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Wells takes 2nd in ultimate fight

By John Bombatch, Journal Sports Editor, E-mail: jbombatch@coxohio.com

He's a teacher and a motivator who likes to practice what he preaches.

Chris Wells, a Middletown High School teacher by day, and a fiery defensive coordinator for the football team on crisp fall Friday nights, enjoys pushing his physical abilities to the limit.

On a day earlier this month, Wells pushed himself further than even he expected.

Just a few months after his second elbow surgery in two years, the Middie mentor entered the Arnold World Gracie Submission Championships, a no-holds-barred ultimate fighting competition that was part of former bodybuilder-turned-California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's annual Arnold Classic, held in Columbus.

Wells, entered in the 173-187 pound weight class of the Amateur No Gi division, fought five matches at the Columbus Convention Center, defeating opponents from Hawaii, Texas, Massachusetts and Florida before losing by a narrow decision to a former national collegiate wrestling champion in the championship match March 7.

"I enjoy putting it all on the line like that," he said. "Wrestling five matches in one day, you don't get much time to rest. But you can't be afraid to take a shot in life. I just enjoy going out and giving it my best shot, win, lose or draw."

The former Middie all-state linebacker and all-American linebacker at Thomas More College in Crestview Hills, Ky., has been studying the art of Gracie Jujitsu with friend and coach Jorge Gurgel for the past six years.

Gurgel runs a martial arts center in Middletown, formerly known as New Generations.

"The place is like a secret around here," Wells admits. "People from several other states come to Jorge's center to train. He's the best."

In fact, Gurgel is one of the few people whom the excitable Middie will admit actually rivals his intensity — on a martial arts mat. Wells credits Gurgel, spiritual friend and basketball legend Shelby Linville, and fellow teacher Dom Williams for helping to frame his life into something that is a positive, not only for himself but for his students as well.

"I hope my kids will be able to learn from what I did, and maybe use it as motivation for themselves to succeed," said Wells. "I'd like all my students to have the courage to know that it's okay not to win every day, as long as you know that you went out and gave something your best shot.

"That's what I did in the Arnold Classic — there were a lot of really, really tough guys there. I just went out and did my best. If the kids give it their best, who knows? You just might

