



KURT J. PELLEGRINO
CLASS OF 1998

Kurt Joseph Pellegrino was born and raised in Point Pleasant. He started wrestling as a 6 year old in the local rec program and by middle school, he was hooked. Kurt went 87-3 as a middle school wrestler. He was a 2 time conference champion, 2-time Lodi Tournament winner and Caldwell Open champion. He won the NJ state championship in 1994 at 126 lbs. In high school, Kurt was a 4-time varsity letterman in wrestling, 4-time district 23 place winner (champion in 1998) and 2-time region 6 place winner (champion in 1997). In 1997, Kurt was the only wrestler in Boro history to be named MVP of Region 6. Kurt placed 2nd in the NJ State finals in both his junior and senior years. After high school graduation in June 1998, Kurt attended Gloucester Community College for a short time, where he started on their wrestling team at 157 lbs.

After college, Kurt still longed for the competition. In 1999, while working for the Point Pleasant Department of Public Works, Kurt started training in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (BJJ), the art of grappling that includes submissions. This seemed like a natural transition for him coming from a successful wrestling background. Kurt became a multiple time Grapples Quest and NAGA World Grappling champion. In 2007, Kurt was one of only 16 Americans invited to compete at the Abu Dhabi World Jiu Jitsu Championships. Kurt placed 4th, losing to his now BJJ coach, Marcelo Garcia, in the semifinals.

After training and competing in Jiu Jitsu, Kurt made yet another transition to Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) fighting. He won his first professional MMA bout in June of 2001. After the win, he decided to resign from Public Works and open his own Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) training facility in Brick, NJ. After compiling an impressive record of 11-1, Kurt was contracted by the Ultimate Fighting Championship

(UFC), the largest MMA promotion in the world. He and his then fiancé, Melissa, sold their gym and moved to Florida to focus 100% on his training. Upon the move to Florida, Kurt was awarded his black belt in BJJ, a long awaited honor for him. He made his UFC debut at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas in July of 2006. He and Melissa, now his wife, welcomed their first child, Priscilla, in 2007. After a UFC loss in 2008, Kurt and Melissa decided to move back to NJ to change training camps and to be closer with family. Kurt, with the help of Melissa, opened a small Jiu Jitsu academy, Pellegrino Mixed Martial Arts, in Belmar, NJ.

Kurt competed in the UFC for 6 years and 13 bouts. He became one of the most popular, top ranked lightweight fighters, winning “Fight of the Night” and “Submission of the Night” honors on 5 separate occasions. In 2011, Kurt retired from the sport of MMA after the birth of his second child, a son, Kurt Robert.

Shortly after his retirement from MMA and UFC, Kurt moved his ever-growing MMA academy to a bigger location on Main Street in Belmar. Pellegrino MMA & Fitness academy is a 10,000 square foot training facility that offers Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, Kickboxing, Wrestling, Boxing, MMA, and Fitness classes to adults and children. He also coaches his very own successful fight team, which consists of almost 30 professionals and amateurs. He has had two of his fighters compete in the UFC. Today, the academy has almost 400 members and over time has expanded its franchise to other locations. As of 2015, there are five KPMMA & Fitness locations, Marlboro, Long Branch, East Brunswick, and Little Egg Harbor.

Even though retired from MMA, Kurt still continues to compete in Jiu Jitsu. He won the International Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Federation (IBJJF) NY Open Championship as a black belt in July of 2014 and won the IBJJF Pan American Championship in September of 2014. Kurt was awarded his 2nd degree on his black belt from his Jiu Jitsu instructor, Marcelo Garcia, in January of 2015.

Kurt lives with his wife Melissa and their two children, Priscilla (age 7) and Kurt (age 3) in Point Pleasant. In addition to his career, Kurt enjoys fishing, spending time with his family, teaching his students, and coaching his fight team.