

The T.K.D. Flash

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On February 2 a total of 31(!) students tested at Grafton, and presiding were Samdans Minesal, Bauman, and Lubner, Yidan Spitz, and Chodans Prohuska, Mattias, Brudnak, Graff, and Soriano and Mr. VH. At the corner were Jim and Mitch Pals. There were a total of 8 Decided grades. Mr. Jim Pals, sponsored by Mr. Gregg Thursten, and Mr. Mitchel Pals, sponsored by Mr. Mattias, were sworn as Deacons. Congratulations to Mssrs. Pals!

There will be a Demonstration at St. Paul Lutheran School in Grafton on March 15. You can call Mr. VH for information at his number above or email to fmvh@execpc.com.

On February 9 there was a test in Sheboygan. Mr. Van Pietersom, Mrs. Karpinsky and Mr. Mikkelson presided and Mr. Klassy cornered. A total of 16 students tested and did a generally excellent job. Miss April Doebert received an award for "Most Improved Student."

A demonstration was held at Grafton Elementary School on February 15. Three sessions of students were amazed and delighted by the TaeKwon-Do skills of Mrs. Lubner, Mr. Mattias, Dr. Brudnak, Mitch Pals, Drew Dondero, Roy Wells, Valerie Pals, Alex Knapp, Natalie Crandall, Paul Crandall, Tony Mattias, Allie Mathusek, Casem Abulughod, Hasan Abulughod, Amirah Abulughod, Zeki Abulughod, Tony Magestro, Anya Magestro, and Dr. Stephanie Brudnak.

The Wisconsin TaeKwon-Do Seminar February 23 at the Academy of Martial Arts--Sheboygan, taught by Mr. VH, was, reportedly, a good time. Due to popular demand it will be repeated for Gup Threes and higher later this year.

A demonstration held at Woodview Elementary School on February 15. Thanks to the following participants: Mrs. Lubner, Mr. Bauman, the Abulughod family, the Pals family, the Brudnak family, the Mattias family, the Magestro family, Austin Meier, Roy Wells, Alex Knapp, Allie Mathusek, Steele Morton, and Austin Shopbach.

Submit articles to The Flash, and become a published author in a martial arts newsletter. Call Mr. VH for details. We make it easy!

Flying High: An Exercise Guide to Increasing Your Altitude

By: Mike Van Pietersom, IV Dan

Introduction

Tae Kwon-Do is one of many different martial arts practiced in the world by a multitude of practitioners. Each and every one of them serves it's own purpose and I have said many times in the past that I believe all the martial arts strive to accomplish the same result, they just have different ways of going about doing it.

However, Tae Kwon-Do has been viewed by the public as being representative of many kicks and acrobatics more than its counterparts. In fact, when many people who do not practice martial arts visit an "open" tournament, they find it easy to identify who the Tae Kwon-Do practitioners are.

The onlookers are quite accurate with this conclusion even though there are some exceptions to that general observation. But in general, Tae Kwon-Do does require more stamina and training in the legs than many others.

When I began taking formal classes at the age of 18, I found that my legs would become worn out rather quickly and had to start increasing their strength. I looked in exercise books for ways to exercise the muscles of the legs, but found that most of the readings were based on

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weight training, muscle massing, and going the "muscle man" look. I didn't like this form of training because it would build up the size and weight of my legs and therefore, cause my kicks to slow down. I wanted a form of training that would capitalize on my speed and give me the "spring" in my legs rather than mass.

For this reason, I began to modify the techniques I saw in those work-out books and gear them toward the martial artist who wanted to get more height in their jumping and airborne kicking techniques. In many cases, the successful completion of multiple jumping, mid-air, and other airborne techniques depend greatly on the "hang time" that you can generate with the jumping motion. Let's face it, the longer you can stay in the air, the more kicks you can pull off in that cycle.

One of my core exercise routines that I have created from this concentrates on the muscles and tendons of the leg that are crucial to getting up in the air. The narrative that follows is an attempt to give you a written plan to practice and train with in the course of your development in Tae Kwon-Do. It has greatly helped me through the years and I still teach it from time to time in my own classes. I hope it will help you too!

Stretching – A Requirement

This exercise program is very intense for those who have never done it before. Proper stretching of the legs in every conceivable fashion is encouraged. You will be using muscles in your legs that you may not know you had, but believe me, you soon will. It is important to remember to stretch both before and after your session. Your muscles will be worked hard as you progress through the cycle and a stretching session after this exercise will help to reduce the aftereffects of such an intense workout. The first time I had a class do this exercise, some of them didn't put much effort into their stretching regiment and found themselves quite sore the next day. Please take the time to stretch thoroughly before starting your session so you don't have to suffer the consequences they did.

A Quick Note

When starting on this program, it is suggested that you phase-in the number of repetitions you complete with each stage of the process. In other words, pace yourself. You have many stages to go through in this cycle and each one continues to use muscles that were already used in the one before. Don't wear out the muscles you use in the early stages only to find out that you can't properly complete the later ones because you wore them out too early.

Warning – you might

not want to do this exercise the day before a physical event. Just as with weight lifting training, the day after you work out your muscles can be a bit sore or not do all that you want them to do until they repair and build up from the workout. Many of my students have noticed that their leg muscles are pretty worn out after this workout plan and one of them even referred to it as "The Deadly Shakes" because her legs kept trembling when trying to do walking stances after this exercise session. If you have a tournament, testing, or other physically demanding activity I would suggest waiting for a different day to start this program. However, if you're ready to dive right in, read on and have fun!

Benefits Of A "Higher" Education

When you complete this exercise cycle you should have an understanding of the following benefits and their applications to Tae Kwon-Do:

You should understand the importance of stretching before and after this exercise system to avoid prolonged aftereffects of exhausting the leg muscles.

Improving on your ability to gain altitude by concentrating on the muscles that produce a "spring" into the air.

Understand the mechanics of getting airborne as well as the applications that can be used in many flying

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kicks used in Tae Kwon-Do. Be able to demonstrate an understanding of making a "controlled landing" to soften the blow and absorb the shock of falling back to the ground.

To gain the highest ground clearance by utilizing a full "tucking" motion at the apex of your jumps.

Working the leg muscles to the point of exhaustion to maximize the growth of the leg muscles, and to build stamina for airborne techniques of Tae Kwon-Do.

Getting Up In The World

Ok, you're stretched out, you're full of energy, you're psyched, so now what? This exercise is broken down into stages, each building on the other. It is important to concentrate on feeling the motion and tension of the muscles you are using so you may fully incorporate them into the exercise. If you give an honest effort at it, you will see results in a short period of time.

Stage 1 – The Toes

This part of the cycle helps to train and strengthen the calf muscles of the leg, which are comprised of a left and right side. It is the foundational basis of getting the "spring" in your jumping action.

Stand with your feet about shoulder width apart. Keeping the legs straight, raise your body weight up on your toes and hold it there for a second or two.

Slowly – come back

down to the ground until your heels rest on the floor. It is important to come down slowly and control the decent back to the floor. This teaches the students to have controlled landings as will become evident in the later stages.

Repeat this cycle about 5 times when just starting out and move up to 10 later on as you become stronger and your muscles have become used to the drills.

(It is important to have your feet at a comfortable angle to one another rather than keeping them both straight forward. The reason for this is that everyone's legs and feet are aligned differently and the natural alignment of your feet will match the way you use your legs when you jump off the ground. Your "calf" muscle has two primary parts – the left and right sides. People who try to keep their feet straight forward when it's not natural will tend to work one side of the calf muscle and not the other, resulting in an imbalance and possible cramping problems in the future.)

Stage 2 – Toe Jumping

Now that your calf muscles have warmed up and are used to the tensing and contracting motions, you will now train them to "spring" your body into the air.

Feet about shoulder width apart as before.

Keeping the legs straight, quickly jump off the

floor as much as you can using ONLY your toes. In other words, do a very fast burst of what you were doing in Stage 1 so as to get off the ground.

Landing – land only on your toes and ball of the foot. DO NOT fall flat on your feet or heels. Hold yourself up on your toes for a second. If your heels bounce off the ground due to weak calves, that's alright but try in the future not to let them touch the ground upon the initial landing.

Slowly – come down onto your heels, keeping control of the decent of your feet. This will really work out the calves and give them the stamina they will need for jumping high into the air once they are developed.

Remember your heels should not hit the ground right away. Make sure that you land on the balls of your feet and then slowly come down on the heels.

Stage 3 – Slight Knee Bend

In past stages, you kept your knees as straight as possible in order to specifically target the calves of your legs. Now we move onto more natural motions as the importance of previous steps become more apparent.

From the starting position of feet at shoulder width, slightly bend the knees but not more than a 20° angle of bending.

Still concentrating on using the calf muscles, jump into the air just making sure

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that you actually get off the ground. Height is not important yet, but feeling the pressure of the upper leg working with the lower leg is.

Landing – allow your knees to bend upon landing to absorb the shock. Come down onto the balls of the feet, NOT the heels. Again, try to hold yourself up on your toes for a second.

Slowly – come down onto your heels as you straighten your knees, keeping control of the decent to the floor.

[It is important at this stage to make sure you bend your knees when you land. If you do not, you risk injury to your heels (crashing to the ground), knee joints (due to lack of shock absorption), and hip joints. Basic rule of thumb, if you bend your knees to take off with, you better bend them on the landing too!]

Stage 4 – Mid-Knee Bend

By now, you might be experiencing some fatigue in the Achilles' tendon and possibly in the calf muscles. Good! That means we're doing something with them. However, if at any time you feel they are getting worn out or just too tired to continue, then stop, stretch them out well, and try this cycle again on another day. Remember, you want to be able to walk properly tomorrow!

Feet shoulder width apart.

Bend the knee joint

about 30° this time, and push off with much more power than you did in the last stage. You should feel your upper leg muscles working much harder than before. This is not the time to hold back – push off hard while concentrating on still using your calf muscles. If you're just using your upper leg to jump with, then you'll never get the "spring" effect that you need. Use your calves!

Landing – This time allow your knees to bend deeply upon landing to absorb the shock. Come down onto the balls of the feet only, with your knees bent as if you were squatting. Do not allow your feet to pound back down onto the ground. Use control and softly land as you absorb the shock of the floor.

Slowly – stand back up as you allow your heels to come back to the ground.

Stage 5 – Major Knee Bending

Now is the time to start breathing harder. In fact, at this point you should begin blowing air out as you jump into the air much like you expel air when doing a Tae Kwon-Do technique. You will be using full power with your legs in this stage.

Start with feet shoulder width apart.

Bend your knees as much as you want with the intent of jumping as high as you possibly can.

When you jump, thrust your arms and shoulders into

the air to gain more height as the momentum of their mass helps you elevate your body.

Your arms should be well above your head when you are in the air.

Also when you jump, use the full force and power of your legs to propel your body higher than it went before. Feel the raw power from the upper legs and the strong tension of the calves spring you up into the air!

Landing – deeply bend the knees when landing on the balls of your feet. Don't allow your feet to smash into the ground, but rather make sure your feet get down to the ground in time to absorb the landing. Don't wait until it's too late and your feet smack the ground. Land softly with a controlled motion.

Slowly – stand up and allow your heels to come to rest on the ground.

Stage 6 – Tucking Jump

Congratulations, you're almost done! Assuming you still have leg muscles that still have energy, this stage will utilize the full range of motion of your knee and hip joints. Coupling this with the raw power of the previous stage, you will learn how to jump high enough to get over objects without snagging your feet on them in the process. This exercise is done in place easily adapts to many of the flying kicks in Tae Kwon-Do.

[This article will continue in the next TKD.Flash]