

Masters of the Martial Arts (Combat Magazine)

Why did you start martial arts? - For many years, Karate had always been the martial art that I had wanted to do, mainly because of the self defence and the effective fighting skills highlighted in the movies. I moved to Middlesbrough to work in 1967 and a colleague invited me down to the Middlesbrough Budokan Karate Club and I was hooked from the very first class.

What do you think is the greatest benefit they offer? – A discipline that improves self confidence and makes personal achievements attainable by all standards of student, through learning a skill and art, that can be practiced for a lifetime.

What is your greatest achievement? – I would like to answer this in two ways, the first being personal to me, and that is being an International WKF Kumite Referee, officiating in the sport aspect of Karate at the highest level, at European and World Championships, retiring this year after 21 years. The second is establishing and developing my Chojinkai Karate Association into one of Britains most successful, producing Senior Black Belt Instructors who all started on my Beginner Courses 20/25/30 years ago. These people provide a strong foundation within Chojinkai of knowledge, ability, loyalty and friendship.

Can martial arts be a guiding light for society? - Definitely, particularly with children, showing them respect, courtesy and manners towards fellow human beings, discipline inside and outside of the dojo, along with important life skills such as confidence to speak up for themselves and if necessary, defend themselves physically, using minimum force.

What's your favourite technique? – Ura Mawashigeri. This is a technique I first saw demonstrated by Peter Spanton in the late 60's, he was very impressive and made it look so easy. It was a technique I eventually mastered, and used quite successfully in competition in the 70's and it is still my "best demo kick to the class".

What's your favourite Kata? – Ku Shanku, however, when I competed in Kata in the 70's and early 80's, Passai and Nei Sei Shi where my favoured katas, then as my association grew and I was teaching Ku Shanku more and more. I started to appreciate the Kata more and I thoroughly enjoy performing it and teaching the many Bunkai applications.

What's the funniest moment you can think of? – Falling on the tatami while refereeing a bout in Belgium in 80's. It was the mirror judge system then and as myself and the judge started to move around the fighters to change position, one fighter quickly charged the other, who backed straight into me. The judge shouted "Yamae" and after I got up, I demonstrated "Toramassen – no score" and the two fighters restarted fighting with grins on their faces, as did the judge and myself. I occasionally tell that story when I take Referee training courses when explaining the Referee's positioning and "what not to do" – I made sure that never happened to me again.

What's the worst injury you've suffered? - Luckily only a broken wrist. In 1981 when I was in training for the Tera Karate kai Nationals, I had won the Kata in the previous year and wanted to repeat that in this year and also try and win the Kumite. I was sparring at every opportunity to get as much practice as possible, however, fell awkwardly at one session and took all the weight on my wrist. I did attend the Championships, but as an official.

Where would you like to see martial arts in 25 years? - They will always be practised throughout the world by Instructors and Students for the traditional and social benefits, however, I would like to see the sport aspect of the Martial Arts as an Olympic Games event. Just as Athletics for example, is made up of High Jump, 5000metres, 100metres, Pole Vault etc, - the Martial Arts section would include Judo, Karate, Taekwondo, Wu Shu etc. This is where I would like to see the Martial arts, on par with all the rest of the Worlds Sports.

How would you like to be remembered? – A Karate technician with high standards, a fair and honest Karate Referee, a Martial Arts video pioneer, to have left a legacy with Chojinkai as a well respected, ever improving and developing Karate Association.

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Doug James

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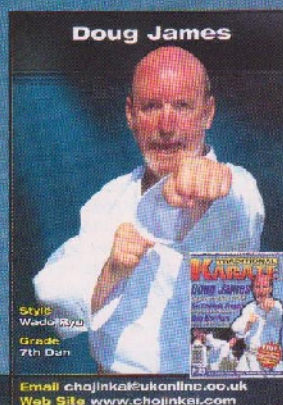
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