

Beginning TaeKwonDo Training Part II

TaeKwonDo sparring as we know it today is a recent addition to this art. In the past only forms training was practiced because sparring was only done in life and death situations. As you will discover forms train all students balance, breathing, techniques, and pre-designed patterns simulating combat against multiple attackers. Remember sparring outside the school (dojang) is strictly prohibited unless it is a life or death situation. In addition, sparring is never permitted in the dojang unless I'm present to oversee the activity and assure that all rules, safety, and respect of one another are maintained. Anger, excessive force of technique, or disrespect of any kind will not be tolerated.

Although TaeKwonDo includes sport sparring it also transcends it. How else can an elderly master or grand master defeat a young twenty year old athlete? When watching masters or instructors their movements seem to be slow and relaxed compared to the students. Do not let this fool you. Masters and instructors can and will move quickly enough to counter techniques and deliver an effective counter attack. I am asked many times by students how do I know what they are going to do when they are sparring with me. The answer is very complicated and simple. First the student lacks self-confidence in the effectiveness of their technique and they just try everything they know and hope something works. Second they are immediately intimidated when facing me because of the "Unknown Factor". This is the fact that they do not know what I'm going to do or capable of doing so they are immediately on defense. The most important factor is that the student shows me by their body language and movement exactly what they are planning to do. In addition, I will make them do different techniques that will assist me in defeating them.

It is said that the Master's training and experience allow them to overcome the usual negative effects of aging which would force retirement in their thirties if they were only engaging in a sport. This is why all students must not train for sparring, but focus on the mind and body. If the student has a strong foundation, mind, and body they will automatically exceed in sparring.

All students must remember that TaeKwonDo training is an ongoing learning experience regardless of belt rank. Grandmasters, masters, instructors, and students learn something new every day in the dojang and are constantly reminded daily how much more there is to learn.

The uniform of TaeKwonDo is called a dobok. All non-black belt students are required to wear a full white uniform. Black belts can also wear a black uniform or a white uniform with black trim. Uniforms are to be clean and neat at all times. Students must respect their uniform, and it is their responsibility to maintain its appearance.

The TaeKwondo belt represents the level of experience and Martial Arts knowledge of the student. The beginning student wears a white belt. Once they achieve enough experience and knowledge, they will attain the yellow, then a green belt, and finally the red belt with an ultimate goal of earning a black belt. As you can see the belt darkens with acquired knowledge. Once a student obtains their black belt this is not the end but only the beginning of their training. Master Daeshik Kim once said, "Obtaining the Black Belt can be considered the passing of the Martial Arts entrance exam. Now the student can truly begin to learn TaeKwonDo". As the student's belt continues to darken with experience, the black belt naturally whitens with continued training. This is because as the black belt experiences more and more they begin to realize that they still have much to learn and are in fact just beginning.

This path to enlightenment is the true nature of TaeKwonDo. The goal is not to obtain fighting skills and aggression, but to live in peace, and achieve purity of spirit.

Although the grandmasters and masters' belt may be faded they realize that Martial Arts training is only one part of their life. They have discovered that they are now free to study unencumbered by fear of failure. What this means is once the masters have achieved the true spirit of the Martial Arts, they can now discover the true meaning of life as it pertains to them. This all started with the simple tying on of a white belt.