

# HERO



**Success Magazine: What does success mean to you?**

*Jason Morris: Comfort, quality of life, and being happy doing what you are doing. If you can figure out a way to do what you like to do... you are happy... that is success. Clearly the financial end of success varies from person to person - but I am in this game to win and dreams.*

**SM: How do you achieve a sense of balance in your life?**

*JM: Two words - time management. As obvious as it sounds, it really is the key to everything. Most young athletes or young entrepreneurs struggle with this. It isn't easy, but effectively budgeting your time can move you ahead of the game quickly.*

**SM: How did you get started in Judo?**

*JM: I started at the Park Side YMCA (now it is the Greater Glenville YMCA). I think I saw a flyer in school for Judo. At the time I liked the show Kung-Fu (when you don't know anything about martial arts you tend to lump everything together) so my mom took me to a Judo demonstration. I watched it and I loved it. I joined right then and there.*

**SM: So at 8 years old you saw Judo and you liked it. Liking something and becoming an Olympic silver medalist are two different things. What made you say I am going to be an Olympic medalist?**

*JM: I am a competitor. I could have chosen any other sport but it was my personality that set me apart. With Judo it was a natural fit. I kept moving forward and I kept getting better. Results kept coming. Every tournament would open the door for another tournament. It was a slow and natural progression for me.*

**SM: How do you qualify for the Olympics?**

*JM: There is a whole Judo circuit. You start competing, you get to know the people involved, and you earn a rating. It is systematic. You compete throughout the year and you can make the Olympic or World Class trials if you are in the top of your weight class. You learn about the teams you can make as you go through the system. There is not a plethora of information out there for you to find your own way in martial arts...it's not like baseball. I was fortunate enough to get involved with a coach at a dojo that was in the competition circuit. It is very difficult to make it on your own, so you need to make the right connections.*

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**SM:** You had achieved  
 courses and accolades by the  
 time you were in school.  
 How did you balance a normal life?

**JM:** I was a high school athlete. This was the only thing I could possibly do. I was on the news, and I knew that I was going to have these opportunities. I don't enjoy the spotlight. Who doesn't? I don't show off their talents.

**SM:** What skills did you possess in your youth that made you different enough to become an Olympian?

**JM:** Maturity. Being mature often means listening and learning from the elders. I seemed to thrive from being around people with knowledge and wisdom. I was also very aware. It's a curse and a blessing at the same time. I am extremely aware of what's going on (people chewing gum and talking, etc.) and it makes me a little crazy. But I know what makes me a good athlete and a good teacher.

**SM:** Was there ever a time when you wanted to give up?

**JM:** Absolutely. There were many times, but they were fleeting. I have always been a big picture guy. I had an underlying level of confidence that kept me going through my highs and lows. I was always able to do what needed to be done at the time regardless of what I was feeling in that moment, and then reevaluate it later. I was aware beyond my years. I cannot tell you why, but I knew that these were all temporary emotions.

**SM:** How did you prepare yourself mentally for the Olympics?

**JM:** I love to compete. It's the force that kept me going. You have to love the process- it's not just about the end result. I had been a top three player in the world for four years, but I hadn't won an Olympic medal. I was getting uptight. I remember enjoying it less and it becoming more business-like. In putting pressure on myself to be perfect, my confidence eroded a bit. This was my second time in the Olympics and I had already suffered defeats. I knew that something wasn't working for me and that I needed to make some changes.

I was successful in the big picture, but where I wanted to be the most successful (in big competitions) I was failing. I told myself that I needed to enjoy these Olympics, go to the opening ceremonies, take pictures and see the sights. I didn't feel the same pressure because I had already lost once. If I lost again it wouldn't really be a big deal. I went from being a favorite for a few years (top three) to being in the top 15 and nobody was really keying in on me. That translated into being able to train more productively and enjoy it more. This mindset won me the silver medal. It was definitely a turning point.

**SM:** What accomplishment are you most proud of?

**JM:** I went through a period of transition from 1996 to 2000. I was on the national coaching staff and it wasn't going as well as I had hoped. I still loved the game and started working out again. It began as something to work toward, but then it became real. In 1999 I entered the nationals and I won. I was back on top of my game. I basically had the time of my life. I knew how to train better, smarter, and harder. I got to a level that I had never reached before. I was a better player than I was when I was 20. Your body changes but so does your mental game. I am more proud of that last stint of getting an old body in good shape than of anything else in my career. That's all you can really do. Prepare the best you can and give your self the opportunity.

**SM:** So how did you start your own club and how did you get that to become a business?

**JM:** I started slowly. I began by running camps. I would charge a certain amount to run a week long camp. People started requesting extra classes. It kind of steam rolled from there. I didn't have a business plan set up, and I didn't advertise. It was all word of mouth. It actually happened in reverse- instead of having little kids coming in and starting (which is more of a cash cow) I had elite athletes coming in to train for the Olympics. But that is what I wanted to do. It was all about the Olympics for me. So I started it this way and eventually worked into having a kid's class. Each year it keeps growing.

**SM:** So what made you make the move to acquire this building?

**JM:** This was all happening at my house. The program kept growing, the kids kept coming, and I felt that I couldn't service them to the highest level to maximize their potential with

the space. So it was a long process of trying to find a building. This was attractive because I was able to rent some of the space. We have been here since October of 2006.

**SM:** So did you have a business plan for this?

**JM:** I had to have one to give the bank, but it is all just a bunch of white noise to me. What we have going is very simple- you come and you join.

**SM:** You are the Olympic Coach, how did you get named to this position?

**JM:** It was based on the progress of my program from 2000 to 2005. I was named Olympic coach in 2006. I had a young program that I started from absolute scratch and we became the best program in the country within six years. So I bludgeoned my way in basically.

**SM:** What skills do you have that separate you from other successful entrepreneurs?

**JM:** Perseverance. I do not lose the enthusiasm or motivation to continue on with this. It just keeps going. That motivational thing is just in me somehow. No matter what happens I don't shut down, and I keep getting better and more motivated with age.

**SM:** What does the future entail?

**JM:** The concrete goal that I have set for myself is to widen my student base. I would like to have 500 students rather than 100. I don't set too many goals based on numbers, but I do have this set as my five year plan. I don't need to be a billionaire though. I am comfortable. I have a nice house. I have a nice car. I have a beautiful dojo. I am content.

**SM:** If you had to describe yourself in one word what would it be?

**JM:** Confident.