

Since my black belt test in Hawaii last year, my life in terms of Tae Kwon Do has changed. It is a whole different perspective from the time from when I was a red belt. When I tested for my red belt, I thought that it would be easy to learn and practice all the curriculum of a red belt and then just move on to black belt. I thought I could repeat the process of learn, practice, and test. Boy was I wrong. Being a black belt isn't just about learning new techniques, memorizing literary knowledge and assisting at a few classes. What being a black belt really means is to show respect to all people, even people you don't necessarily like or agree with. Also, a black belt should show that they are willing to be responsible for themselves, and their actions. What I've learned from being a black belt for the past ten months has helped me understand more of what being a black belt means. Enough said here for now. Let me talk about what it was like when I first got my black belt.

When I first received my black belt I was really excited. The days past and I continued to go to class and learn my new forms, techniques, and memorize my new literary knowledge. Over time I realized that being a black belt wasn't just about being a high belt who knew how to do all the techniques from white belt to black belt. I realized that a black belt was a person who helped people and respected them no matter the age and no matter where they were, in the do-jang or not. A black belt is supposed to strive to follow the aims to achieve in their lives daily. We are told to follow the aims to achieve from day one so that we can try to become better people from that day on.

I had assisted occasionally with the panthers before I became a black belt, but when I became a black belt I got the chance to assist a lot more. All I have to say about the panthers iswow! The panthers are so full of energy and are dedicated to getting the job done. When you assist with a class they look up to you for leadership. This is a key role to help them build their confidence,

and listening skills. One of the best things is, when you teach one of the panthers something new and they do it in front of everybody. You just feel really good on the inside. When you go to assist at a panther class, your bound to make friends with somebody. The kids are just so friendly. They look up to you for a lot of things. When they look up to you it feels really good, there no other way to describe it. That's the way I remember it when I was just starting. I looked up to everybody for what to do. I remember Mr. Barrella taking me aside and helping me practice my techniques. I also remember some of the black belts who still train here today helped me. Looking back at the times when I was just starting, I know that being a black belt is a very special privilege. I also know that when you are helping family members who are in Tae Kwon Do, it takes a lot of patience. I got a chance to have a one-hour class with my brother. I got to help teach him his new form, Chung Mu. It took a lot of patience for me to help him. When he learned it, I felt really good because I had just helped him accomplish something.

In July 2008, I participated in the 2008 A.I.M.A.A summer camp in Orlando, Florida. It was a whole different experience from the 2006 A.I.M.A.A. summer camp in Flagstaff, Arizona. The first difference was my age, I was ten years old in 2006 and I didn't have as much stamina as I do now. Second, I was a second degree brown belt and I didn't have as much experience as I do now. And Third, I had absolutely no idea what the adult class was like. Well, I found out at this summer camp because Mrs. Farrell had given me the ok to take the adult classes. The classes we took were unlike any other I had taken before, especially Grandmaster Cho's seminar. All the classes were really fun like Mr. Long's, Master Ameris', Master Darcy's, and so on. When you go to summer camp, be prepared to feel the pain. But this is the good kind of pain. This kind of pain helps you to get strong and build a strong body. Another thing is the lessons on forms and techniques. What you learn at summer camp will help you practice and understand the proper techniques that we all need to learn.

The reason why we practice is to get better. Why do you think Mr. and Mrs. Farrell tell us about our stances and body positions? They

do it because they care about us and they want us to get better. They have helped me in this way plenty of times and I'm sure I'll give them an opportunity to help me with forms, techniques, fighting, and about every other thing there has to do with your body, many, many times in the future. That is why I am standing here today, getting ready to test for my 1st degree black belt.

Michael Deprest

I would like to thank all the people who have helped support me in my career of Tae Kwon Do. I would also like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Farrell for dedicating their time and helping me to become the martial artist I am today. The people I would also like to thank, but who are not here are Grandmaster Cho, all the masters, and all the people from the other A.I.M.A.A schools who have helped me. I would also like to thank the Burketts and the Webers for giving me the encouragement and support throughout all the years that I have been in Tae Kwon Do. I would especially like to thank Mr. Weber for helping me in and out of class with forms, techniques and literary knowledge. The people who I would like to thank the most are my parents and all my other family members who have supported me on my journey. I would like to thank my parents for everything they do Taking me to school, helping me with my homework, and taking me to Tae Kwon Do. The most important reason that I would like to thank them is that they have helped me be prepared for testing every time and supported me and gave me the confidence that I need to carry on in Tae Kwon Do. I just wanted to say that I love them unconditionally and I thank them for all that they have done throughout the years I've been in Tae Kwon Do. And again to all the people who have helped me, THANK YOU SO MUCH!!!!!!