



F2W 95 – A Lifetime Of Competing With Gracie Humaita SD's Michael Trasso

F2W 95 black belt competitor **Michael Trasso** has been around a long time. Growing up on the east coast, he began in martial arts pretty much as soon as he could proverbially walk and has stayed on that path since. Training and competing has taken him all around the world since. Now in San Diego training at Gracie Humaita, Trasso will represent the team when he takes on **Sergio Rios** at [Fight 2 Win 95](#).

We recently caught up with him to get more on his background and preparations prior to the match Read on to learn more about Michael Trasso.

## Fight 2 Win 95 – Michael Trasso (Gracie Humaita)

**Give us your own summary of your life story so far if you don't mind, for the fans.**

I was born and raised in Lyndhurst, NJ and was an extremely shy kid. At a very young age I was fascinated with Bruce Lee and his movies on TV. Coincidentally my pre-K/kindergarten teacher recommended that my parents put me in some type of sport to help break my shyness. My father thought martial arts was a good route due to my Bruce Lee interest and the self-defense aspect. After trying a few martial arts schools, we came across 'Rising Sun' in Lyndhurst, NJ which was a custom mixture of catch wrestling, freestyle jiu-jitsu, sambo, and hapkido. At 5 years old my father enrolled me there and my journey on the mats began.

After about 8 years at Rising Sun we decided to expand my martial arts rolodex and look into learning Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. In 2003 while at a Grappler Quest (GQ) tournament in Las Vegas, **Brain Cimins** (President of GQ) introduced my father and I to **Mike MrKulic**. At the time Mike was a brown belt BJJ student and instructor under **Louis Vintaloro** and a representative of RGDA (**Royler Gracie/David Adiv** partnership). Mike was conveniently located about 20 minutes from my house in NJ and we started training at MBJJ (Mike MrKulic BJJ) around 2004.

During this time, I was already a few years deep into middle school wrestling and decided to continue that through high school at St. Mary's under head coach **Scot Weaver**. I also began weekly private lessons with Purdue All-American, **Jason Silverstein**. Silverstein was a crucial aspect in my development and future success on the wrestling mat. The next four years of high school consisted of me dedicating half the year to wrestling and half the year to BJJ.

In 2008 I was recruited by Rhode Island College head coach Jay Jones and my college wrestling journey began. Being a collegiate athlete was a full-time job so unfortunately my BJJ training took a back seat for the next 5 years.

In 2012 I began a part time wrestling coach position at Hope High School in Providence, RI before I graduated in 2013. After I graduated I decided to go out in the real world and my main

focus was geared towards my career once I landed a job in the IT staffing industry. While working I kept actively training at TBBJJ in Providence, RI under **Tim Burrill** and **Jimmy Connor**.

In 2016 there was an opportunity for me to move out to San Diego, CA and help start up my previous company's west coast practice with two other colleagues. Between a change in scenery and knowing I would be in one of the world's biggest BJJ hubs I decided to make the jump. Once I was in San Diego I began training at Gracie Humaita San Diego under professor **Regis Lebre** and jumped back into the competition scene.

Jan 2, 2018 a few colleagues and I started our own IT staffing company called Ternio Solutions Group which is where I currently work. To this day most of my time consists of ramping up a startup while training, teaching, and competing in BJJ.

For a more detailed bio please feel free to visit my [BJJ Heroes](#) write up.



**How long have you been training and what does it mean to you?**

I have been training Martial Arts for over 20 years-specifically BJJ for 10+ years. BJJ has been a bridge to help me develop some of the strongest friendships I have to this day. BJJ teaches you so many life lessons you cannot learn in a school classroom. Only through hard work and actual mat experience can you learn the diligence, respect, patience, and humbleness the sport brings. I

have been on a mat doing some type of martial art since I've had my first memories, therefore, BJJ & martial arts have somewhat raised me and made me the person I am today.

### **Gracie Humaita San Diego – what's it like training there? Who else has influenced your game?**

Training at Gracie Humaita San Diego is great. The room is full of students/competitors and instructors from all walks of life with many different styles. If you are looking for more of a modern-day game, old school style, judo, wrestling, or top pressure smash pass game, we cover it all.

My BJJ style is very unorthodox hybrid mixture of catch-wrestling, BJJ, and wrestling. I like to embrace chaotic scrambles but also stick to a more traditional style when needed.

Throughout my entire journey I have had many people from drill partner, students, and professors influence me. One of my major BJJ influences were from 2012-2016 while training in Rhode Island. Jimmy Connor was one of the most open, detailed oriented, creative, and intelligent folks I've ever learned from and rolled with. Jimmy was a huge believer in "The mat is your canvas, you paint your picture and create your own journey." In essence- often times in this sport people see techniques and styles so black and white and "right and wrong". While steering students clear of the obvious mistakes and wrong/inefficient reactions and positioning he pushed creativity, unorthodox styles, and out of the box development to your individual BJJ game. As an unorthodox funky scrambler I appreciated this very much.

### **What do you do when you're not focusing on jiu-jitsu?**

When I am not training I am working my 8-5 job at my start up company. Between trying to squeeze in workouts (running, BJJ, lifting) early before work and late after work I have very limited time for other activity. Outside of work and BJJ I have a big passion for music. My favorite is Classic Rock/Psychedelic Rock, but I also love 80's Rock/Pop, New Wave, 90's Rock, Motown, and many other genres within the 1950's-1990's timeframe. I really enjoy exploring "new" older music, reading up about specific artists, bands, songs, lyrics and their meaning, collecting vinyl records, music t-shirts, and just good ol' jamming out.

### **What are some of the greatest obstacles you've had to overcome in your journey?**

Some of my main obstacles I had to overcome in my lengthy journey have been injuries and adapting to the new modern style BJJ games that have come up over time. I started martial arts and Jiu Jitsu in the 90's when you could not find many legit black belts in the United States like we can today. Most practitioners had the basic strong foundation with maybe a few flashy moves and techniques were not readily available via YouTube or the internet. BJJ has grown tremendously in the last 10-15 years with new techniques, positions, and development. If we went back to the 90's and introduced worm guard and all these inverted guards I'm pretty sure our heads would have exploded. Adapting with the change in modern BJJ style was a challenge during my journey to black belt, but a successful transition.

### **What accomplishment are you proudest of so far?**

My proudest accomplishment thus far is a silver medal in the 2018 IBJJF Pan American Championships (Adult Black Belt Medium Weight). I was fortunate to have a good run at Brown Belt and collect some hardware at Worlds & Pans in 2017 but after receiving my black belt in 2018 my BIG test was Pan Ams. Although I did not get the gold, I was happy to see progression in my game and going toe to toe with some of the best out there.

### **What's your biggest motivation right now?**

My biggest motivation in BJJ is to be a World Champion and a very well rounded and excellent instructor/coach. I've grown up my entire life competing, and I love the feeling of chasing after something and working towards a specific goal. From an instructor perspective I enjoy helping others learn the sport and improve their games with the knowledge I have picked up throughout the years. You can give someone a tangible item that may fade or break through time, but something like BJJ and sharing your ideas and techniques is a gift that lasts a lifetime and could be passed down for years to come.



### **Your opponent at F2W 95, Sergio Rios, what do you expect out of him?**

Sergio is a tough competitor and has some great accolades under his belt. I expect a tough battle.

### **How have you prepared for this match? Any predictions?**

No major changes to my routine. Plenty of drilling, live rounds, positional sparring, cardio, etc.

### **What's next for you after this?**

Short term- After F2W95 I will be competing in the IBJJF No-GI World Championships mid December. Long term- In between my startup company I plan on competing as much as I can and hope to become a regular face in the pro/invite only leagues for no-gi matches. In 2017 after sharing the bronze podium with **Mike Perez** at the IBJJF World Championships (Brown Belt) FIVE Grappling tried to put together a no-gi match between us but Mike turned it down. In early 2018 I was contacted about a different super fight opportunity but had to decline due to an injury I was nursing. I hope to have many more of these opportunities in the future.

### **Any last words?**

I just want to thank **Seth Daniels** for this opportunity to compete on one of the biggest stages at F2W95. There were many talented competitors to choose from and I am stoked I got the invite.

Also, a big thanks to everyone at Gracie Humaita for helping me prep for this fight. Special thanks to Professor Regis Lebre, **Tyler Bishop**, and **Jena Bishop** who are always pushing me to new levels, challenging me, filling in my gaps, and there to help me with anything I need to make me a better competitor and instructor. Lastly, thanks to my buddy **Zimitro Perez** for always taking time out of his Sundays to drill with me weekly.