

**Lex Fridman Podcast #439 - Craig Jones: Jiu Jitsu, \$2 Million Prize, CJI, ADCC, Ukraine
& Trolling**

Published - August 14, 2024

Transcribed by - thepodtranscripts.com

Lex Fridman

The following is a conversation with Craig Jones, martial artist, world traveler and one of the funniest people in the sport of submission grappling. While he does make fun of himself a lot, he is legitimately one of the greatest submission grapplers in the world. Underneath the veil of nonstop sexualized Aussie humor and incessant online trolling, he is truly a kindhearted human being who's trying to do good in the world. Sometimes he does so through a bit of controversy and chaos. Like with a new CJI tournament that has over \$2 million in prize money. It's coming up this Friday and Saturday. Yes, the same weekend as the prestigious ADCC tournament. The goal of CGI tournament is to grow the sport. You'll be able to watch it for free online, live on YouTube and other places. All ticket profits go to charity, mainly to cancer research. I encourage you to support the mission of this tournament by buying tickets and going to see the event in person. Craig gave me a special link that gives you a 50% discount on the tickets. Go to lexfreeman.com/cji and it should forward you to the right place. They're trying to sell the last few tickets now. It's a good cause. Go buy some. Also let me say, as a fan of the sport, I highly encourage you to watch both CJI and ADCC. To celebrate athletes competing in both. From CJI with Nicky Ryan, Nicky Rod, or Ruotolo Brothers, Ffion Davis, McKenzie Dern, and more. To ADCC with Gordon Ryan, Nicholas Meregali, Giancarlo Bodoni, Rafael Lovato, Jr., Mica Galvao, and more. I have a lot of respect for everyone involved. I trained with many of them regularly and consider many of them friends. Including Craig Gordon and of course John Danaher, who I will talk to many, many more times on this podcast. This is a Lex Fridman Podcast. To support it please check out our sponsors in the description. Now, dear friends, I invite you all to come to the pool with Craig Jones and me. When you brought the \$1 million in cash on Rogan's podcast, did you have security with you?

Craig Jones

We had security, but only by Joe Rogan's request. He said, "You're really going to bring it? Do you have security?" I said, "No." He's like, "Don't worry about it. I'll send my security."

Lex Fridman

You were going to do it without security?

Craig Jones

Yeah, we we're going to wing it. I was told not to tell anyone, but I sent pictures of it to everyone I know. That was probably a security risk.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. It's just you in a car with a bag of cash.

Craig Jones

Yeah, it was a company that sponsors me, shuffle.com. It was their friend. A friend of theirs, so a guy that's never met me before just took the risk to show up to a stranger's house with a million dollars in cash to bring to Joe Rogan. It was a big risk of him.

Lex Fridman

He just put it in the car and drove it.

Craig Jones

Drove it over there, yeah.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. With no security except Joe.

Craig Jones

Except Joe.

Lex Fridman

That's common sense.

Craig Jones

Then Joe said he'd never seen a million dollars before, but I don't know if I believe him.

Lex Fridman

That's what everyone says. That's what Pablo Escobar probably says also. What's your relationship with risk, especially with the risk of death?

Craig Jones

I would say I'm very risk averse.

Lex Fridman

You are? No, you're not. That's a lie.

Craig Jones

My relationship with risk. I like a bit of excitement. I like a bit of adventure. I'm more about the adventure, but I will not let the risk get in the waiver. Also, obviously just got back from Ukraine. I'm happy to take a few risks if it's part of what the locals want me to do. In Kazakhstan, we did some things that were dangerous. If the locals are like, come along, join in on this activity, I feel personally obligated to go with them.

Lex Fridman

It's not about the risk. You're not attracted to risk, you're attracted to adventure and the risk is a thing you don't give a damn about.

Craig Jones

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

If it comes along with it.

Craig Jones

Sometimes the best adventures involve the most risk, unfortunately.

Lex Fridman

Speaking of which, you went to Ukraine, like you said, twice, recently.

Craig Jones

Twice. Really pushed the limit there.

Lex Fridman

Including to the front?

Craig Jones

To the front.

Lex Fridman

Tell me the full story of that from the beginning. How did you end up in Ukraine?

Craig Jones

We're in Kazakhstan. We're doing some filming in Kazakhstan, and obviously Borats still a very traumatic memory for them, and some of my jokes felt like they don't go as well in that neck of the woods. We had some difficulty filming out there. We filmed this horse game. Have you ever heard of Kok boru?

Lex Fridman

Thanks to you, yes.

Craig Jones

It's a game, a very, very old game. They cut a goat or a sheep. I didn't get too close to look at it. But they cut its head and legs off and they use it as some form of bull and then they'll have up to a thousand guys on horses violently trying to pick this up and drop it in the other end's goals basically. The goals used to be concrete, now it's just a top. But local business

owners will throw down huge amounts of money for the winners. These horses have been trained from a very young age. The riders have been trained. I've never ridden a horse before. We wanted to film something that made it look like I was going to go into the horse pit, into the Kok boru pit. However, the drunk stunt man that we used just decided that when he took my horse reigns, he would take me straight into the pit instead of ending the shot there. I was in there amongst I guess the horse riders, the Kok boru riders, and we weren't leaving. We just were in there for quite a while. He could talk English pretty well actually. He's like, "Oh, I thought you'd want to check it out from the inside." Then while we're in there, someone picked up the carcass and a wave of horse riders came at me. I was quite concerned at that point because they're bashing into each other and obviously they're angry. They're seeing a foreigner in there. I was wearing basically Biggie Smalls COOGI looking sweater, so I stood out. They definitely didn't like that I was participating in a game that they probably trained their whole life for and that amount of money they could win is very, very significant and there's me in there. They're also pointing out Borat, Borat. Thinking I was making Borat jokes, which again, very traumatic memory for the people at Kazakhstan.

Lex Fridman

Were you making Borat jokes?

Craig Jones

No, but I guess it's the same type of humor. I'm not pretending to be Kazak. I'm just there being an idiot and enjoying the local culture. But we're over there in Kazakhstan and we did that. That was obviously a bit risky.

Lex Fridman

Did they learn to love you?

Craig Jones

I think they learned to love me and then to hate me again. It was a bit of all encompassing relationship for the Kazak people. But we basically abandoned ship. It was proven too difficult to film some things, some sensitive subjects over there. I said, "Where should we go next?" I just looked at the map and I was like, "We're near Ukraine." Ukraine was a place that I'd been offered to teach a jiu-jitsu seminar prior to I guess the full scale war commencing and we're looking for a bit of adventure, something interesting to film. Following the news, obviously very controversial in the news, people have very strong opinions. I was like, "Let's go over there. Let's do a charity event. Let's do something. Let's train with the people and really experience of ourselves." We set up the seminar. Turned out to be the biggest seminar for jiu-jitsu in Ukraine history. Which is wild considering obviously they are at war. But everyone came together to support it. One of the soldiers there, one of my friends there, good friend now, who's on the front line, he made a comment on there. He said, "Hey, this is a seminar to donate profits to the soldiers, but we're on the front line." I

was like, "You know what, I'll come to you." He's like, "Listen, I can't promise you'll survive, but I'll promise you'll have a good time." I said, "That's all I needed to hear." We connected and my friend Roman, we went really, really close. I think we were at the closest 0.7 kilometers from the front line. Obviously very surreal experience to be over there seeing basically how the battles fought with those drones.

Lex Fridman

How long ago was this?

Craig Jones

I think it would've been March or April. We went there. We went, basically spent two nights up on the front line. Went back to Kyiv and that was it for that trip. In terms of crazy stuff that happened, obviously just the people living. You download the air defense tracker. At any time there could be an air siren going off, an air alert on your phone. Could be like drones heading your way, planes are in the air, missiles flying. Then those missiles will change direction and stuff, so the air alert, you don't know if it's heading a different direction, but they just warn everyone. You live under a constant state of fear basically. Then on that first trip, the heaviest moment was, I was going downstairs in the hotel to work out, which is honestly a rare thing these days, doing something healthy with myself.

Lex Fridman

You're working out.

Craig Jones

Getting in the gym, pumping some iron. This was divine intervention that a hypersonic missile was shot down by the patriot event system, just like five minutes from the hotel. The whole hotel and the attached gym just shook like crazy. Some people started freaking out. Most people went to leave to go outside, which I don't think is recommended, but you want to see what's going on out there.

Lex Fridman

This was in Kyiv?

Craig Jones

This was in Kyiv. It got shot down and then some of the local troops actually took me to the site of where just part of the missile had landed in the ground and left this huge of indentation. They'd already cleared up most of the, I guess, shrapnel from the missile. I don't know if I should or if I was legally allowed to do this, but I took some of that missile back home with me. I don't know where I left it actually. But I thought maybe that would raise some alarm bells and airport scans. But I took it regardless. That was basically the crazy thing that happened on that first trip.

Lex Fridman

The Patriot Defense System is incredible. That's an incredible piece of technology that's from the United States. It's expensive but it's incredible. Then so that's protecting Kijiv.

Craig Jones

That's protecting Kijiv, yeah. That was at the time where US hadn't voted to I guess keep funding the weapons over there. It was a tense moment because I think, I don't know, everyone was thinking when do those air defense missiles run out? That was a heavy moment for me thinking, look at what it shot out the sky. Imagine if they didn't have that. But that was probably the most surreal moment. But Kijiv largely, life goes on most of the time as per normal. I was faced with crazy messages and comments, even just posting that video. Like I'm getting paid by Ukraine and stuff. It's just like people just don't understand that life has to go on like Kijiv here, the front lines far away. The cities have to largely try to operate as normal or just life will not go on in those villages and cities.

Lex Fridman

Well, it's human nature as well. It's not just Kijiv, it's Kharkiv, it's even Donetsk, Khartsyzk. People get accustomed to war quickly. It's impossible to suffer for prolonged periods of time, so you adjust and you appreciate the things you still have.

Craig Jones

Yeah, some bolder moves out there. I love seeing people that just crazy stuff's going on from the war and they don't even react to it. They don't go to the bomb shelter. It's like a bolder move. I'm not going to change my lifestyle. Actually on that first trip as well, something else that I probably shouldn't have been allowed to do was go to Chernobyl. Chernobyl, I believe troops came through Belarus and there was some fighting going on in Chernobyl. I think the whole world got concerned at that point if any sort of radiation leaked. But Chernobyl, as it stands, the troops back down and it's completely covered in mines. Very, very difficult to go to Chernobyl. Basically as a tourist or as I guess a idiot like myself should really probably not be allowed in a place like that. But we were able to get there. We passed four security checkpoints. It took two attempts. First time we tried to go in there was with the special forces guy, we cleared two security gates. Then they stopped us and basically threatened us with arrest. Rightfully so. Really have no business going to Chernobyl. We made a connection. I won't say who this connection was, but he had heard about what I had done with a charity event and opened some doors for us to be able to go to Chernobyl. We got to see Chernobyl. We had some filming restrictions there just because it was a crazy military conflict at one point. We got to actually see Chernobyl. Chernobyl always been a dream of mine to see. It's just such an interesting place and to see it under these conditions, very, very strange.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, what was that like? There's no civilians there now.

Craig Jones

It's just completely empty. I guess it's like the fantasy you have. I imagine people go on tours of Chernobyl back in the tourist days when it was a tourist spot and it would be busy full of tourists. We got basically a private tour, so we got to really feel that abandoned vibes. I guess I was interested in it from playing Call of Duty and then Chernobyl series, all the documentaries and stuff. But very, very strange place to go visit.

Lex Fridman

It is now a minefield like a lot of parts of Ukraine. That's one of the dark, terrifying aspects of wars. How many mines are left even when the war ends for decades after? Mines everywhere. Because de-mining is extremely difficult and that could continually kill people.

Craig Jones

I don't think it'll be a tourist spot for a very long time. Because if you were thinking about areas to de-mine when the conflict ends, an area where if you accidentally trigger a mine could cause a radiation leak. It's probably going to be very low on the list. Tourism for Chernobyl, who knows how long until that returns.

Lex Fridman

Why do you think you were able to get to Chernobyl? Why don't you think the Ukrainian people, the Ukrainian soldiers don't see you as a threat?

Craig Jones

Maybe they were hoping that I did step on a mine. Maybe my jokes didn't go too well there.

Lex Fridman

Your connection was actually Putin, he was trying to get rid of you.

Craig Jones

Putin, yeah. I don't know. We felt pretty safe when we're there. There was an air alert went off. They were more concerned with me dying just for the PR side of things. It's like Australian tourist.

Lex Fridman

In one of your videos actually heard Ukrainian language. They were talking about, we don't want to lose an athlete. That's what they're saying as they're loading the rocket launcher.

Craig Jones

Oh yeah, the rocket launcher. I showed a rocket launcher with the troops on the first trip. But the second trip I went back to, which was only maybe four to five weeks ago. This time we went to some crazier spots. We went to Odessa, which has been hit a ton.

Lex Fridman

I really enjoyed the video of old man stretching and exercising on the Odessa shore.

Craig Jones

Yeah, what is it, a local custom?

Lex Fridman

Well, Odessa people are known historically to be wild.

Craig Jones

That was wild. It was abrasive to the eyes, but I appreciated it. Especially a middle-aged man in underwear with a beer belly doing a Sundance at dusk. That would frighten many people.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. The battleship would turn around. Yeah, so where else?

Craig Jones

We went Odessa, we briefly went back to Kijiv. I made a connection with the police chief, basically the entire country last time. He had said to me that if I wanted to go somewhere really heavy in terms of action, we could go to Kherson. He's like, "I'll personally escort you to Kherson." I was just like, well, here we have an invitation for adventure. I think it's a great idea to go. I thought, you know what? I'll completely lie to my camera man and tell him it's a safe trip to go on so that he can pass that information onto his fiancée and she won't have any concerns. We basically take this huge journey all the way down to Kherson. We switch at a city outside, I can't remember the name, but we had to switch into armored vehicles. I remember the guy that picked this up there said, "Hey, give me a phone number for someone to call to recover your bodies." He said that in a joking way, but I think he was serious. But I said, "Just leave it." I don't think they need it. I didn't think there'd be much left probably if we get hit over there. But we go basically into Kherson. I think Kherson's population used to be like 250,000 now it's basically all military down to 50,000. We went into the police basically station in the bunker underneath, the top of the building was destroyed. Then one of the local guys just took us on a city tour. Which again, we had some filming restrictions because obviously anytime something's hit, I guess the other side wants to be able to see what damage has been done. If you take any footage of recently destroyed buildings, that's going to help them recalibrate and target the next shot. Kherson being so heavily hit, it's basically within range of every single thing Russia has. Every form of weapon. Drones. Before we took the tour, he put some drone blocking things on top of the car, which didn't look reassuring. He also took a helmet out the back of the car, which I thought he was going to give to me, but he just threw it in the back of the pickup truck and said, "Oh, you won't need this, you'll be dead anyway." I was like, "Oh, I've made a great life decision with this little Kherson tour." But then we took a tour of the city and Kherson used to be a

beautiful beach city by the Neva River, but basically it's just the river that separates Russia from, I guess the Russian land they've taken from Kherson. Kherson split across that river and there's just Russians on the other side of the river and Ukrainians on this side. Very, very dangerous spot. Kharkiv makes a lot of press because of the long range missiles that hit, but Kherson's just being hit all the time. We took this tour, we went along the river. We went to within one kilometer of the front line. That was the closest we got. After this point, we heard artillery strike. Because you're in an armored vehicle, it sounds further away than it is. Obviously the sound doesn't get in. I thought it sounded far away. We could see some smoke that actually appeared closer in the distance. The guy driving us took us to a point where a large building was blocking us from, I guess the angle at which the missile would've come from. I thought everything was cool, thought that must've been off in the distance. Then we heard two more strikes hit very, very close. They sounded really loud. Then I think he's radioed in to see if everything's safe, if we can leave this point. Then we basically raced back. But I started to realize we were in danger at any point where he really sped the car up or took evasive movements in the car. But we got out of there and I think I had someone translate it later and basically he was checking to see if the roads were clear for us to leave. Ultimately ended up being someone died and a few people injured from that blast, which was less than half a kilometer from us. Basically they were radioing saying, end the tour, come back to the police station.

Lex Fridman

Artillery is terrifying. There's just shelling and it's the destructive power of artillery is insane.

Craig Jones

Yeah, it's constant all the time. You hear that noise and you're like, is that coming or going? Very concerning.

Lex Fridman

Right. You don't know. You don't know. Just like that, it could be you, gone.

Craig Jones

Last time, the village we went to, basically it was the day we left. We stayed there overnight. The day we left, it just started getting extremely shelled and the soldier we were with just took a selfie video of us and basically the location we were in just hearing just artillery strike after artillery strike, just being like, oh, you guys left and the fun began. They take it in good spirit. I was trying to use their energy to reassure myself. But I guess when they see it every day, they're more adjusted to it. They're not freaking out every time something crazy that goes on.

Lex Fridman

Well, they have to. They have to be in good spirit. You have to be joking and laughing.

Craig Jones

The guys are always laughing and joking. They were laughing and joking at me quite a bit, holding weapons, trying to shoot weapons and stuff. They got a lot of enjoyment out of me shooting the RPG.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, they're probably still telling stories of that crazy Australian American that rolled in.

Craig Jones

They helped me out though in my marketing campaign for the tournament. We were able to secure a Lada, classic Soviet Union car. We towed it, we painted it with the logos of the other event, the ADCC, and we got to shoot some RPGs at it. Great experience. Great fun.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, it's a very creative marketing campaign.

Craig Jones

Very dangerous one.

Lex Fridman

I don't think Coke or Pepsi are going to do that one. It's very innovative.

Craig Jones

It was a bold move. Luckily they let me get away with posting it. But when we were there, it was basically at a shooting range and we cleared them out for a while. We'd blown up the car, we'd set it on fire, we'd done all this sort of stuff. I remember we were trying to blow it up. It wasn't quite hitting, one of the missiles was lodged in under the car, so it was risky. That could have gone off at any moment. But we needed to get it to ignite. We needed to get a shot where it was on fire. The logo of the enemy tournament was basically on fire. We poured gasoline on it. We shot the gasoline tank. That didn't work. That must be a movie trick or something. Then we decided we had light on fire, a rag and just throw it into the blown out back window. I'm with this guy, special forces guy, and we throw the rag in the back.

Lex Fridman

Like soaked in gasoline rag?

Craig Jones

Yeah. We start running. He's like, "Stop, stop." He's like, "It didn't go off." We're sitting there quite close to the car, lighting it, trying to light more. As we walk back to the car, then we just hear the car ignite. He's like, "Run, run, run." We came quite close to death already at that point. But we wanted to get the shot, some photos in front of the burning logos. But we

had told the guys at the shooting range to basically give us 10 minutes or so, so we could take the photos. I don't know if they didn't wait the full 10 minutes or if we took too long, but they started firing at the targets anyway. Then the ricochets were flying very, very close to us over our head. One landed right by my leg. We're like, "Shit, we better get out of here." Obviously not much safety concerns at that point, but we survived basically artillery strikes. We survived a bit of friendly fire with the bullets coming our way. But again, I was strangely calm because the other guys were calm. But then afterwards they said to me, they were like, "oh bro, if you got shot, we'd just have to dump your body at a hospital. We wouldn't be able to explain why you're here blowing up cars."

Lex Fridman

Right. You're American and athlete, international celebrity.

Craig Jones

They'd be like, what is he doing on the front line? There's no real good explanation for it. But through even to the jokes and stuff, it's good to highlight what's actually happening over there. It's obviously very, very bad.

Lex Fridman

What's the morale of the soldiers like? Is there still an optimism? Is there still a hope?

Craig Jones

There's the battle fatigue and as they say, all the heroes die early. The guys, the real heroes that are willing to sacrifice themselves, they're the ones that are going to get taken out quick. Unfortunately that's the reality from over there. But their thoughts are mostly that it's going to be a prolonged war. When I ask them about how fast the front line moves, they're like, "Oh, could take six months to move one 200 meters." It just feels like it's going to go on forever. From the Ukrainian side's perspective, those guys talk to me about how when they hear radio intercepts of Russian soldiers marching to the same frontline spot, is that basically they're marching into certain death at certain locations. Based on the radio transmissions, they know they're going to die, but they head forth anyway. Straightforward into Ukrainian position. Which is just wild to me, I guess World War II, they just keep throwing troops at it. You see a ton of footage they take themselves, which is mind-blowing. Obviously some of this footage doesn't make it to the internet because it's got important details in those conflicts. But they're showing first person perspectives of trench warfare. It's just crazy to see what some of these guys have gone through.

Lex Fridman

I went to a lot of the same places as well, including Kherson. What was your sense of the place?

Craig Jones

Kherson was like, it was just so destroyed. I think at this point most of the civilians are gone. I saw a lot of just elderly people left behind, especially a lot of old men. I just think they're just like, hey, I've lived in my whole life, I'm just never leaving. No matter the level of danger, those guys just remain. Then it's largely just, I guess military in Kherson. But that place felt very, very dangerous. I didn't realize until we got there, just quite how destroyed it is.

Lex Fridman

How did that experience change you? Just seeing war, head on.

Craig Jones

How it changed me? I guess just realizing a lot of these soldiers are just, you distance yourself from them thinking that they're something separate. But really speaking to a lot of the Ukrainian soldiers, my friend Roman, he hadn't lived in Ukraine for eight years. He lived in France, he had a life, he's got a wife over there, he's got a daughter. He basically volunteered to come back to protect his mom and brother who still live there. I used to view them military guys, because in Australia and I guess in the US, they don't have this conscription ongoing right now. Whereas obviously there's guys like Roman who volunteered, but then there's a lot of Ukrainian soldiers that were conscripted into the war. It's like you just realize how a lot of these guys are everyday people. They're just in this crazy situation. Where Roman felt obligated to return to Ukraine. From my perspective, anyone from Australia or US, it's just a different perspective on those. They feel different to the regular people fighting in Ukraine, from my perspective.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, it's defending the land that is your home.

Craig Jones

Yeah, Japan was coming for Australia, I guess in World War II. They attacked the north. But really there was no foot battle and there was no soldiers on the ground within Australia. I guess US too during World War II. It's like a completely different perspective from our recent histories compared to if you were a Ukrainian and there's Russians within the defined border. Their responsibility to protect their homeland and their family, it's just something you can't imagine. But also after having spent time with them, you can see why they feel such a strong sense of obligation to protect Ukraine, protect their family and friends.

Lex Fridman

In a lot of cases, the soldiers using their own funds to buy equipment. Whether it's bullets, whether it's guns, whether it's armor. Is that still what you saw?

Craig Jones

Yeah, in terms of the weapons, America provides weapons. We saw a wide selection of weapons. Some of those would be old Soviet weapons, like obviously the RPG we shot and what we shot out of it is all Soviet. It's very old weaponry. Then you've got US weapons that have been given as well. But in terms of the basic soldiers equipment, if they want good quality stuff, that might be the difference between them surviving the winter or the summer just in the extreme temperature range. They have to pay for that all themselves. They always joke about when foreign soldiers come over to train them. A lot of foreign soldiers come to learn about the drone technology they've developed on a budget is they always joke with them about how everything from most countries is basically supplied. All the good quality standard equipment they'd need is just supplied by the government. But in Ukraine, obviously funding is very stretched. These guys to have the best equipment. They have to basically find money to pay for it themselves. They'll do that by seeking donations. Best way to get donations would be to grow social media profiles. That's when you see a lot of social media warfare from a perspective of gaining fame to secure donations for their battalion to be able to fight better or protect themselves. Also, some of the social media warfare, I guess is psychological warfare against the enemy. You'll see private Telegram groups where they're showing what they've done to the enemy, what the enemy's done to them. It's just crazy.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, there's Telegram groups on both sides and basically some of it is propaganda, some of it is psychological warfare. Some of it is just the human nature of being, of increasing your own morale and the morale of the people around you by showing off successfully killing other human beings. Which are made other in war. The nature of this war has evolved. Drones have become more and more prevalent. Consumer level, cheap drones. Can you speak to that? Have you seen the use of FPE drones?

Craig Jones

Yeah, so basically like a three to \$500 drone. I think it's like carbon fiber, 3D printed and they can attach different forms of weaponry to it, whether it's just dropping a frag. They could drop a mine out of it. I know they were talking about how they had a liquid that could basically burn through a lot of cars and tanks so the person inside basically melt alive. Which sounds horrible. But what's mind-blowing to me is you could have a \$3 million Russian tank that could be destroyed by a \$300 drone. Which is just crazy how fast the war changes. I think they're the world leaders in budget drone technology. They didn't obviously don't have the budget for these crazy, elaborate massive drones. I did see some higher budget, bigger drones over there, but for the most part, those FPV drones is really how most of the battles are fought. You're seeing the cameras on them. You can see basically kamikaze drone will chase someone down and they have that footage. That's what the police chief said to me when he gifted me one of the drones they used. He basically said, he's like, "Artillery is scary, but a drone will follow you into a building." It's a haunting thing to

think about. They'll see the drone, they'll hear the drone, they might try to shoot it down or they might try to run. But if it's a kamikaze one, those guys are pretty good at flying them. It's going to chase the soldiers down. A lot of soldiers like pretending to be dead. It's really crazy, some of the footage out there with those FBV drones.

Lex Fridman

It's a terrifying tool of war and tool of psychological war and used by both sides increasingly.

Craig Jones

Yeah, both sides use it. I remember I was with Roman in Morshyn and he had his break period. He was allowed to leave the country because he basically volunteered to join the army. Ukrainian men can't really leave Ukraine right now. But Roman, I was in Morshyn and this was a surreal experience for him. We went to the beach and there was some tourists there flying a drone, and you just saw his instinctual reaction to that drone sound in the sky, flashback to that.

Lex Fridman

Currently, they're all, as far as I know, all human controlled, so FPV. But to me, increasingly terrifying notion is of them becoming autonomous. It's the best way to defend against the drone that's FPV controlled is for AI to be controlling that drone. Just have swarms of drones that are \$500 controlled by AI systems. That's a terrifying possibility that the future of warfare is essentially swarms of drones on both sides. Then maybe swarms of drones, say between US and China over Taiwan.

Craig Jones

That would be wild. They do those crazy drone light shows where they do those performances with the lights and stuff. They're already pretty sophisticated with pre-programming.

Lex Fridman

Those are pre-programmed. The low level control, flight control of those is done autonomously. But there's a interface for doing the choreography that's hard coded in. But adding increasing levels of intelligence to the drone where you can detect another drone, follow it and defend yourself. In terms of the military on both sides as the Ukraine war, that's the technology, that's like the most wanted technology is drone defense. How are you defending as drones on both sides? Anybody that comes up with an autonomous drone technology is going to help whichever side uses that technology to gain a mill- ... is going to help whichever side uses that technology to gain a military advantage. And so, there's a huge incentive to build that technology but then, of course, once both sides started using that technology, then there's swarms of autonomous drones who don't give a shit about humans, just killing everything in sight on both sides. And that's terrifying because there's

civilian deaths that are possible that are terrifying, especially when you look 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years from now.

Craig Jones

Yes, it's surreal. When we went to coastline, it was the entire sky is just full of drones. At any given time, they could decide to come and attack. So, they could just sit there forever waiting, waiting for you to come out of that building. They'll wait a long time when someone goes and hides inside. Or potentially, if it's an open window, fly straight through the open window to get people.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. So, you're not even safe indoors.

Craig Jones

Yeah, there's nowhere to hide and they can wait for a very, very long time.

Lex Fridman

And as far as I know, even politicians, you're in danger everywhere in Ukraine. So, if you want to do a public speaking thing and doing it outside, you're in danger because it's very difficult to detect those drones, it could be anywhere. It's a terrifying life where you don't know if you're safe at any moment anywhere in Ukraine.

Craig Jones

Well, sure. It's crazy with what happened to Trump, I thought maybe the next attack on a public figure might come in the form of drone technology, something along those lines. I wonder how they protect against that here.

Lex Fridman

If that happens, just imagine the insanity that would ensue. Because we understand the idea of a gunman with a rifle shooting somebody but, just a drone, just imagine the conspiracy theories. Who controlled that drone?

Craig Jones

Where'd it come from? Yeah.

Lex Fridman

And now, everybody, that will just cause chaos.

Craig Jones

And the range is ever-increasing. One of the battalions in Ukraine, because those FPV drones have short range, pretty short range, but they were able to attach it to one of the larger drones with a signal booster so they could potentially go up to 30, 40 kilometers into

the distance. So, the drone that hits you could be flown by someone so far away from you. And if they did that domestically, that would be very frightening to think of the sphere of where it could have come from.

Lex Fridman

When you've talked to the soldiers there, did they have a hope or a vision how the war will end?

Craig Jones

No, really. I guess it just seems to everyone that there's going to be no middle ground.

Lex Fridman

When I was there, there's a optimism that they would be victorious definitively. And so, is there still that optimism and, also, are they ready for prolonged war?

Craig Jones

I think it would be a soldier by soldier basis. I know each of them had a different perspective. I remember I would ask them about, in terms of US politics and their fears, because the first trip I went there, US hadn't agreed to resupply weapons. So, it was a very different feeling in the air there of concern over what was going to happen but they still remained quite optimistic that, no matter who got in, they felt would do the right thing. But in terms of prolonged war, most people think it's going to go for a very long time. The children's hospital that just was bombed in Kyiv, anytime there's a moment like that, that reignites everything and I think it happens on both sides. So, I know that there was an attack in Crimea, there was an attack on a beach, I guess, and I don't know if that attack on the hospital was retribution for that but that's the energy that is felt. They might have battle fatigue but, when something happens to civilians, especially kids, on your side, reinvigorates the energy to fight for as long as necessary. And in terms of the case by case basis, one of my friends, Dmitri, over there who trains jiu-jitsu in the gym, he was very passionate about it just because of the history. He brought out documents of his grandfather being executed by the USSR. So, I know that when the war started, basically, he took a bicycle helmet and his AK-47 and went out into the streets and he's like, "I'd rather be dead than live under Russian rule again." So, very case by case basis, personal history for them, I think.

Lex Fridman

Did they comment on US politics whether they hoped for Trump or for, in that situation, Biden now Harris to win the presidential election?

Craig Jones

I think most of the guys try to keep it pretty positive. You know what I mean? Some people did think that maybe, if Trump was elected, he wouldn't continue to fund it but they really try

to stay optimistic. Most of the people I spoke to really try to remain optimistic that they would be protected if it comes down to it. But obviously, there was a nine-month period where they weren't refunded. So, as that stretched ... Obviously, they're refunded now but it takes a lot of time to get that equipment back to the points at which they need it. So, if ammunition had ran out, Patriot defense system had ran out, really, really scary prospect there. I don't know, I guess no one knows what's going to happen there.

Lex Fridman

Did you lie to people and say you were close to the president so they can be nice to you so they can convince you to continue the funding?

Craig Jones

I'm an Australian diplomat. Other than that-

Lex Fridman

Diplomat. That could be a nice way in.

Craig Jones

Yeah, that would've been a nice way to the top. Luckily, for me, most of the places I travel to, jiu-jitsu gives me access to so many different individuals, it's super bizarre. Oligarchs, royalty, I guess, tech wizards, it's a strange group of people, a code around the world of just I get strange access just for being good at wrestling dudes.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, martial arts, there's a code and there's a respect, a mutual respect. Even if you don't know anything about the other person, if you've both have done martial arts, there's similar things with judo, with jiu-jitsu, with grappling, all of that. I don't know what that is.

Craig Jones

Yeah, it's like an inner circle. Because this film project we're working on, it's focused on that is, because of the history I have in jiu-jitsu and traveling and doing seminars and just getting access to strange experiences from the local, strange in a positive way, and participating in those experiences, that's what I wanted to focus this travel show on was the community of jiu-jitsu. People around the world really has no ethnic background, religious background, even level of wealth, as cheesy as it sounds, it's a good equalizer on the mats and that community, camaraderie knows no limits there.

Lex Fridman

Including mats, the shadiest mats in some small town in the middle of nowhere?

Craig Jones

100%. Even Sheikh Tahnoun who started ADCC, I know, when he went to the US and he studied there, he would train at a very simple gym, he wouldn't declare who he was. I watched a documentary produced about the story of Sheikh Tahnoun and how he studied in America, basically, in anonymity. The people that his gym didn't know who he was in his country and he trained there, he trained with him for years, cleaned the mats like anyone else. And then they didn't realize who he was until he said, "Hey, I want to invite you to my country," but he actually meant, basically as royalty, come and then they realized who this guy was and the significance of him.

Lex Fridman

That's gangster, that's great. One of the things I love about no-Gi jiu-jitsu is you don't see rank. So, on a small scale, there's no hierarchy that emerges when you have the different color belts, everybody's the same. It's nice.

Craig Jones

Yeah, you get to see the skill.

Lex Fridman

The skill speaks but there's just a mutual respect and whatever. You can quickly find out who ... I actually wonder if I would be able to figure out the rank of a person. Can you usually figure out how long a person has been doing jiu-jitsu?

Craig Jones

I like to think, with some of the aggressive clothing choices I've made and sold in the sport, that that should be a beacon, that that person is a blue belt. Has, hopefully, some talent because they're fearlessly provoking the other party there.

Lex Fridman

Oh, it's like in the jungle, whenever there's an insect that's red that is really flamboyant looking, that means they're dangerous.

Craig Jones

It's a target, yeah, though being flamboyant. If you come on the mats with something pink, pinky or something, people are circling in fast especially in Eastern Europe.

Lex Fridman

Okay. So, yeah, you mentioned the project, can you talk about that? I saw there's a preview that you showed, Craig Jones Gone Walkabout.

Craig Jones

Gone Walkabout, yeah.

Lex Fridman

So, you showed a preview in Indonesia where you're both celebrating and maybe poking a bit of fun at Hicks and Gracie.

Craig Jones

Hicks and Gracie, yeah. So, I like to match looks from time to time-

Lex Fridman

Thank you, thank you.

Craig Jones

... in an homage.

Lex Fridman

You look sexy.

Craig Jones

It's comfortable, actually, I enjoy it.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. You should keep it.

Craig Jones

I'll only we wear this now. I'll wear this for the Gabi match. Yeah, we're trying to do a documentary series because the way I see it is I want to grow the sport of jiu-jitsu. And this sounds funny to say now because I'm doing a tournament but everyone tries to do it through competition. But as we know, most jiu-jitsu gyms you visit, a very small percentage of people compete, let alone compete regularly. You'll go to gyms that could be brown or black belts that don't know many of the big name competitors. So, my thoughts were we're never going to grow this sport by competition, we're going to grow it by appealing to the large majority of people that do it which are just people that enjoy it for the benefits it provides to them whether health or psychological. And obviously, many people are inspired by Anthony Bourdain, basically it's looking at what he did with food by showing the very interesting characters in the food culture, the food industries, especially with street food, and building around that. So, I'm trying to look at jiu-jitsu like a giant cult. Scientology isn't starting with Planet Xenu, it's starting with John Travolta and Tom Cruise. So, if we can create a documentary travel series highlighting the diverse, interesting people that participate in the sport, in that sense, I hope it can grow but also doing some charity work along the way. We'll release the Indonesia Bali episode pretty soon but, as an Australian, I do do a lot of damage culturally around the world so I'd like to do some good as well. We've done a lot of damage to Bali, so give back to local communities. We have an Australian there that runs an academy, Akademi Kristus, he's one of the guys we're donating a portion of the ticket sales

to from our event but he basically went straight into a Balinese slum, started teaching jiu-jitsu on a mat under a tree and then slowly, through donations, has built a gym. And his real focus is not just taking money from people and gifting it to them to help the community but to teach them skills. So, he'll take a lot of the disadvantaged kids and he'll teach them things like photo editing so they can get that work from the internet, really. Incredible guy.

Lex Fridman

It's good to know that you see yourself as the John Travolta of jiu-jitsu.

Craig Jones

Many masseuses have accused me of the same thing, unfortunately. All lies.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, there's a lot of similarities between the two of you. So, you mentioned Anthony Bourdain. What do you like about the guy? What do you find inspiring and instructive about the way he was able to, as you said, scratch beneath the surface of a place?

Craig Jones

I just felt like he was very authentic, wasn't afraid. This is something I had trouble with when we first started doing the travel show, it's easy to do a travel show if you only say positive things about a place. But he would find a very creative way to show what's good and bad, a very honest reflection of the place so that's something I would strive to do. However, in some places, it's very difficult. You know what I mean? For example, Kazakhstan, if I were to say something negative about Kazakhstan, they'd be like, "Who's this foreign idiot talking about our culture?" And I think that was what was incredible about Bourdain is he could talk about both the good and bad of places and he would do it in such a way that it was tasteful and was respected by the locals.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, that's actually a skill that you're incredibly good at. You make fun of a lot of people but there's something ... Maybe there's an underlying respect, maybe it's the accent, maybe ... I don't know what it is. There's a love underneath your trolling.

Craig Jones

I like to think so. Hopefully, yeah. Gabi Garcia, there's a deep passionate love underneath the trolling.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. Speaking of which, let's talk about CJI. You're putting on the CJI tournament, it's in about a week, same weekend as ADCC, \$3 million budget, two divisions, two super fights, winner of each division gets \$1 million, everyone gets \$10,000. How do you even say that? Plus one?

Craig Jones

10,000 plus one, yeah.

Lex Fridman

Plus one. Just to compete. So, it's August 16th and 17th, everybody should get tickets. Same weekend as ADCC's which is August 17th. Okay. So, what's the mission of what you're doing there?

Craig Jones

The mission has always been, first and foremost, increased athlete pay. So, ADCC has invested a ton into the sport. Obviously, I mentioned Sheikh Tahnoun, Sheikh Tahnoun has done so much for the sport of grappling, particularly no-Gi grappling. So, he's growing it, he has funded this for a very, very long time but we've hit a point since 2017 where the audience, the crowd watching live and at home behind a paywall has grown considerably. We had things like Metamoris, we had the Eddie Bravo Invitational, Polaris, all these professional events that have also contributed to growing the sport. And obviously, people like Gordon Ryan have definitely increased the popularity of the sport but the payment for ADCC has never gone up despite, again, the growth of it. So, what I did, a lot of fans were asking me earlier in the year, they said, "Craig, are you going to do ADCC?" and I said, "That is a big commitment of time, energy, expenses on steroids to get my body ready for a tournament that I'll probably lose." And if I lose on day one, I make \$0. If I lose in the final, which I have done a couple times, I only get \$6,000. I think third place is 3,000, fourth place is 1,000. So, if you make day two, you get paid. But for me personally, seeing ADCC in 2022, you're looking out to a sold out crowd of 10,000 people. It's on FloGrappling which you know paid quite a bit of money for the streaming rights, I can't comment on what that number would be, and then you go home, despite having put in all that effort, with only 6,000 and they basically ... The argument is you're paid in exposure. But again, there's many ways to expose yourself. You know what I mean? That's just one of the platforms to do so. My problem was that they announced that they were going to go from Thomas & Mack to T-Mobile which is a jump in quality of stadium but not a significant jump in seating. So, we've gone from 11,000 seat arena to I think a 15, 16,000 seat arena. And I knew that FloGrappling would've had to pay more money because now the sport's growing so much and I can personally track the growth of the sport through selling instructional DVDs, instructional online products. Because that keeps growing and we're targeting those white and blue belts vulnerable to internet marketing and that audience continues to grow and those will be the people that largely watch ADCC, events like this. So, I simply said, in response to a lot of fans asking me, "Are you going to do ADCC?" and I just simply made a video saying, "No, probably not, probably not. It'd be nice to make some more money." And then I listed a bunch of sports, such as cockbar, that you get paid more to win cockbar. In the villages of Kazakhstan, the payment structures higher. And I received a very aggressive response not from any of Sheikh Tahnoun's people but from, basically, who runs the event today. One of those guys amongst giving me death threats said, "Hey, T-Mobile costs \$2

million, you don't know what you're talking about in terms of business and production." And he's probably right but, to me, \$2 million is a waste of money for a jiu-jitsu event, I don't think we're at that level yet. That's where the UFC hosts events. \$2 million, that's an expensive, expensive venue. So, we argued a bit on the internet and he said, "Hey, if you don't like it, why don't you go get \$2 million and put on your own tournament?" And I said, "I might just do that." And one of my anonymous friends kindly donated a \$3 million budget and I actually messaged him before the show to say, "Hey, we won't reveal your identity," because, obviously, anyone that has money is going to get asked for more money or ask for money from others. So, he wants to remain anonymous but he basically just said to enjoy the trolling aspect of it and also contribute to the sport of jiu-jitsu.

Lex Fridman

Well, that's good to know that the anonymous funder appreciates you for who you are, Craig Jones.

Craig Jones

He sees my true identity and he wants to provoke ... It's trolling for a good cause. But basically we were able to find Thomas & Mack Event Center, which was their original venue, and it just happened to be available that same weekend which we're very happy about. And so, we booked that out, we decided to ... ADCC pays 10,000 to the winner, we were like, "You know what? We'll pay \$10,000 plus one to show up." So, to show up in our event, you're going to get paid more than to win ADCC. And not only that, we're going to broadcast it for free. So, on Meta, X and YouTube, you'll be able to watch this event for free.

Lex Fridman

That's amazing.

Craig Jones

It's very considerate to the FloGrappling streaming platform, I believe, to have also a free alternative on the same weekend. And the brilliance of this whole thing is I was largely criticized for not knowing anything about business but the people criticizing me decided to host a tournament, a 15,000 seat arena, they decided to take sponsors, they decided to use a streaming platform which sells subscriptions based on the athletes that would enter it but not give any of the talent, the athletes, a contract which gave me this beautiful position to basically say, "Hey, what do you prefer? The prestige of an ADCC gold medal or money?" And that's the feud so far and we put that out into the world. I didn't chase too many athletes down. Obviously, a lot of these guys really need money. So, you throw a million dollars out there, people are jumping on board. So, initially we started getting, we got two local guys here in Austin, the Tackett brothers, they jumped in first and they're great kids. They really legitimize the whole thing because, if we'd pick certain athletes, just B team guys straight away, it's already looking a bit dodgy but we've got some legitimate athletes. Especially the under 80 kilo divisions, full of, minus two or three guys, that's the best people in the world in

that weight division. And as we started to grow our roster here, what happened, I'm going to say this, allegedly, for legal reasons, is that the first move ADCC did was they matched the female pay to the men's pay. So, the women always traditionally got paid less, I think \$6,000 for first place. As soon as we had Ffion Davies, the reigning champion, come across to do a super fight with us, bang, ADCC raised the prize money of the women's division to equal the men's. So, me, being a feminist activist throughout many of my years on this earth, immediately got women's pay raised in the sport of jiu-jitsu, equalize basically, which went counter to everything the promoter had said because he said it was out of his control. To raise money, he said only the ADCC, I guess coming directly from the Sheikh or the Sheikh's guys, could raise the prize money, he got it raised. And then what happened was, once we started getting some of these big names here, so some of the best guys from ADCC would be in this division. We've got a bunch of champions or medalists or, really, the top betting favorites for their divisions there, they started, and again, I can't emphasize this enough, allegedly, paying show money which has never historically been done before to keep athletes in their show.

Lex Fridman

So, you're saying, allegedly, there were some under the table payments by ADCC? Do you have secret documents proving this?

Craig Jones

I do have the documents.

Lex Fridman

Okay.

Craig Jones

Now, some of the guys obviously told me, you know how it is, you slap million dollars on the table, it looks great. That was me proving I had the money, which wasn't even my money to begin with, but it was basically me saying, "Hey, the money's real". I don't know why but, strangely, a lot of people don't believe me when I'm telling the truth.

Lex Fridman

I don't know why they wouldn't.

Craig Jones

But what logically happens is they're like, "Oh, look how much money he has. Give us more show money," so they're negotiating with me. There was one particular Brazilian businessman manager, I won't say his name, but he looks like the thing from Fantastic Four and he was a manager for some of these athletes and he would take a massive 20% cut. So, what he, and I got to pay respect to this because it actually caused trauma to the other team as well, but I would invite an athlete to CJI, he would go to the other organization and

he would say to them, "Hey, what sort of deal could you give me to keep this guy? You want to keep him in your event?" And he would use CJI to leverage more show money for his guys of which he gets to grease the wheels with 20% for himself. However, at CJI, everyone gets \$10,001 across the board and a million dollars prize money so there's no room for, really, negotiation for the tournament aspect of us. So, he has a vested interest in putting his guys in ADCC because he can negotiate show money and he can basically take 20% of that for himself. But really, for the sport of grappling, this is incredible across the board because, by us stealing or at least borrowing a bunch of athletes from ADCC, ADCC had to fill their divisions. So, they filled their divisions with many other competitors that wouldn't have ordinarily had the chance to do ADCC. And really, although we've scheduled it the same weekend, ours is actually Friday, Saturday, ADCC being Saturday, Sunday, our day starts pretty late. So, we start 5:00 PM Saturday. So, really, ultimately it was a big marketing ploy to go head-to-head pretending like we're making the fans choose but the fans will be able to watch both events. You'll be able to go all day Friday for us. You'll sadly miss the ADCC Hall of Fame ceremony where you'll see many of great speakers, public speakers, philosophers tell their stories about hardship just like at the end of any jiu-jitsu seminar or beginning if you're blessed like that. You might have a 45-minute monologue about how they're more knowledgeable than doctors, lawyers, classic black belt technique. But you will miss that, unfortunately.

Lex Fridman

With great metaphors about lions and-

Craig Jones

About lions, yes. About being a humble lion most importantly.

Lex Fridman

Humility is important.

Craig Jones

But you can watch all that Friday, you could watch most of ADCC Saturday. And then Saturday night, in Las Vegas, I'll be doing what many men have done before and that is wrestling a giant woman.

Lex Fridman

Can you speak to that? How are you preparing for this moment of violence on a Saturday night with Gabi Garcia?

Craig Jones

So, Gabi Garcia is the legend of women's grappling. I think she's won more than anyone else. So, between me and her, we would at least have 15 to 20 world championships, I'd imagine. She's huge, I say that in an endearing way. She might be 6"4' , 6"3' and her weight varies

depending on what time of the day it is between 220 and 275 pounds but she's going to be coming in quite big and strong. Me, I am about 179 pounds right now and at 5'11". So, I've got a significant size disadvantage, she has the credentials but we're going to scrap it out, scrap it out and see who's best, the greatest woman's competitor of all time or a guy that's never won anything.

Lex Fridman

Has it added some complexity to the picture that there's some sexual tension in the room whenever the two of you are together?

Craig Jones

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

Or maybe I'm being romantic but it seems like you've slowly started to fall in love with each other.

Craig Jones

It's been three years of seduction, it's been a long time.

Lex Fridman

It's inspiring for many young men that follow you and look up to you. Just the romantic journey that you've been on, it's truly inspiring.

Craig Jones

Yeah, I would say it's a motivational message to the guy that keeps sending DMs to a girl on Instagram for years that maybe, after three years, it could also happen for you too. No matter her height and weight, I think persistence is the key here.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Craig Jones

And we do have a wager on the line.

Lex Fridman

What's the wager?

Craig Jones

This might be the first wager of its kind, I would hope, in combat sports history. If she wins, I'll personally give her a million dollars. If I can footlock her, we're going to collaborate together in an OnlyFans sex tape.

Lex Fridman

Did she agree to this?

Craig Jones

She shook on it.

Lex Fridman

Great. You do have an OnlyFans channel, is that still up?

Craig Jones

After August 17th, it's going to be fire.

Lex Fridman

It's going to be on fire.

Craig Jones

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

Wow.

Craig Jones

I think that and, honestly, when we talk about secret investor, I think that could fund the entire tournament. It'd be that success.

Lex Fridman

That'll be the only paywalled thing about this tournament is your OnlyFans.

Craig Jones

Yeah, it's going to be a spiritual experience for me.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, wow. Okay, I'm fully distracted now. Can you talk about the rule set?

Craig Jones

So, we're using the angled walls inspired by karate combat. Karate combat did those angled walls.

Lex Fridman

Those are awesome. You're calling it the alley. That's really, really interesting. So, it's like in a pit, I guess, and the angled walls are-

Craig Jones

Yeah. So, karate combat have a square pit, we have a rectangular alley. We like the visual of just you're in the alley with someone you know. We both know what goes on in an alley, I know a couple of things that could go on back there.

Lex Fridman

What's second thing? Nevermind, I got it.

Craig Jones

But why this is brilliant, why the angled walls are brilliant for grappling is because any grappling tournament, this goes without question, this goes for IBJJF, ADCC, the reset is one of the most annoying aspects of the sport and one of the aspects of the sport that some of the sneakier guys take advantage of. There's guys out there that are brilliant at playing the edge open, the ref will reset them or they'll shoot a takedown near the edge and you might watch ... And, again, I'm picking on ADCC here. But you might watch an ADCC match where 90 seconds of a 10-minute match is the referee grabbing them, bringing them back to the center or trying to recreate something of a position that landed outside. Not only is that boring to me and it could be bias. Again, it's happened to me in events where the ref's gone, "Stop," I've stopped, he's moved a little bit more and then there's an adjustment in the reset. It's cheating to a certain extent but it's just more of an annoyance. They bring it back, they reset it to the best of their ability in the center. The angled wall mitigates that and it mitigates it in such a way that it's a disadvantage to be pushed up against the angled wall. You're very easily taken down against the angled wall. You could use a cage like the UFC does or any MMA organization, however, cage wrestling can be slow. You're obviously at the vertical and it can stagnate there, guys are very good at using split squats to really defend that position. And for me, personally, I don't love the cage for grappling, I'd like to differentiate it for grappling. What holds people back from using the alley or a pit-like structure is the viewing, the viewing angle. Because obviously, if you are one of the VIPs or you pay for an expensive seat, that angled wall is above you. A cage, you can see into, an elevated platform stage you can see clearly into because it's basically flat but the athletes could fall off and injure themselves. So, if something happens, UFC fire passes the elevated flat stage. It's scary to be near the edge, you go off, you're going to land on concrete. You might want to do that to the other guy if you, that way, inclined. But the alley, the angled wall solves all those problems, very minimal referee interference. Again, the only thing that holds people back is the expense of building it. But again, when you're spending someone else's money, you will spare no expense in production. So, we've spent a lot of money on the alley and we've really gone out of our way to create an experience that, around the alley, we've elevated everything so that the people watching will be able to see down into it. Because your instinctual thought is, "Oh, it sounds great but how am I going to see in it unless I'm far up?" You'd need a coliseum-like structure which is basically what we've attempted to create so that you get both a perfect place to wrestle, to grapple in as well as a perfect viewing angle for the fans.

Lex Fridman

Well, I think it's an amazing idea. What about the jiu-jitsu on a slant? You've triangled somebody on a slant.

Craig Jones

Yes.

Lex Fridman

Is there some interesting aspects about the actual detailed techniques of how to be effective using a slant?

Craig Jones

I'll be honest, I competed for karate combat twice, never once did I ever step foot into the pit. Just, again, like you said before the podcast, if there's a right way of doing things, I'm probably doing it the opposite.

Lex Fridman

The wrong way. I actually no idea why people take advice from you but they do.

Craig Jones

I'm mostly an inspirational speaker at this point, I think.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. You and Tony Robbins are like this.

Craig Jones

Same size at least. But in terms of the training for, obviously, the athletes, it's very difficult. Some of these guys have gone out there and built their own angled walls.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, I saw that. There's a cool video of that.

Craig Jones

They're getting into that. That's a smart thing to do. There's a million dollars on the line, you should probably invest in that. But I also like a new surface that no one's competed on, no one's gamed it yet, we're going to see it unfold. UFC, when people started figuring out how to use the cage, we're going to see this unfold in front of our very eyes how the strategies work for this. The other thing we've done too is we're doing rounds. So, qualifying rounds would be three five-minute rounds, the final would be five fives. Why I want to do that is to incentivize action. We're going to incentivize action through penalizing people but we really want ... I love a short burst, a break and the guys can go hard again. I don't like a jiu-jitsu match where the guy takes the back early and he's like, "Oh, if I keep this position, I've won,"

and that's something that people that don't compete don't realize. If you get a good position early, you get up on the points, you just sit there and go, "Oh, let's ride this to the end." That's why I want rounds so that you might take the guy's back, you're really incentivized to get that finish. And the way we're trying to grow the sport is to steal the MMA scoring structure which a lot of people criticize because they think it's overly complicated, they don't understand it. But to the mass audience, they understand a 10-point must understand a decision in that sense, they understand it being scored round by round. So, we're trying to appeal to a broader audience here but we think, based on the structure, based on how hard we'll call stalling penalties, based on you wanting to finish your opponent quick to have a better chance at a million dollars. Because it's 10,001 to show up and a million to win, if you aren't first, you lost, there's no reward for second place. So, I'm punishing the one position I've only ever been able to achieve in tournaments.

Lex Fridman

Are you worried that, because of how much money is on the line, people will play careful?

Craig Jones

A very generous friend of mine has provided this money. I'm like, "Unless you guys go out there and try to kill each other and put it all on the line, I just won't do it again. I'm giving you guys a massive platform". We've turned down offers from streaming platforms that wanted to buy the rights to this event because the marketing's gone very well. We're turning down money to grow the sport. The ADCC promoter said he wanted to grow the sport so what he did is he put it behind a paywall and he used the money from the paywall to buy more expensive arena. I don't think that's how you grow the sport, I think you grow the sport like comedians do these days. Guys like Mark Normand will release a special for free, Andrew Schulz did it first, released a special for free- Norman will release a special for free. Andrew Schulz did it first, released a special for free and it grew his audience massively. I think that's what jiu-jitsu needs. We need an exciting show that's not behind a paywall that'll grow the sport, grow the audience, and really then, ultimately, we can get to a level where it could be behind a paywall. But I just don't think we're there, yeah.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, I think million dollars is a lot of money, but the opportunity here, because it's open and freely accessible by everyone is to put on a show.

Craig Jones

And then, you get a million every year. This is a crazy, exciting event. The funding is going to be so easy year after year. And the other aspect we're doing to it is, unfortunately, I'm not going to make any money off this thing. It's a nonprofit and the money from charity...

Lex Fridman

Except the OnlyFans, but whatever.

Craig Jones

Yeah, that's the real cash cow. But that's the real work too.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. And that's not for charity, that's for your personal bank account, the OnlyFans. Are you also...

Craig Jones

So, that'll be for the follow-up therapy. But that'll be expensive gig for whoever takes that on board.

Lex Fridman

Love hurts.

Craig Jones

That physically will, yeah. Ticket proceeds to charity. So, obviously, we've got the \$3 million budget, we've got production expenses, we've got the team of staff to hire. But if we could sell this thing out, we could potentially donate a ton of money to charity. One of those charities is Tap Cancer Out. And what's great about this is Rich Byrne is a black belt from New York, who's in the banking world. He used to run an event called KASAI Grappling. He went through cancer. He basically had a very aggressive cancer. He had it treated. And now, he basically has said to us that whatever we donate from the profits of the event, he's going to match dollar for dollar. And we've also had another guy who wants to remain anonymous, agree to match dollar for dollar as well. So, the more ticket sales revenue we can create here, the more we can actually give back to charity. So, it's really all round. It's going to be a great event.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, Tap Cancer Out is great. And all the charities that the athletes have been selecting are great. What's been the hardest? You are wearing a suit, so you figured out how to do that, but...

Craig Jones

The tie was difficult for sure.

Lex Fridman

Tie was difficult, but you figured it out and congratulations on that. But you've never run a tournament? No.

Craig Jones

I've never wrestled a big woman either. Well, I have, but not in this form.

Lex Fridman

Not in a competitive environment for OnlyFans. What's been the hardest aspects of actually bringing this to life?

Craig Jones

The first one was people believing it was real.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Craig Jones

That was quite difficult. And then, communicating with the athletes. That's basically my responsibility is securing these guys, getting these guys to commit to things. It's very difficult. There's a reason a few athletes in every sport really stand out and it's kind of professionalism and kind of the way they market themselves. And I think those two things do go hand in hand. So, we're in a sport... Isn't that funny? Where a lot of these guys do have managers. I think in MMA things would be a lot easier for the promoter because you're not talking directly to the athlete. You're talking to a guy who might, who's obviously taking a cut, but like, peace, there's a middleman. So, in a situation where you're talking directly to the athlete, can be very difficult, can be very annoying, can be very hard to reach these guys. They can be very non-committal. That for me has been one of the biggest challenges. The guys that I speak to that are like, "I'm in." And then, they're like, "I'm out. I'm in," like navigating this area. One other aspect is because we did this basically from idea to event will be less than three months, three and a half months. So, it's like we're having to do so much in such a short period of time. Little things like, of the show and money we've given them. They're expected to basically secure their own flight and hotel to the event with cutting down on staff because that would be one of the... If I had to coordinate, getting these guys flights, I would just jump off a building. It's hard enough to get them to agree to the event, let alone coordinate, "Hey, what date do you want to come in?" It's like herding cats. So, really just the interpersonal stuff's been difficult. Obviously, going up against ADCC, the legacy event has been pretty difficult as well. Well-established, huge history. They've been selling tickets for two years. Everyone's known it's been coming for two years. That thing was largely sold out before we even announced the event. So, we're going head-to-head with this event. So, from a ticket sales perspective, very difficult.

Lex Fridman

What's been Reddit question? What's been the most surprising people who turned down on your invite?

Craig Jones

Oh, I mean, we can name names. I mean, obviously, Conan, he was a semi in, semi out. His suggestion was actually to do a second and third place prize rather than a million. And I'm

like, "No, we want all or nothing. It's all or nothing here." That's a better spectacle, better entertainment, probably more injuries, but it's all or nothing. Mica Galvão, the one that got away.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Craig Jones

That's sad. But we got the Ruotolos. The Ruotolos props to these kids because Kade's the reigning champion. These are two of the best guys in the sport. Allegedly, were offered pretty significant show money to stay. But they hit me up and they said, "Hey, promise us one thing. We're on opposite sides of the brackets and we'll fight to the death in the final for the million." And we know... Everyone knows that. Well, we've seen them compete against each other multiple times. So, that was not a surprise because I know they're good kids. But to basically turn down allegedly show money to do this event, to support the event, to me is incredible. Mica Galvão, things would be more complicated there. Obviously, Mica officially joined ADCC before he secured the Ruotolos. Kade beat him in the final. Mica's personally motivated to face off against Kade, so he didn't know Kade was in our event before he agreed to ADCC. There's more to that story too, in terms of Mica doing ADCC because a bunch of the kids in his team, I think they're being flown out to do the ADCC kids event. So, there's his two teammates, well, at least one of his teammates will be doing the ADCC 66 kilo division. So, his dad, his coach, doesn't really want to split time between two events. That's a difficulty for athletes there. But obviously, disappointing. We couldn't secure Mica. Mica said he was about the legacy, so he wanted to be the youngest guy ever to double Grand Slam, which is basically win all the Gi events and win the ADCC that same year. My thoughts were, if I was in his position, and I never was obviously a prodigy, a talent like that is I thought he had a position to make a statement in the sport to kind of as cheesy it sounds, be on the right side of history, to have turned down a double Grand Slam, to be in an event that supports athlete pay. Again, I don't overly criticize him. But I think in terms of your legacy and reputation, to be at a point and choose to do that is much more memorable than him getting that double Grand Slam, which I'm sure he will win the ADCC 77 kilo division this year, but it'll be somewhat tarnished anyway. So, I do feel bad for some of the athletes that win this year and potentially people will be like, "Oh, yeah, but there was half the people weren't in the division." I feel bad for those guys. But at the end of the day, most of these guys had an opportunity to be a part of an event that really there's no downside to. You have a chance to be paid more money than you've ever been paid in your life. You are selling tickets that are going to go to charity, and it's not behind a paywall. So, anyone, anywhere in the world can stream this event, watch it, and there's no barrier to entry in terms of finances.

Lex Fridman

Was there ever any chance that Gordon Ryan would enter?

Craig Jones

I don't think so. I don't think so.

Lex Fridman

Is that something you tried?

Craig Jones

Me and Gordon don't text each other too often. I tag him on Instagram and things, but he doesn't respond.

Lex Fridman

Tell me about your history with Nicholas Meregali.

Craig Jones

My history with Nicholas Meregali, actually it dates back to a time where probably he does not even remember back when I used to wear a kimono. So, I went to Abu Dhabi World Pro. I was chasing my gi dreams. I lost in... I can't even remember. Again, probably the final. You know me, I probably lost in the final against Tommy Langacker in the weight division. This was the last year they did the absolute. I went into the absolute. I made it all the way to the semis. Nicholas Meregali destroyed me in the gi. I did hit a nice little reversal on him though, he passed my guard and I somehow reversed him from side control. That's the only part of the match I share. After which, he swept me, submitted me.

Lex Fridman

You reversed him from side control?

Craig Jones

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

Okay. So, that could be an instructional.

Craig Jones

Yeah, exactly, exactly.

Lex Fridman

But right place, right time though. All right.

Craig Jones

But then, years later I left the team, Meregali replaced me. So, they've brought in a more credentialed, handsome, doesn't speak as well, but they've brought him in. He's my replacement. He's coming to the team. We faced off at ADCC. I do a heavier division

thinking... I looked at the names and I was like, "That looks like an easier division." And I had two teammates at that time that were in my 88 and I was like, "Those guys will have to face all first round. I'll have to face one of them second round the way they do the seating and the structure of the bracket." So, I was like, "I'll do 99, I'll leave 88 for the boys." They both lost my division first round, unfortunately. So, I faced off against Meregali beginning of day two. Lot of pressure because Danaher used to corner me, used to be my coach. Now, he's cornering the Brazilians who used to complain about as the enemy. And I'm like, "What's going on over here?" It's like karate kid stuff. I face off against Meregali. I go hard early because I think he can't defend leg locks. For the first three minutes, I'm just attacking legs, legs, legs. I ended up sweeping him, getting on top. No points before the points period. But I'm very tired. I'm very tired at this point. Meregali's big. There's some guys that get juiced up to hit a certain weight. That's what I did to enter this division. You can't keep your gas thing. Meregali's just a big dude. Who knows if he's on the juice or not. But he's just naturally sits around 230 pounds or even 225. When you're naturally that big, you gas tanks a bit better. Again, if you balloon yourself up on every substance possible, gas tanks surprisingly not too good. So, we have a bit of a close one. Decision goes my way. Ultimately, finals next. I lose that. But that is sort of our competitive history. We were meant to have a match that had been pre-booked immediately after ADCC. So, we agreed to this before ADCC. I was like, "The price is right, I'm in." So, I signed up for it and I'm thinking ADCC that we're going to face off soon after. Meregali chose instead to have some vacation time. He wanted to go on vacation. He went to relax, bit of relaxation down in Brazil. So, the match is scrapped. Flo hit me up and they say, "Can you do February?" And this was about the time that Volk fought Islam in Perth. I was like, "No, I can't do February because I'll be helping Volkanovski. That's going to take precedence over this match." Flo goes, "You know what? We announce it anyway. We'll sell those tickets anyway. We'll get the people hyped. And then, we'll just have you pull out." And I'm like, "All right, do it." I'm like, "Do whatever you want. That's fuck, and probably not a good idea." But they do that. And then, people keep trying to rebook this match. But now, I barely even train anymore. I'm busy being a promoter, traveling around. So, now instead of facing in competition again, which I would do if the price was right, they'd have to pay me very well. Two of the shows have offered me the match, but the money, terrible.

Lex Fridman

What do you think is a number that would convince you?

Craig Jones

It would have to be, I would think half a million dollars. Otherwise, I just can't be bothered.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Craig Jones

You know what I mean? It have to be worth it because to put a price on a guy that takes himself as serious as Meregali. Meregali is a very serious man. He's talking about authenticity. He's talking about words he doesn't even understand. For me, to give him the opportunity to live in a world where he had won the last match against me, it's hard to put a price on that. When people say it's not about the money, it's not about the money. It's about me waking up every day knowing that he knows he lost to me.

Lex Fridman

So, you think you've gotten it in his head?

Craig Jones

Yes.

Lex Fridman

How do you think he would do if you were to face him for the said \$500,000?

Craig Jones

For the \$500?

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Craig Jones

I think over five minutes I beat anyone in the world. But...

Lex Fridman

You still think you got it?

Craig Jones

I still think I got it. Gabi about to find out too.

Lex Fridman

All right. So, you're going to make a statement with Gabi that it'll be a match she remembers.

Craig Jones

Yeah, yeah, she for sure. I think the fans will remember it as well. I'm open to it. If we do this match, I'm taking it very serious. But we'd be open to rematches. I've always said, I would have an MMA fight with her. I wouldn't be afraid to hit a big woman.

Lex Fridman

So, unlike with Meregali, if you win, you're not going to ride out off to the sunset with Gabi.

Craig Jones

I'm a bit of a romantic. I think she deserves a few finishes, not one, and hit the bed that night.

Lex Fridman

So, you think you can actually beat Nicholas Meregali?

Craig Jones

I think so, yeah. I mean, you could throw a riddle at him before the match. That had fucking complicate things for him for the next hour.

Lex Fridman

Will you and Gordon ever get along again?

Craig Jones

I think so. I think we need... The origins of MDMA was couples therapy in the '70s in Houston, I believe. I believe something like that for us could resolve these underlying issues.

Lex Fridman

You're a man of Reddit because they suggested that you should consider ketamine therapy sessions.

Craig Jones

Just imagine a therapist sitting down with him. They'll be like, "Clear the schedule for the next couple of weeks."

Lex Fridman

With all due respect, Craig, I can't imagine a therapist sitting down with you. That would be a terrifying.

Craig Jones

I do have a therapist. Actually, they prescribed me Vyvanse. He's quite confident in my...

Lex Fridman

This is... You met him in Bali or where did you?

Craig Jones

It's a Russian website.

Lex Fridman

It's the old Sean Connery thing. It's not a therapist. It's just something that's spelled the same.

Craig Jones

I think me and Gordon, a debate of some type would be awesome.

Lex Fridman

Like a political debate?

Craig Jones

Yeah, me representing Kamala Harris, and him representing Donald Trump. That would be...

Lex Fridman

So, intellectual sparring.

Craig Jones

An intellectual battle, a battle of wits.

Lex Fridman

Can you just speak to your trolling? Is there underneath it all? Is there just a respect the human beings you go after?

Craig Jones

For sure. They have to be worthy of being attacked. You know what I mean?

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Craig Jones

Like if someone attack... That's the thing, it's like you want a worthy adversary, not in a sense of, I don't want to battle someone that has better banter than me because I'm going to lose. But I want to battle someone with a profile large enough that it doesn't look like you're just...

Lex Fridman

Who do you think is the biggest troll or shit talker in martial arts?

Craig Jones

Renato Laranja.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. Well, you can't even put him in the... He's in the other class of human being.

Craig Jones

He's overqualified.

Lex Fridman

Chael Sonnen comes to mind.

Craig Jones

Chael is good.

Lex Fridman

You versus Chael, who's a better shit talker? If you look the entirety of the career.

Craig Jones

Chael is better. I mean, I don't think if you can shit talk in MMA, because there's far worse consequences for you. If you're still willing to do it when really violent things can happen to you. I mean, I'm getting death threats, but he has a certainty of violence against his opponents at MMA.

Lex Fridman

So, on Reddit, somebody said you are a coral belt level troll and just happened to be good at jiu-jitsu. So, what did it take for you to rise to the ranks of trolling from white belt to black belt to coral belt? And what's your journey with talking shit?

Craig Jones

That's a good question. Hey, I think it would've happened after I moved to America because in Australia, we just on a daily basis say some of the worst things you could ever imagine.

Lex Fridman

Like in private life?

Craig Jones

Yeah, we just trying to ruin each other's day. In a way, that's so blase, you're going back and forth. And the guy that actually gets upset and says some real shit, that's your victory. You know what I mean?

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Craig Jones

You're like, "Oh, we got you, you actually... That actually, bothers you. All right, we'll take that as a victory."

Lex Fridman

All right. So, when you come to America and everybody takes themselves a little too seriously, those are just a bunch of victims that you can take advantage of.

Craig Jones

An Australian entering American banter is like, neo getting these matrix skills. You're just like, "Whoa, I see everything coming."

Lex Fridman

Do you ever look in the mirror and regret how hard you went in the paint at somebody?

Craig Jones

I don't think so. I don't think so.

Lex Fridman

So, you're proud of yourself?

Craig Jones

I think what I offer is some balance. It's like I'm bringing some justice. Ultimately, it'll probably come back in spades to me.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. I don't know, as a fan of yours, as a fan of Gordon's also. But as a fan of yours, I see the love behind it. I don't know. It seems always just fun. The shit talking seems fun.

Craig Jones

I wish you'd buy it back. It doesn't buy back anymore though.

Lex Fridman

What's your relationship like with Mo the organizer of ADCC?

Craig Jones

I mean, it's been a love-hate relationship. I guess that...

Lex Fridman

Like with Gabi?

Craig Jones

Like any good relationship, if you don't get blocked to the end of it, will you really in love to begin with?

Lex Fridman

Right.

Craig Jones

That's my thoughts anyway. But so, in terms of my friendship with Bob, me and Mo were really close friends for a long time. We'd talk a lot. He was instrumental in us moving Danaher desk squad to Puerto Rico. He lives in Puerto Rico, spends most of his time in Puerto Rico. I've spent time with him in Florida, California. But in terms of our relationship, I'm trying to think of an exact time where it went south, but I guess in my... Him being the ADCC organizer, in my attack of athlete compensation was taken personally, which is obviously going to ruin whatever friendship you had.

Lex Fridman

And that started around the time you were thinking about CJI.

Craig Jones

I mean, to be honest, CJI was a result of the response of my discussion of athlete compensation. So, me and Mo had been close friends even after the Danaher team broke up. We were still close friends for quite a while after that. But it does complicate things when someone is, for all intents and purposes, he as an ADCC competitor and he runs ADCC, the event, he's in control of it now, he is your boss. So, that does complicate our friendship.

Lex Fridman

Have you had a conversation since you announced CJI?

Craig Jones

Have we had a conversation...

Lex Fridman

When did you get blocked?

Craig Jones

I honestly didn't get blocked. I was just joking. Nah, honestly, we had a disagreement about athlete compensation. I said, "Let's do a podcast and talk about it because I'm a big fan of transparency. If you think I'm an idiot for thinking athletes should get paid more, tell me in. Show it to me." And I've made public statements. Other people have asked why we don't get paid more money. You can both tell me and the world at the same time, the grappling world at the same time, but was not interested in doing a podcast. Again, maybe he thought I was

going to hit him with some gotcha questions or something. But really, at the end of the day, I personally believe you've got nothing to hide. If you are confident in the business decisions you've made, then there's no got you moment that I could actually do. I could easily... I would have done the podcast if I look like a complete idiot would've released it anyway because it'd be a good message to where we are in the sport. But again, considering what I know about Thomas & Mack's price, which I believe we're paying \$200,000 for, and T-Mobile's \$2 million. How do you justify no increase in athlete pay? Well, we have a \$1.8 million increase in venue cost.

Lex Fridman

So, you're saying that there could potentially be poor business decisions, poor allocation of money that could be reallocated better to support the athletes?

Craig Jones

Yeah, I've never once thought this was some organization when most like stealing money from self. I'm just saying that... And again, the road to hell is paved with good intention. So, he might fully think that what he is doing is going to grow the sport. I'm going about it in a completely different way. I don't think we need T-Mobile. I don't think we need it behind a paywall. I think we need cheap venue, still maintain good quality production. Release it for free. If you want something to grow, present it for free.

Lex Fridman

Is there a future where the two of you talk?

Craig Jones

Yeah, for sure. He keeps insisting on talking face-to-face. I don't have a problem with that, but my argument is, this is a public feud. The public... This is... We're having a disagreement. Let's settle the disagreement in a way that answers the question to the fans. Because if one of us is a complete idiot that I believe the world of people following this story are entitled to know which one of us is an idiot.

Lex Fridman

If you talk to him, would you be good faith? Would you turn off or turn the troll down from 11 to a three?

Craig Jones

I don't even think I need a troll. It might just say, "Hey, show us the books." You know what I mean? Honestly, when our event's done, we're going to be pretty transparent. Obviously, we are run as a nonprofit. We're going to be pretty transparent about everything. And I mean, obviously, ultimately, all the views we get. When FloGrappling, when an event on FloGrappling or Fight Pass or any other streaming provider, unless it's a pay-per-view, you're

not going to know how many people watched. So, that's one aspect of what we're doing is we're going to have a visual guide to how many people off hands of grappling.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, transparency in all of its forms. That's what bothers me about the IOC with the Olympics is that there's this organization that puts on an incredible event, but it's completely opaque, it's not transparent and the athletes don't get paid almost at all. So, it's usually from sponsorships and they sell distribution, broadcast distribution. And so, it's mostly pay walled after the fact. It's very... Unless you're a super famous athlete or a famous event, it's hard to watch. I don't know the early rounds of the weightlifting or the judo or all of the competitions where most of those athletes get paid almost nothing and they've dedicated their whole life like, they've sacrificed everything to be there and we don't get to watch them openly. And in many cases, you can't even pay for it. With IOC, I've got to experience this because I'll have podcast conversations with judoka for example, and I put a little clip in a podcast and the Olympics channel takes it down immediately. So, they have all the videos uploaded private, they're private.

Craig Jones

Oh, to flag the copyright.

Lex Fridman

They just flag the copyright automatically. From the private videos, they could release, they could release somewhere, even if it's paywall, which I'm against. But paywall, but make it super easily accessible. So, the FloGrappling model is still okay. I'm against it. But if you do a really good job of it, okay, I can understand a membership fee, but it should be super easy to use. But in the case of the Olympics, first of all, in the case of the Olympics, the whole point of the Olympics is for it to be accessible to everybody. So, paywalling goes against the spirit of the Olympic Games. And I will say the same is probably true for many sports I grappling, especially from major events like ADCC that I feel like they should be openly accessible to everybody on every platform. But what was the decision like for you to make it accessible on YouTube and X and...

Craig Jones

Well, I mean, just because basically it's going to grow the sport. You know what I mean? If you have to subscribe to a platform to watch something, you have a mild interest in, a mild curiosity in, there's a financial barrier there. So, I want to open it up because again, we have an investor who's contributing and is happy for it to be spent this way, happy for us not to be held hostage by these streaming providers. And really like, again, I'm not making accusations against FloGrappling or UFC Fight Pass. They are making the right business decision by not providing streamer numbers because that's leverage that those people can use against the streaming provider. But for me as an individual athlete that really wants to understand the metrics of how many people actually watch this sport to leverage that in my

own sponsorship negotiations, then if I'm in a position to have this out free and also give every athlete involved the same metrics and information, you'll literally be able to see the spikes when you compete and you'll be able to take that and present it for opportunities for sponsorships, for businesses to say, "Look, how many views this got." I was one of the most viewed moments of this event, so I want to put the power back in the athlete and take it away from the host.

Lex Fridman

And it creates a lot of incentive for the athlete to make it exciting.

Craig Jones

Yeah, this is your time. It might never happen again. I fully intend to run this every year. That's the goal. But again, it might never happen again.

Lex Fridman

Is there a possible future where the 2026 ADCC is run by Craig Jones?

Craig Jones

Could I take over ADCC? I think from an ADCC perspective, it would make a lot of sense. I think it would make a lot of sense to wait, to see if this event turns into fire festival first before you commit to something like that. But I think a more modern approach to the promotion of the event, again, I keep going back to the comedians. You know what I mean? If you want to grow your brand, whatever that may be, provide content for free and you can paywall. Eventually, you can grow the audience, create the audience free. I think, again, if your goal is to create a huge sport here, then it's like if we're already a niche sport and competition aspect of that, is it even smaller niche? Then, we need to grow that providing this content for free.

Lex Fridman

Well, having just chatted with Elon Musk who fundamentally believes that the most entertaining outcome is the most likely, that to me, if the universe has a sense of humor, you would certainly, Craig Jones would certainly be running ADCC, which would be, I mean, it would just be beautifully hilarious.

Craig Jones

It would be a poetic ending. It would be an underdog story, from a man that could never win the event to running the event on behalf of the Sheik Tahnoon.

Lex Fridman

So, I saw B-Team videos of the CJI camp, people training super hard. So, you aside who don't seem to do things in a standard way, what does it take to sort of put yourself in a peak shape, peak performance for a huge event like the CJI or the ADCC?

Craig Jones

I mean, psychologically, it's really, really brutal. For me, anytime I'm leading up to any event of any meaningful significance, it's horrible on a psychological level because you're always thinking about, "Are you training enough? Are you doing enough?" If you feel any signs of sickness, injury, the stress levels increase, your sleep quality decreases, it's all those little subtle things that's so hard to mitigate. So, whether you feel like you're training hard enough, you're over training. Those to me are the most difficult aspects. And I think really, those are an individual thing and that's really something where a coach can provide what he thinks to you is the right amount of work. And I think that's different for different people. I think Nicky Rod could do eight hours a day, you know what I mean? I think Nick Ryan, 8 minutes.

Lex Fridman

I saw a video of Nick Ryan with a trashcan throwing up.

Craig Jones

Yes. He's being good.

Lex Fridman

And the top comment is like, "That's him doing the warmup."

Craig Jones

That is satisfying to watch, honestly.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. But yeah, so you're supposed to train hard enough to where you have this confidence that you're prepared.

Craig Jones

Yeah, I mean, and it's an impossible thing to grasp. It's like some of the best performances I've had, I've been called up last minute or I've been sick or my camp's been horrible. And for me, personally, I've gone in there and thought, "Oh, relax." Almost like, oh, well, you got caught up a week ago, you're injured, you missed four weeks of your camp. And I went in there super relaxed and accepting of the result and performed much better. Sometimes, when I know three months out, I've got an event coming up and that event only happens every two years. It just the stress of that alone, I personally on an individual level, more of a, I'd rather wing it. I'd rather be in the stands and just roll down. Like Gunnar Nelson, I remember he had a brilliant performance in an ADCC absolute. And he was out drinking the night before. He had no idea he was competing the next day. He was in the stands eating ice cream and they called his name out for the absolute, and he went out there and I believe he got bronze. I believe he beat Jeff Monson. So, it's like, it's different for different people. Obviously, you don't want that to be the standard. You've got to be putting in the work at all

times. But even now in my crazy travel schedule where I don't train anywhere near like I used to. As long as your game is technical, and as long as your body's in good condition, I believe you can still train well against world-class guys. You might not be able to do an hour straight, but if you're technique-orientated, you're just losing fitness.

Lex Fridman

So, is it possible to out cardio Craig Jones? Is your game fundamentally a technique-based game?

Craig Jones

For Sure, for sure, yeah. I've never wanted to win anything bad enough to train properly for it.

Lex Fridman

Right. But isn't that the secret to your success being lazy?

Craig Jones

I think so. I think that's the only logical explanation. And I also use it as mind games too. Again, no one knows whether what I'm saying is true or not.

Lex Fridman

Right.

Craig Jones

And I'm not saying this story to say anything bad about my opponent at that time, but I booked two matches and two consecutive weekends. And I've been traveling, I think I just got back from one of my trips. I've been over international, so I don't even know where the fuck I was. But...

Lex Fridman

Yeah, you're in Texas right now, by the way. Just in case you forgot.

Craig Jones

Texas, just for you. I just came back for you.

Lex Fridman

Thank you, man, it's an honor.

Craig Jones

But I hadn't really even trained. I couldn't train. I was traveling, just had no ability to train. I trained for a week. I had the Phil Rowe match. And I said to myself, I was down in Mexico City and I said, "You know what? If you win this match, you got to face Lovato next week. Don't go

out and party, don't celebrate the victory. But as a 32-year-old man at that time, hitting a flying triangle submission, I thought that deemed a worthy afterparty.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Craig Jones

And we got out of control that night. And it wasn't until the next day I woke up, I was like, "Oh, I have Lavato next weekend." But people don't know whether I'm telling the truth or not. But it's also, I'm almost too honest because I'll be doing an interview saying, "Yeah, I was out party and I barely trained." The opponent looks into that and they question it, "Is he telling the truth? Is he baiting me? Is he really that unconcerned?" You know what I mean? It's almost a psychological battle in and of itself, but for the most part it's true.

Lex Fridman

So, to you, being psychologically relaxed is extremely important, just not giving in them, I wonder what that is.

Craig Jones

Not too much pressure. I don't want...

Lex Fridman

Pressure.

Craig Jones

I don't like the pressure.

Lex Fridman

But you like the pressure when it comes to internet shit talking.

Craig Jones

Well, I mean, you get a silently sit back and think about a good response.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. How important is it to just go crazy hard rounds leading up to competitions like that? You said sort of Nicky Rod, but on average for athletes at world-class level, do you have to put in the hard rounds?

Craig Jones

Yeah, I think you have to put in the hard rounds. It depends at what point in your career you are. I think someone like Nick Ryan might almost train too technically too often. And when he comes to competition, it's a confronting experience when someone hits him hard and he

fills that pressure. So, I think different people require different things. When Nicky Rod is breaking the spine of a 37-year-old father, a three-bus driver, it might be time for him to train in a more technical manner. So, it's like you've got to cater it to what they need. And again, depending on the opponent, it's a game of- To cater it to what they need. And again, depending on the opponent, it's a game of strategy. For me, when I was more active, I look at an opponent that I want, that I could steal some clout from, off of which the clout, you can make money. And I think to myself, "What's the best rule set I can beat them in?" That's the strategy. And then how would I beat them in that rule set? So there's so many strategic layers to go above and beyond just the training for me. But nowadays I like to, if I train short duration, high intensity, that's the best for me. I don't like this six little, like 10, six minute rounds, whatever. I don't like this long training. For me, it's too much toll on the body. I think I go to the gym, maybe the first round's slightly light, and then just bang it out. Two hard rounds tops, a little bit of problem solving. Get out of there. Because you want to feel a little bit of the competition intensity. That feels the best on my body.

Lex Fridman

When you're traveling, you're doing seminars and you're just doing Jiu-Jitsu with folks, are you training with them? I'm sure, from everything I see, people would love to train with you.

Craig Jones

Yeah, they want to. I mean, I don't know what it is. Obviously, I guess it's like people want to play basketball with a basketball star or something, you know what I mean? But I guess you play one-on-one with a basketball player, there's no great risk of injury. That's the real problem is if you don't roll at your seminar, the seminar participants don't feel like they've got the full experience. But, there's snipers at these seminars. There's these sharks that are circling wanting to attack you, and you have to look it... You look at it from both perspectives. I think you should provide excellent technique. Excellent question and answer time. And I think you should roll a little bit. For the most part, these days I'll just roll 30 minutes straight. I'll just do 10 guys, three minutes, no break. 30 minutes straight. I might even get the guy to pick, again if you... Some of these guys come in hot.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, it's terrifying, man. Because the thing is with Anthony Bourdain sort of analogy here, you're exploring all parts of the world. You just want to be there in the culture, teach good techniques and just socialize. You don't want to... There's just a bunch of killers that are trying to murder you.

Craig Jones

Yeah. To them they're like, "I get to test myself against a world-class athlete today." And to you, you're like, "Oh, I'm in Odessa. I'd like to get to know the people."

Lex Fridman

Yeah, exactly.

Craig Jones

"Try some food, have a couple drinks and enjoy the place." But to them it's time to go. You got to rope it open a bit. If I meet pressure with pressure, I get tired. But if I don't provide resistance where they think there should be resistance now it slows their pace down. They get shocked a bit. But 100%. If I'm at a seminar and someone's rolling too hard with me, if I feel like I might get hurt, I'll 100% rip a submission on them. You know what I mean? It's like, you're confronted with a threat. You have to meet it with a threat. It's like, I've spoken about this with Ryan Hall. Ryan Hall will give them a warning and then gone. And I think it's perfectly acceptable. I won't endanger them for no reason, but if you are coming hot, you better tap fast. If I feel a threat, you better tap. I'm not going to break it for the sake of breaking it. But if you do some crazy shit that might potentially hurt me and I get a submission and I'm tired. If you are fresh, you can catch a heel hook, hold it tight. The guy tries to wiggle out. You got it. If you're tired and you've been nice with a heel hook and then they slip out and club you in the head, then next time is going to be the last time.

Lex Fridman

Well last time, see you're another level, you and Ryan Hall are just world-class. But for me, I'm trying to find, navigate through this. 'Cause I'd like to be able to roll 10 rounds for fun, for cultural.

Craig Jones

Oh, but they're coming for you too.

Lex Fridman

And unfortunately ripping submissions or knee on belly, some kind of dominant position, people don't hear the message at all. Or if I let them submit me a bunch of times, they don't calm down either. So I've been trying to figure out how to solve that puzzle. Because I'd like to keep rolling with people across the world for many more years to come. But it's tough.

Craig Jones

You can't do it. If you've reached any level of notoriety, whether it's in the sport or just as a celebrity, you're better off to just have three, four trusted training partners and train privately. That's the sad situation. People used to say, "Oh, you could be such and such and go to any gym." No. Those days are over now. Now, if you show up and you have any sort of name, they're coming to kill. Honestly, you're better off. It's so much safer. Training is about trusting. Trust is built from safe rounds.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Craig Jones

Strangers are scary.

Lex Fridman

I don't know. I'm trying to develop a radar when I look at a person, trying to figure out. Are they...

Craig Jones

Are they from Eastern Europe? I'll tell you what the most [inaudible 01:47:31]. That's a good one. You know what? Anyone that wears a Pitbull sports rash guard or anyone from the country of Poland, be ready.

Lex Fridman

Oh, Polish people go hard.

Craig Jones

People go hard. I've never had a flow roll with a Polish person.

Lex Fridman

Somebody on Reddit asked, "How many legs did you break in Eastern Europe?"

Craig Jones

Three or four.

Lex Fridman

To send a message or just for your own personal enjoyment?

Craig Jones

I don't enjoy it.

Lex Fridman

You don't enjoy the violence.

Craig Jones

It is humorous after the fact though. I mean it's just like, "Hey bro, I'm jet lagged, I'm tired. I'm here for you guys. Why are you trying to hurt me?" If I get a submission tap, don't hesitate at all. Don't hesitate. I mean, Jiu-Jitsu's dangerous. It's a dangerous thing. And when strangers are going crazy, they think they're getting invites to CJI if they tap me. It's just wild.

Lex Fridman

So speaking of which, just for the hobbyist, for a person just starting out, what wisdom can you provide? Say, you were tasked with coaching a beginner, a hobbyist beginner. How

would you help them become good in a year? What would be the training regimen? What would be their approach? Mental, physical in terms of practice in Jiu-Jitsu.

Craig Jones

I mean honestly picking safe training partners and trying to understand the positions and not just freaking out. You might escape if you freak out, but you also might be stuck in something and you injure yourself. So I think if you can... It's just about longevity. If you can find a pace to train at and a sort of intensity and the right people you could potentially train five years without injury. It's really about how you move. If you are always moving in an explosive way, eventually you're going to do that from a position in which you can't move and then something's going to tear. And you also want to be able to trust training partners to not go too crazy and inflict too much pain. You know what I mean? It's like, yeah, I think I've managed to avoid a lot of injuries. I just never roll too athletically, explosively. I think I'm probably incapable of moving at that rate of speed.

Lex Fridman

So that's part of it is you the way you move. But I guess you also don't allow anybody to put you in a really bad position in terms of hurting you.

Craig Jones

I let them put me in bad position, but I try to stay relaxed at all times. That's the key here is, I mean, yeah, obviously you've got the cheesy, keep it playful. But it's like if you can remain calm in bad positions, that is a skill. That's your confidence not in yourself, but that the other guy's incapable of submitting you. That's the ultimate confidence. You can give him whatever you want.

Lex Fridman

So the thing you want as a beginner is to focus on minimizing injury by relaxing, by not freaking out.

Craig Jones

Yes. Keeping it at a pace so you can understand what just happened.

Lex Fridman

The thing is how do you know if you're freaking out or not? As a beginner. It feels like a...

Craig Jones

Yeah if you're panicking.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, that's a good... I mean I see a lot of beginners breathing, starting to breathe hard, they tense up. That's probably, underneath that is panic.

Craig Jones

If you can make someone panic, you'll fatigue them. It's the same, it's like even if you higher level and you're worried about getting your guard passed, it's the panic that leads to fatigue in your guard retention. But if you're so flexible, you remain calm. I think it's because you're not panicked.

Lex Fridman

Fear is the mind killer. But also you have one of the more innovative games in Jiu-Jitsu history. How'd you develop that? How do you continue throughout your career? How were you innovating? What was your approach to learning and figuring positions out? Figuring submissions out?

Craig Jones

I mean, financial motivation. If you can hit moves that no one else knows how to do, you can sell those instructions. But also it keeps it interesting. I mean it can get stagnant and boring. A lot of people get to blue belt, they're good at one thing. They only do that one thing. I think it's finding creative ways to beat people. And sometimes creativity is in how they respond to it. So if you can find a humiliating move to do to someone, well, not even necessarily humiliating, but a move that is unexpected. When you get hit with something you don't expect, I think that is sort of really one of the most fun aspects of it. You know what I mean? You train to stay better than the people you're better than. That's what keeps you in the game. And finding creative ways to beat those people is some of the most entertainment.

Lex Fridman

So that's just something that brings you joy, by doing the unexpected.

Craig Jones

If you get swept with something that you don't think should work, I think that's fulfillment.

Lex Fridman

So your game is even a bit trolly, interesting. But what's the actual process of, with the Z Guard, all the innovative stuff you've done there, how do you come up with ideas there?

Craig Jones

Just studying tape. Just study. Study tape and try to reverse engineer. If I see something or I train with someone, and it feels... You know when you have those moments where you're like, "Oh, I don't even know what they're doing here." And if you can put someone in a position they don't understand, that's also where they panic. So it's creating different ways to make people panic. But also, I mean just innovation, like having fun with it. I guess the artistic aspect of it is fun. You can be creative in how you can beat people.

Lex Fridman

Did you say artistic or autistic?

Craig Jones

Both. Both.

Lex Fridman

Okay. Just checking. What's the most innovative thing you've come up with? What's some of the cooler ideas you've come up on the mat?

Craig Jones

I don't think I've come up with anything, but I've popularized things. Like certain styles of leg entry. I definitely didn't invent them, but I popularized them. Octopus guard, playing more from turtle, sort of the pinning style of game. Because of my jokes online, put me in a position of power in the sport so that when I post content, it can popularize a move or at least an instructional popularize a game. But still, I'm not trying to sell inauthentic products. I'm still, I want the technique to work, be...

Lex Fridman

Functional.

Craig Jones

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

But put some humor on top of it. Like power bottom. Your instructional names are pretty good. And you changed that one. I saw the name of that.

Craig Jones

I mean unfortunately Meta, the ads were not appreciating some of that humor, so we had to soften the titles a bit.

Lex Fridman

You got a phone call from the man that said, "Change this."

Craig Jones

I didn't. Allegedly, the company hosting it did.

Lex Fridman

Right. What do you think about Zuck in general? The fact that he trains Jiu-Jitsu. Have you got a chance to train with him? You've trained with Volk?

Craig Jones

I haven't trained with him. I met him when Volk fought Ilia. We've spoken briefly. Interesting guy for sure, loves Jiu-Jitsu, loves MMA. Is really intending to compete in something I think.

Lex Fridman

Competing in Jiu-Jitsu, intends to compete in MMA, has a beginner's mind, is humble about it. It's interesting. Was he ever in consideration for CJI?

Craig Jones

Oh, I mean we would love to have him. We'd love to have him, but he's coming off of ACL surgery. Think he's returned to sport August. I think he'd be back training again soon.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. What your relationship has been like with Volkanovski, like what have you learned about martial arts, about grappling in different domains? Just training with him.

Craig Jones

I mean for me personally, what's so interesting about Volkanovski is his, I guess where he came from. It's like you have pre-existing ideas of what a UFC champion is. Again, I would say it's similar to when I started training Jiu-Jitsu and I first traveled to America and got to train with some really famous people. You realize how relatable they are in some aspects. Volkanovski trains a freestyle and it is humble beginnings. Humble origins. It's a small gym in a small sort of beach side city. They're run on puzzle mats. You know what I mean? If you think UFC champion, you don't think puzzle mat gym, you know what I mean? He's not training at American Top Team, he's not at one of these big gyms. So to me it just shows what you're capable of through hard work and sort of self-educating in such an isolated place. It's insane to me that he's still considered probably the pound for pound best featherweight ever in my opinion. And he's basically come across and started late from a rugby background. But also in terms of what I've learned on a technical level, I've picked up a lot of stuff from him in sort of grappling exchanges. How to get back up. Obviously, wall wrestling. In terms of how hard he trains, how hard he works the cardio aspect is insane. His cardio workouts are absolutely insane.

Lex Fridman

So he is the opposite of you, essentially.

Craig Jones

Complete opposite of me probably publicly and privately as an athlete. Yeah. The amount of work he puts in and just his sheer mental willpower. I remember there's been a couple of times where I've watched him do weight cuts where like, "That's horrible." You're watching your friend, obviously we started as basically I would help him in certain jiu-jitsu aspects, and then becomes a close friend of yours. But the whole process of the MMA fight is

horrible, especially when you care about the person fighting because some of those weight cuts you see are awful. You're basically seeing guys' eyes roll back in their head, like him just powering through a five kilo, 10 pound cut. And just constantly talking about how easy it is. But while clearly, I mean these guys look like they're dying. To push through that, and then to push through some of the moments in his fight. To watch him be completely relaxed until five minutes before the fight and then he starts talking about, "You're never going to take this belt away from my family." He's thinking about his family before he fights, his kids. You see the character change. It's just absolutely insane to watch. On the other side of that is obviously watching the ups and downs. It's been so many ups. The last two have been downs. So you're seeing the full spectrum of the highest highs and the lowest lows.

Lex Fridman

How's he able to deal psychologically with loss?

Craig Jones

I don't know. Obviously he's still hungry, still motivated. Obviously I thrive in a losing environment, but him on the other hand, I'm not sure. We don't talk too much on that level. Obviously we check in as friends, see what he's up to, see what he's planning. We were trying to get him a grappling match at CJI. I won't say the reasons it fell through, but we were setting one up with Mikey Musumeci, but we couldn't get it done.

Lex Fridman

And you can't say the reasons why.

Craig Jones

I can't say the reasons, but would've been awesome.

Lex Fridman

Do you think you could have set that up if you had more time? Part of the challenge here is for some of these gigantic matchups, I feel like it takes time.

Craig Jones

Being the promoter. Tournament, not as bad. The superfights really, really difficult. I don't think we could have set it up with more time, that particular match. But that was the dream. That's what we were hoping to do.

Lex Fridman

But there's a lot of other interesting matchups that you could have possibly gotten through if there's more time.

Craig Jones

Yeah, I'd love to see, I mean personally I really want to see Volks and Ortega have an actual grappling match. We saw him get out of those deep submissions and apply a ton of ground power. I'd love to see them just have a grappling match. I'd love to see more of the UFC stars have grappling matches, especially if they've had any head trauma in a fight. It's like, "Hey, let's keep them busy." As you see, some of those guys go crazy if they can't train.

Lex Fridman

What about the fights against Makhachev? You think Volk can beat him?

Craig Jones

I think the first fight showed he could beat him, for sure showed it's possible. Even in the second fight, when he reversed the grappling exchange. I wish he'd tried to take Makhachev down. I really think he has a huge strength advantage against Makhachev and I personally believe he has a fence wrestling advantage. You might not see it in a sense of the technical hip tosses and things like that really, but I do believe Volk's one of the best, if not the best cage wrestler in the world.

Lex Fridman

But who do you think wins in a grappling match?

Craig Jones

That would be interesting. Would be interesting. The problem is two almost to while you are a champion like Islam is you could just never book them. You could never get it.

Lex Fridman

What do you think makes the Dagestani wrestlers and fighters so good?

Craig Jones

I think personally, those guys are just like, they just love it. It's just about, it's how they train. It's a fight to the death, you know what I mean? It's just built in them. They don't want to concede an inch ever. I think for MMA and wrestling, that can be very, very good. I think sometimes when those guys come over to Jiu-Jitsu specific events, they get leglocked. They fall into traps. Overly aggressive or overly evasive. But I think the way they train just is perfect for a fight. A fight, they can just forward pressure, eat some shots, grind a guy against the wall. Fence wrestling is technical. Jiu-jitsu is far more technical. There's way more things you can do in a grappling scenario from top and bottom than I think against the wall. So a grinding nature of how they train works really good to walk a guy down and take him down against the wall. And then obviously with ground and pound, very good to hold a guy down. So I think just never conceding an inch in training. It's just they've done that since they were born, basically.

Lex Fridman

So you learn how to grind somebody down?

Craig Jones

Yeah, they're just trying to break each other at all times. Trying to have some dominance over their friends and who they train with.

Lex Fridman

But you think in the grappling context, that will not always translate?

Craig Jones

Not when you can pull guard and submit from your back. I think that sort of negates some of that grinding pressure. I think that has to be met with more slow technical lateral movement. I think that's the way you... That would be the dream for me is that guy just comes straight forward into my guard. That grinding approach works well if he's taken me down and got already close to me. But if I'm laying flat on my back and he's standing and he has to engage, he has all that danger at range. But if he can connect to my body before we go down, now we're in his world again. I think.

Lex Fridman

I wonder if it's like, at his prime could be versus you for example. Who do you think wins there?

Craig Jones

Buggy choke for sure.

Lex Fridman

Buggy choke. No way. I know you're joking.

Craig Jones

We get in with a buggy, I reckon.

Lex Fridman

Really? So you can get a buggy choke at the highest level. Can you educate me on that? That legitimately can work? At the highest level?

Craig Jones

Buggy choke for sure. Yeah.

Lex Fridman

Really?

Craig Jones

Catch anyone.

Lex Fridman

Really? Okay.

Craig Jones

You're not a buggy believer.

Lex Fridman

I'm not a buggy hater either. I'm just, I'm agnostic on the buggy choke.

Craig Jones

Khabib would go to sleep for sure.

Lex Fridman

Yeah?

Craig Jones

Yeah. There's no way he would tap to a buggy choke. Who was it? I faced recently, I faced a Russian guy from Tata. I couldn't buggy him. I was trying a closed guard one though, sort of. It is harder to pull off, but I had to put him to sleep twice at the end of the match with a triangle. But he was just willing. I don't know, Eastern European guys, it's like they're treating it like a real fight.

Lex Fridman

Have you ever gone hard with a Dagestani person? Grappling, wrestling, any of the fighters, any of the MMA guys?

Craig Jones

Have I, have I, have I? I mean they do train hard. They do train hard. When I did the seminar in Odessa, it was at a school, but another school in the city brought like 10 Dagestani guys. All of them went insanely hard. I was like, "Guys," it's a small sample size, but they all wanted to be broken.

Lex Fridman

What do you think, you as the wise sage of Jiu-Jitsu, if you look 10, 20 years out, how do you think the game is going to evolve? The art of it.

Craig Jones

The art of it. I mean, I think obviously people are going to keep innovating, perfecting certain things, throwing out information, bad sort of techniques, bad sort of... But I mean

it's so hard to predict. It's like that's the game of making money off the instructional is predicting where we go next. It's so, so difficult.

Lex Fridman

What do you think is going to be the most popular submissions on CGI and ADCC this year? Is it going to be footlocks or rear naked?

Craig Jones

I think actually CGI, I think there's going to be a lot of guys that don't tap, that take injuries. A small concern is that a guy wins the match but is so injured he can barely go onto the next match. Win the battle, lose the war.

Lex Fridman

We are going to see that. Aren't we? People refusing to tap.

Craig Jones

Actually we did the walkthrough yesterday and we were like, "One ambulance is not enough. Get a second one here." If they take one guy injured to hospital, we can't continue until an ambulance comes back. So these guys are going to go, everyone will be Dagestani for a day. That's what I think this tournament will achieve. But progression, it'll just be the integration of wrestling into Jiu-Jitsu. I think that would be the most exciting way the sport could progress. It's basically folk style wrestling, but an integration of submissions from the standing position too. If you just follow the rules of you should always be fighting to get on top, whether that's a submission that leads to a sweep or a sweep. And you should be trying to avoid being pinned. And as long as the game revolves around that and guys engage each other offensively on their feet, that would be the most exciting, best way to watch the sport.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. When I show the sport of Jiu-Jitsu, the most exciting stuff is whenever both people want to be wrestling, scrambling, wrestling, they both want to get on top.

Craig Jones

Yeah, the scramble.

Lex Fridman

That looks like fighting versus guard stuff.

Craig Jones

I'm a guy that totally agrees with you, but if I think the guy's a better wrestler, I'll concede. It's like that's the hard part.

Lex Fridman

But then the whole crowd will then mock you ceaselessly, as they should for conceding.

Craig Jones

That's what the million should be. We should have a tournament or a round-robin thing where it's like the million goes to the most exciting man, who took the most risks.

Lex Fridman

I mean, in a way that's what's going to happen because this is quite open. So the benefit of being exciting is you're going to be glorified on social media and if you're going to be boring and stall, you're going to be endlessly sort of willified.

Craig Jones

Forget about medals, social media glory is all that matters.

Lex Fridman

Well, in a certain sense, on a basic human level, yeah. I mean not all that matters. But if you're going to stall, you're going to become a meme I feel like, especially with CGI. Are the refs going to try to stop stalling?

Craig Jones

Yeah, we're going to penalize them hard. Hit them hard, get that boring shit out of here.

Lex Fridman

So what percentage of athletes would you say are on steroids? Is it a hundred percent?

Craig Jones

Anyone that's ever beaten me, they're taking more steroids than me. I don't know. I wanted to test them, but not to do anything bad, but just in the name of science to see what people are running. It's so hard to say because you train with people and they don't even tell you what they're on. I tell the world what I'm on and they go, "Look at you, you're not taking any steroids." It's like such a secret thing. I personally think it's almost impossible to say, but occasionally you look at a guy and you're pretty certain.

Lex Fridman

The looks of it. But it could also go the other way. Certain people are just genetically built and they look like they are. And then there's probably others like yourself.

Craig Jones

It's a self-defense mechanism. You'd rather assume that that guy was on steroids than his genetics are so far superior to yours. You're like, "Nah, it must be steroids."

Lex Fridman

Yeah, that's the part of accusations of people being on steroids that I hate. It's like without data, people are just like, it's a way they can say that somebody's cheating without... Because I like celebrating people and sometimes people aren't on steroids and they aren't cheating and they're just fucking good.

Craig Jones

What about Gabby Garcia?

Lex Fridman

I think she's beautiful, strong. You're a lucky man to share the mat with her. You should be honored. I am betting a huge amount of money on her, so...

Craig Jones

Me too.

Lex Fridman

Either way, you're going to get paid.

Craig Jones

She's paying 11 to one.

Lex Fridman

I bet on love as well. So we are aligned in that way.

Craig Jones

Love will prevail.

Lex Fridman

Okay, you put Alex Jones to sleep. Just to reflect back on that, what was...

Craig Jones

He was too woke. He needed it.

Lex Fridman

So that's you fighting the woke mind virus or whatever?

Craig Jones

I think it was on the pulse too much.

Lex Fridman

What was that like? I didn't see the full video. I just saw a little clip.

Craig Jones

I thought he was dead for a second. But I, for some strange reason, couldn't stop laughing. I don't know. I was like, please wake up.

Lex Fridman

There's something funny about it. Yeah.

Craig Jones

I was like, his blood pressure is higher than mine. I hope that didn't cook him.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, that would be quite sad.

Craig Jones

It's so crazy.

Lex Fridman

Murder somebody.

Craig Jones

Yeah, he's probably the most just entertaining human being ever. He just says the... Like, off-air. He's always on. He's always ready to say some wild shit.

Lex Fridman

The craziest shit possible. What's it like going to sleep? I somehow have never gone to sleep.

Craig Jones

I went to sleep one time. Lachlan Charles was demonstrating a technique on me, but I woke up straight away. But for 10 seconds I didn't know who I was, where I was, what I was doing. But that's it. That's the only time I went out.

Lex Fridman

Saw anything.

Craig Jones

Didn't feel good though. Some people say it feels good. Did not feel good.

Lex Fridman

You were like what? Panicked. Lost.

Craig Jones

Yeah. I just didn't know what was going on.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. And then you load it... That must be a cool feeling to load it all back in. Realize, "Where am I?" I feel like that sometimes at a hotel when I'm traveling. It's like, "Where the fuck am I again?" When you wake up. Maybe that's what it's like.

Craig Jones

Some people push it too far. David Carradine.

Lex Fridman

What? I'm too dumb to get that joke.

Craig Jones

Autoerotic asphyxiation.

Lex Fridman

Oh, good. Thank you. Thank you. Now I know. So given all the places you've gone, all the people you've seen recently, what gives you hope about this whole thing we've got going on? About humanity, about this world? We start war sometimes. We do horrible things to each other sometimes. Amidst all that. What gives you hope?

Craig Jones

That you can still make fun of anything. As long as it's funny. That's what I'm fighting for. People talk about cancel culture. I just think the joke wasn't funny enough. Had poor delivery.

Lex Fridman

Well, thank you for being at the forefront of making fun of everything and anything. And thank you for talking today, brother.

Craig Jones

Thank you bro.

Lex Fridman

Thanks for listening to this conversation with Craig Jones. To support this podcast, please check out our sponsors in the description. And now let me leave you with some words from Anthony Bourdain. "Travel changes you. As you move through this life and this world, you change things slightly. You leave marks behind, however small, and in return, life and travel leaves marks on you." Thank you for listening and hope to see you next time.