

## Benny Benavides



Benny Benavides was born in Los Angeles, California in 1961 but became a Texan when his family moved to El Paso, Texas. He always enjoyed rough sports and took up Kenpo Karate with Coach Galarza at Hawkins Elementary School. He also engaged in Judo at Ft. Bliss from the sixth grade on to his latter teens at Jefferson High School. He found the time to also be a boxing pupil of the renowned boxer and trainer, Jake Martinez. He also studied Aikido under Doshu Edward Wilkes.

Benny's boxing career would prove to be short lived as he discovered wrestling at Jefferson. He immediately showed himself to be an astute learner and captained the "B Team" as a freshman. He also traveled to Colorado for the Junior National Olympic Championships and raced through the competition to win a gold medal. It was a first ever for an El Pasoan.

As a sophomore in high school, Benny wrestled the city's best and claimed his first district championship. The state took notice and ranked him number one. As a sophomore he won district with a 27-2 record. After his district championship, Benny defeated a wrestler from the New Zealand world team, while still a teen-ager.

After graduating from high school, Benny joined the U.S. Army and was stationed at Fort Bliss where he became a part of the All Army Wrestling Team in 1982. He achieved this by beating a wrestler ranked #2 in the world, garnering the attention of the All Army Wrestling Team coach. After only three weeks on the team, he was named Captain. While stationed at Fort Bliss Benny entered the International Games, the United States versus Latin America, and the first of its kind in North America. He won the first Gold Medal ever for the U.S. in these games.

Following an unbeaten year Benny was sent to Turkey and was approached to start the first wrestling team for the U.S.A. overseas. He went undefeated as a wrestler and Captain of the U.S. team as they took on powerhouse programs from Russia, Turkey, Greece, Italy, and Germany. His accomplishments during his leadership of the U.S.A. Europe team from 1983-1985 included eight gold and two silver medals.



After an Honorable Discharge, Benny returned to El Paso and studied Tae Kwon Do under instructor David Cobb. At the age of 46, he discovered Jiu-Jitsu and went on to create his own hybrid form of wrestling and jiu-jitsu, a form that was perfect for submission grappling. Benny's potential in submission grappling was realized when after a few months of training, Benny qualified for the Pan American Games in Los Angeles, California. Despite being a rank beginner, Benny used his exceptional skills to demolish his foes and took the Gold Medal back to El Paso. This was the first Pan American Games Jiu-Jitsu gold medal for any El Pasoan. Continuing his career after 2007, he became an eight-time North American Grappler's Association (NAGA) gold medalist. Benny also took a UFC 100 Grappling crown in Las Vegas, Nevada. He competed in different weight classes and emerged with a total of four gold medals, as well as the overall title. Benny entered the absolute division (no age, no weight, no height) and won the UFC absolute trophy.

Other highlights of Benny's impressive career include a number one listing by NAGA in the Directors Lightweight No-Gi Invitational Division. In El Paso, Benny has provided Jiu-Jitsu clinics and training for the Fort Bliss Combatives Instructors who train our United States soldiers. He has been instrumental to law enforcement, training members of the El Paso Police Department, Texas State Troopers, New Mexico State Police, the U.S. Border Patrol and the Fort Bliss Police Department.



Most of Benny's adult life was spent working in Special Education for 14 year. He was actively involved in UIL Region 19 Special Olympics for 22 years.

When thinking about self-defense and martial arts, Gold Medal winner Benny Benavides is the knowledge and experience behind Xtrem Jiu-Jitsu, El Paso's premier Jiu-Jitsu and MMA school, teaching his unique hybrid system.

The Masters Hall of Fame in Los Angeles, California, recognized Benny for his remarkable record with a huge induction reception in 2011. He was inducted into the El Paso Martial Arts Hall of Fame in 2012 and has become the winningest martial artist (jiu-jitsu) in the history of El Paso. Benny is now the owner and CEO of a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation, housing the El Paso Boxing Hall of Fame, Martial Arts Hall of Fame, and Wrestling Hall of Fame. He plans to open the El Paso Museum of Sports and Athletics to house and showcase the rich history of sports and athleticism in El Paso.