

KIRSTY GOUGH 1st Degree

2nd Degree BLACK BELT ESSAY

Instructor: John Kirkwood 5th Degree

In the year 1999 I started Tae Kwon Do at Larkhall leisure centre. I also started Judo at the same time but fell away from it because I enjoyed Tae Kwon Do a lot better.

When I first started Tae Kwon Do I was part of the Scottish Tae Kwon Do Association, training with Mr John Kirkwood. I remember being the only white belt at the time and not knowing what to do or what to yell. Soon though I had learned Sajo Jirugi and it was time for my first grading. I was scared and nervous because I was so used to asking Sir for help but now Sir could not help me or show me what to do. When I got older I soon realised that a grading was a test to show that I knew and understood everything about Tae Kwon Do before moving onto the next belt.

Once I had passed my grading it was fun and all new again. It was great because I enjoyed learning new moves, new techniques and my new pattern. My mum and my sister also started. They enjoyed Tae Kwon Do a lot and I was always helping them along the way. My mum would take us to lots of competitions. I enjoyed competitions a lot because of the atmosphere. They were amazing because the squad was brilliant and usually when we entered the hall everybody would start talking about us, and how good we were.

Everyone in the squad would keep everyone going, keeping them confident and clam not letting their nerves or excitement get the better of them. When someone won it would "start the ball rolling" and keep us all on track to go out and perform our best and hopefully win. Of course no one would win anything if we didn't have a great instructor.

I loved watching Sir perform his patterns and fighting because he was so good at it and we all loved supporting him at the competitions. Sir was always showing us how to make our patterns better and what not to do in sparring. For such a small amount of competitors, we always did Sir proud by trying our best and bringing back a large amount of trophies. I remember at one competition I was fighting in point sparring and my opponent stood on my toe. I thought it was fine until back at training in Larkhall, we were practising sparring techniques when Megan (a student) stood on my toe again, it started bleeding badly.

I didn't even realise that it was bleeding until there was a trail of blood up and down the floor. My mum took me to the hospital but nothing was broke but I had to get the nail removed.

Sir told us that we could also train in Blantyre were he taught also. My mum took us to Blantyre to train even more. I enjoyed training at Blantyre as well because I met new people again and also learned different things, now I was training at Larkhall and Blantyre. I thought it was fantastic to go back and learn more. At Blantyre Sir done different things all the time, not one class has ever been the same. I enjoyed doing my patterns because I was getting better at them and learning more about them. Also at Blantyre Sir used to play different games with us.

One night we were playing "tig" and Sir caught me, but as he did he accidentally pushed me forward into someone which made me loosen a tooth, which was ready to fall out. It was at the end of the class and we were collecting our club cards, but as I said 'Thank you Sir' I swallowed my tooth. It gave me a sore throat afterwards, but it was funny when I told mum!

At the end of each year we have an award night and a demonstration to reward people of how dedicated and hard some people have worked throughout the year. We also put on a show of different things in Tae Kwon Do, from creative patterns, pad work, self defence and destruction. We practice for the demo. I enjoy participating in them because I can act and show other people what I can do in Tae Kwon Do as well. They can be really funny; especially watching the younger ones beat up Sir!

Also watching others like John Kirkwood Junior with weapons and watching him perform his patterns and other stunts, are amazing. We use some of our squad training days also to practice for the demonstration. Squad trainings amazing because it helps build stamina, confidence and helps me develop different fighting techniques. Squad training was hard t begin with but over the last few months it has become slightly easier for me. Squad training has made me fitter and has improved my fighting ability and my flexibility.

At squad training for a start up warm-up we play basketball. Not just normal basketball, we also use rugby tackles and grappling when taken down. It's such a great warm up and it gets me in the mood for a hard nights training. Squad training has helped me so much that I wouldn't be as good as I am now.

Three years ago I was sitting my grading for my black belt 1st Degree. Before my grading I was nervous and a bit scared because I didn't want to let Sir down or myself. When I was about an hour into my grading I got over my fear and was enjoying the feeling of (it was a five hour grading), after that I was feeling confident and knew I was ready for the rest of my grading.

The people whom I graded with also made it easier because I knew most of them and we were all their supporting each other. The only thing I let myself down was my breaking. I had to break my board with an elbow strike but it took me several strikes to actually break the board. Once the grading was over it was a great feeling. I was feeling tired, but relieved because I had just finished my first black belt grading.

Now its time for my 2nd Degree grading and I know I am ready to go and do it. I am confident and positive that I can do even better than the last time. Also it will be great doing my grading with Mark, Jack, Kara and Paul. This will make it easier because in class we encourage one another, help each other and we train together a lot. I cannot wait for my grading because I am actually excited because this will be my first time grading with my sister.

In the future I hope I will continue training. Since I was 6 years I have been training in Tae Kwon Do and grown with Tae Kwon Do. It has made me more patient, disciplined, focussed and confident person. Also it has shown me to respect everyone and everything, but also to persevere with anything I will come up against in the future.

Tae Kwon Do has changed me completely from the way I think, to everything I do in my life. I am so glad that from the age of 6 yrs I chose to commit myself and to involve Tae Kwon Do within my life.

