



Wado International Karate-Do Federation

DOJO CONNECTION

MAY 2008

Nechako Karate Club

Six members were successful in achieving black-belt status, the most at any one time in the club's history.



The new black belts, from left are: Shawn Nakashima, Keith Nakashima, Celynne LaMarre-Belanger, Angeline Spears, Ashley McMillan and Warren Grafton.

When Nechako Karate Club sensei Ken Corrigan put in the order this fall for black belts, he should have requested a bulk rate. Six of his students are now wearing the black belt after they all passed their shodan (first-degree black belt) tests – with flying colours.

The black belt presentations were made to Nechako students Ashley McMillan, Angeline Spears, Celynne LaMarre-Belanger, Warren Grafton, and the father-and-son combination – Keith and Shawn Nakashima.

Never before in club history have so many Nechako club members achieved black belt status at the same time. For Grafton, a 22-year-old UNBC geography student and northern BC regional coach who has studied karate 13 years, it's virtually a lifelong achievement.

"This is definitely one of those days that you wait for to come," said Grafton. "Being a shodan is a beginning, technically you're just learning the basics to the point where you can actually develop and now I can really start to figure out what the whole thing's about. They make us wear white belts and be in the back of the class when we're doing our grading, because you're being humbled."

Keith Nakashima got interested in karate watching Shawn perform in twice-a-week practices at the Nechako dojo in the former fire hall in South Fort George." It's been a long go, but it's very satisfying to get this far," said Keith, 49. "We went to a lot of tournaments together and this is our time together. He's in university now and the only time I get to see him is here."

Shawn, a 20-year-old UNBC mathematics major, put off his test so he could grade for his black belt at the same time as his father, who doubles as his crash-test dummy on the practice mats." I've been doing this 13 years, and he caught up to me pretty quick," said Shawn. "I know my dad to be pretty persevering and I'm not surprised he's up to this level. I'm pretty proud of him and pretty proud of myself."

At 14, LaMarre-Belanger is the youngest Nechako member ever to get a black belt and it took her just seven years. The BC Team member is being coached by Grafton and she's hoping to follow in the footsteps of Andrew Thompson, a Nechako club member and former national gold medallist.

McMillan, 18, needed just five years to rise to the level of shodan. "It's really exciting, I can't believe I got my black belt already," said McMillan. "When I was still in school, I was kind of nervous about being around people and being around crowds and karate has given me that confidence. It's a lot of hard work, but in the end it's worth it."

The black-belt presentation was a proud moment for Sensei Corrigan. He's been working with five of the six new black belts from the time they were young kids. "All but Keith, who got it in my adult class, started in my children's class and have worked their way all the way up the ranks, so this is special," Corrigan said. "Normally you have such a huge drop-out of students around green belt, so to have this many students stay with me right through to the end is very unusual. Obviously as individuals they felt a bonding with each other and decided to stick with it."

Prince George Open Karate Tournament

The Prince George Open Karate Tournament, sponsored by Sensei Ken Corrigan's Nechako Karate Club, was held April 12, 2008. Results of the Nechako Club members who placed are:

Mateya Tomasino: 1st Kata; 4th kumite
Kyndra Farrell: 2nd kata; 2nd kumite
Jocelyn Fennell: 3rd kata; 1st kumite
Darian Vanderstar: 2nd kata; 2nd kumite
Ashley McMaster: 2nd kata; 1st kumite
Brooke Wood: 2nd kata; 2nd kumite
Amanda Farrell: 1st kata; 2nd kumite
Brooke Palfenier: 2nd kata
Nicole Cannon: 3rd kata; 1st kumite
Dana Nickolichuk: 1st kata
Celynne LaMarre-Belanger: 3rd kata; 1st kumite
Laura McMaster: 2nd kata; 1st kumite
Tanisha Hamilton: 1st kumite
Jessica Antoine: 2nd kumite
Charles Fennell: 2nd kata; 1st kumite
Ethan Martin: 3rd kata; 2nd kumite
Tanner Ulrich: 1st kata
Chris Quarengahl: 2nd kata; 4th kumite
Seth Aitchison: 1st kata;
Kyle Cannon: 2nd kata; 1st kumite
Dale Peck: 3rd kata; 4th kumite
James Maillet: 4th kata; 2nd kumite
Peter Ryks: 3rd kata
Darren Wahl: 2nd kata; 2nd kumite
Gino Tomasino: 3rd kata; 1st kumite
Steve Ulrich: 4th kata; 3rd kumite
Finn McGhee: 2nd kumite

"Success is sweet but it usually has the scent of sweat about it."

-Anonymous

Underground Fighting Clubs

You may or may not have watched news reports recently about High School underground fighting clubs. I watched a fight club video on YouTube and was struck by the notion that these boys, who are struggling with the eternal problem of breaching adolescence and adulthood, have confused their version of mixed martial arts with fun and fighting skill.

These kids risk a lot for this type of social, "Fun." They haven't seen or experienced the legal and physical consequences of permanent injury that can ruin them for life. They don't see the hidden consequences of what they are doing. They think what they are doing is "Mixed Martial Arts."

What they are doing is not martial arts, mixed or otherwise. They are not knowledgeable enough to know that the type of fighting they are participating in is really the crudest approach to combat there is. Most all of those kids will never understand a true Martial Way...a spiritual path to finding value on the inside. A "Way" of getting to the soul of being alive that takes the outer form of fighting. They've never seen high level Budo where a real martial artist downs an opponent with just a small step forward and a slight motion of the arm. They can't even begin to conceive of, and are not even remotely close, to Budo at the ultimate level where an encounter is ended with a single glance without any physical action at all.

The practice of Budo is not intended to teach students how to defeat an opponent. There are quicker and more efficient ways to learn to do that. The techniques and methods in a real dojo are vehicles for forging the spirit: sharp, resilient, powerful, tempered, and pure. The forging of the spirit is a universal principal of true martial arts. Real mastery requires self mastery. Unfortunately these kids have replaced the boredom and discouragement that can come with real practice with the momentary excitement and fun of fighting without understanding the essence of any martial art. They have escaped boredom only to redecorate it with short term excitement that with one single injury can lead to a lifetime of regret.

"Master athletes don't seek victory at all costs. They recognize that ultimate victory means personal growth and long-range lifetime benefits."

-Unknown

Ma-ai

In karate training, ma-ai refers to the proper combative distance you should maintain against an opponent. The fundamental ma-ai is one in which your opponent can't kick or hit you without taking one step. This is roughly the distance at which the fingertips of two extended arms just barely can touch. If your ma-ai is too close your opponent can strike you at will. If your ma-ai is too far away no sense of connection with an opponent is possible. Ma-ai then is not too close and not too far away.

Ma-ai can vary according to your opponent and the circumstances you find yourself in. You might stand closer than the standard two arm distance if you feel that an opponent is not especially skilled. You might stand further apart than usual if you are dealing with a particularly fast, powerful, or taller opponent. Add a weapon to the scenario and your ma-ai must increase by at least the length of the weapon. The person who controls the distance and space in any encounter controls the entire encounter.

You can't just ask an opponent to extend his or her arm so that you can measure your ma-ai which means ultimately it is something you just have to know through practice. Sound practice and the magic of time help you to learn this. Sanban gumite is a very good way to learn to control your distance. Practice PSF (Precision, Speed, Force) in that order because each flows from one to the next. Remember when you are practicing any new skill to slow down first so you can go faster later.

WIKF TEAM GEORGIA

Members of the WIKF Team Georgia from the Newnan Karate Center recently competed in the Atlanta Champions Cup Tournament. Results of the competition had 8 team members winning 16 trophies.

Keith Bonner: 3rd kata; 1st kumite

Elijah Caldwell: 3rd kata; 3rd kumite

Drew Cox: 2nd kata; 2nd kumite

Anna Cox: 3rd kata; 2nd kumite

Joey Lytten : 2nd kumite

Alex Gaitan: 1st kata; 3rd kumite

Robbie Lytten: 3rd kata; 3rd kumite

Andrea Knoll: 1st kata; 2nd kumite

TALK ABOUT

Captain Devlin Spradlin, USMC, WIKF Nidan, has returned safely from his second tour of duty as a Company Commander in Iraq. His wife, Sarah has informed me that they are also expecting their second child.

- **Scott Meek** traveled to Newnan, Georgia to compete in his first NKF style tournament and his first competition since hip surgery. While he didn't win he learned a lot and the following week competed in another tournament and won first place.
- **Doug Jepperson** has been invited by Sensei Cyrus Madini to travel to El Salvador to teach a seminar. Maybe **Arturo Girona** can make that trip since it isn't too far from Nicaragua where he is currently working.
- **Brody Burns** is still in training for his new career but should be returning to the Plano Texas Dojo soon.

AUTHENTIC?

A few weeks ago my wife and I went to a new Japanese steak house here in town to sample the food and atmosphere. I was disappointed because I found the food to be inauthentic. The food has obviously been "Westernized" to make it more palatable to American tastes. They do this because the general public wouldn't know or appreciate the real thing even if they saw it and the restaurant would most likely go out of business.

I believe that the same thing has happened in many "Japanese style" dojo in the west. They are not teaching real karate but rather a watered-down version of something that looks pretty, but isn't authentic, to keep students in the dojo to make money.

Ask anyone who has trained for more than 25 years and they will tell you that the karate scene has really changed. What happened? We had a paradigm shift--a change in the fundamental rules. You couldn't run a dojo any longer where students had to wipe the blood off of the hardwood floors and went home with black-and-blue arms and legs, broken noses and busted lips. Those who tried went out of business and had to close their dojo. You can still find a few places like that but not very many and they have an extremely small dojo population.

No, I don't miss the old paradigms for running a dojo because in truth brutality often took the place of real skill. I have altered my dojo paradigms over the years, but I do sometimes wonder if too many places haven't westernized karate to the point where it is no longer authentic just like that restaurant.

"Nature's way is simple and easy, but men prefer what is intricate and artificial."

- Lao Tsu