



SideKick News

Volume 15 Issue 11 - November 2010 - Page 1

Indomitable Spirit

'T WAS THE NIGHT

'T WAS the month before Nationals
And all through the gyms
The CTF Black Belts are training –
Strengthening their limbs.

Whether it is visions of medals,
A dobok or new rank,
The process is grueling,
Our coach - an old crank.

To the gym, to the gym,
We must all go.
To continue our training
This we all know.

Our skills we must sharpen
As our patterns we do,
Our speed is increasing
As we free-spar too!

As the much anticipated date
Does now draw near.
Anxiety sets in.
Here comes the old fear.

Can I do it? Can I do it?
Oh yes, I really can.
For months I've been training
I'll stick to my plan.



'T was the night before Nationals
And all through the south
Not a black belt was stirring,
Not even the mouth of the South.

With visions of success
Running through their minds
The CTF Black Belts
Search for the sleep they don't find

Which moves comes after that?
A knife-hand or fist?
Why can't I remember?
Why is it like this?

The board breaks, the board breaks
What if I fail
To break all my wood?
But the app's in the mail!

Can I change the breaks?
Will Grand Master Hardin approve?
If I can't, I'll think of something.
Maybe -- I'll move!

Now is the time
To show what I've learned.
The results of my training,
Soon I'll know what I've earned.

I know now I'm ready.
My patterns are keen.
My sparring is strong,
But what does it mean?

My mind is a jumble
As through the meanings I stumble.
Which dynasty, what dates,
As a spirited attempt to remember I
make.

My body is aching,
As my muscles cry "enough".
In time all will heal -
'Til then I'll be tough!

A calm settles over
My much troubled soul
As Grand Master Hardin bows in
And welcomes young and old.

The training takes over.
My mind is ablaze
With the knowledge I'll find success
At the end of this day!

'Twas THE NIGHT! is my attempt to look at the humorous side of training for a significant goal in our taekwondo career (Actually the idea was started by Grand Master Hardin). These goals are frequently motivators to keep us training consistently! This is the process by which we develop indomitable spirit, however, it comes at a price! We must work through the aches and pains, bruises and even injuries and illness to achieve our goals.

I hope this strikes home to many of you and helps you to laugh away some of that tension most of you are beginning to feel!

GOOD LUCK TO ALL AND TO ALL A GOOD TESTING (TOURNAMENT) NIGHT!

-ALISON HARDIN, EDITOR

Who is your toughest opponent?

THE TESTING PROCESS

While training for testing and the CTF National Championships, one of my students asked, ***“Who is your toughest opponent?”*** Upon a moment's reflection, I answered, “I am.” This answer seemed to surprise her but to me, it is the essence of why I continue to train in Taekwondo. It is truly my belief that *“he who masters himself (or herself), masters everything”*. It is a fundamental truth of life that you can not control others, only yourself, therefore, by learning to control your actions, can you influence the consequences of your actions. If you will examine those situations where things did not turn out as you wished from the perspective of “what could I have done differently and how could that have influenced the result?”, then you are taking the first step on the road to personal improvement. Without self-examination, we are doomed to continue to repeat the mistakes of the past.

He who masters himself, masters everything.

Choong Sil Taekwondo is the process of physical and mental development towards a goal of “constant and never ending improvement.” As you take stock of your accomplishments this year, be sure you evaluate your “mental” development in the areas of self discipline, self evaluation and self control. The development of control over one's self is one of the “secrets” of Taekwondo!

The Taekwondo testing process is designed to provide interim goals for the student and to allow him to see his progress periodically. Most schools schedule testings regularly, about every two months. This timing is designed to give a student adequate preparation time to prepare for the testing. *This does not mean that you should test every two months.* There are often times when a student is not ready due to illness, vacations, work demands or simply the difficulty of the material. Because there will be another testing soon, waiting for the next date should not be difficult.

When are you ready to test? This is for your instructor to determine. Because of his experience and knowledge of each individual student, your instructor is able to determine when you have sufficiently mastered the skills required to advance to the next rank. Don't be discouraged if your instructor does not ask you to test every time. This is normal; as you advance in rank, you will require more and more time between testings. Focus on the things he has asked you to improve to be sure you will be ready when he does ask. My philosophy has always been to be as prepared as possible at any time should my instructor ask me to test! This means always training hard and keeping up with all memory work such as patterns and definitions.

THOUGHTS ON FREE SPARRING

WHY SPAR?

“Cheryot Kenya—Fighting Stance—Free Spar”

We have all heard these words as we begin a sparring session. What are you thinking then? Is the first thought that goes through your head - “How can I score on my partner?” If so, then you are definitely a member of the majority of Taekwondo practitioners. Most people seem to view sparring as either a game or a challenge of their skills. This attitude is counter productive to increasing your skills in sparring since you are thinking competitively and focusing primarily on your best offensive skills. These are probably the skills which need the least amount of development. When sparring competitively, we usually don’t focus on developing our weaker areas such as defense, movement, combinations, new techniques, etc. Most important, you will probably be fighting by instinct rather than developing your mental discipline and control.

HOW SHOULD YOU WORK TO IMPROVE YOUR SPARRING SKILLS?

First, recognize your weaknesses, prioritize them and develop a plan to gradually work down your list. Your instructor is the best person to assist you in this process. Through his experience, he can advise which areas you are most likely to improve in at this stage of your Taekwondo career. Frequently, we are not physically or mentally ready to develop some skills.

Second, recognize and then utilize opportunities to work on your skills. The first place where we learn, refine and improve skills is in drill work. This allows us to focus on the techniques and combinations in an isolated situation without the pressure of having to respond to a partner. Working on your own on a certain combination or technique is another necessary step. You may want to work with a bag or Wavemaster type kicking target to develop the proper stepping, distancing, etc. to make your combinations work properly. Once you have drilled repetitively until the work is becoming somewhat automatic, try implementing it in your sparring session. It is usually best to first use new techniques when sparring lesser skilled opponents who are not stronger than you or skilled enough to really pressure you. You are much more likely to lose your mental focus under pressure and revert to doing the same old thing.

Third, develop your mental discipline and focus. Taekwondo naturally forces you in this direction but, like your physical technique, mental discipline and focus improve through repetitive practice. Rather than approaching a sparring session as a contest or game, train yourself to use it as a training session. Select something you need to work on and DO IT while you spar. Frequently, your instructor has already set the stage for what you should be doing in the preliminary workout—pay attention to what he is working on with you! If the instructor has not supplied a focus for your session, select one of your high priority items that you have been drilling to use during the sparring session. Mentally, you must discipline yourself to stay out of competitive mode and in training mode. You must also convince yourself that it is okay if your sparring partner makes a score on you. For this, you need a partner you can trust to have control. Most of the time, we immediately switch back to competitive mode when someone scores on us. This will be counterproductive to the purpose of the sparring session. If your partner is putting too much pressure on you for you to feel comfortable, explain to them that you are working on new material and would appreciate it if they would go slower with you.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD SPARRING PARTNER?

- ⇒ ***Don’t be competitive.***
- ⇒ Allow your opponent to tag you without retaliating.
- ⇒ Go at a slow enough speed where you and your partner can experiment with new technique.
- ⇒ Exercise control so your opponent will not be afraid for you to score.
- ⇒ Recognize and respect your partner’s scores even if they are exercising great control and there is little or no contact. Don’t ever hit them back in the face because they pulled their technique and left themselves vulnerable. You have to build trust in your partner for your sessions to be productive.
- ⇒ If you are stronger and/or more experienced than your partner, do not take advantage of this. You will both improve more when you work at a speed where everyone is comfortable.
- ⇒ ***Always maintain your mental discipline and focus.***

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THOUGHTS ON FREE SPARRING

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Fourth, keep working on your new focus area until you find it feeling natural for you when you spar. You can't assume you have it in your arsenal just because you used it effectively a few times. You should continue to strive to have it become automatic.

Finally, move down your list to the next priority and repeat the process. This is the essence of Choong Sil—Constant and Never Ending Improvement.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that sparring is like playing chess. Once we learn the moves, success will go to the most focused and disciplined player.

SPARRING IN COMPETITION

When we line up in a tournament, the rules are a little different. This is not a partnership situation but it is also not a battle to the death. We still must spar responsibly and remain in control. Uncontrolled attacks and excessive contact are the surest routes to disqualification. Expect heavier contact than classroom sparring since your opponent will most likely be in competitive mode and adrenaline will be flowing freely. Don't let this upset you—you are probably hitting harder than normal too!

Mental focus, control and discipline still remain your most potent weapons. I use the first part of the match to assess my partner—their weapons, degree of offensive or defensive nature, speed and distancing. In order to do this, I begin the match in defensive mode and allow them to be the aggressor—99% of the time, they accommodate! Frequently, I am able to score easily just by allowing them to make a mistake and countering them. Once I have made my assessment, I continue in defensive mode and allow them to continue to attack as this always opens up opportunities for the proper counter. I never switch to offensive mode unless I get behind and must play catch up. I also keep it simple. I know my best, quickest and lowest risk techniques and that is what I use. I don't try to throw a lot of different techniques. If I can win a match with a sidekick or punch, that is all I need. I'm not there to show off—I just need to finish the match 1 point ahead of my opponent. If I do that, I will get to keep sparring. I know that I watch my opponents in their other matches and begin my evaluation of them then. By not showing them more than what I have to to win the preliminary match, then hopefully, I still have a few tricks up my sleeve for their match. I found that once I started playing smart instead of just playing aggressively, I was able to begin winning consistently in tournaments.

I have a few simple rules that I keep in mind when I spar that I have refined over the years through my competition experience.

- 1) Maintain your mental focus. Go into your match with a plan and have the discipline to follow it.
- 2) Don't get mad, frustrated, angry, cocky or scared. Sometimes calls don't go your way. Sometimes you get hit harder than you like. Sometimes you make mistakes. Sometimes you lose. None of these is a reason to lose control. Your brain shuts down when you lose emotional control and you will lose.
- 3) Don't be overly aggressive. Everytime you attack, you leave an opening for your opponent. Remember you only need to be ahead by 1 point to win. I always like to score first as this takes the pressure off me. There is no reason to just keep trying to score. Hold off and let your opponent come to you.
- 4) Be defensive—keep your hands up. Your opponent can't beat you if they don't score.
- 5) Manage the ring. Drive your opponent out of the ring and then score on them when they can't score on you. Turn your target area towards the side with one judge and your opponent's targets toward the other two judges. Move around. Most people can't hit a moving target as easily.
- 6) **HAVE FUN! Competition sparring is just a game and a learning experience. Leave your match with new friends and new areas to focus on.**



CTF
TAE KWON DO

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS
St. Benedict's
Memphis, TN
November 13, 2010
9:00 AM

30 National Championship Divisions

2010 BLACK BELT HOLIDAY WEEKEND

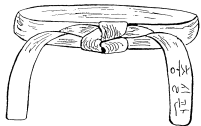
DECEMBER 11th
DICKSON, TN

ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET

GREYSTONE GOLF CLUB
Presentation of
2010 National Champions
Instructor of the Year
&
Other Awards

SCHOOL OWNERS' MEETING

Dickson Taekwondo
12 PM—Sat., December 11th



BLACK BELT TESTING

6 PM, NOV. 12, 2010
MEMPHIS, TN

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND THE LAST CTF BLACK BELT TESTING OF 2010

NOVEMBER 1ST is the deadline to submit your BLACK BELT APPLICATION to the NATIONAL OFFICE.

Would you like your own copy of this newsletter e-mailed to you each month?

Forward your request with e-mail address to
choongsil@hughes.net.



USTL 9th ANNUAL TOURNAMENT

July 1-2, 2011
Branson, MO

Make your plans now to attend the 2010 USTL National Tournament. The tournament will be held in Branson, MO. Branson is a great town with lots of activities so plan an extended trip this year!