

Learn from the Master



(Master Toddy and Courtney King. Photo Credit: Jenna Bodnar)

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Learn from the Master. Muay Thai gym teaches fighting skills and discipline.

BY TODD MICHAELS

He has appeared in James Bond's "Man with the Golden Gun" and "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery."

He has trained members of the Secret Service and Special Forces, as well as 30 world champions. He's known as the "Father of Muay Thai" in England, but is simply referred to as Master Toddy in Las Vegas, where he has operated Master Toddy's U.S. Muay Thai Center for the last 12 years.

The studio, located on the corner of Arville and Russell roads (433-7000), features close to 500 members and offers a wide range of activities for all ages and abilities — from kids and fitness classes to advanced instruction for fighters and instructors.

"A lot of people come to strictly get in shape, but after a while they want to see what it's like to get in a fight," says Anthony Brown, a Las Vegas Metropolitan police officer who is a former national champion in tae kwon do and a world champion in Muay Thai, thanks to Master Toddy. "When I walked in here, I knew nothing about Muay Thai, but he took me to Thailand where I won a world title against a guy who had over 100 fights.

Brown, who has fought in K-1 events here and also is a dancer in Bally's show "Jubilee!" has trained at Master Toddy's for seven years.

“The center produces a lot of champions. It’s authentic Muay Thai,” he says. “The big thing about Muay Thai is you use eight weapons — two hands, knees, elbows and legs.

“That’s why it’s so effective, because most people don’t learn to fight that way. We train like professional boxers.”

Master Toddy has trained K-1 giant Bob Sapp and former Ultimate Fighting Championship title-holder Tito Ortiz, among others, and he also formed a team of champion instructors for his studio.

"I give 100 percent of my success to Master Toddy, Master Chan and Master Lookchang," says Lisa King, who has trained at the center for nine years and recently finished work on the movie "Ring Girls" which also features Master Toddy and is due out next year. "All of his fighters are very, very successful. He has trained more world champions than any other trainer in the world, and all of his training is authentic. They're all masters from Thailand."

King, whose 14-year-old daughter Courtney also trains at the center, is equally impressed with the family atmosphere at the center.

“In a lot of martial arts, there are a lot of egos involved, but there’s a very real family environment there,” says King, nicknamed the Black Widow when she steps into the ring. “Most people don’t leave when they go to Master Toddy’s.”

In addition to being a good way to get in shape, Muay Thai can teach discipline and more.

"It's not just physical. We have meditation and there's a lot of discipline. You're not allowed to use bad language," Master Toddy says. "Most children parents send to us are hyper with no discipline and no focus. But we straighten them up and teach them how to listen, how to make friends."