



Mike Aina

MMA Fighter

Class of 1998

By Neal Riveira

“All right fans! Here we go with three five-minute rounds scheduled. Introducing to you in the blue corner standing 5’9” weighing 160 1/2 pounds, this tough as nails MMA fighter, joins us with the back ground of kick boxing and jiu jitsu and has compiled a record of 11 wins and six losses and one draw with 6 wins coming by way of knockout, 1 submission, and 4 decisions. Representing the Penn Training and Fitness center and hailing from Hilo,

Hawaii. Please welcome Iron Mike Aina!”

Amidst loud cheers, nervous tension and great excitement, Mike Aina enters the ring, ready to fight at a MMA event. MMA is the acronym for Mixed Martial Arts, which combines the sports of boxing, wrestling, kick boxing, Muay Thai and jujitsu and has become the fastest growing professional sport in the world.

Mike graduated from Waiakea in 1998, where he excelled in football, soccer and baseball. He was a member of the championship BIIF football team for all four of his high school years under Coach Tim Lino. Beginning at age 13, he started boxing under Wally Carvalho, Sr. with the Hawaii International Boxing Club.

After graduating from Waiakea in 1998, Mike started competitive boxing in Las Vegas at the age of 22. He then moved back to Oahu and began training at the Kalakaua Gymnasium. He has at least 30 boxing fights under his belt. While working on Oahu as a scaffold builder, he injured his back, and decided to move back to the Big Island. A year later, he received a call from BJ Penn, asking him to be his sparring partner. BJ saw a lot of potential in Mike. Mike began his professional career as an MMA fighter in 2003 with the Penn Training and Fitness Center.

The training regime of a MMA fighter is amazingly rigorous. Every day, he either goes to the gym or works out at home. He does cardio for two hours in the morning, then strength training in the evening. Three out of five nights, he does kick boxing and spends around five to six hours a day, doing basic training. When not working out at the gym, Mike runs three miles, punches his bag, and does other exercises.

Add a strict diet to the exercise and training. He eats a diet of mainly raw fruits and vegetables, drinks a lot of water, stays away from protein and rarely eats sweets. He does not eat anything fried.

Mike's regular job is as a welder with the Keck Observatory ones on Mauna Kea, where he has worked for the past five years. He is also married to Kuulei and has a new daughter, Mikaila. His family is very supportive of him. Mike is also pursuing an Administrative of Justice degree. His father was a police officer, and he wants to follow in his footsteps.

To aspiring MMA fighters, he recommends that they be consistent in their training and to master one of the many skills involved in the sport. They also need to refine their strikes, ground work, grappling and stand-up boxing skills. For Mike, training is an outlet to blow off excess energy. He works hard to maintain a balance physically, mentally and emotionally.

"MMA fighting is hard work and there is a lot of wear and tear on the body. You just need to just keep pushing, training hard, and working at it", said Mike. "Follow your dreams and you'll find yourself living them".

