

PAUL ACKERLEY 1st Kup

1st Degree BLACK BELT ESSAY

Instructor: John Kirkwood 5th Degree

I first started in Tae Kwon Do 5 years ago at the Blantyre Sports Centre. My reasons for joining the club were:

- I enjoyed martial arts out of films
- I enjoy physical activity
- I like being pushed to my limit both physically and mentally
- Being part of something worthwhile

The only thing that I thought would hold me back was my age, which might sound funny as I was only 26 years old. But with martial arts you always assume you have to start at an early age in order to do better.

This is something I realised is not strictly true, and something I like about the club. There are all different age groups doing what they can. I have always done sports throughout my life ranging from football, rugby, hockey, badminton, snow boarding and weight training. None of them has captivated or inspired me like Tae Kwon Do has. I train at the club 3 to 4 times a week, if I could manage I would train 7 days a week! It is the only sport I have done that if I miss a class due to work or family commitments I am gutted, because I need that buzz it gives me, that's when you know you're hooked.

When I first started Tae Kwon Do I did not really have any goals set out, I just thought I would go and see if I liked it. As soon as I started I knew it was for me, but it was not until I sat my second or third grading that I set my goal of sitting my Black Belt. Trophies and awards are something too many people put too much emphasis on, although I understand the significance of them.

My main goal for the future, is to continue to train as hard as I can, increase my fitness and flexibility, I also wish to continue to learn and grade. I understand that when I achieve my black belt that's when my training will really begin. Being faster making my patterns smoother is all things I see my Instructor doing and is something I strive to emulate. I would also like to train over in Ireland to gain more knowledge through seminars and meet other AIMAA members, as well as supporting my club.

Competing in competitions is something I have always wanted to do but never thought I was good enough, but through my black belt and squad training I feel it is something I am ready to do. Especially after competing in the last "Interclub" competition and winning, has only strengthened that drive to compete.

My major goal for the future is one that will make the most improvement to my patterns, sparring and line work, and that is my stretching. It has been the hardest part of my training since I started. I never have been flexible so the challenge of getting to where I am now has been really hard, but one that I have enjoyed, to be able to get into the box splits one day is something to aim for, but with more training and focus anything is possible.

Being an Instructor or Assistant Instructor is something I never really thought was for me, but within the last few months of training for my black belt, the realisation of how hard it is has been has made me want to help other members reach their black belt also.

The aims that Tae Kwon Do wants you to inspire to are things I feel society in a whole could benefit from. Too many people are out of control, rude and lazy, wanting the easy option, never challenging or bettering themselves. I feel like I have made a life long commitment to Tae Kwon Do and the club. My only regret is that I did not start sooner.

