Metadata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbhXppC0pTE
When you look at most of the mature grappling arts of the world, they're typically divided into what the Japanese would call tachiwaza, or standing technique, and ground technique, newaza. In wrestling, for example, you'll see that there are standing takedowns, and there's also several par-tier moves, moves down on the floor. Jiu-jitsu is different from many of the other mature grappling arts, and so far as really it's only concerned with ground grappling. There are standing techniques, but in all honesty, they receive only a tiny amount of attention, and it's not uncommon to see even high-level black belts with undeveloped standing technique. I believe this has, in a sense, done great things for grappling, and bad things. That increasing specialization on the part of judo and standing technique, the rule system of judo currently greatly rewards standing technique, much more so than newaza or ground technique, has meant that the overall level of throwing ability has risen remarkably since, say, the 1950s, and judo now, in its current rule system, is producing generations of people around the world who are just unbelievably effective at coming out, controlling their opponents in a standing position, and throwing to the ground. In jiu-jitsu, it's resulted in a generation of students who are incredibly effective at starting on the floor and working their way through various positional institutions down on the mat. And so the technical level within sharply defined areas is rising rapidly as the years go by. Even in the time that I've been involved in the sport, I've seen a huge amount of development in the sport of jiu-jitsu. And that's a great thing. But on the negative side, it's meant that we're raising grapplers who are so compartmentalized in their skill set that when they try to go outside into, say, for example, mixed martial arts, they often encounter problems. They appear to be unassailable within their domain, but taken outside of that, they often are surprisingly limited. And so, as I said, the great positive of increasing specialization is being a rapid technical improvement within certain areas, but it's come at a price, and that price is the overall effectiveness of the grapplers seen from the big picture. Can they win a fight? And I think the vision of the future would be one in which you would see a grappler raised to an early age who is equally effective in both standing and ground techniques. That would be the ideal. And it seems like in some respects, not all respects, but in some respects, we're getting further and further away from that ideal of a well-rounded grappler. We're going into an age of the specialist, as I've seen, that's had a positive effect in some ways. It's meant that in their domain, technical expertise is rapidly risen. But put in a context of overall grappling skill, how would they do in, say, for example, a fight situation? I think it's been, in some ways, detrimental. And so this vision of the future that I have is of a group of athletes who are equally effective in both standing and ground, equally effective gi and no gi. Will they have the highly specialized skills of someone who devotes all of their time and energy to one small area? No, of course not. But there will be this idea of a well-rounded grappler. The idea is to raise someone in the future who could conceivably go to a World Championships in Judo one week and excel, do extremely well, compete successfully at the highest levels. Then the very next week, compete in a highly competitive Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu tournament and, again, get into the top placings. And then the week after that, go into a no-gi Abu Dhabi tournament and, again, get into the highest rankings and do very, very well in that short time. So in a three-week period, three World Championships, and absolutely test the limits of everyone they come up against and score in the medal placings. That would be the ideal that I would be striving for. That's why Travis Stevens is such an interesting student to me. Because he's one person, much earlier than anyone else I believe, who's striving for that ideal. I remember when I was training Travis early last year, being incredibly impressed by the fact that at one point he competed in a Judo World Championships. A week later, competed in the Copa Podio, one of the most competitive Jiu-Jitsu tournaments in the world, invitation only. Did incredibly well in both events. And then a week after that was training with Chris Weidman and George St-Pierre in Mixed Martial Arts, no-gi, and doing very well with both of them. And that's the ideal that I want to espouse in grappling. Of someone

who can do it all, and do it all at a very, very high level of expertise. I don't want to raise all-rounders who are mediocre at everything. I'd rather be good at something than to be mediocre at everything. But what I do want, and I thought it would take someone trained from a very early age, and in the future we'll see people like this. Who can excel in all elements. Travis Stevens was the first person I trained who excelled in every aspect of grappling. And did it in a remarkably short period of time, and starting relatively late. I often run into this problem when people seek instruction in grappling, and also in Mixed Martial Arts. We'll often get people who come from a boxing background, or a kickboxing background. They're like, listen, I'm not interested in really learning Jiu-Jitsu, just teach me how to get out of a submission hold. Teach me how to get out of a triangle. Teach me how to do this. In other words, they want to learn tiny pieces of the puzzle. This approach is always doomed to failure. You're never going to learn how to get out of a high level Jiu-Jitsu competitive submission hold. Just by snatching a little piece of information here, a little piece of information there. The wise thing to do is to devote yourself to the sport. You'll often see Jiu-Jitsu guys come into a wrestling club, show me just how to stop a single leg. Well, you're not really going to learn how to stop a single leg until you're highly competent at performing a single leg. You can't just learn a piece of the puzzle. You've got to take on the whole project. People don't want to hear this because it takes time and effort. But really, that's the only way to go. That's the logic that Travis is trying to work with here. In this case, I can only talk with regards to the sport of Mixed Martial Arts. That's the only time where I'm directly involved in someone's training all the way through to the fight. I help people prepare for a grappling competition, but I don't accompany them to grappling tournaments. So I'll talk in terms of my Mixed Martial Arts coaching experience. Really, it comes down to familiarization. You've got to look at what is the event. What can you reasonably expect to be going on when they compete in the sport of Mixed Martial Arts, in this fight in particular. You've got to bring them into experiences which mimic what you can reasonably expect to happen. There has to be a level of stress which prepares them for it, but isn't so stressful that it detracts from their confidence or physically injures them. You have to strike a compromise between softness and hardness. The training has to be hard enough that it's realistic, but it can't be so brutally hard that it breaks them, both mentally and physically. This is the main thing we work on. Familiarization. They must train in more or less the same kind of environment. I remember when George St-Pierre fought Johnny Hendricks, he heard through the grapevine that Johnny Hendricks was going to train in Las Vegas, in the actual octagon that they would be fighting in. He thought this was too much of an advantage for Johnny Hendricks, so he simply bought a UFC octagon at considerable personal expense and put it in his gym, so that he would train in exactly the same dimensions, exactly the same floor surface on a daily basis. That kind of general familiarization of putting yourself into more or less the same situation you can expect out there in the event you're competing in is the way to help you prepare for competition. I see Travis as a vision of the future. Travis represents, in my coaching experience, the closest I've seen to a fully well-rounded grappler. We're talking about a guy who can compete in world championships in judo one week, jiu-jitsu the next, and submission grappling the week after, without a problem. He got there, he got his first title, he got his second title, He got there sooner than most because he came from an extensive grappling program, but also because he was very smart. He didn't try to learn just enough jiu-jitsu to learn judo, he took it on as a separate project. So he took on the whole sport of jiu-jitsu, the whole sport of judo, the whole sport of submission grappling. He threw himself into the project, as it were, and didn't try to just steal a little piece here, a little piece there. I believe that future generations of students will look at people like Travis Stevens as an inspiration and a guiding light. Someone who, early on in the game, represented that ideal of the truly well-rounded grappler. I think there will be a similar mindset to the one exhibited by Travis himself, which is one of just an enormous addiction to training, of an obsession with technique and the learning of a craft or a skill over time. Travis is, without question, one of the hardest-working athletes that I've ever had

the pleasure of teaching and training. Even Georges St-Pierre, who is legendarily hard-working in the gym, used to look at me and in his broken English, he would say, this Travis fellow you bring here, he's not afraid of hard work, is he? No matter how badly injured he is, he'll tape himself up and he'll show up in the gym. There were times he was so badly injured, they wouldn't let him train in Boston. He would drive to New York in order to sneak down here and train. When Georges St-Pierre needed him in training camps, he would, without even so much as a moment's hesitation, jump in his car and drive four hours, come up and train in the afternoon and then get right back in the car and drive four hours back home to Boston for Judo practice. This is a guy who lives to train. He'll travel to Europe for a seminar and just an opportunity to train with fellow competitors and then be back in the United States for a Jiu-Jitsu tournament and right back to France for a Judo tournament. This is a man who's just one of the hardest working human beings I've ever had the pleasure to meet. I think that students coming up in the future will have to have that similar mindset of throwing themselves into a life of training. This ideal of the complete grappler is not for the faint-hearted. It's not something that you can just do on the weekends. This is devoting your life to learning what could easily be three different sports, machine grappling, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and Judo. Any one of those would be a lifetime endeavor and you're taking on all three in one lifetime. It's going to take an extraordinary effort. I believe that the mindset involved comes down ultimately to work ethic. Travis is an ideal that anyone involved in grappling can look up to and aspire to. He was unrivaled with regards to his desire to perform hard work in an intelligent fashion and make forward progress. That's why I believe he makes such rapid progress in the sport of Jiu-Jitsu. For more UN videos visit www.un.org