

MRS. CECILIA GOUGH  
2<sup>nd</sup> DEGREE BLACK BELT THESIS



Instructor: Master John Kirkwood. A.I.M.A.A Scotland

Training daily (apart from Saturdays) is not what I do; it is what I have become! It keeps us (Kirsty and Kara, my two daughters and I) together as a solid unit. Life itself can be tough at this time, but because of Tae Kwon Do no matter what life throws at us I can handle it, with a strong mind and spirit, which I am truly thankful for.

Life right now has many challenges, which are tough just getting by from day to day. It is hard and some nights I look for an easy way out, but for me that wouldn't be an option, my family and training are there for me, and I for them, they keep me focused and strong.

Grandmaster Hee Il Cho and Master Kirkwood's influence has made me a better person and mum. Being a martial artist makes the difference, training hard, sweating, sometimes in pain, pushing myself physically and mentally, when my body wants to stop! But my head says "No Way" dig, dig and dig more is where I like to be. I don't want it easy, I want to give it my all, trying my hardest and loving every single second of it, what a buzz!

I truly appreciate being able to do this, because I know only too well what it's like not to due to injuries, but even during these times, this is where sheer will and inner strength, and not wanting to give up gets me back onto the floor! I need training to be hard, because in my mind then it's worth while and means more. Pushed to the max, this is what makes it different from a fitness class in a hall. When I train, I train in the do-jang becoming someone better.

Training with Master Kirkwood, is something I will never take for granted. I see him come straight from work to take the first class of the night, and begin warm up with the young kids. Then onto sparring with their safety gear on! Sir takes time with them, going through blocks, and techniques, then onto free sparring. The kids just love it! They come alive and the noise level and energy goes up. Sir, runs and chases after them, and sometimes ends up on the floor grappling rolling about with them! "I am thinking who the biggest kid on the floor is" The kids leave the class buzzing and telling parents of how they got to fight Sir!

The next class arrives, probably over 40 kids, and quickly they are lined up. Sir has them focused, commanding and concentrating by demonstrating combinations of line work and every kid's eyes are fixed on him. From colour to Black Belts, Sir adjusts feet, hands, checking every movement, and sometimes showing high grades spinning and jumping kicks, with everyone trying to do it like Sir.

Adults are now in class warming up at the back of the hall, getting ready for their class! Master Kirkwood's flying by this stage and we try to catch him up during warm up and move straight into training point sparring. Sir's speed, power and accuracy is amazing, we watch in awe and feed from his energy. We are truly blessed to have him for our Instructor.

Thursday evening's is "Squad training" which is for me the highlight of the weeks training sessions. Sir, dedication is admirable watching him arrive from work into the car park and having a banana (having not time to go home) and then into two hours of squad training for us! Our sessions start by very quick game of "Death Ball" a game designed by Master Kirkwood and our very own! It's a combination of basketball, taekwondo, grappling and locks and can become very intense but has loads of energy kicking about in it, and loads of fun!

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We also do a 1 hour fitness and strengthening training, utilising cardio and plyometric exercises. Sir heads the way pushing us harder and faster. Making us stronger and wanting more! Then onto core work “gritting your teeth and holding each move” It feels like forever trying to hold and doing our best, not to give and let Sir down. Then we are on with our gloves for some sparring, with our suits or t-shirts usually soaking wet now, however feeding off each others energy, pushing each other on!

In sparring intervals the other partner is doing press-ups! Obtaining body conditioning, and of course Sir’s running about getting a wee extra kick in here and there, making sure no ones slowing down! Before we know it our times up, and we have to stop. But Sir shouts “fighting stance” left jab, and then right jab then left, then right! We end up doing a hundred of each jab before we are asked to leave the hall! Sir is quite simply the BEST and I know I have everything to thank him for Instructor, Teacher, Coach, Leader and Legend!

During a visit to Ireland with Master Kirkwood, and out for a meal with Master Darcy and AIMAA Instructors and students. Master Darcy announced “Grandmaster Hee Il Cho’s” visits to Ireland and Scotland! Who would have thought Grandmaster would come to Ireland and Scotland; we could hardly believe what we were hearing. I remember thinking amazing, Grandmaster is coming to Scotland and how he does not like the cold and rain, but was still going to fly all that way to see us!

Everyone was so happy and excited! I could not wait to get back home to see everyone faces when they too heard the news! It was planning and training, getting ready for Grandmaster visit. Before we knew it time had flown and it was here. We flew to Dublin and arrived at the Basketball arena having been driven by Mr Ryan. When we got out the car it hit me that “HE” was here!! Walking into the arena was amazing, the atmosphere electric and the whole place was buzzing!! It was a huge arena with the stage set up, flags flying and the seating for all the spectators. What an amazing sight and feeling.

First came in the Masters wow!! and what a build up. We got ready for Grandmaster Hee Il Cho’s entrance and in he came! What an entrance, what a reception showing our appreciation and respect. Grandmaster Cho just blew everyone away wither it was by stretching, and strength, or his power or speed. I could hardly believe my eyes to be lucky enough to be there in his presence. On listening to Grandmaster’s wisdom I know blessed we are to be part of something so good by someone so good! Hearing Grandmaster telling us he goes to “Happy Mountain” and that he will be looking down on us, made me and everyone around us to do our very best with all our hearts, to try our hardest and to take care of what Grandmaster has given us!

The seminar was of course unique and I have never experienced quite like it before. Just to watch Grandmaster movements was amazing, spinning round so fast that I couldn’t see him do it! I loved the riding horse stance, the squats, the push, yes the core work. I loved it all and continue to do them. All too soon the seminar came to an end and time to leave, to head back home to work early the next morning! Monday morning and to prepare for grandmasters visit to Scotland!

Kirsty and myself where in ‘The attic’, my café in East Kilbride working away. I had accidentally left my top at the seminar in Ireland. Kirsty had texted Master Kirkwood to see if anyone had picked it up, however we thought he was busy with Grandmaster and the Masters and would be relaxing or shopping before returning to Scotland. I was working in the kitchen, whilst Kirsty was working in

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the front of the café. Kirsty fell through the swing doors into the kitchen trying to tell me something, hands flapping about, so I walked over to the doors and looked out, and yes standing right there was Grandmaster Hee Il Cho. I couldn't breathe, and with him were Mrs. Cho, Master Darcy, Master Kirkwood and Mrs. Kirkwood. Mr. Fernandes, Miss Markowska and students from Jersey were also in the café!

Yes of course I knew Grandmaster Cho was going to be here in Scotland for the seminar, but I never expected to see him in my little café in Scotland! I had just received a text from Master Kirkwood and thought they were all still in Dublin! I never in my wildest dreams expected to see Grandmaster Cho in my work place. I was overcome with emotion. Master Darcy, I thank you forever for this, I have never felt so humbled and privileged. I could hardly speak to take the order for the food. I could not think, and I lost my focus on doing my job, which I had done day in day out! I composed myself and Kirsty and I got on with the job in hand! It was a privilege to prepare food for everyone, and entered the kitchen muttering to myself "I'm making food for Grandmaster Cho" wow! It was also a privilege to make food for the beautiful Mrs Cho, the most gracious looking ladies I have ever met. I truly thank everyone for this most wonderful memory!

From Grandmasters visit I have some wonderful, amazing memories and I will cherish them clearly forever. I hope and pray that I will continue to be part of the wonderful family, which is AImAA. To train with Grandmaster Hee Il Cho. To go whenever possible as well to train with Master Darcy, Master Byrnes along with all the other Instructors in Ireland.

I will of course continue to train directly with Master Kirkwood, whom I thank immensely. I will continue to teach the AImAA Panthers, which has been an amazing time for me over the last 18 months. To see such young children love and learn Taekwondo, to grow in confidence and indeed to do "Chon Ji Tul" at age 4 yrs. To pass on and get back all the work from them is humbling. I think our Panthers are so important, as they are indeed our future!

Thank you for taking the time to read some of my feelings, thoughts and wishes.

Yours in AImAA

Mrs. Cecilia Gough 1<sup>st</sup> Degree.