

Andrew Snow

August 12, 2012

Tae Kwon Do's Impact on My Life

I have participated in Tae Kwon Do for four and a half years. During that time, I have learned valuable lessons affecting my life. First, it teaches me "hard work pays off." Second, Tae Kwon Do also shows me the art of discipline. Finally, I have learned how to display true sportsmanship.

One life lesson that Tae Kwon Do has shown me is "hard work pays off." Beginning Tae Kwon Do at the age of 12, many thought that I had started a little too old. What I face ahead is competition against many who had trained since they could walk. Aside from that, there are many challenges that I faced due to my growth of *nine* inches over a three-year period. My first goal was to make the US Junior Team and time frame, I knew, was short for me. However, I was up to the challenge. Vince Lombardi remarks from his experience, "Leaders aren't born, they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work. And that's the price we'll have to pay to achieve that goal, or any goal." After earning my 1st Dan Black Belt last year, the opportunity to compete at the US Olympic Training Center (OTC) for a position on the Junior U.S. Team traveling to Egypt came earlier this year, January 2012. After successfully defeating my fist opponent and adrenaline was high, I faced the current USAT Team member for the semifinals losing to him 10-2. Returning home, I determined to train all the harder, knowing the level of competition. My day starts at 6:30am cross-training before school. Then

after school, I train for 2-3 hours. Then after eating dinner around 9pm, I finish up homework until midnight or sometimes till two in the morning. This is my usual daily routine. Then six weeks later, in February, I was blessed to be sponsored by Sayres, Inc. to compete at the U.S. Open. I felt mentally and physically strong. After winning three matches including two against Canada and Mexico, I fought in the Finals against the same team member I had previously competed at OTC. In the third and final round, my opponent was winning 2-0. Then, I successfully landed an ax kick to the head and led by 3-2, with about 30 seconds left. With a couple of seconds left, my opponent tied it up. The fight went overtime. In overtime, my opponent executed his trademark drop kick, defeating me 1-0. I had not won the gold medal, but I learned that "hard work pays off." My game tremendously improved within the six-week period. I also knew I had given my all. Continuing with my dedication and focus in training, I successfully earned a spot at the AAU team trials this year. Once again, hard work had paid off in victory. I also understand that success as a result of hard work is not always a medal or some tangible item, but rather knowing that you have set a goal and done your very best to reach that goal. Success is thus the sense of accomplishment or satisfaction knowing that you have given your all to be competitive. Steven Lopez, the most decorated Tae Kwon Do athlete in history stated, "Some days, when I win, I feel like I have lost, and sometimes when I lose, I feel I have won." Hard work pays off does not always mean winning a gold medal, but instead knowing that you have trained your hardest and you are the best you can be. One major life lesson displayed in Tae Kwon Do is "hard work pays off."

Tae Kwon Do has also taught me the art of discipline. Each day, I must be disciplined to train. It does not matter if I am tired or had a hard day at school, I maintain the discipline to practice. I also have to maintain discipline in my attitude. If I win or lose, I am required to have discipline in keeping my composure. While fighting, if my opponent holds in the clinch or if the referee does not see a penalty, I cannot allow my emotions to determine my actions, but remain disciplined. Tae Kwon Do has helped me focus and succeed in becoming more disciplined.

Finally, I have learned and observed true sportsmanship. One of the most important tenet, if not the most important, of sports Tae Kwon Do is sportsmanship. When my friends ask me, "Is Tae Kwon Do like UFC?" I tell them, "No. Tae Kwon Do demands a lot of respect. Unlike other combative sports, when I step into the ring, I make it a priority to shake hands with my opponent and bow to the other coach. At the end of each match, I shake hands with both the opponent and his coach. I do not yell at my opponents from across the ring or disrespect them. I give all my opponents respect." Watching the 2012 Olympics in London a few days ago, I witnessed a display of true sportsmanship. During the bronze medal match between Afghanistan and Italy, the Afghan fighter received an injury causing him to limp. After the match, the victorious Italian aided the opposing fighter walk back to the coaching seat. In that moment, true sportsmanship was demonstrated. A life lesson Tae Kwon Do has given me is how to have true sportsmanship.

Tae Kwon Do has had an impact in my life, teaching me life lessons. Starting Tae Kwon Do older than the majority of my opponents and entering the junior division only two years ago, I learned that "hard work pays off." It does not always

pay off in a tangible medal, but the knowledge that I have practice harder than anyone and have competed to the best of my abilities. Tae Kwon Do has also trained me the art of discipline. No matter what occurs in the ring, I must maintain discipline over my emotions. I also have to be discipline to practice even when I do not feel like it. Lastly, Tae Kwon Do has taught me to display true sportsmanship. If I win or lose, I exhibit true sportsmanship to my opponent and his coach. In conclusion, Tae Kwon Do has had an impact in my life that will have a life long impression.