



CTF SideKick News

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INDOMITABLE SPIRIT

As I was preparing to write this month's newsletter, I reviewed past issues. As I read through the articles on Indomitable Spirit, I found innumerable examples of courage and triumph of the spirit.

All of us will face great challenges in life—physical and mental - and how we handle them will demonstrate to those around us the depth and quality of our character. I know from personal experience that the will to succeed and never give in can have a very powerful effect on your life as you pursue your goals.

The single-minded ability to remain focused and pursue our goals despite adversity, fear and setbacks is not something which comes naturally—no one is born with it. You must develop this quality by training yourself to face your fears. You cannot succeed if you do not first attempt the difficult. You will stumble along the way. Everyone does but the strong person rises up, brushes themselves off and continues on their way! As you move forward, you will recognize your accomplishment of continuing on your journey and, from this, develop confidence to confront even greater difficulties.

We do not always “volunteer” to face new challenges in life. Most merely present themselves to us, and we have no choice. By training ourselves to face the challenges where we had a choice, we have developed the strength of character that will be required to face the unexpected.

Be prepared by not backing down and facing your fears. *“The only thing you truly have to fear is fear itself.”*

Who is your toughest opponent?

A few years ago 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, ONLY 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.

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!

He who masters himself, masters everything.

TOURNAMENT COMPETITION

How everyone can win!

Tournaments are a great way to have fun and meet new people. Every tournament is like a family reunion where we get to see people we might never see otherwise.

You can gain a new perspective on Taekwondo from observing students from other schools. By watching the high rank black belt divisions, I have realized what is possible. Everyone needs inspiration and this is a good source. I might not have challenged myself enough simply because I didn't know what could be achieved.



Tournaments provide excellent training experiences. First, they serve as motivation for students to concentrate on their training as they prepare for the tournament. Next they provide the student with valuable experience in performing before a group. This helps the student who is extremely nervous to confront and control his anxiety. I must admit though that the "butterflies" will never go away unless you cease to care about the results. By watching other

students of similar age and rank, the student may notice areas where he can improve. Go to the tournament with the attitude that you want to learn from others not just come home with a trophy.

Before you can enjoy and learn from your experience, you must go to the tournament with the right attitude. Not everyone who competes in a tournament gets a 1st place trophy. In fact, only one person will in each division will leave with one. It is how we learn to deal with not being that one person that develops our character. It is what we learn from our performance that will allow us to return next time and improve our performance. I have always found that I learned a great deal from my losses and very little from my wins!
There is no shame in losing if you lose gracefully and have done your best. Whatever you do, don't choose not to compete because you don't think you can win 1st place!

A NOTE TO PARENTS

Parents are often the unsung heroes of their children's Taekwondo success. Their support is critical if a child is going to reach his potential in Taekwondo (as well as life), whether he competes or just trains. By providing positive support you can help your children realize that they can reach difficult goals through hard work. If you can give them the little push they sometimes need to get past a difficult time then you are helping them learn a valuable life lesson. Nothing worth having is gained without effort.

You, too, can make a child's tournament experience a positive one. Encourage your child to train hard before the tournament so that he will have the best preparation possible. Nothing is more embarrassing to a child or adult than forgetting your pattern.

Teach your child that true winning means having performed your best whether or not you win a trophy to take home. It takes a lot of courage for your child perform in front of the judges and audience and, therefore, he is already a winner by just stepping into the ring.

"Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."

-Confucius □

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.**

Congratulations National Championship Competitors

NOVEMBER 15, 2008

This is the day that many of our Black Belts have been working for all year - The National Championships. In order to compete, these Black Belts had to qualify by competing in various tournaments around the country this year. They have spent a great deal of time and effort preparing not only for the Nationals, but for those Qualifiers just so they would have the opportunity to compete. Winning a National Championship requires one to train hard, persevere even when they don't win, and learn from their mistakes. It all comes down to their performance on November 15, 2008. This means that someone who was third in qualifying still has an equal shot at winning! Add to that the fact that we will have competitors coming together from different regions who have never competed against one another, and we should have some exciting competition in these divisions.

While not every one of the qualified Black Belt will walk away with a 1st place trophy, all have already won. They have all improved greatly through all the additional training they have done this year. They have also gained new friends and respect for old adversaries.

The National Championship Elimination rounds will be running all day at the same time as the regular competition so everyone should get to watch our top Black Belts compete.

GOOD LUCK TO EVERYONE!



Invitations will be mailed shortly for CTF's Annual



Black Belt Banquet & Awards Ceremony
Saturday, December 6th
Blue Grass Yacht and Country Club
Hendersonville, Tennessee

School Owner's Meeting
Saturday, December 6th
Aregis Taekwondo Center
Hendersonville, Tennessee