it is exceedingly rare in most academies across the world.

I like to think of the group I came up with as “my generation” and, aside from being my training partners and instructors, most of my generation have become my closest friends and confidants and, to this day are basically family to me, Cathy and Xander. With this generational backing, and the compounded lessons I learned from 2007 to mid 2010, I became a fairly competent Blue Belt. However, I was, in my opinion, still mentally missing the elements that make up a Purple Belt. I did win Silver at the World Championships in 2010, which is probably the moment

that most people realized I could possibly be a Purple Belt, but for me it was two different and very distinct scenarios that gave me the internal lessons to progress.

The first one involves a guy that I admire very much. His name is Kwami Mensah. He is a total bad-ass and someone that I always did and always will look up to. As most of the guys in my generation do, we had a friendly rivalry in class. We often did matches of the day and general sparring, and I always tried to kill him. I usually failed. I had developed into a mainly bottom game guard player and if I somehow got on top, I would be unable to pass his guard despite Julius giving me instructions on what to do.

During one particularly grueling match with Kwami, I found myself on top of him in a sorry excuse for an over/under position. Julius was yelling at me to keep my head in the pocket and to keep my right arm (as I pass to the right) stiff and buried in between my legs. I was in a bad spot with my head wrong and my arm wrong and, instead of following instructions, I tried to do my own thing and shuck past Kwami. Let it be known that no one is shucking past Kwami Mensah. I believe I got reversed, my back taken, and choked right there in front of Julius. This happened because I did not listen – because I chose brawn over brains. This stupid, intentional error had an effect on my Jiu Jitsu that I sincerely track back to one of the reasons that I am a Brown Belt now. Right after this happened, Julius angrily announced that for the next six months I would be only allowed to do over/under passing and, whenever possible, which was probably every damn day, I had to start on top of Kwami freakin-Mensah!

In those days, when we were dished out a long-term punishment, we did it – no questions asked. Through swollen neck discs, bleeding ears, and scraped eyes, I worked on over/under passing daily for six months with a guy that I am still not sure I could over/under pass. I started to understand the position on a micro level. I could feel the difference between my head being in the correct place versus being one centimeter up or down. This was a breakthrough exercise and lesson for me. I was able to expand my Jiu Jitsu to the point that I did not have a preference between top and bottom and I also realized that, with constant dedicated un-fun practice, any position was able to be understood and built upon. More than placing 2nd at the World's, I think Julius pairing me with Kwami and making me work through a grimy position for half a year, gave me the



tools to be well-rounded enough to move on.

Remembering the injuries inflicted upon my face grappling with Kwami reminds me of another very funny Blue Belt story that is worth sharing, as it also taught me a lesson about perseverance. Sometime in 2009 we were having a typical weeknight evening grinder practice that involved a split between drilling and intense sparring. As I love to spar, I was often paired with brand new student, especially larger stronger ones, as a way to illustrate that size and craziness can be neutralized by technique. On this night, there was a student trying the Academy and he was an older gentleman, large, and extremely muscular. There were numerous red flags related to this gentleman that should have prevented him from sparring with anyone. First off, he cut the sleeves off his black Gi at the shoulder. This is a major red flag. Literally, he was wearing the Gi from the Kobra Kai School in Karate Kid I. If that was not enough, to know that there was going to be some crazy &\$%\$ about to go down, his name was "Butch" and he probably was well over 200 lbs. So, of course, I was paired with this man for a sparring match - his chance to show what he was made of and my chance to stop it. Many of the evening sparring matches start on the ground with both opponents down. However, it is not uncommon for one person to start standing up and the other to be seated. For some reason, this is how we started. I was the guy seated and planning to wrap him up and triangle him. However, as soon as the word "GO" was announced, he leapt in the air and kneed me directly in the eye socket. Even writing this is causing me to get queasy in remembrance of the pain I felt. Anyone reading this that was there will probably laugh out loud remembering my reaction. I screamed and was literally rolling around on the mat like I was in a frying pan. Julius is notorious for being calm and stoic when something like this happens and he was so on this night. I am sure it was hilarious watching me squirm all around though. Eventually, I ran off the mats and went into the school's front office to deal with this pain. The front of my Gi had a downward blood splatter of blood and bits of bone that had shot out of my nose. Sorry for that graphic image, but this really happened. I contained myself, expecting to look in the mirror and find a broken nose. To my surprise my nose was fine. I could not figure out why I was bleeding from my nose and what on earth the bones were from. I eventually went back to the guys and had them look at it. The overall consensus was that it was a mystery and that I looked fine, and that I should just continue the class. So I did. Cathy was away on some sort of work trip or something so I was all alone when I got home. I had crusted blood all over the inside of my nose so I decided to use this device that my mother bought me called a Neti Pot to clear it out. This Neti Pot looks like a genie lamp and you pour water into your nose and it is supposed to clear your sinuses. Anyway, I did that and then to clear the water I blew my nose. That is when things got very real - my eye blew up with air like a balloon. Seriously, my entire eye filled up to the size of a baseball with one blow into a tissue. I fell back onto the floor and had no idea what was going on, so I did the only thing that I could think of in light of Cathy being away - I called Keith Cebula. We talked briefly about the possibilities of deflating my eye or why, how, and what was going

on. Keith basically said “this is not good man – go to the damn hospital.” I did so. Turns out I had a broken eye socket, shattered sinus cavity (this is what shot out of my nose,) and a fractured upper nose bridge. Julius, Keith and my father all came to Howard County General Hospital in the middle of the night to hang with me. Looking back on this, I always laugh as the entire story is so outrageous, but, in the end, I learned a lot. I learned that I could push through inevitable injuries that come with grappling and I also learned that, despite the hard way in which we all treat each other in class, my teammates are really my true friends that will and have come to my aid anytime I am in need. This was surely a motivating factor in my progression, as I wanted to impress and make proud these people that had become my true friends and teammates. As an aside to all of this, apparently the worst thing in the world to do after any eye injury is to blow your nose. You have been warned – it’s true!

Back to the second of my two most important Blue Belt experiences/lessons. The biggest thing that I recall from being a Blue Belt is learning and playing around with a position that I still use daily - the overhook from butterfly guard. I had early success in Jiu Jitsu with the triangle choke. Thus, I became hyper-focused on getting to that position.

I relentlessly worked on it and studied all other positions where a triangle would be possible. This is how I landed on butterfly guard. I liked that my small legs would be free to shoot up whenever the opportunity arose. I found that people fought to get an underhook on my left side (their dominate right) and thus I started to wrap my left arm over their underhook instead of fighting to prevent it. For some reason, I feel calm and confident when I am in this position. It is like a safe zone for me. I have been playing from and with the overhook butterfly guard since 2008 and having this position allowed me to work on a system of moves from it, gave me a mission during matches, and gave me something specific to focus on in training. This position taught me early on how to reverse engineer a move. In other words, I must not only focus on a move, but all of the ways to get into said move. As without the understanding of what leads to a move, the move is simply something you know but cannot use in reality. This is a valuable piece of knowledge that I have used in my journey.

However, the bigger picture is that when it came time for me to fight in 2010 at the Worlds, where I found myself totally overwhelmed, scared, and nervous walking into such a big arena and event, I relied upon the safety of my overhook to get me through. I vividly recall saying to myself, in my head and probably even out loud, all I have to do is get to my overhook and I will win. I had four matches at the Worlds in 2010. My first two, one of them is still available via a Google search, I immediately got to my overhook butterfly/closed guard and finished fast triangles. As soon as I got to my overhook the venue became smaller, the noise stopped, my fear went away, and I felt just fine and in control. This is remarkable and worth really thinking about.

My third match was a total grinder against a very tough guy from Alliance. Due to having two wins under my belt in the biggest tournament in the world, I had the confidence to fight a match where my overhook would not be the end of it. I won my third match by one advantage and, with that, I knew in my head that I could be a Black Belt someday. I did lose in the finals of the Worlds, but I often think back on that match and I know exactly what I did wrong. I am not a World Champion, but those matches, the overhook butterfly, my broken face from Butch, my friends and teammates, my fights in a racquetball court, and the compounded lessons I learned from 2007 to that final match in 2010 surely flipped a switch in my mind and I knew/know that I could/can absolutely be a Julius Park/Crazy 88 Black Belt.



David Zwanetz – 2010 World
Championship – Silver
Medal

INVISIBLE JIU JITSU / MENTAL REPS / AND PASSING THE TORCH

I was promoted to Purple Belt in June of 2010 after the above-mentioned fairly successful showing at the 2010 Worlds. It was surely not just me that did well – the entire team did fantastic. Somewhere online there is a highlight video set to DJ Khalid's "All I Do Is Win" track showing some of the main highlights from the trip. It is quite cool and when I think back, that song rings in my mind. The 2010 Worlds



expertise is one of my most fond life memories overall. It is really up there in my mind, and not because I did OK but because it was so exciting to experience the World's for the first time with all of my closest friends/teammates and, of course, Cathy who has an incredible BJJ story of her own.

Now on to the Purple Belt, which was an entirely different animal than Blue. Purple Belt is where every other person of the same Belt is really good. There is no easy match with a Purple Belt opponent. Purple Belt is where people know most positions, have a personalized style and plan for most any scenario, and probably also the state in which BJJ is so engrained in one's life, it is as essential as eating food or spending time with family. It surely was all those things for me. Jiu Jitsu became (and surely still is) a necessary element for me to achieve happiness and normalcy in my life, for me to de-stress and recalibrate.

Purple Belt also came with a lot of natural speed bumps like age, an uptick in work responsibilities, and the most rewarding speed bump of all – the birth of my son, Xander. All of these things made me slow down and really relish the time I had to train. They made me enjoy teaching more because teaching makes me think about moves and Jiu Jitsu theory. I started to watch more film (15 minutes per day as prescribed by Julius), which really helped me understand the idea behind doing mental reps/mental Jiu Jitsu.

Having my son helped me understand just how important and outstanding my teammates are. I brought Xander to the Academy directly from the hospital, even before he saw his bedroom that we spent months putting together for him. He has been at the school almost every day since he was twenty-four hours old. I want him to spend his time with each of the people that so very much enhanced my life. The 88 family are his Aunts and Uncles and I am so proud every time I see someone holding him and playing with him at the Academy. I was a Purple Belt for five years. I loved every moment of being a Purple Belt. I competed at the World level, I trained, I learned tons about myself and Jiu Jitsu, and I got to do it all with my wife and my brother-in-law, who are both incredible grapplers.



This picture is proof that at Purple Belt, life becomes more difficult. The pools aren't as heated... the sheets of a lower thread count...

I cannot really say that as a Purple Belt there was any one moment that I felt that I was deserving of or ready for a Brown Belt. To be honest, this position is so new to me, and I am so surprised and honored to receive it, that I can hardly articulate what it means. I have similar feelings about most of my major achievements. The Brown Belts that I grappled with when I was a Purple Belt are still deeper into Brown Belt than I, and thus I still have a ton of work ahead of me to understand and know what they know. The color of a Belt surely does not illustrate at which phase of the Belt a person is in.

However, for purposes of this write-up, I do recall an interesting thing happening to me within the last six months that I can hardly explain myself. As of late, I started to notice that if I would fall or jump during scrambles (which by nature are a chaotic time in a grappling match), I would land and be in a fairly legitimate position - sometimes in a full-blown submission (triangle, guillotine, or oma plata). I cannot explain it really but each time it happens I take note of it. I think that what is happening is that after eight years of grappling, something in my subconscious mind or reflex system is able to catch on to a position before my conscious mind tells me what to do. Once it does, I am already there.

The first few times it happened I chalked it up to luck, but as it has happened numerous times now, while I cannot explain it, I do not think it is luck at all. I would imagine that if you unexpectedly threw a football at a seasoned wide receiver, he would, without thinking, catch the ball. If you threw a football at me unexpectedly, I would probably duck. I think this is a really cool thing to look forward to for any grappler, after putting the required time on the mat. One's body, probably somewhere in Purple Belt land, will learn how to sense grappling and anticipate positions before one's mind does. I doubt that it was a coincidence that this started to happen to me in the last half year before I was promoted to Brown Belt. When I grapple with Julius or Malcolm or any of the high-level upper Belts, they always seem to know what I am going to do before I do it. This is what I am talking about here and I am proud that I have a little of that in me after all the time put in.



Dave Z is thinking, "I won't have to do house work for a week!"

All I CAN SAY IS "THANK YOU!"

The beautiful thing about Jiu Jitsu is that it is about the journey and not the destination, as there is no end. Black Belt may be the tangible goal for all grapplers, but I assume that there are levels to Black Belt that mere mortals like me will have to wait decades to understand. Of course, I feel great satisfaction in obtaining a thing that I know very few people obtain. I have been enjoying messing with Cathy by holding up random purple objects, like my ties and old rash guards, and asking if they are hers. I have declared that Brown Belts do not change diapers, which I can tell you is not at all true. I have been a Brown Belt for exactly one week and in that time one thing did happen that I was very humbled and honored by.

A Blue Belt student that I look up to very much as a man, father, and all-around gem of a human being, pulled me aside and told me that he was personally very excited about my promotion. He said, I was one of the first people that helped him understand Jiu Jitsu. This was extremely touching and surely struck a chord. I don't know if he was blowing smoke, but he said that there was a group of Facebook messages going around with students expressing their excitement over my achievement. The notion that I may have had the effect on certain people the way that all the upper Belts have had an effect on me sincerely brought tears to my eyes. Even writing about this is a bit difficult. For those that were there during my promotion, it may or may not have been evident that I was doing everything possible to prevent myself from bursting into tears. What I was thinking about was all the people that helped me along the way, and that those people thought enough of me to give me such a great honor.

The idea that I may have already or will in the future have the opportunity to improve others' lives through the lessons of Jiu Jitsu is probably my favorite thing about all of this.

I like to think of myself as a Brown Belt in my law career as well as in BJJ. In my work endeavors, I am often asked to write biographies or talk about my successes and many



After almost 5 years at Purple Belt, David Zwanetz was promoted to the rank of BJJ Brown Belt.

people have asked me how I got where I am. It is no secret that I attribute much of my success in work and life to the lessons that I have learned from Julius Park and through Crazy 88. I view being a BJJ practitioner and a zealous lawyer as one in the same. I have learned, as you can see above, how to persevere and take small steps forward for long periods of time. For this I am eternally grateful. I don't know where I would be if I never had those fights in the racquetball court and then met Julius Park, who I consider a best friend, but I know that it would be light years behind where I am now with my work, my marriage, and my overall happiness in life. I am totally humbled by this entire experience and I only hope I can remain worthy of the title to Crazy 88 Brown Belt.

