



Sports on durhamregion.com



SPORTS



Jason Liebrechts / Metroland

WHITBY -- Janine Mutton won a silver medal in Brazilian jiu-jitsu at a European championship in Portugal.

Jiu-jitsu's mighty Mutton

Newcastle native wins silver medal in Portugal, eyes world championships

Brian McNair
bmcnair@durhamregion.com

OSHAWA — Janine Mutton could barely walk on her two sprained ankles when she boarded a flight for Portugal to compete at the 2016 European jiu-jitsu IBJJF championship, so her expectations of winning had taken a big hit.

To make matters worse, she figured she wouldn't be able to train hard enough on the wonky ankles to lose the weight needed for her usual middleweight class, so entered the light heavyweight division 15 pounds up.

But anyone who may have underestimated the five-foot-two Oshawa resident didn't take into account the size of her heart, which allowed her to come home with a silver medal at the elite competition.

"I went from like, 'I'm going to win this competition when I go' to 'I have

two broken ankles pretty much' so I wasn't sure if I'd even be able to move," recalled Mutton, who injured herself sparring with men. "So coming home with silver, yeah, I'm disappointed I lost the final match, that I didn't get to take home gold, but it's pretty remarkable. This is a huge competition."

Competing as a white belt in Portugal, Mutton needed to alter her strategy because of the bad ankles. Typically strong fighting on her feet, she knew she would need to develop a better ground game to survive at the competition.

She was able to win three bouts before making "a big mistake" in the final and falling short of the ultimate prize.

Mutton is now focusing solely on the world championships being held in California this June, something she set her mind to pretty much as soon as she started into jiu-jitsu last year.

She expects the experience she gained in Portugal will serve her well.

"With jiu-jitsu, I'm not the only one with an injury. There's a lot of people that have to work around stuff, so I kind of looked at it more as an oppor-

tunity to make this work for me and not use it as an excuse as to why I do poorly," she explained.

"It was a good thing for me," she said, of fighting through her injuries. "It made my kind of develop my game some more, rather than just work at what I'm good at."

Jiu-jitsu has done much more for Mutton than win her medals.

Admittedly, she was falling into trouble, including drugs, while growing up in Newcastle, but since high school has become a fitness and nutrition addict.

Now 24, she works at Are You Game conditioning club in Whitby, runs her own online business for training and nutrition, and trains for competition at Action Reaction in Toronto.

She was a high-level soccer goalie growing up and has dabbled in various other sports, including boxing and muay thai, but has found her passion for now in jiu-jitsu.

"This is huge outlet for me. This is awesome. It gives me the opportunity to get rid of a lot of steam and just be at peace with myself," she explained. "It's opened a whole new door to my life. I fell in love with it for sure."



Dr. Douglas Smith
Guest columnist

Choking can haunt the best

I'm often asked about choking from professional athletes; why it happens and what to do about it?

The recent Masters golf tournament saw Ernie Els and Jordan Spieth choke big-time.

Els six-putted from six feet. Unconscious anxiety, fear and nerves can do funny things to the body.

Good golf requires total comfort, relaxation, confidence and focus. When we are afraid of making mistakes we get out of our comfort zone. We try too hard and tense up the grip, arms, head, feet and make a tentative, jerky swing that tends to decelerate.

In particular, unconscious and involuntary wrist tremors prevent the stroke from being smooth and accelerating through the stroke.

When we miss makeable shots, our brain tends to go into shock and now we rush to get the next one completed without thinking or going through our normal routine.

This is the same experience for all sports.

When asked what was going on in his head Ernie said, "I can't explain it. It's unexplainable. I couldn't get the putter back."

It's clear that Ernie was in total shock and felt helpless and powerless to stop, think and act calmly.

Later in the Masters tournament, Spieth, one of the coolest and best golfers on the planet, bogeyed 10 and 11 and then racked up a quadruple bogey on the next hole, a par 3. He lost six shots in three holes.

His first shot on the par 3 landed in the water, the next one in the water from 80 yards and the next in the bunker from the same spot. He could have easily won the Masters a second time in a row if he had just parred the hole.

Spieth seemed invincible until his collapse on the back nine.

The bottom line here is that we are all subject to choking.

So how do we deal with it?

- Slow down, breathe deeply.
- Realize mistakes happen and learn from the experience.
- Be kind to yourself.
- Realize this is a temporary experience that does not have to define your worth.
- Get help and learn how to deal with anxiety, choking and nerves.

Dr. Douglas Smith is a licensed psychologist in Ontario specializing in sport psychology since 1985. Contact him at 905-430-3538 or drdoug@promind.ca; website www.promind.ca