

“PEACEFUL WARRIOR” MANN WINS THIRD PARA JIU-JITSU CROWN IN ABU DHABI

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Ronald Mann, who lost the bottom half of his left leg in a motorcycle accident 23 years ago, took just 23 seconds on April 16, 2017, to earn the swiftest submission victory and a gold medal for his crown at the inaugural World Para Jiu-Jitsu Festival in Abu Dhabi.

“The Peaceful Warrior” returned to Abu Dhabi on April 21, this time winning a pair of gold medals.

Mann not only defended his para jiu-jitsu title with a five-minute-long decision over 181-pound Japanese amputee Wataru Horie, but the 46-year-old won by arm-bar submission in 3 ½ minutes over open division rival Stacy Duchscherer of Canada, who outweighed him by 59 pounds.

Like Mann, Horie and Duchscherer are amputees below their left knees.

“They were both purple belts, which is one belt above me. Wataru is 28, almost 20 years younger than me, and Stacy is 52,” said Mann, a native of Lansing, Michigan, now living in Rockville.

“The open division is any weight and with any mobility limitations. It’s a random fight for anybody who signs up to be matched with anybody. Stacy weighed 240 versus my 181 pounds.”

Sponsored by The United Arab Emirates Jiu-Jitsu Federation, it was the second-ever major international event involving athletes with a range of disabilities.

“I didn’t realize the emotions that would come up in me. Being invited last year, to win, and then to come back and repeat as a champion and to win the open class as well is an honor and a gift for me,” said Mann, a member of the USA Para Jiu-Jitsu team who trains out of the Rockville-based Yamasaki Academy belonging to instructor Fernando Yamasaki.

“Stacy was my roommate, and we hung out the entire weekend. His wife passed away a few years ago, and he came up to me crying right after the fight. His daughter had texted him, saying, ‘Mom would be so proud of you.’ We just hugged. That was an amazing, beautiful moment for two fighters who have overcome so much in our lives.”

A former U.S. Army medic who enlisted at age 18 and served in the Army on active duty in South Korea, Mann won an Army-wide Tae Kwon Do championship in his youth. On his 46th birthday on Jan. 6, Mann returned to Lansing, where he won a combined five fights in two separate 170-pound divisions of the FUJI tournament.

On April 7 at The Prince George's Learning and Sports Complex in Hyattsville, Mann earned a silver medal in the International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation's D.C. Open. Mann dropped down two age brackets to win his first-round bout against Jay Zamparo, an opponent with multiple sclerosis, before facing a pair of able-bodied fighters.

In March 2017, Mann won four of five bouts and the gold medal during a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu competition at the Capitol Sportsplex in Glenn Dale, earning three of his four victories by submission.

Mann founded The United States Para Jiu-Jitsu Association, which built the para jiu-jitsu team for the inaugural UAEJJF Grand Slam at The Los Angeles Convention Center last September.

Mann won the gold medal in para jiu-jitsu and split bouts against able-bodied opponents during that event, which "had 25 people from the United States, Brazil, Costa Rica and Venezuela," was "a huge step forward to have a separate division" and served as a qualifier for Abu Dhabi.

In Los Angeles, Mann won the gold medal in para jiu-jitsu and split bouts against able-bodied opponents. Mann had organized the para jiu-jitsu portion of that competition with the UAEJJF.

Competing at 85 kilograms (approximately 188 pounds), Mann submitted Chad Vandergoot of St. Paul, Minnesota, in 75 seconds with a "mounted cross-collar choke" in para jiu-jitsu and overcame his able-bodied rival, Khalid Aldamaki of the UAE, 6-4, despite suffering a dislocated jaw.

Although Mann was submitted in just over five minutes during his loss, his submission of Vandergoot was the tournament's fastest in an event whose categories included wheelchair-bound and site-impaired athletes.

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