



KOREA/USA SIMMUDO ASSOCIATION

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Maintaining Standards and Testing: Part 2

Previously, I touched on keeping minimum standards in place for the benefit of the student's growth and progress in their martial arts. Now I want to look at what the instructor's role is with the students.

Personally, I view being an instructor as I view my job. I go to work to do the job I was hired for, not to make friends. If I make friends at work great it's a bonus on top of doing my job well. **As a martial arts instructor I am not their to make friends with the students. I'm their to help them learn the material and grow as an individual.** If I make friends while teaching again it is a bonus on top of doing what I am there to do, teach. I have not allowed people to test because I was not comfortable with them moving up in rank at that time. I have done this on three separate occasions with my younger brother. I did not allow him to test at those times because I cared about his growth in the art.

What would happen if we started to let people test too soon because they are a nice person? There would be a lot of nice people holding rank they do not have the technical

skill that is required for their rank. I am not proposing that as instructors you should run a "warrior camp" where people are going at it 150% all the time with the aim of hurting or maiming somebody. I am proposing that as instructor we all work to maintain a certain expectation for the students to meet with their technique. **When a student is promoted in rank you are essential putting your seal of approval on that individual.** Personally I want quality students not a lot of less than adequately skilled students.

Any of you that are instructing should ask yourself, "Am I here to have people like me or am I here to help people grow?" I hope you are teaching to help people grow as an individual not to make people like you. I see more and more examples of people being too worried about upsetting somebody else in our society that they let people slip by at home, work, school, etc. **Hopefully in the martial arts we can at least maintain certain standards** and help people understand why we have them without being afraid of hurting their feelings. Marital arts are something people can do for their lifetime and as instructors it is our job to help them succeed in that by striving for excellence in what they are doing.

Take care,

Kirby Strissel

Starting My Journey

My start in the martial arts began in October of 1990.

On a Friday evening I went to the homecoming football game for Byron High School. I don't remember who we were playing and didn't care at the time. I was going to meet up with some friends, watch the game and have fun like any other sixth grader would. Instead I got beat up by four people for no reason. Actually, they had a reason in their minds. The day before one of them pulled a knife out on the bus and threatened me with it. I knew he wasn't going to do anything and wasn't worried about it so I just let him do his thing to impress his friends. Somebody else however reported it to the school. The next day the Elementary Principle calls in the person who threatened me with the knife and finds it in his pocket. **So of course I'm**

blamed for reporting it and get beat up by him, his cousin and two of their friends.

The next week my parents took me to meet Master Fred Gommels and get enrolled in his martial arts program that taught TaeKwonDo. Right away I found something I loved doing. School sports never held any interest for me because if you played your heart out and lost you still got yelled at by the coach and made to feel like a failure. Not exactly positive reinforcement. **With the martial arts it was an individual pursuit. It was up to the individual to excel as far as they could.** I liked this individual approach mixed with the relationships that develop with the people you train with.

Over the years there have been ups and downs like you would expect with anything else one may do. I however

have continued to train and grow as an individual. After I had earned my black belt in TaeKwonDo I wanted to fill in some of the areas that were lacking, throwing and ground work, and took up Judo. I enjoyed training in Judo and even entered a few tournaments taking everything from dead last in my weight class to first place. As much as I enjoyed Judo the club was not able to maintain membership and ended up closing. At this time I started training in Master Gommels Hapkido program and eventually earned black belt rank in Hapkido.



Myself and some of the people I've met on my journey in the Martial Arts.

Around this time I met a person in the martial arts who ended up becoming my wife, Nicole.

We now have two children and a busy home life but we both still find time to train in the martial arts. I have continued with TaeKwonDo, Hapkido and was able to join a new incarnation of the Judo club again last year. As long as my body

holds out I will continue to train. **I joke with people that don't understand why I train that "It's cheaper than therapy."** This however is very true. No matter what problems may be going on in my life I can workout for a little bit and forget about them. For me, this helps me decompress and come back to the problems with a fresh outlook.

I hope all of you have had an continue to have many positive experiences with your martial arts journey.

Take care,

Kirby Strissel

Administrator - Korea/USA Simmudo Association