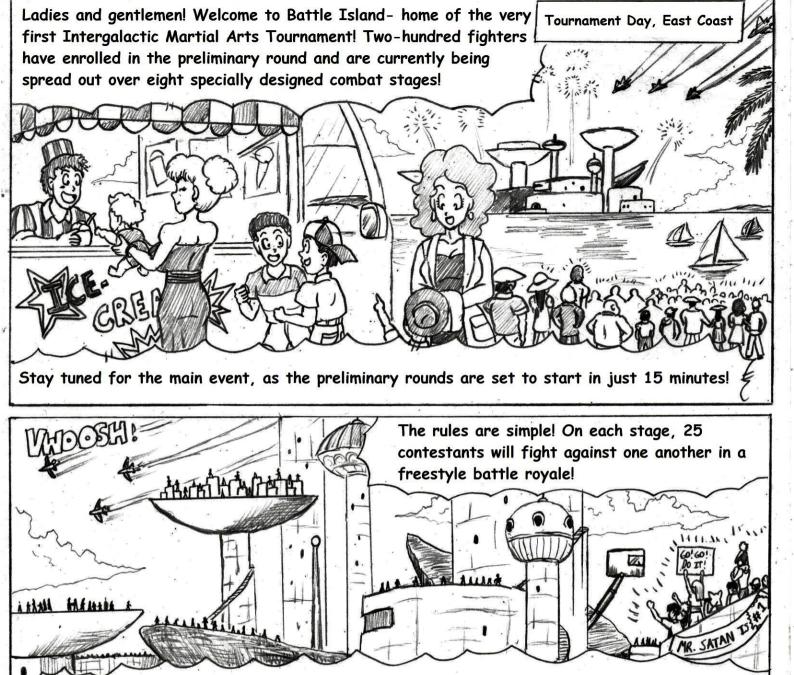
## GOLDEN AGE

Chapter 3 - A Strange Tournament

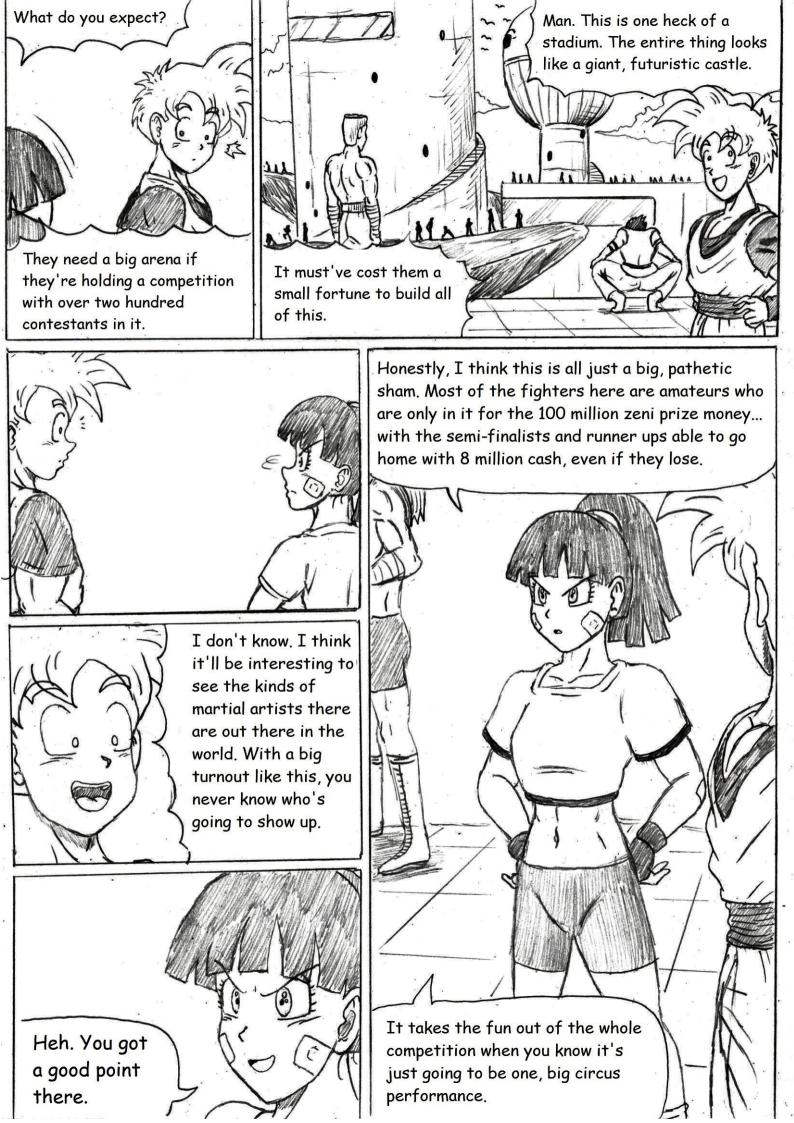
Wow! That competition looks amazing! So many fighters! I wonder how Gohan is gonna do?!

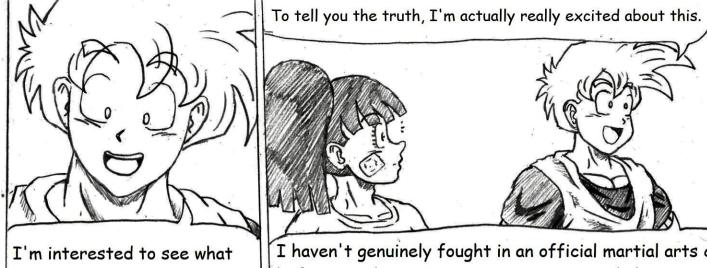
Oh, I'm sure your boy will be fine. Fighting is in his blood, after all.



Fighters are disqualified if they faint, surrender, or fall into the sea! The last one standing on each platform will move into the quarterfinals! Killing is prohibited of course, as is hitting below the belt, and the use of weapons!







I'm interested to see what it's like to fight in a real ring.

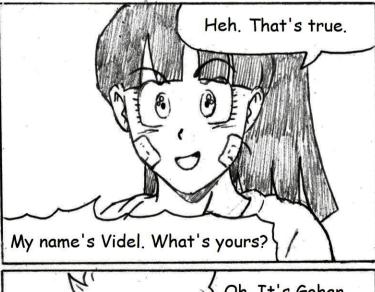
I haven't genuinely fought in an official martial arts contest before... and since I never got to see my dad compete in the previous world tournaments...

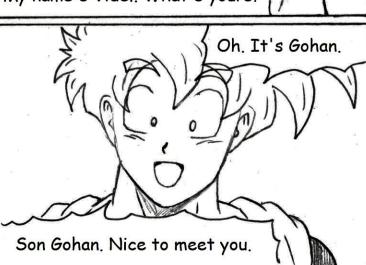




before? Your face looks very familiar.



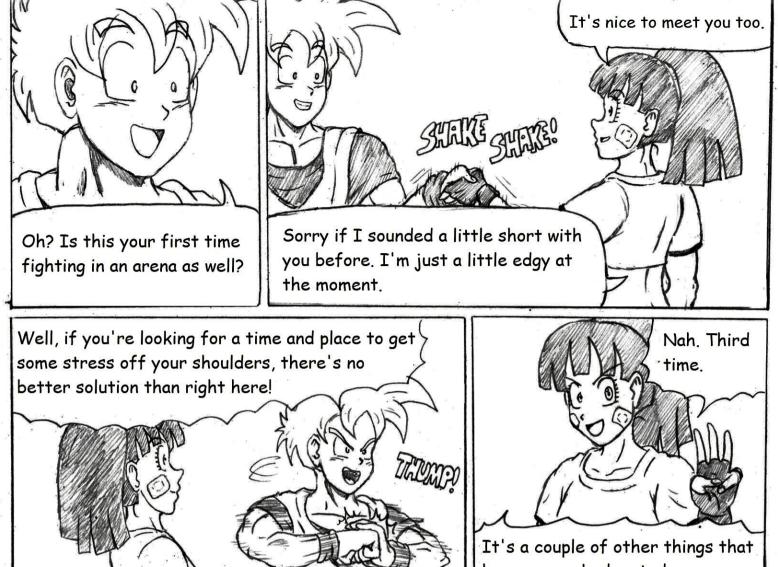






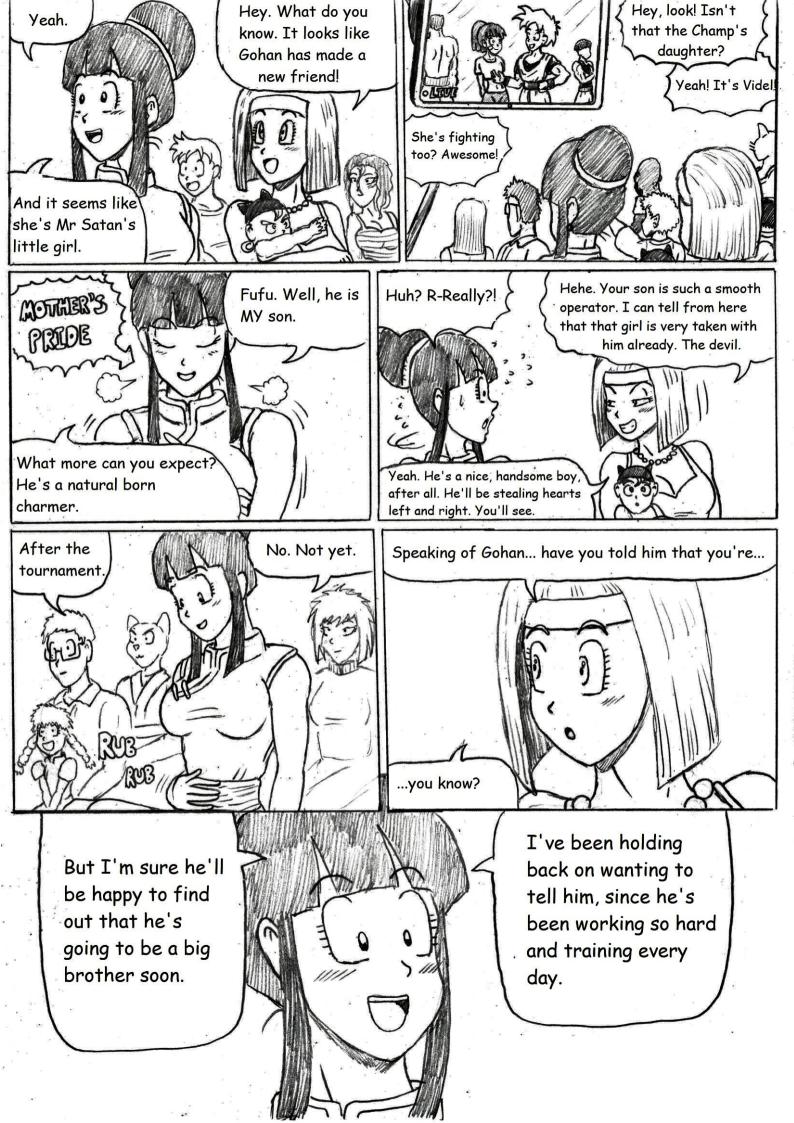
Maybe I just have one of those faces. Y'know, the kind you see on the streets or at school. I haven't really gone out much, so I don't think you and I would've met.









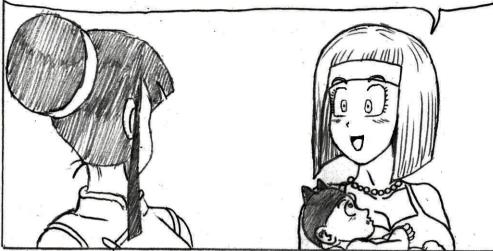


He did. When Gohan told me he wanted to keep fighting and explained to me the reasons why...

I just couldn't say no to him.



True. Honestly though, I was surprised to hear that you allowed Gohan to keep training, even though Goku said you didn't want him to. So what changed your mind?



Tell me the truth, Bulma... am I making the right decision here? Do I support his passions and his other talents, and allow him to pursue his interests freely? Is that what a good mother should do?

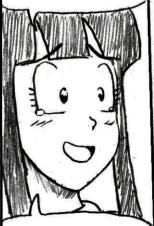


During our talk, I realized how unfair I was being on him... and that I was forcing him to pursue a life that only I wanted. All these years, I was so focused on protecting him from the world and pushing him to pursue a career as a scholar, I didn't realize I was robbing my son of what was most important- his freedom to choose his own path.



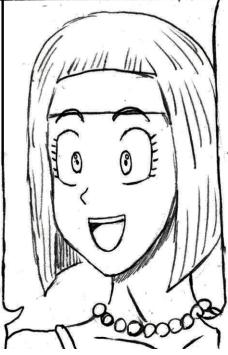
It's what Goku always wanted for our son to have. I was just so wrapped up in trying to raise the perfect, normal, fairy tale family that I never saw how much I was babying and smothering him. But after Gohan told me he wanted to be the best in both academics and martial arts... I knew I was only holding him back.

Thank you, Bulma.



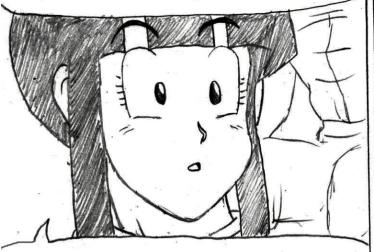
Th-That really means a lot to hear.

A boy like yours wasn't meant to be kept behind a desk pushing pencils. He was meant for greater things. In fact... you letting him train like his father was probably the best thing for him. After seeing how much happier, stronger, and confident Gohan was when he came to visit a few days ago... I know you made the right call.



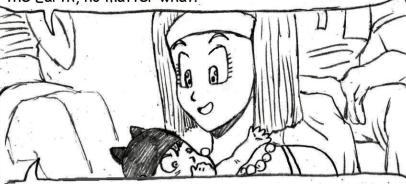
Yes! Chi-Chi... Gohan is a really amazing boy. He's smart, gifted, hard working, and every bit as strong and passionate as you and Goku are. If studying AND training hard is something he wants to do, and he has the ability to go the distance, I say let him! To take away that chance... the opportunity to try and be his best... will only lead him to regret in the future.

Not to mention Vegeta isn't exactly in a rush to take up Goku's place in the group. In fact, he still really hates the idea of being with the others.



Is that why Vegeta isn't competing today?

Being a parent is tough... especially in a family of energetic, hungry Saiyans. Leading a completely normal life for us is impossible, since monsters, aliens and demons seem to constantly be popping up to threaten the Earth, no matter what.

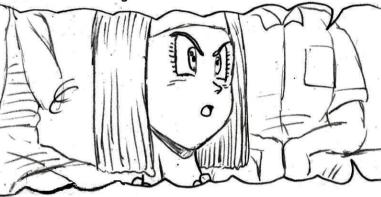


The only thing standing between them and our world is our family and friends. So to stop them from doing what they do best would be a seriously bad idea.

The guy doesn't even want to train anymore. I have no idea what's going on in that thick head of his!



Pft! He's not here for a whole bunch of reasons. Even though this may be the last time he may be able to see Trunks before he goes back to his future world...



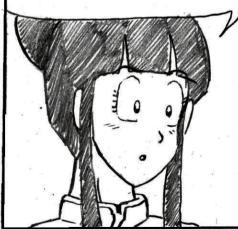
...he just wants to lie at home and mope. Geez.







Hm. He hasn't been the same since Goku died.



"A lot of things are going to change... for everyone."







"But I suppose nothing's going to be the same without him around..."





My mum did judo all throughout highschool, while my dad practiced karate. He fell in love with her at first sight and the two of them ended up running the gym together before they had me.



She must've been a really strong and skilled fighter to have been able to do that.





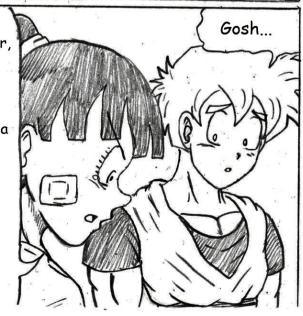
She started looking pale one day. After a couple of weeks, while she was out shopping, she fainted. The hospital staff ran all sorts of tests, but they couldn't figure out what was wrong with her. She's tired. She struggles to eat. And while she's awake some days, she sleeps most of the time.







Things weren't the same after that. Eventually, dad stopped going to see her, leaving me to go alone to the hospital with the maid. Now he's out most days and nights, and every time he comes home, he always has someone with him- a friend or a business associate. It just got worse the more famous he became. And now, all he does is show off and act like a big shot- dancing around the ring, bragging to the cameras... if mum saw how he was behaving, I bet she'd give him a good, hard punch to the face.





Maybe... doing all of that is just your dad's way of coping with things. I mean... everyone reacts differently when someone close to them is struggling or sick... especially someone they really love.



After hearing what you had to say, I think acting out the way he does probably helps your dad get through the day.



I didn't mean to go off at you like that, Gohan. I'm just... really scared and angry about all of this.

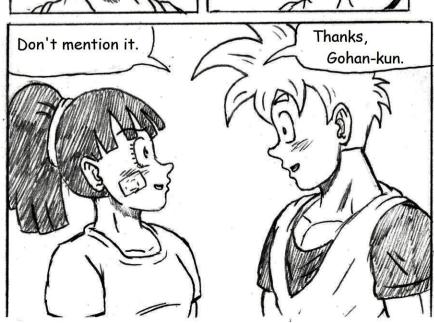












I've been doing everything I can to take my mind off what my mum is going through... and everything else. Even though she told me not to worry... I can't help but think about her.



I just wish there was a way I could help her.



lend you an ear, Videl.







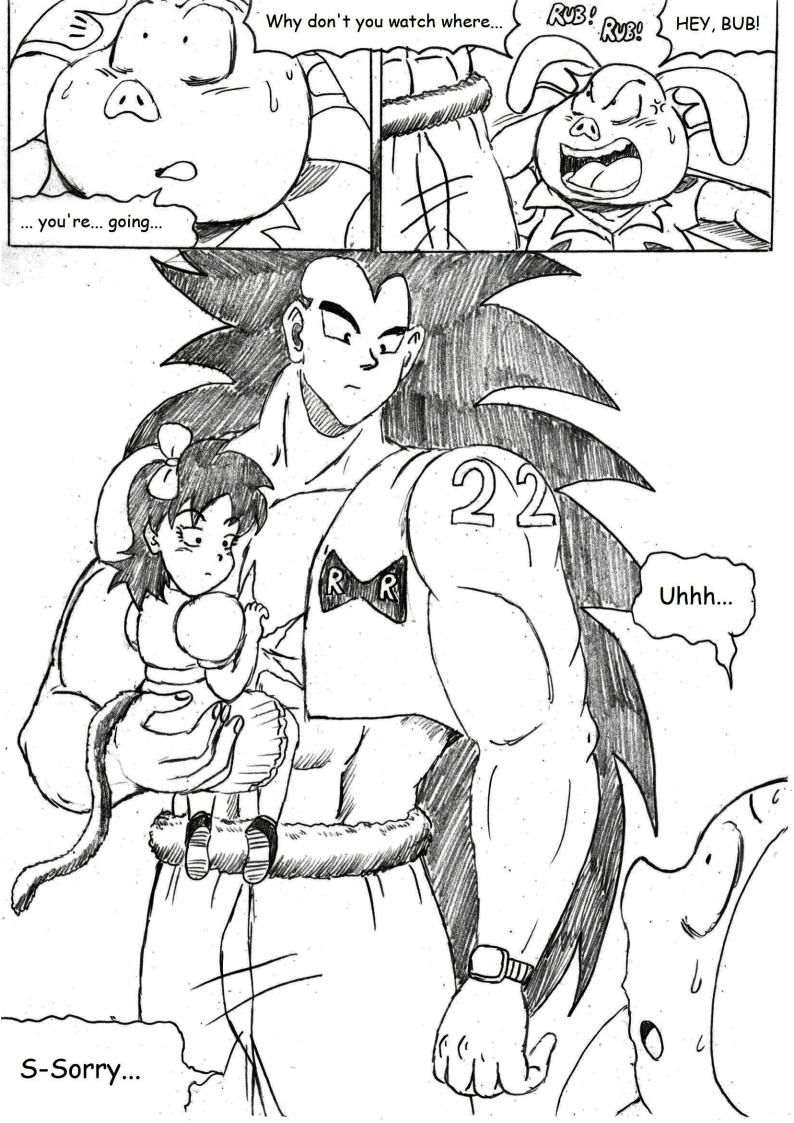




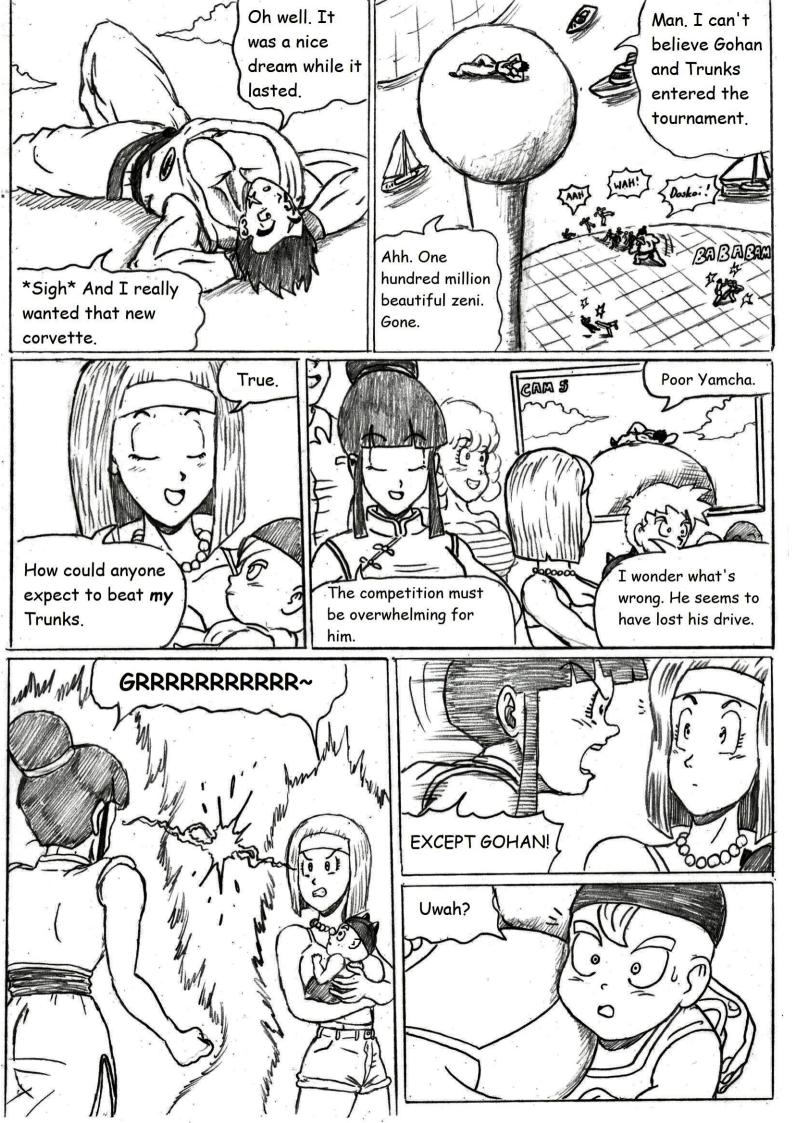














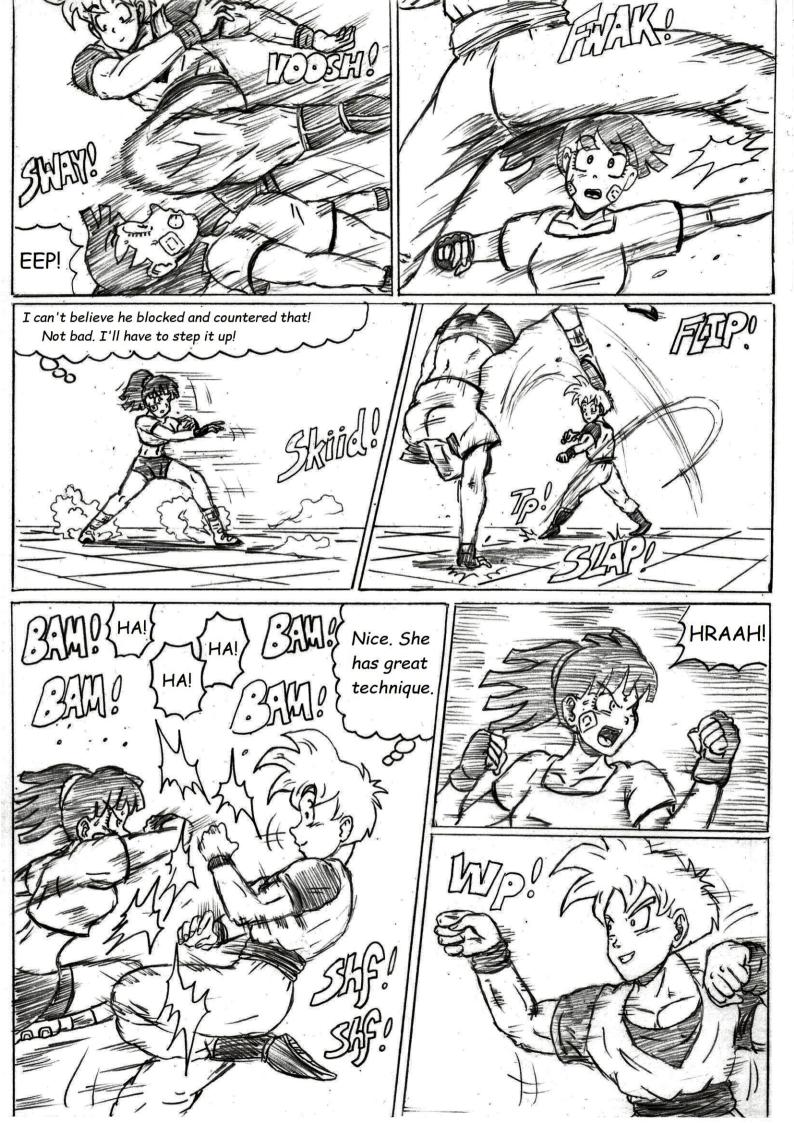




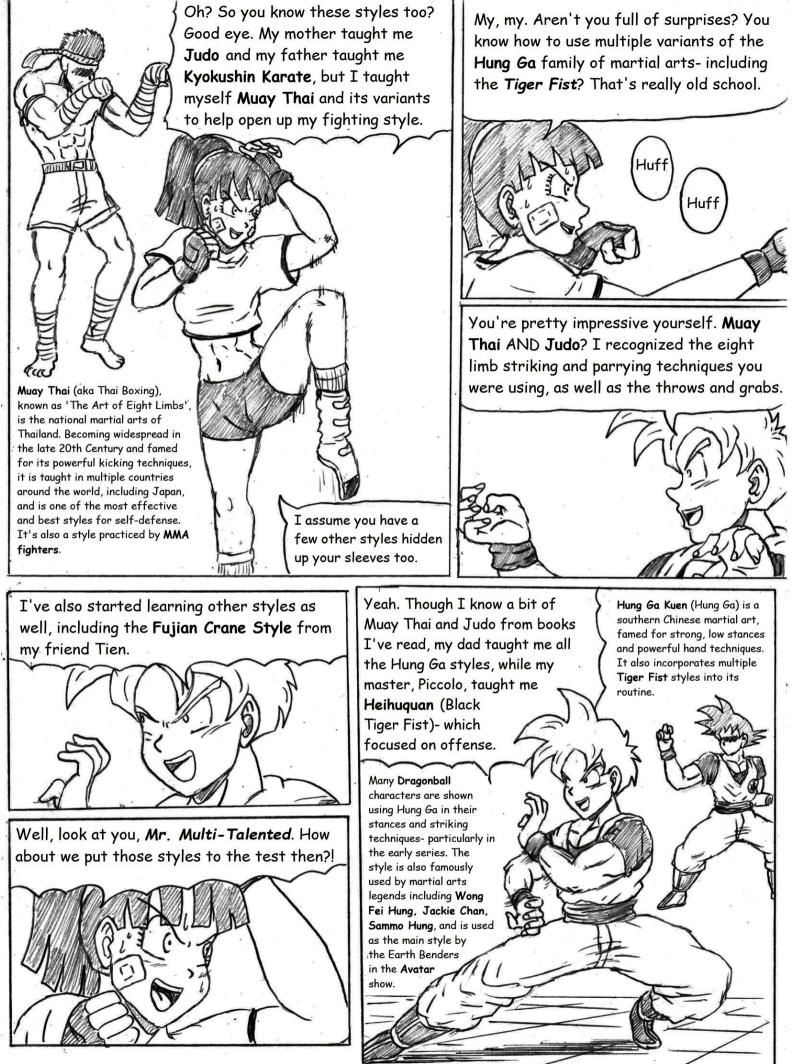








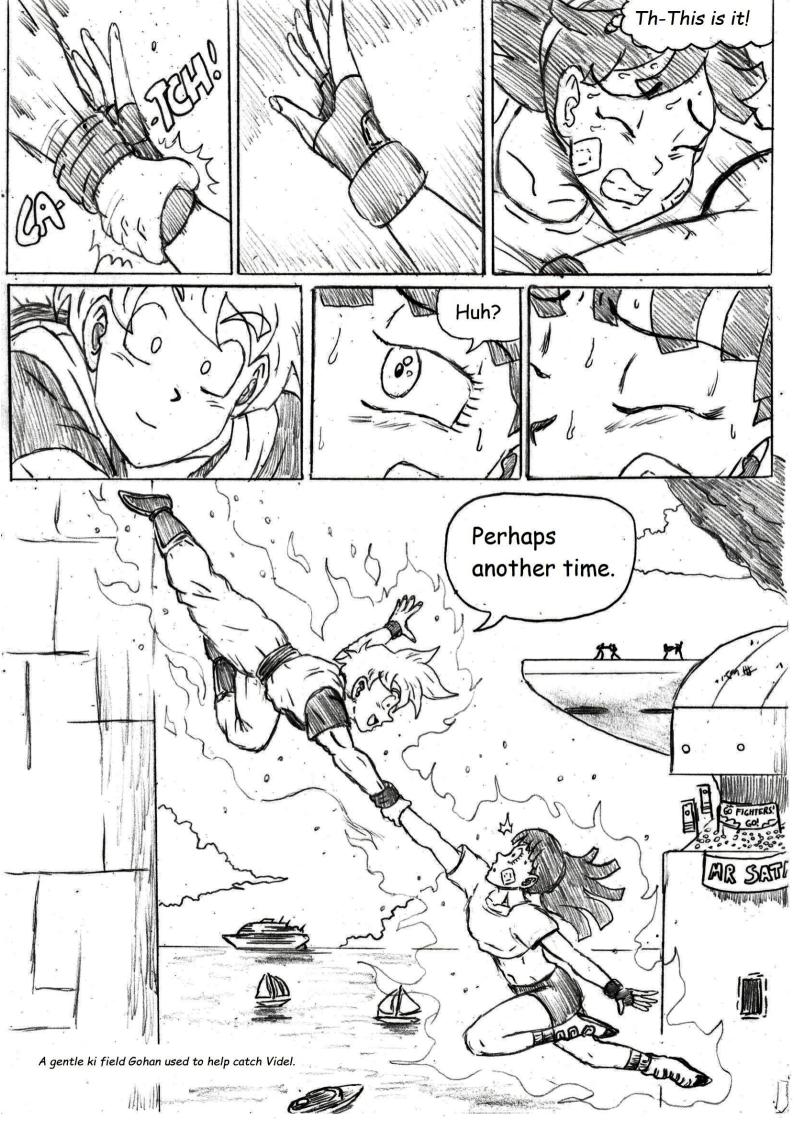




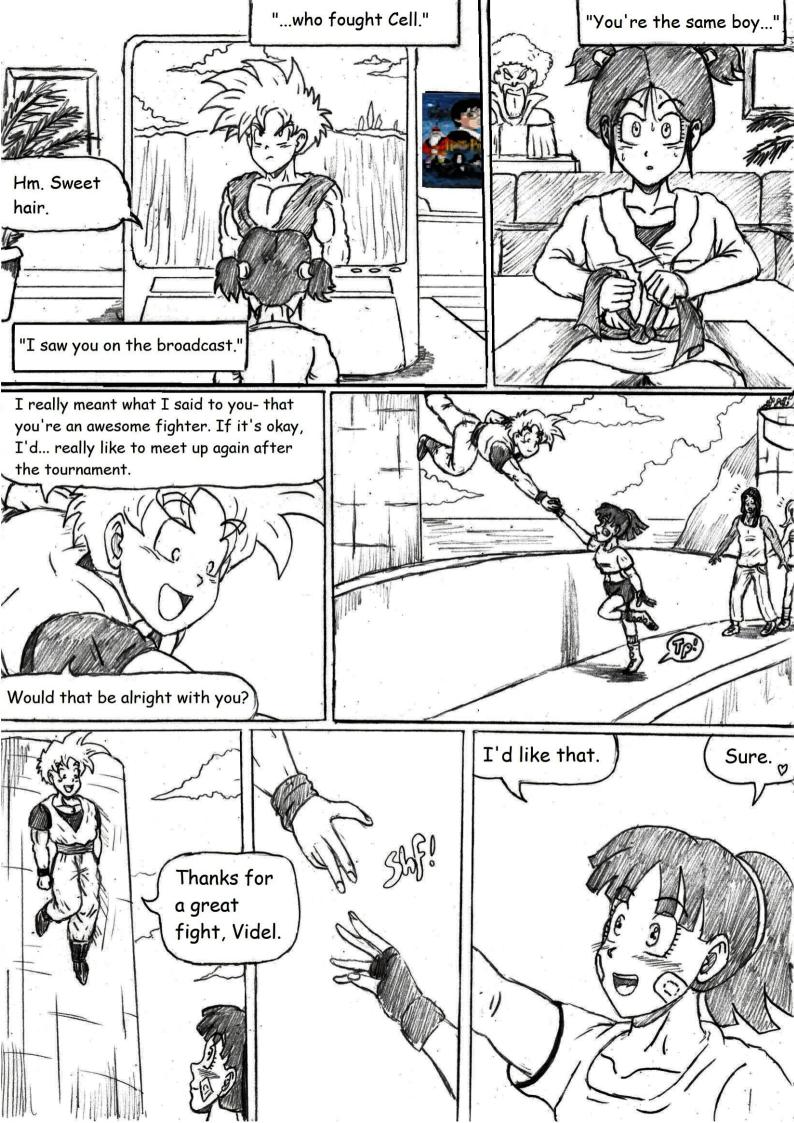








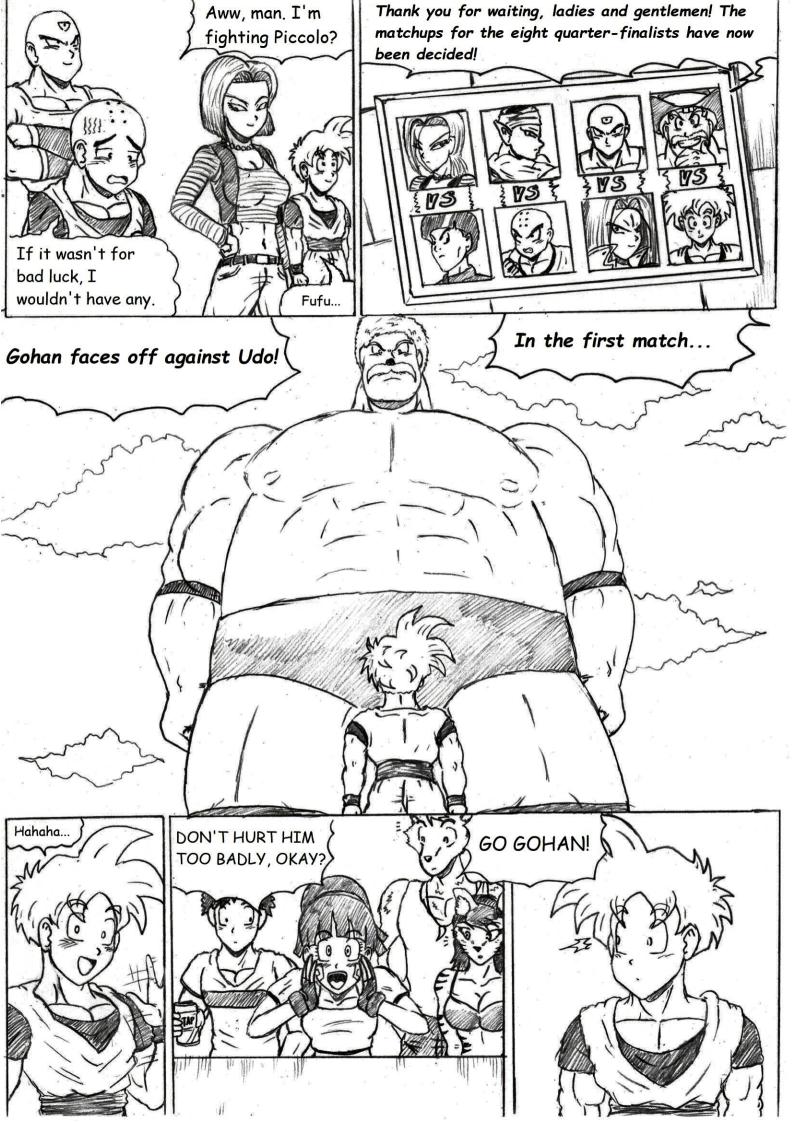








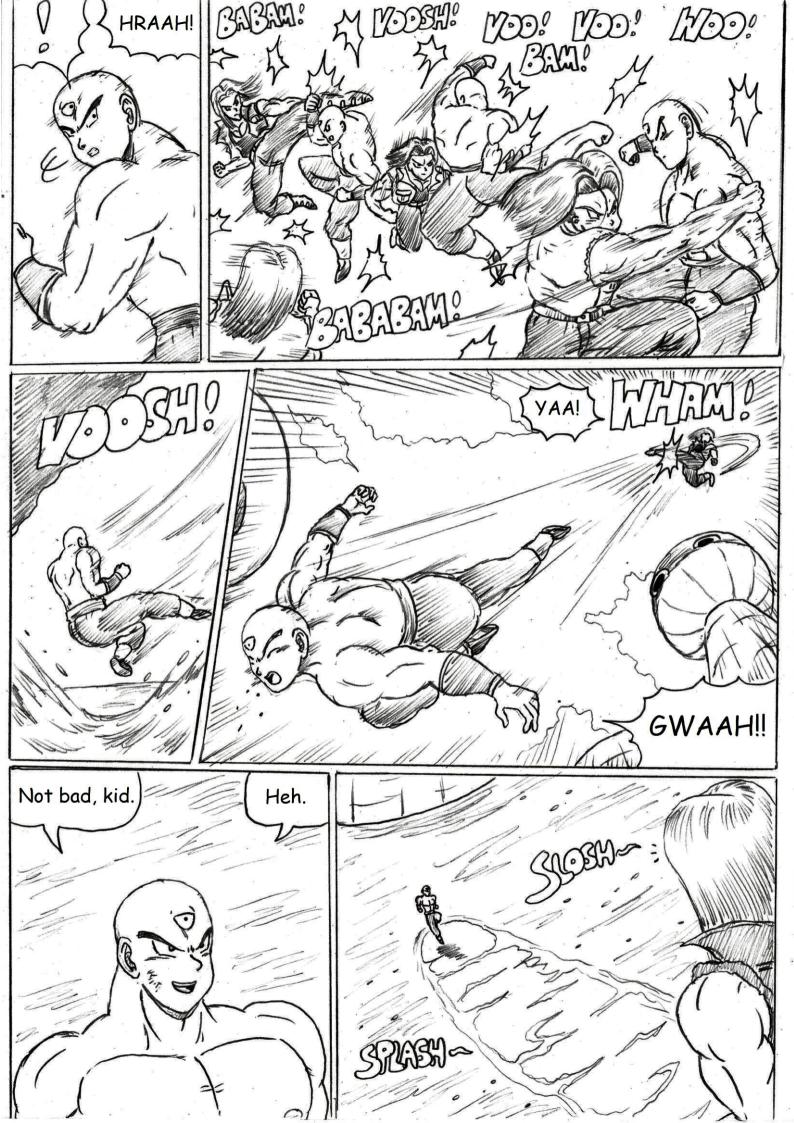








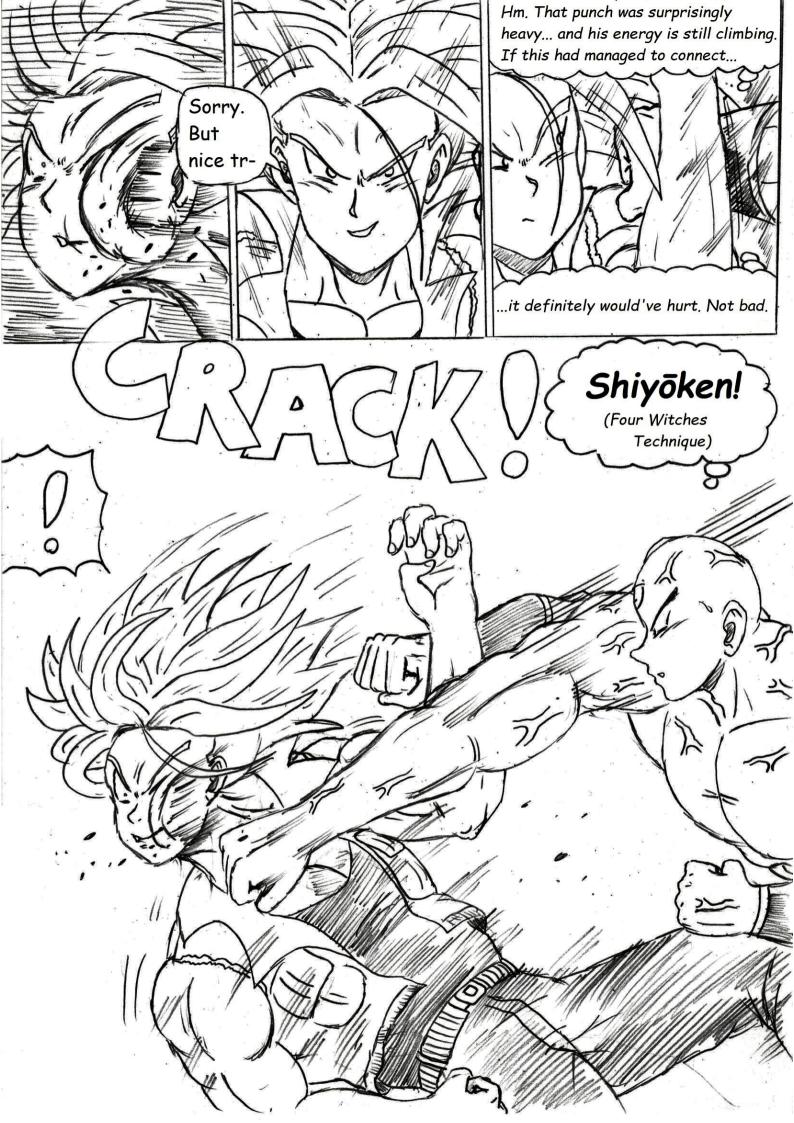








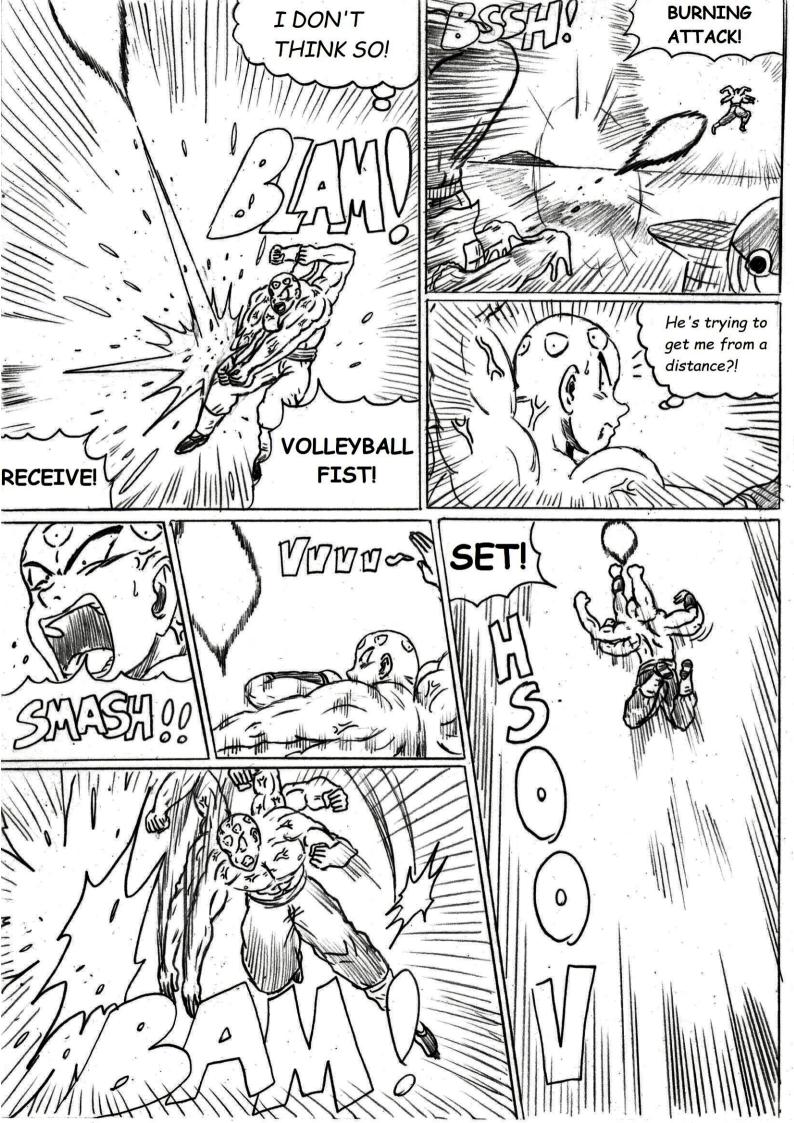


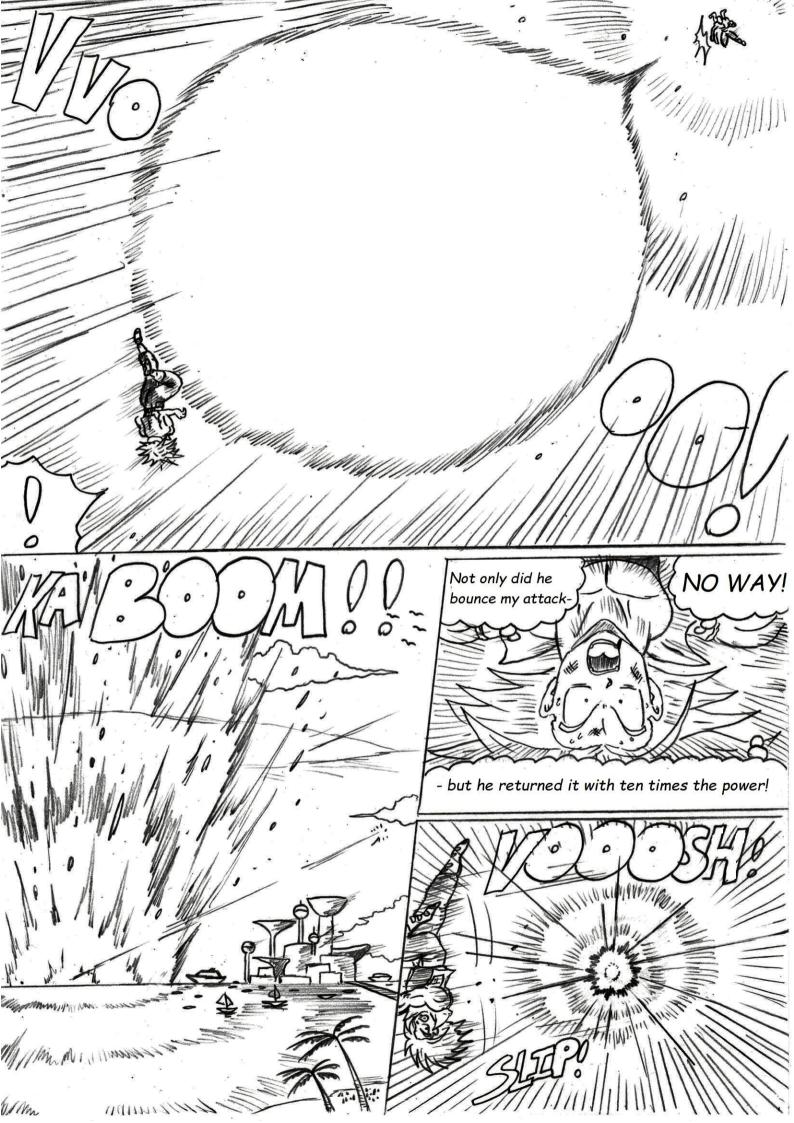










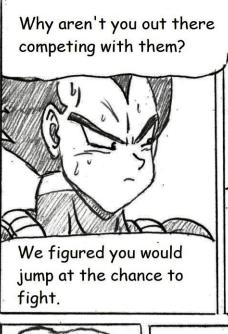


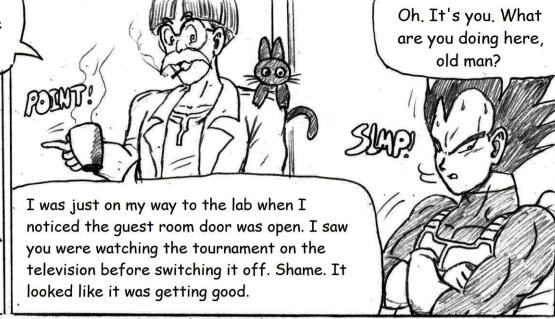
















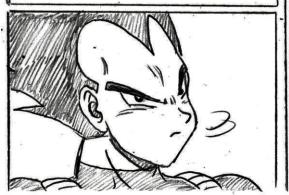


Even if I was to take part, it wouldn't change a thing. No matter what I did, Kakarot was always two steps ahead of me-both in strength and his convictions. As if that weren't enough, his son also ended up surpassing me. That kid. And a half-Saiyan at that.

Your tenacity has gotten you this far. Why stop now?



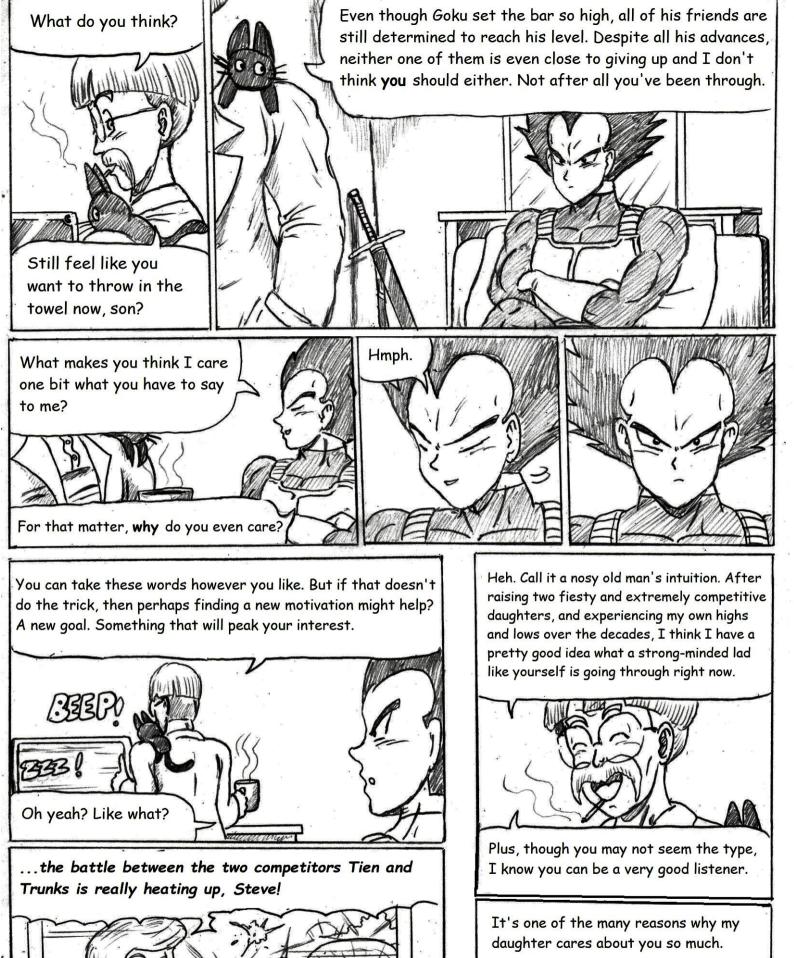
If you have the will and means to push yourself beyond your limits, then plant your feet and keep going.



The way I figure it, each and every one of us is gifted in our own ways. Two people can be the same masters of whatever field they practice- but the paths they took to achieve their heights were never the same. One's path may have been shorter, while the other's path was longer, more periless, and full of twists and turns that seemed almost endless.



Sure, it may seem like Goku was always ahead of you... but that may be because he'd found the stride that suited him best to traverse the road that he chose. Same as his son. Perhaps it's possible you have yet to find your ideal stride... or that you have found it, yet you haven't fully committed to it or you may have strayed away from it. Either way, you will eventually reach the top of the mountain peak that seems so insurmountable to you. It's only a matter of time.



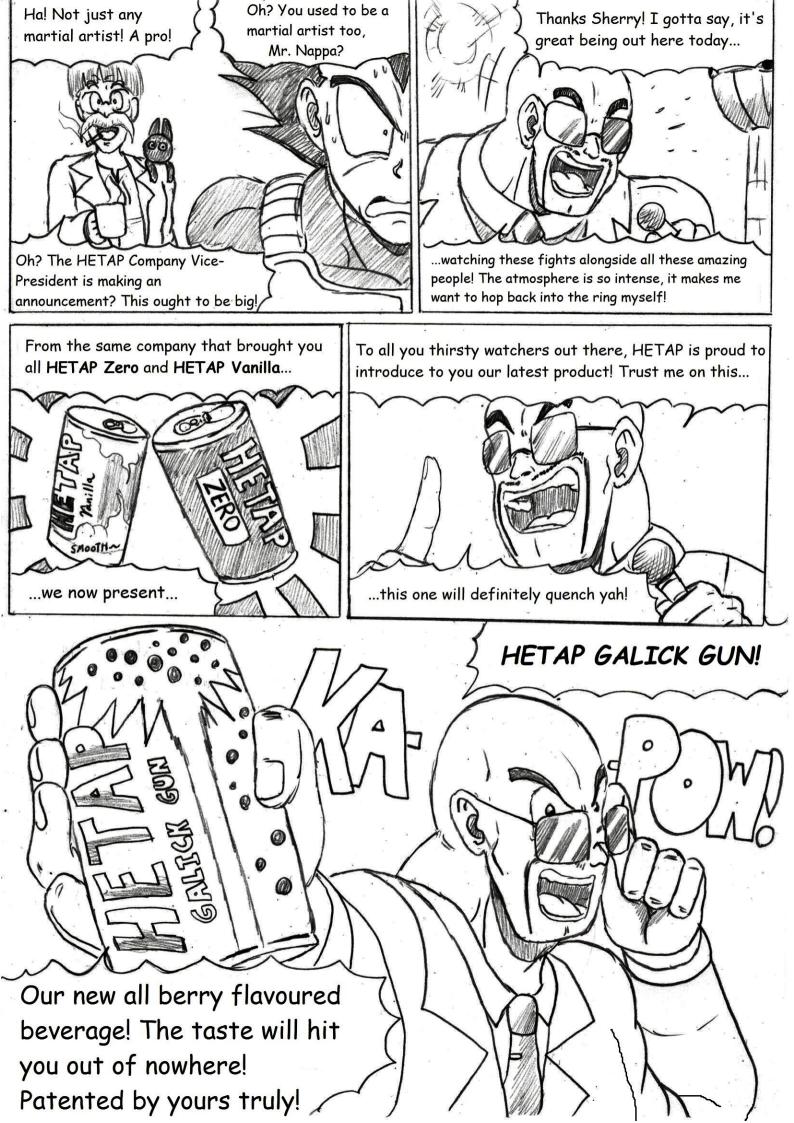
But before we return to the action, a quick

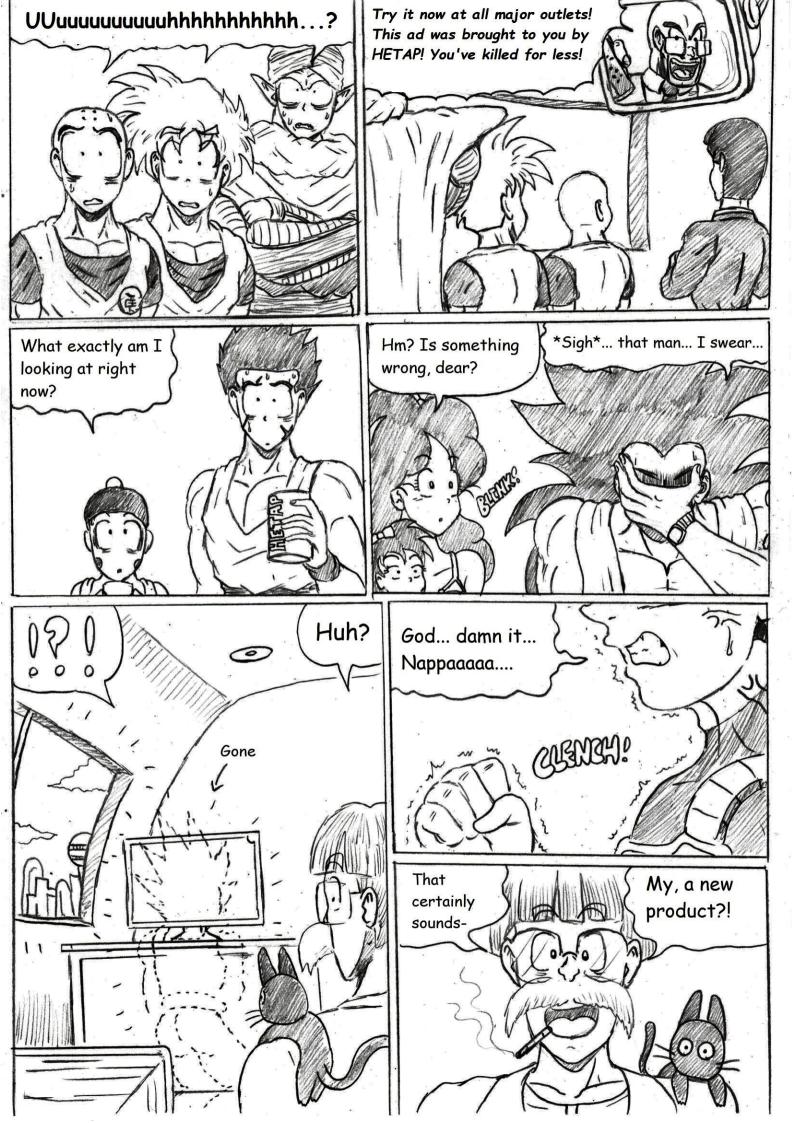
Tournament's secondary event sponsor...

announcement from the Intergalactic Martial Arts



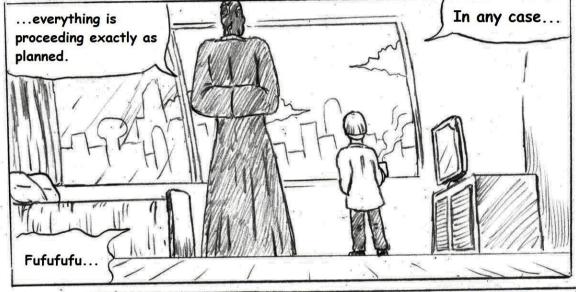










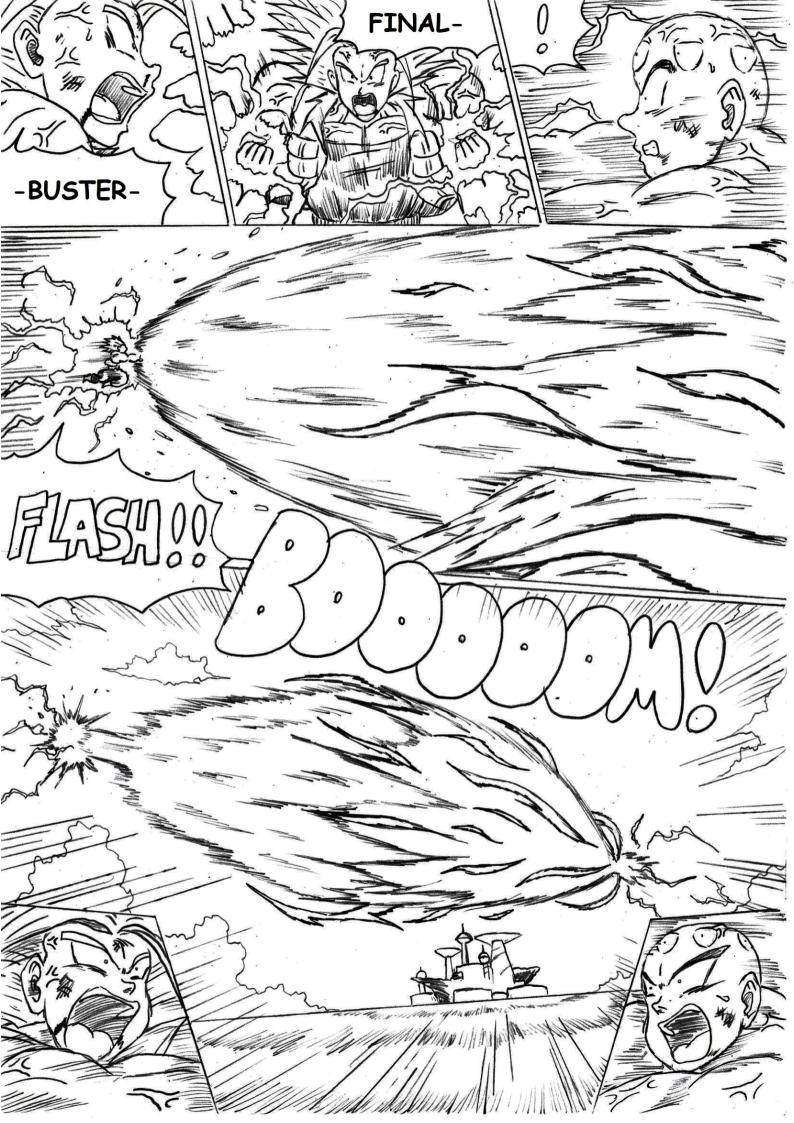










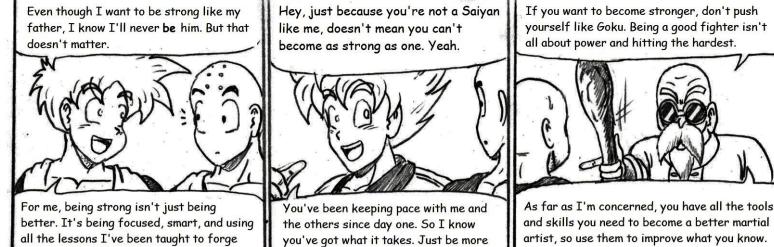






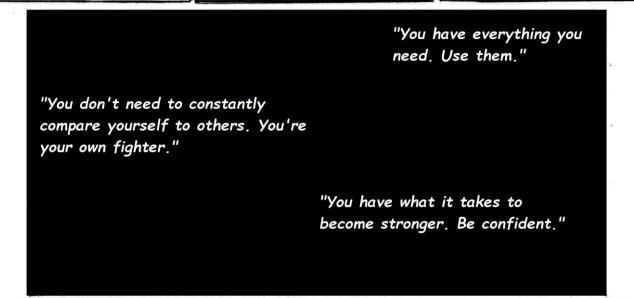


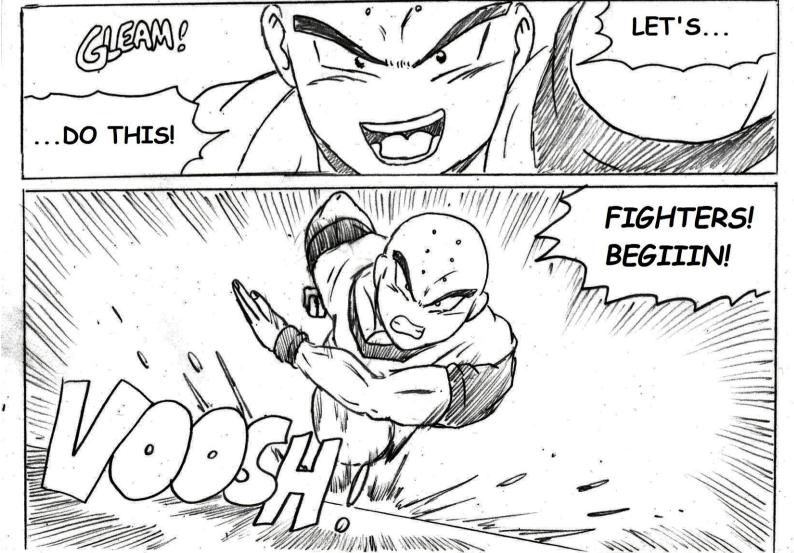




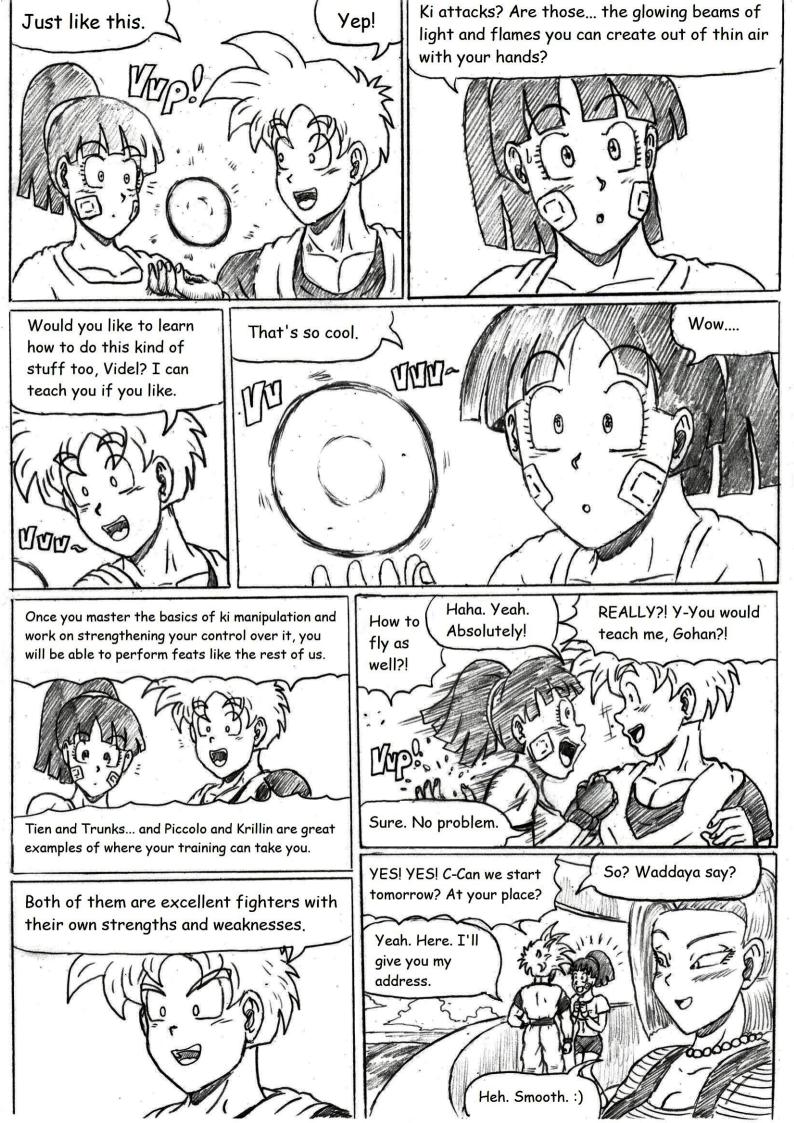
confident in yourself.

my own path to being my own martial artist.













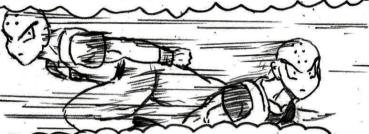








It's a simple but effective move. Instead of using sheer speed to create these fake images, he used ki to make them temporarily solid, giving them the properties of a shockwave.



That's why when they hit, they land with a surprising amount of force, before dissipating like normal after images the instant their energy is used up.

Rah! This technique is really troublesome to deal with! Not only has he created a lot of copies and is hiding amongst them, but they're attacking from multiple directions at once and bypassing my attempts to guard! Their hits are landing where my defenses are weakest and the damage is piling up!

This move uses incredibly precise ki control and shaping, so I can't just copy it outright. Hmph, I can't believe he was able to come up with something like this.



Heh. Being able to imagine something this ludicrous is such a Goku-thing to do. I can see where he got his inspiration for this from.



I can destroy them before they hit me, but he just creates more to replace them. And if I attack haphazardly using blasts, I might end up hitting the nearby crowds. He's stopping me with an attack that limits my options and is keeping me landlocked.



I can't sense where the real Krillin is either, since the after images he's using has ki and he's suppressing his. He's also spacing them out around the arena. Smart tactic. I would've done the same thing in his position.

