

# For Ross, fighting isn't about the brawl

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Farmington Hills resident Jessica Ross admits her family doesn't like the idea of her getting socked in the face when she goes into the ring.

"They don't like what I am doing," she said. "They don't get it."

Nonetheless, the 28-year-old advertising executive said the sport of mixed martial arts fighting is about a person testing her physical and mental skills against another, not mindless brawling.

On April 13, the promoters of HOOKA-SHOOT brought together 12 women skilled in the field of mixed martial arts to compete in the first all female mixed martial arts event in the U.S.

Ross was chosen as one of the select women on the card that pretty much allows any kind of fighting in an effort to make the opponent submit.

The matches were held at the Evansville Memorial Coliseum in Evansville, Ind.

Last year, Ross said she suffered a technical knock out in a limited women's fight on a card made up of mostly male fighters.

"I started the boxing as a way to work out," she said. Soon after she joined friends in signing up for classes in the martial art of jiu jitsu.

"I was their first and only female student," she said.

She has won 35 first-place medals in Brazilian jiu jitsu matches held all over the country.

"This (ultimate fighting) is just a natural progression in that sport," she said. "It's where you test your skills against another."

But also like any sport, the chance of getting physically hurt, exists.

The opponent must either submit or go three, five-minute rounds. If neither fighter submits, judges make the ruling, Ross said.

She said the fights will be broadcast in Japan, where ultimate fighting is very popular.

Ross said most people find it hard to believe she's a skilled fighter as her day job has her wearing dress clothes and dealing with media advertising issues for J. Walter Thompson.

Before and after work and on Saturdays, though, you'll see her in the gym training, usually at Warrior Way Martial Arts Alliance located in Warred Lake.

"Most people would never guess in a million years I do this," she said.

Case in point, Ross said the woman she is set to battle with this month is an attorney and mother of two.

She admitted catching up with family and friends is tough with such a busy schedule.

"It's a good thing for the whole women's fighting movement," he said. "She's making history with the rest of the women on the card."

What does she like about fighting?

"I like the competitive part of it," she said, "the mixed (martial arts) part of it."

She realizes allowing her face to be hit in ultimate fighting matches will eventually result in physical consequences.

"At 28, I am already older than most of the fighters," she said. But she does plan to keep competing in the jiu jitsu long after she gives up ultimate fighting matches.

"I want to start a female, self-defense class," Ross said. "I think everyone should know how to defend themselves if they are ever thrown down."

While there is no large purse at the end of the match, Ross is hopeful the fight will allow female fighters a place in the spotlight.

"We hope to show women can do this as well," she said. "It's a man's sport that women can break into."

She said few women were involved when she began fighting in tournaments.

"Now I go to tournaments and there are 10 of us, we're the pioneers."

Angelo Popofski is Ross' trainer and boyfriend. He said Ross trains and works hard at what she does.

"She's very technical," he said, adding he's not worried about her getting hurt in the upcoming match.

Popofski said the fact Ross was invited to participate is a testament to her abilities.



**Fight club:**  
Jessica Ross of Farmington Hills is among the elite cadre of women athletes in the sport of mixed martial arts fighting.

## Youth honored at breakfast on May 13

Farmington Youth Assistance will have its 17th annual Youth Recognition Breakfast May 13.

Organizers look for those students in grades 6-12 who deserve recognition and appreciation, but who may not normally receive it from the community at large.

The event is part of Farmington Youth Assistance's goal to encourage positive examples of youthful volunteerism.

Organizers hope the recognition of these young people will focus attention on positive role models in the community.

## Weavers Guild displays its fiberworks at center

A variety of hand-woven articles by members of the Michigan Weavers Guild are now on display at the new City Gallery, in the lobby of the Costick Center in Farmington Hills.

*Fiberworks*, the juried exhibit features rich tapestries, felt sculptures, baskets, table runners and garments, among many other items. Many of the talented artists in the guild are Cran-

brook Academy graduates, and have won numerous awards for their work.

In existence for 56 years, the Michigan Weavers Guild is dedicated to inspiring creativity and preserving fiber traditions by providing forums for the education of hand-weavers, hand-spinners, basket makers, and fiber artists in related disciplines.

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