

Tae Kwon Do (My Journey)

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At the tender age of 37 I managed to encourage my two elder children to attend a class in the local sports centre run by a colleague of mine from work, I did this to encourage a sense of worth and aid in confidence when dealing with bullies and such. My house is in a rough area of the town I live in and no matter how hard you try your children will always be on their own at some point.

So after happening along one Tuesday night my boys had their free class and decided that this class was fun, cool and exciting enough to keep them off their video games. After a while one of the black belts at the Blantyre club set up a small club close by and I thought the boys could go there and help the numbers with the new club. Once there however I noticed that watching just wasn't enough anymore so into my big white suit I went with the idea of getting a wee bit fitter and maybe getting a blue belt to prove I could still push it for an old man

What happened then I am really not sure but having looked at the then Mr. Kirkwood's class in Blantyre I thought I would never manage even the warm up, it seemed so intense and so young, the argument ended when talking to Mr Kirkwood at work I found out I was younger than him!. So with no excuse I went along to my first squad class and loved it, I was the slowest probably fattest and seemed to be the worst but with the support and encouragement of the instructors and people in the class I made it what a rush.

For whatever reasons the EK club decided to go to a different association and on meeting the senior instructors felt immediate unease with the change and knew instantly that Mr Kirkwood was the instructor we needed to move forward with our journey, in fact there really was no other choice and still isn't 7 years on a broken foot 2 operations and 6 weeks in physio later.

By the time we had returned to The Blantyre class we were attending as a family of five with my wife and youngest son now joining in, Mr. Kirkwood has shown what can only be described as the patience of a saint and has led by example for me personally and our training family as a whole. My age, inexperience on some occasions laziness and others just lack of understanding have been met with over the years by Mr. Kirkwood with a smile or a "no the other right."

It is with a feeling of nervousness that I write this opening myself up to the thoughts that I always try to push aside,

Why do this at 44

Looking around today, seeing what people are becoming how people treat each other with a lack of respect or any sign of understanding I see that if more people followed the ideals of the

martial arts then the fight just to move forward would return to a simple journey and be much more pleasurable for all.

Why Tae Kwon do

Because although I have tried judo, karate and saikido nothing makes you feel as alive as completing a class and learning something new or sharing the training with friends both old and new

What would a black belt mean to me?

It would mean that after 7 years my learning has begun, I have managed to reach a level that will let me benefit more from Master Kirkwood's teachings, will better allow me to understand the meaning of my instruction. Far from reaching my goal as I originally thought my blue belt would be the black belt seems to signify a new start, the start of my path to understanding.

I was told by master Kirkwood that if I give him the time and the effort he will train me to the best of my abilities and I feel that this time is right for me to make a move forward and only hope that I do not let him or my club down.

I feel that this journey of mine is becoming a lifelong obsession and thank god for allowing me the time and health to do this, there are so many people who have shown me support and great kindness though the early stages of this journey and hope that they know how much they and their support has meant, Billy Reid; if ever there was a man who encourages and shows what effort can do, Kevin Mclear, despite adversity he is probably the most upbeat man I know with a knowledge I find myself drawing on whenever I can. Master Kirkwood; an inspiration

My Wife Jeanette who has nursed me through the breaks and operations, who has put up with the moods has pushed me to be all I can be I owe everything and hope I can be half the person she is.

As the time approaches for the testing I know that I must put my all into my learning and training and show what I am able to do, this I hope will be enough to move to my next step.

When I started Tae Kwon Do time was my greatest constraint a 37 year old novice?, but when watching and learning about Grandmaster Cho or when I watched the gentleman at the world championships in Dublin I found out my only obstacle will be me and that I will overcome god willing .

I hope that the future learning opportunities are as varied and fulfilling as they have been so far. I hope to assist where I can to promote Tae Kwon Do and Aima. I have found real joy watching the enthusiasm of the young and old alike and hope that this never dies down