



Jane Krienke/For the Index

Junior Humza Quadri, left, and senior Matt Kiblinger, right, practice together Oct. 18 on campus. Quadri uses a style of fighting called Muay Thai, which emphasizes the use of knees, hands, elbows and shins. Quadri suffered a broken nose during his first career fight.

Student by day, fighter by night

BY JANE KRIENKE
For the Index

When he's not in the basement of Magruder Hall in the physics lab or learning about important health issues in Pershing Building, junior Humza Quadri can be found walking around campus, armed with four pairs of weapons at all times, all of which are parts of his body.

For the past two years, Quadri has been training and competing as an amateur Muay Thai fighter for St. Charles Mixed Martial Arts. Muay Thai, a form of mixed martial arts, is referred to as the science of eight limbs, Quadri said. Fighters can utilize four pairs of weapons in combat: their knees, hands, elbows and shins.

Quadri has competed twice during his amateur career. Although he lost both fights, his current Muay Thai coach, Quinton O'Brien, said his record does not show his ability. O'Brien said Quadri had problems during his second fight because he had trouble cutting weight properly. Cutting weight is done to keep a fighter in the weight class he or she is signed up to fight in, O'Brien said.

O'Brien said Quadri performed well during his first fight despite a slight size disadvantage and an illegal elbow move made by his opponent. Quadri said he received his most expensive injury of his Muay Thai fighting career that day, during the last 30 seconds of the fight — a broken nose.

"I just remember during the first fight, by the third round ... I had never felt so exhausted in my whole life, like every muscle in my body was burning," Quadri said. "But then it's you and the other guy in the ring and it's just going through your head just like 'this guy is going to put you down if you don't put him down first,' so that keeps you going through all that burn."

Quadri said he became interested in learning more about different fighting styles such as jiu-jitsu after he and his little brother watched Ultimate Fighting Championship on TV. Quadri, who is from St. Louis, started working out at Lifetime Fitness gym and taking classes there. He said he first tried Brazilian jiu-jitsu, which focuses on grappling rather than striking an opponent. He said grappling techniques are similar to what an observer would see during a wrestling competition. The two opponents leverage their body weight against each other to pin the other down, he said.

Quadri's jiu-jitsu class instructor was Matt Ricehouse, the professional Mixed Martial Arts fighter who currently fights for a fighting organization called Strikeforce. Ricehouse introduced Quadri to Muay Thai fighting, which incorporates striking moves during combat, he said. These striking moves, which include kicking and punching, are similar to techniques a boxer or karate fighter would utilize during a fight, he said. Ricehouse said Quadri's body type, with his long torso and limbs, and his willingness to learn make him well-suited for Muay Thai fighting.

Several differences exist between amateur and professional



fighting competitions, Ricehouse said. For example, amateurs are not compensated for winning fights, nor are they allowed to incorporate certain moves, Ricehouse said. In addition, amateur competitions provide a learning experience, which Ricehouse said makes it okay for an amateur to lose.

"If you get beat by one guy some way, it makes you go back to the drawing board to figure out how not to get beat that way again," Ricehouse said.

Quadri said he would prefer to incorporate some illegal moves, which would benefit him because he prefers to strike his opponent instead of grappling.

"As an amateur, you're not allowed to knee to the face or throw elbows to the face which I absolutely hate," Quadri said. "Throwing elbows to the face would be really good for me. I don't like to fight at too close of a distance. If someone clenches up, I don't really like that part of the grappling."

Because only two people compete in the ring, O'Brien said Muay Thai often is perceived as an individualistic sport. In reality, he said, a fighter cannot prepare for a competition without the help of other people. A fighter needs someone to hold pads and practice, O'Brien said. Quadri, who continues to train throughout the year, said he keeps his technique crisp by teaching his friends.

"You've got to train guys up to do it," O'Brien said. "Humza, given that he's away at school, it's not like he can do a ton of training with guys who have done this a lot, so if he's going to get a lot of training, he needs to train his friends, he needs to find other people to train with."

Before senior Matt Kiblinger, started working out with Quadri, he threw for the Truman track and field team and lifted weights with Truman's Iron Dogs, the co-ed lifting club.

He said none of that train-

ing could quite compare with the Muay Thai techniques Quadri has taught him.

"In [throwing and lifting] you have about two or three seconds of all-out maximum effort, and then you're done until your next throw or whatever," Kiblinger said. "Here we'll do three minute rounds, and by the end of the round I'm totally exhausted because I'm not used to going super hard for that long. It's pushed my endurance a little bit more than other sports I've done."

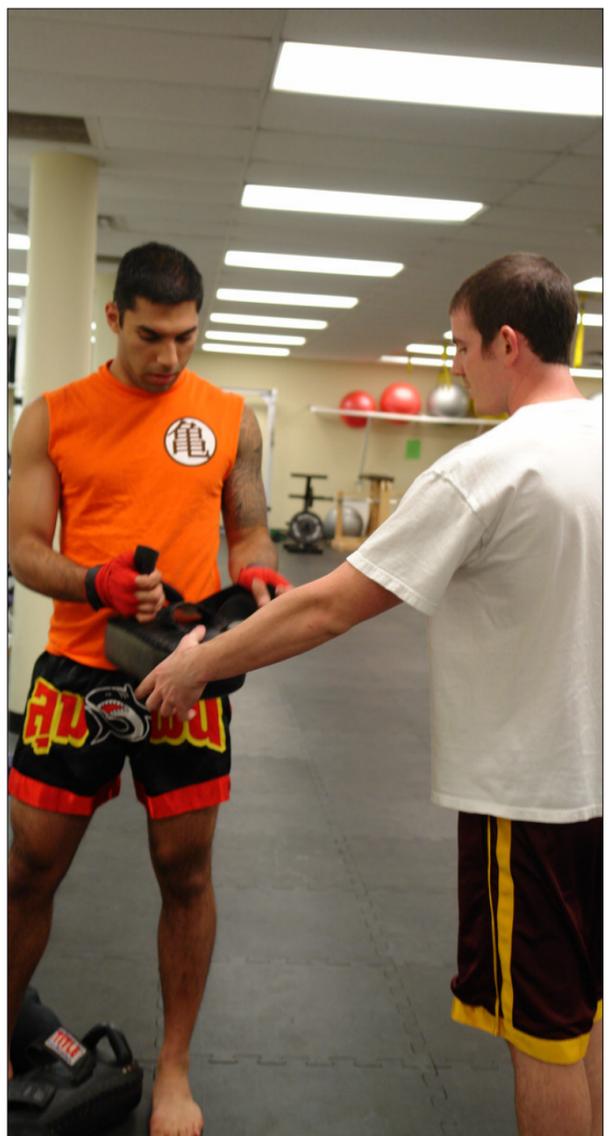
In addition to practicing technique, training for competition involves a variety of exercises, including push-ups, lifting weights and running, O'Brien said.

However, Ricehouse said a majority of the preparation for a fight is mental, not just physical training.

"You call it roadwork when you go running because it's all mental, so you're just putting in your time on the road, not for your legs at all but just for your mind," Ricehouse said. "You tell yourself not to quit ... that's something that helps you in a fight, you know ... if you've done your roadwork every day then there's no reason for you to take it easy or make yourself quit, you know you can push yourself to the max."

After he graduates this May, Quadri said he is looking forward to competing at the Thai Boxing Association Muay Thai Classic. This competition occurs every summer in Des Moines, Iowa and is known as one of the largest amateur Muay Thai competitions throughout North America, Quadri said.

"I definitely want to get back in the ring because I've developed so much more since those [first two] fights and I really want to test things out," Quadri said. "That's probably the most fun of fighting because you feel yourself making these improvements and you want to test it out. Some people train for the training, and I train for the training, but then I train and learn all these things and it's like, I can't test this out. I really want to fight."



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Top, junior Humza Quadri prepares to punch targets Oct. 18 on campus. Above, Quadri helps senior Matt Kiblinger put on targets to train with. Quadri plans to compete at the Thai Boxing Association Muay Thai Classic this May in Des Moines, Iowa.