

## The Doug James Profile: Celebrating 40 Years in Karate

Doug James has been involved in Karate for over 40 years and is the founder and Chief Instructor of Chojinkai Karate. For the last 31 years he has been a professional instructor. Doug served on the board of the Karate Governing Body for 4 years and this year saw his retire from his role as one of the WKF's top kumite referees after an international refereeing career spanning 21 years and having officiated at over 50 European and World Championships.

In the late 80's he co-founded VMA International, which pioneered putting the martial arts onto video and into the homes of thousands of people. Still one of Britain's leading karate officials and professional instructors, he remains a member of the British & English Referee Commission and is president and chief instructor of the Chojinkai karate organisation.

### **1967 to 1976 – The Learning Years**

Doug first showed interest in the Martial Arts was in 1963 when he trained in Judo at age 16. When the Club closed he joined West Hartlepool rugby club and played regularly for the under 18's and later for the senior team.

His first experience of karate was in 1966 when he watched an impressive karate demonstration in Hartlepool given by Walter Seaton – then a 1<sup>st</sup> Dan – and it left a lasting impression on Doug. He did not join at that time because of other commitments, but while training to be a draughtsman in Middlesbrough the following year, a colleague trained at the Middlesbrough Budokan Martial Arts Club and he invited Doug to go along and give it a try: he was hooked straight away.

The karate style practised at the club was Wado Ryu within the multi-style BKA and was administered by Len Palmer, with the leading Instructors being Ticky Donovan, Peter Spanton and John Smith.

Fred Kidd 1<sup>st</sup> dan was the Budokan club instructor, assisted occasionally by John Sparkes also a 1<sup>st</sup> dan. Other club members who also went on to be senior instructors were Norman Wall and Cliff Richmond, along with John Gittus who emigrated to Australia and became the President of the Victoria State Federation. The club also had judo and kendo sections which Doug dabbled in on a few occasions; however, it was karate that he remained passionate about.

The weekly training routine for many years, which was rarely missed, was three nights a week normal training at the club, then Sunday mornings would be hill running, then back to the dojo for sparring and stretching.

Visiting instructors, on occasional weekend courses, were Peter Spanton – then a Wado Ryu 2<sup>nd</sup> Dan – and Tommy Morris – then a 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan Shukokai – who introduced Doug to alternative techniques and a variety of weapons; including the Sai, Tonfa and Nunchaku.

The hard training started to pay off when he was graded by Peter Spanton to Brown Belt 3<sup>rd</sup> Kyu in 1970. This is when Doug started helping out at classes and first showed a keen interest in teaching.

Doug first competed in local events which were organised by Bryan Crossley; who had been the first All Britain Kumite Champion in 1965. He then competed in Open Kumite competitions and in the North East Karate Kumite League. He also travelled to London with the Budokan squad and competed in BKA Nationals (kata and kumite) twice reaching the quarter finals in kumite.

In 1974 he moved his family to Carlisle to work in production engineering and then opened his first karate club in the October 1974. In that same year, Doug also graded to 1<sup>st</sup> Dan by the BKA panel in London.

1976 was the big decision year when he left his job as production engineer and began teaching full time. Within 12 months he had started clubs in Annan, Blackburn, Brampton, Cockermouth, Egremont, Lancaster, Langholm, Lockerbie, Morecambe, Maryport, Penrith, Preston, Silloth, Whitehaven, Wigton and Workington.

To ensure that he and his family would make a living, he took all classes himself, usually two venues in one night and then throughout the weekend, driving over 30,000 miles a year. This was also the year that he founded Cumbria Open Karate Championships at Carlisle Market Hall and started holding summer residential courses, the first being at Silloth on the Cumbrian coast. He continued to search for knowledge, travelling to London regularly to train with Peter Spanton and invited Ticky Donovan to visit Cumbria to conduct competition karate courses.

### **1977 to 1986 – *The Developing Years***

It was around 1977 that he began training with Toru Takamizawa by travelling to Birmingham for regular private lesson. Doug then affiliated his 300 members to the Tera Karate Kai group, headed by Sensei Takamizawa, which was still at that time was within the BKA.

The North East was the next area chosen to expand the group, so Doug opened a club in Newcastle in 1978 and a fulltime dojo and shop. Clubs were also eventually opened in Morpeth, Sunderland, Hexham, Prudhoe and Durham. Doug was then graded to 2<sup>nd</sup> Dan by BKA Panel in London

In the early 80's he reduced the number of club venues to 10 so that he could still personally teach at the majority of the clubs.

Doug continued to compete in Kumite League and Opens, as an individual and with club teams, gaining medals in most events he entered. The most memorable of these events being the Tera Karate Kai Nationals, where he gained gold medal kumite and gold medal kata in Wado and Open Style events. He retired from Competition Karate aged 35 to concentrate on developing the clubs.

In 1980, Doug was graded to 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan by the Tera Karate Kai panel in Birmingham. In the same year, he re-named the clubs "Chojinkai" to bring all 10 clubs under one banner.

It was around this time that he got interested in refereeing within the refereeing section of the Tera Karate Kai with Chief Referee Barry Tatlow. The Newcastle Upon Tyne Open karate Championships were founded and held at the Lightfoot Stadium. Along with the then well established Cumbria Open these events became the top events in north.

In 1982, with his 10 clubs and 300 membership, Doug founded the British Karate Do Chojinkai within the English Karate Federation – later named FEKO – and started attending referee courses and eventually achieved National Judge under Brian Smith in 1983.

He was later awarded 4<sup>th</sup> Dan WUKO and achieved National Referee and his first International qualification in 1986: EKF Judge at the European Senior Champs in Madrid, Spain.

This was the year he met Tim Eyrl, an independent video producer and recorded "Wado Ryu Karate - Beginner to Black Belt", which was the first comprehensive Wado curriculum on video.

### **1987 to 1996 – *The Pioneering Years***

Doug commissioned Tim to produce the "Vic Charles Competition Karate Video", again the first of its kind in that format. Doug and Tim then formed "Video Martial Arts International", more universally known as VMA which made the first ever "Magazine on Video" in 1988.

The library of titles began to grow, producing instructional and training tapes with Ticky Donovan, Terry Pottage, John Richards and other leading British karate instructors of the day.

VMA was also the first company to record championship videos of English and British National karate events, plus the European and World Karate Championships. VMA were then appointed the official video team to the EKF and WUKO for the European and World Championship events.

In 1987 he was a co-founder of the British Karate Grand Prix along with Roy Stanhope, Abdu Shaher, Unel Wellington and Victor Charles.

Doug was also invited to Australia to teach and formed the International Karate Do Chojinkai, with affiliated groups in The Republic of Ireland and Wales.

In 1989 Doug gained his first international referee qualification at the European Championships in Yugoslavia. The same year also saw Doug awarded 5<sup>th</sup> Dan WUKO.

The English Karate Referees Commission was formed around this time and he was invited to join by chief referee Terry Pottage to help train and develop the English officials.

He continued to enjoy attending international championships and officiated at the European Senior Championships in Italy and Scotland, and the European Junior Championships in Spain.

Doug also founded the Northern Open Karate Championships at this time which brought the number of Major Competitions to three and established himself as Northern England's top promoter of karate tournaments.

The international officiating continued with Doug refereeing at the European Junior Championships and European Senior Championships in Germany, the European Cup of Clubs in Yugoslavia, and the Villa-De Madrid International Trophy in Spain.

He continued to develop VMA, producing his second Wado karate video which was called "Beginning Wado Ryu Karate". Along with Tim Eyrl, Doug expanded VMA titles to include all martial arts. This saw VMA work with Hee Il Cho, Bill Wallace, Dan Inosanto, Ohtsuka II and many others. Along with martial instructional and training tapes, VMA also provided material for sports channels on BBC, ITV, SKY and worked with celebrities such as, Jackie Chan, Barry McGuigan, John Fashanu, Geoff Capes and Comedy Actor Norman Wisdom.

In 1992, Doug got onto the world referring circuit by achieving his world judge qualification at the World Senior Championships in Spain. 1993 saw Doug awarded 6<sup>th</sup> Dan WKF (Formerly WUKO). With Chojinkai group of clubs now firmly established as a major player in England, 1994 saw the Chojinkai Association directly join the English Karate Governing Body.

As busy as ever on the referring front, the early 1990s also saw Doug officiating at the European Senior Championships in Holland, Czech Republic, England, Finland, France, Tenerife, Yugoslavia and Greece. In the later 1990s, Doug officiated at European Junior Championships in Wales, Spain, Turkey and also World Championships in Malaysia, Germany and South Africa.

### **1997 to 2007 – *The Consolidating Years***

In 1998, Doug achieved his lasting ambition by gaining World Referee – straight to "A" class – at World Senior Championships in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Refereeing continued on the international scene, officiating at the European Senior Championships in Turkey, the European Junior Championships in Cyprus and Germany, the World Senior Champs in Germany, and the World Junior Champs in Greece and France.

Doug was elected to the EKGB Management Committee and the Board of Directors of EKGB Ltd, with specific responsibility for Refereeing in 2000 and later Regional Development.

In 2001 he was awarded 7<sup>th</sup> Dan WKF and around this time decided to revise the Chojinkai grading syllabus, introducing a range of new ippon gumite (pre-arranged sparring techniques).

This revision of the Chojinkai syllabus gave Doug the opportunity to bring the Wado Ryu video up to date and as a result he produced revised versions of these videos on DVD. These completely re-filmed programmes became the three volumes of the "The Master Class Series" which are regarded as the most comprehensive instructional programmes available.

2002 also saw the release of the highly acclaimed “Heroes & Legends of British Karate” video and DVD, Ticky Donovan OBE wrote to Doug “You have made so much history with this tape that the younger generation can see for themselves, instead of only being told about it. You and your company have made such a big contribution to British Karate that will live on for a long time”

2004 saw the re-structuring of VMA and the formation VMA Distribution: a sister company to VMA International, to market the huge range of VMA video programmes on DVD.

On the advice from Sport England, the role of the EKGB as the governing body was transferred to Karate England and Doug was very much involved in setting this up in 2005, but did not stand for election to the new board. As most people now know, Karate England went into liquidation after 18 months. This was a very disappointing time for karate in England and for Doug personally.

With the formation of the EKF European Regional Champs in 2003, Doug served on the Referee Council and acted as a Tatami chief referee for the championships and subsequent events until his retirement from refereeing this year.

So after an international refereeing career spanning 21 years, officiating at over 50 European and World Championships, Doug has now “hung up his international whistle”. Doug remains part of the English and British Refereeing Commission and vice-chairman of UKKRO.

On hearing of his international retirement, the President of the WKF Antonio Espinos, approved the presentation of a 20 year plus, gold long service pin to Doug, along with his personal thanks.

He has now retired from day to day teaching at clubs and has handed over this role to the very competent and highly qualified Senior Instructors at the respective Chojinkai clubs.

As president of the British Karate Do Chojinkai, his main role now is that of running the Association together with Rita as the Secretary & Registrar.

With regards to training and teaching, as the chief instructor of the Chojinkai organisation he now concentrates on maintaining the high standards by visiting & teaching at the Clubs on a rota basis, together with conducting specialist courses and gradings.

**Doug can be contacted on email – [chojinkai@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:chojinkai@ukonline.co.uk) - via his website – [www.chojinkai.com](http://www.chojinkai.com) or by telephone on 0797 9922800 – the huge range of VMA DVD’s can be viewed on [www.vma-international.com](http://www.vma-international.com)**

## KARATE

Doug James has been involved in Karate for over 40 years and is the founder and Chief Instructor of Chojinkai Karate. For the last 31 years he has been a professional instructor. Doug served on the board of the Karate Governing Body for 4 years and this year saw him retire from his role as one of the WKF's top kumite referees after an international refereeing career spanning 21 years and having officiated at over 50 European and World Championships.

In the late '80s, Doug co-founded VMA International, which pioneered putting the martial arts onto video and into the homes of thousands of people. Still one of Britain's leading Karate officials and professional instructors, he remains a member of the British & English Referee Commission and is president and chief instructor of the Chojinkai Karate organisation.

# Doug James

## Celebrating 40 Years in Karate

To ensure that he and his family would make a living, he took all classes himself, usually two venues in one night and then throughout the weekend, driving over 30,000 miles a year.

### 1967 to 1976 - The Learning Years

Doug's first interest in the martial arts was in 1963 when he trained in Judo, age 16. When the club closed he joined West Hartlepool rugby club and played regularly for the under 18's and later for the senior team. His first experience of Karate was in 1966 when he watched an impressive Karate demonstration in Hartlepool given by Walter Seaton - then a 1st Dan - and it left a lasting impression on Doug. He did not join at that time because of other commitments, but while training to be a draughtsman in Middlesbrough the following year, a colleague trained at the Middlesbrough Budokan Martial Arts Club and he invited Doug to go along and give it a try: he was hooked straight away. The Karate style practised at the club was Wado Ryu within the multi-style BKA and was administered by Len Palmer, with the leading instructors being Ticky Donovan, Peter Spanton and John Smith.