

My Taekwon-Do Career

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Having firstly been involved with Taekwon-do from the position of a parent of two students, then graduating on to being a student myself, through to instructing a club with a great majority of children. I have been well aware or made aware of, the many different factors than may influence a child's achievements and approach to a Martial Art

Let me introduce you to 'Max', hopefully his experiences will raise a few issues important to a child and to their learning.

MY TAEKWON-DO CAREER

Hi! My name is Max, I am seven years old and today is my first day of training at the local Taekwon-do club. I have seen a few Movies with some fighting in them and thought it would be good to have a try at this. The Club I am going to did a demonstration at the school near where I live. Mum thought I might like Taekwon-do as it is something you do by yourself and I like individual things.

I have tried a few other sports, but haven't liked them much, I tried Soccer but it was too cold in the winter and you had to get up too early. I remember my parents thinking it was funny the way everyone in the team followed the ball around the field as a group, I was always at the back of the group and got out of the way when the ball came to me. Guess I wasn't very good at Soccer that's another reason I gave it up. I then tried Kea's but they seemed to run around and be really noisy.

I really liked my first lesson and wanted to get a uniform, but the instructor told my mum to bring me a few times first to see if I really liked it and wanted to join. There were two other new people on the first night so I didn't feel too bad not knowing anything.

The man taking the training seems really good at what he does, he showed us lots of new things. We have to stand really still and listen to what he says, this is a bit hard to get used to but, we learn lots of things because we have to pay attention. There are some other children in the club that have been going for a long while and can jump up in the air to kick pads, they look really good, hope I can learn to do that one day. After I had been going for a while we were taught the first patterns, I got rather confused as I wasn't sure which was my right and left hand, this was better when I got my uniform as I now remember that the badge is on the left side.

Today is the day of my first grading, gee! I'm scared, the people sitting up the front look so serious, my instructor looks right at me which puts me off even more. I have done lots of practice and managed to do the first patterns without any mistakes, and I also answered the theory questions. I find it hard to answer questions in a loud voice and stand still when you are nervous. I don't know if the man up the front heard me properly, but he nodded so I suppose he did. I was really happy when I heard I had passed.

I am starting to learn lots more things, our instructor keeps telling us we are not allowed to use what we learn at school, and that we are doing our training to improve our skills.

We have a kid at school who used to do Karate, but gave up early on, he is a real pain as he keeps trying to punch and kick us, I won't do anything back as we are not allowed to use Taekwon-do out of the training room. My mum told my instructor, who taught us how to give someone a dead arm, which doesn't hurt them too much and makes them go away, also it's hard for them to complain to the teachers when they don't look hurt.

Our club is going to a tournament, so we have been practising our patterns, and guess what I can now do some jumping kicks like the ones I saw the bigger kids doing when I first started at class. I am now a green stripe. I have entered into patterns and jumping kicks, I like those the best. We have been doing some tournament sparring training, as some of the bigger kids are entering in that. Our instructor has told us the rules and that we have to use light contact to score points, people can have points deducted if they kick or punch too hard and can even be disqualified if they keep doing it. I think that is fair as no one wants to get really hurt. One of our bigger kids had to fight someone a lot taller which he said wasn't much fun as he had to kick a lot higher to score points, which made it much harder for him to win.

The other two kids that started at the same time as me are now blue stripes, we have all graded together each time. Chris was saying to me that he is getting bored and will most likely give up, I think it is because he seems to think he knows how to do everything so he doesn't listen, he seems to want to do things quickly and not try to get something right. Directly he can remember a pattern he thinks he knows it and can't be bothered practising it to do it properly. Our instructor has to keep making Chris do things over again and again. Mary is different she seems to want to do everything perfectly and spends heaps of time practising, what she does looks really good, I guess its only because she spends all that time.

I am still really enjoying the classes as we seem to have more and more to learn. We all have to stand very still, stay in stances when our instructors speaks and can't get away with anything, actually I think this makes the class fun as we learn new things quickly through having to pay attention, then we have a chance to get on to more difficult things. We do get to play a few games but they usually have something to do with Taekwon-do.

We have been doing quite a bit of sparring training and combinations, we are trying to learn to be more relaxed when we spar and to have control. This means that when we spar at club no one gets hurt, it also makes us more confident to get closer to each other and to try lots of different things. Also holding your fists loosely when you punch makes it easier to punch faster, I am finding it much easier to do lots of punches on a pad, rather than being slow and heavy.

I now have another trick for bully's at school, if they keep coming towards you trying to punch or kick, I keep moving backwards until I get near a wall, then step aside at the last moment and they hit the wall instead of me. Honestly, I tried it the other day on this big boy and it worked, made him look really stupid. The other kids laughed at him.

We are now learning to break boards, it is fun, we have this really easy breaker board to start on, but even the easy one won't break if you don't hit it in the right place. Also it can really hurt if you don't hit it right, certainly makes you think about what you are doing. We have also been learning how to do reverse turning kicks on a hanging tennis ball, it really makes you learn to be accurate.

We played softball at school the other day and I found I could hit every ball, I could never do that before, my mum said it has to do with hand eye co-ordination which may have got better by punching and kicking small targets.

I have now been training for five years and have done all the coloured belt gradings that I have to, my next one is black belt, that sounds really hard if it takes a whole weekend. My instructor has given me a 'Training Guide' he has worked out which has a series of lessons for me to follow, he has also given me the clubs' copy of the Encyclopaedia to read all the theory, just in case we get the same theory test as the adults, as this has happened to some kids. Also the step sparring syllabus has all changed since I started, thankfully this is all in the training guide.

What we are going to do is, there are three lessons per week, we do one at the senior club night on Monday, the other during the week, then I visit my instructors house on the weekend to do the third lesson. The third one is mainly a revision of the other two we did during the week. For the first lesson we did Yellow belt 3-step, self defence, green stripe 3-step, Chon-ji, Dan Gun, Do San, then 30 pushups, and the theory of the patterns we did. The second lesson we started to make up my black belt one-step, then did green belt one-step, Won-Hyo, Yul Gok and Joong-Gun then the theory of those patterns. At lesson three we revised all the coloured belt step sparring and the theory of the patterns we did. Then we did situps for one minute. I also have to go for a run twice a week.

My instructor is very fussy with patterns and picks up the smallest things, he says that patterns are the hardest thing to do as people have trouble making them look realistic, seeing as we are intended to be blocking and countering an attack at each move. I like doing patterns it makes it interesting when you have to learn a new one. I find I have to practise them all quite regularly as some of the moves are nearly the same, so sometimes it is easy to get confused and do half of two different patterns. Hope I don't do that at my grading, I think the only way to stop that happening is to keep on practising.

I have now done 5 weeks of the 3 set out lessons per week, we have now just about covered everything I need to know, and are spending the last two weeks doing revision. For the theory revision I just have to read over the lessons I have been given, as my instructor has abbreviated all the required pages from the Encyclopaedia, the lesson plan also has stance diagrams, Korean language and other theory like the ancient map of Korea. I think I have just about got it sussed, I am more worried about the theory than anything.

Grading weekend has finally arrived!!!!.....

BOY!! That was hard work!!!! Mum said I can have the day off school on Monday.

Guess what I passed, phew!! The wait for the results was a nightmare, but well worth it. I really feel like I have achieved something, my parents and older sister say they are very proud of me... neat eh!!!

I reckon I deserve a couple of weeks rest, but know I won't be able to miss training any longer. Perhaps I will be able to help my instructor with the juniors, I guess that's what it is all about.

See ya later !!!!!!!