

A History of the University of Michigan Taekwondo Club

By Master Steve Busch

With contributions from Mr. James Young, Master Joseph Lloyd
and Mr. Naji Hussein

January 2, 2006
Rev. July 4, 2013

Foundation

The University of Michigan Taekwondo Club was founded by James G. Young in 1964. Mr. Young began training in 1959 in the Korean martial arts style known as Tang Soo Do under the instruction of Dale Droulliard. During his military service in Korea, Mr. Droulliard was the first American to be trained in this style and, similarly, was the first to open a club in the Detroit area. As a 2nd Dan, Mr. Young founded the UM club so he could continue training and to share this relatively new martial art. The club grew in membership and plans were made for continuation of the club after Mr. Young's graduation. In 1968, Professor Ergun Ar, who was not only a club member, but also the club's faculty advisor, located a number of instructors from various Korean styles. This was a time prior to the "unification" of various Korean styles into modern day Taekwondo. Mr. Young, Dr. Ar and senior club members "interviewed" prospective instructors and also watched them train and compete. At this time, club members included Ed Bell, Terry Goebel, Jack Hoyt and Joe Lloyd.

After considering skill level, technique and the intangible qualities of leadership and strength of character that martial arts training is supposed to foster, a unanimous decision was made to ask a young 5th Dan named Hwa Chung to be the primary instructor at the club. A student of Kang Duk Kwon founder Park Chul Hee and a former Korean sparring champion, Master Chong was in a masters program at Michigan State. After agreeing to teach at the club, Mr. Chong showed his dedication by driving from Lansing twice a week while school was in session.

Mr. Young elected to attend the University of Michigan law school and from 1968 to 1971 continued to learn from and work with Master Chong. By 1970, the club had almost 100 members and worked out in Waterman Gym. During summers, club members would drive to Lansing to train with Master Chong (as he was finishing his Masters Degree). The club actively participated in martial arts competitions throughout the Midwest.

Following his graduation from MSU, Master Chong took a job with GM and moved to the Detroit area, where he opened up a school. At this time, club was struggling with workout space. There was an old bowling alley in the Women's Athletic Building. Jack Hoyt received permission to renovate this space for the club. Club members refinished the floor and installed mirrors. This became the club's workout room for several years. When the women's gym was scheduled for demolition to make way for the CCRB, University officials sought out the club for help with the design of a martial arts room. Upon completion, club had first choice of workout times, allowing other groups to use the room when they did not need it. This is why one can only find plaques from the Taekwondo Club on the walls.

Shortly after the opening of the CCRB in the mid 1970s, Dr. Rodney Grambeau asked Master Chong if he would teach a Phys Ed class. This eventually evolved into the Kinesiology/U-Move class. At that point, club reached the structure we see today, with Master Chong teaching the class, and his senior students leading club. Key Club

members during these formative years included Joe Lloyd, Jackie Adler, Dr. Dennis Burke, Greg Gorrin, Randy Hall, Don Peterson, Patrick Harrigan, Donna Valerie, Dr. Mahommed (Cubby) Khazaeli, Lonnie Odom, Dr. Harvey Slaughter, Cliff Price, Saleem Jehangir, and Jim Wigginton. Mr. Jehangir would go on to found the Tae Kwon Do School in Karachi at the National Sports Training & Coaching Center (NSTCC) and The Taekwondo-Karate Association of Pakistan in 1971. Master Jehangir has continued to be one of the leaders of Taekwondo in Pakistan for many years.

Club produces an Olympian

During the summer of 1976, club was working out in the track area behind the IM building. A 14 year old Korean boy named Han Won Lee would watch them from the side. His family had recently emigrated from Korea. Although he had never practiced Taekwondo in Korea, it was familiar to him. Han joined the club, worked his way through the ranks, and earned his black belt. He trained extensively with Joanne Hamilton and Eric Erickson. When he could, he also went to Detroit, where he would spar with Owen Pope, Lynette Love, and the other students there. Later sparring partners of Han included David Kim, John Vincent, and Master Chong's sons, Hoon and Sean.

In the early 1980s, Master Chong became involved in the founding of the United States Taekwondo Union (USTU). This group became the national governing body for the World Taekwondo Federation in the United States. Master Chong served as President of the Michigan State Association for a number of years. During this time, the club hosted the state championships each year.

In 1982, the University of Michigan Taekwondo Club hosted the national championships at Pioneer High School. Taking advantage of a home court, Han won the first of five national championships. In 1988, Han won the U.S. Team Trials and went to the Olympics in Seoul, Korea. Han won the Bronze medal, losing to the Gold medallist in the semi-finals. When he returned, Han took advantage of his publicity to open his own school. Dave Kim and John Vincent followed him. During the late 1970s and early- to mid-1980s, other key club members included Nicholas Bissoon-Dath, Tony Glinke, Todd Grant, Scott and Dale Shuger, Mike Wallace, Wynne Chin, Ed Rice, and Mary Asztalos Schoenfeld.

In 1992, Han got the competition bug again and tried out for the U.S. team again. He won the team trials and went to Barcelona as the team captain. Unfortunately, Han injured his knee early in the competition and did not medal. A short while after the 1992 Olympics, Han was asked to come out to Colorado Springs to become the resident Head Coach at the Olympic Training Center.

At the same time, Master Chong was elected President of the USTU, a position he held from 1993 – 1996. During all of this, club continued on. Key members from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s included Tim Frye, Steve Busch, Sahba La'al, Garry Gross, James Marks, Susanne Kopecky, Jerilyn Bell, Matt Birchmeier, Terry Hull, Shana Milkie, Roland Spickerman, Laura Kistler, Tony Winkler, and Mike Spigarelli.

Club loses a long time instructor

One of the constants of club from 1968 to 1999 was the presence of Master Joseph Lloyd. Master Lloyd served as Head Club Instructor for most of that time. Master Lloyd also supported Master Chong in the USTU, serving as Legal Council for a number of years. In early 1999, Master Lloyd observed that a number of the club officers and senior members were not attending his workouts. He called a meeting and requested that the upper belts write mission statements for the club. The officers stated that club should first be a social entity, and that Taekwondo was secondary. They said that club should be fun, and that working on fundamentals and basics were not fun. Although several senior club members supported him, Master Lloyd saw a significant disconnect between the club officers and what he wanted to teach. He shortly thereafter submitted his resignation to Master Chong. Master Nicholas Bissoon-Dath took over as Head Club Instructor.

In 2000, the first Big Ten Taekwondo Conference Championship was held at MSU. The club sent a team and took second. President Josh Rosenblatt volunteered to host the 2001 championships. Aided by instructors Master Bissoon-Dath, Steve Busch, and Tony Winkler, along with officers Michelle Anderton, Bohua Yu, Chrissy Dallas, and Kent Winter, the tournament was a success. The University of Michigan took first place, narrowly defeating MSU. OSU, Purdue, and Indiana all sent teams. Unfortunately, the Big Ten Taekwondo Conference was unable to find a host for the next tournament.

In 2002, club suffered another loss when Chrissy Dallas passed away. A popular member and officer, Chrissy had helped support the class by recruiting fellow Kinesiology students to enroll. In 2003, alum Scott Shugar died in a scuba diving accident. Both Scott and his daughter Dale had earned black belts from Master Chong, Dale being only eleven years old at the time.

The new century has seen an influx of new blackbelts who have contributed to the continued success of the club. These include: Naji Hussein, Sigrun Karlsdottir, Elliot Morrison-Reed, Daniel Santiago, Mike Walsh, Dan Kim, Shendi Wang, Jacqueline Cole, Sadeh Arab, and Jorge Renato Peña Alarcon. Under their leadership, the club has been successful at a number of tournaments. Mr. Hussein and Dr. Cole, in particular, have contributed greatly as leaders and instructors since 2006, during which the club has seen a resurgence in its membership to over 100 people and a renewed commitment to national and collegiate competitions, primarily as part of the Eastern Collegiate Taekwondo Conference.

In 2008, Master Nicholas Bissoon-Dath decided to retire from his position as Head Club Instructor and shortly after relocated to California. His place was taken by Master Steve Busch. A club member since 1987, Master Busch had been assisting both Master Bissoon-Dath and Grand Master Chong.

Epilogue

The University of Michigan Taekwondo club is the oldest, and arguably most successful, martial arts club on campus. It can boast more alums and an Olympic medalist. The source of this success has been the strong club members, combined with the constant support of its instructors (particularly Grand Master Chong, Grand Master Lloyd, and Master Bissoon-Dath) and alumni, who have formed a base that the current club members can build upon. Other clubs have lacked this, and many have either folded after the founder left or required regular support from an outside school. Many students have earned their black belts. Others have come as black belts and continued their training. Equally impressive are the accomplishments of the club alums after they have graduated. Among its alums, club can count many successful doctors, lawyers, scientists, engineers, and business leaders. Grand Master Han Lee now runs a very successful Taekwondo School out in Castle Rock, CO.

One of the great lessons that many club members have learned is the value of a true student-teacher relationship. While the club has supported Grand Master Chong for many years, he in turn has supported the club and made many sacrifices. Master Chong could have made more money by opening private schools. He has also turned down lucrative offers from friends to teach at schools outside the area. Grand Master Chong's peers stopped teaching classes many years ago, while he continues to teach on a regular basis. Recently awarded his Tenth Dan, Grand Master Chong is one of the top Taekwondo masters in the country. He recently served on the executive council of the World Taekwondo Federation and is now on the Kukkiwon Advisory Board.

The future holds some interesting questions for the club. The model which existed for over 30 years has changed. From 1970 through 2002, club was lead by students of Grand Master Chong. While Master Busch continues to support and instruct the club, the large majority of the club black belts and instructors did not earn their black belts from Grand Master Chong. The link between the club and Grand Master Chong is now much weaker. The upcoming decade will see further changes and evolution.