

This past weekend of 18 November 2011, my 7 year old son and I attended our first IMT Myuna Bay TKD Training camp. Master Ron Claassens and his team of instructors hosted 30 adult and 10 young students of varying belt levels in an effort to enlighten and challenge us all in the art of Modern Tae Kwon Do. The entire group was housed together comfortably in one dormitory building complete with a deluxe common area that included a full kitchen, lounging areas and patios, and a home theater/sound system. Each room had 3 fun bunk beds to sleep six, and it's own bathroom/shower. I must say straight away that this was a well-executed first-class experience, and without question packed a tremendous punch.

We missed the Friday night warm-up and welcome, but heard it was a perfectly grueling fitness session followed by Master Ron's motivating dialog to spur everyone's indomitable spirit. We arrived 8:30am Saturday morning and were offered a healthy snack before the 3 1/2-hour seminar on generating maximum power for all blocks, punches, and kicks got underway. The guest expert this season was Master Barry Anderson 6th Dan Karate instructor, and he immediately had the entire group (IMT instructors included) engaged in a series of speed and power technique/drills and games that electrified us all, kids especially. The time literally flew by. After heavy training, all students were invited to "smash in" with all the power we could muster any black belt holding a high density punching pad.

At noon thirty, we broke for lunch. All of the meals (breakfast/lunch/dinner) were held in a large dining hall, were very organized and contained healthy choices. This gave the IMT team many great opportunities to meet, talk and connect with each other. Everyone was very open and positive, and it was fantastic meeting more people that share an interest in martial arts.

This training camp is compulsory to IMT Black tips going for their black belt, and also for 2nd dans and above to get "the green light" to test for their next dan. So next, we broke into 2 groups: those who were there to be assessed for an upcoming chance to be graded for their next black belt, and everyone else was treated to a team-building thrill ride on a 3-story rope swing. Each participant was wearing a harness and given a crash helmet, then pulled to the top of the swing where they then free-fall for four seconds as the swing swoops you through to the other side... awesome! The cameras were snapping, capturing the range of expressions from sheer fear to intense delight!

At quarter past 4:00pm, the IMT Ninja Warrior Challenge was underway. This was a complex 12-station relay race designed to deplete all who participate. We broke into 4 ten-person teams and the competition was fierce from the onset. Bragging rights are a big deal to some, but the team spirit was truly positive and interactive, making it fun for students of all ages and skill levels. Teammates had to work together to position the right combination of individual assets for the best time results. The stations included complex cardio rep sets, running laps while carrying a teammate on your back, push-up/sit-up and kicking/punching combo drills, and even kick-popping two lolly-filled balloons with thumb tacks on your toes! The lollies went flying..! Best of all, the bronze, silver, and gold winners were presented with very nice medals serving as a great keepsake. And the gold medal team also won a night out on the town together: a pre-paid Korean buffet dinner for the entire team.

After tea, a 30 minute sparring session was ON. This was 6 three-minute rounds of full on martial arts exposition, toe-to-toe with your opponent. Master Ron smiled as he padded up and took on all of the father-son teams with a wicked playful energy. The atmosphere during sparring is absolutely vibrant, because everyone is now trying out all of the techniques they are learning, and it is a great chance for black belts and above to mentor and motivate aspiring students. This is a full contact sport, but IMT students are all taught self-control and the importance of reading each other and working with each other.

After dinner, the common area lounge turned into a movie theatre (Kung Fu Panda II) and many kicked back like it was a resort. There were outdoor patio areas where people hung out, and some even got their poker on. As a parent, it was great to see that all of the kids really got on so well, there were so many different fun things to do during downtime.

Saturday concluded with an hour long session dedicated to forms from 8-9pm. Mastery of these martial arts patterns containing all punch/kicks/blocks in TKD is a life-long journey, and everyone performs their forms differently. This session was absolutely about endurance for me, because after the day's events we were all drawing from a drying well, and we had to go beyond fatigue to get through it.

Sunday morning sunrise was just starting to glow when Master Ron began an hour long Yoga session. Kids and adults went into deep stretches and meditative expanse as Master Ron delivered spiritual and calming dialog in the face of very intense, sometimes painful flexing and stretching activity. Conditioning of the mind is a key component and I was again struck by the participation and focus of the young students, some were just 4 years old! This was an unexpectedly inspiring start to the day.

After Sunday breakfast, the morning sessions included Bo work (blocking and striking with a long wooden staff weapon), Set Sparring (protocol attack/defense techniques with holds, take-downs, and counter-strikes), strike shield drills, and kicking combo target training with hand-held clapper shields. Each of those 4 sessions were 45 minutes long.

Finally, the highlight of the weekend came in the form of a rigorous under-water TKD cardiovascular work-out with Anne in the swimming pool, complete with aqua aerobics, various kick/punch combos, and heavy resistance exercises. After a 30-minute super-charged aqua TKD drill, the scene quickly went to fun & games including the human whirlpool and the human wave-maker. Next came an action-packed photo/film session where outrageous hilarity ensued as team members executed high-flying mid-air spinning hook kicks, synchronized leaping attacks, and vicious tackle take-downs. IMT has heaps of budding action movie stars, and it was all caught on film! It was the perfect wrap-up to the weekend.

At the final meal, Master Ron presented two of his students my son Caden and I with trophies for best effort, which is quite an honor considering all of the collective effort put forth by everyone. We went home sore and satisfied, with new skills and new friends. Bravo to Master Ron his wife and senior Instructor Anne and his team of IMT instructors, we will absolutely be back for more!

Regards
Jason Crouch