

A History of the University of Michigan Taekwondo Club

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

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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 Grand Master 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 in Economics). The club actively participated in martial arts competitions throughout the Midwest.

Following his graduation from MSU, Master Chong 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.

Shortly after the opening of the CCRB in the mid 1970s, Dr. Rodney Grambeau and Dr. Dee Edington 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 that was to be in place for 40 years, with Master Chong teaching the class Tuesdays and Thursdays, and his senior students leading club Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays.

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, Len Gil, 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.

The University of Michigan Taekwondo Club 1970

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 1974, 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 founded the Michigan State Association and served as President of the Michigan State Association and Vice

President of the USTU 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. Club member Joan Hamelin also won a national championship.

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. Master Lee then served as US Olympic team coach in 2000.

At the same time, Grand 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, Tony Winkler, Mike Spigarelli, and Dr. Laura Kistler. Dr. Kistler was a collegiate national sparring champ.

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 decided to retire for personal reasons. 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 a 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 black belts who have contributed to the continued success of the club. These include: Naji Hussein, Jacqueline Cole, Daniel Santiago, Sigrun Karlsdottir, Elliot Morrison-Reed, Mike Walsh, Dan Kim, Shendi Wang, Sadeh Arab, Jorge Renato Peña Alarcon, Ajae Whittaker, TJ Schmitz, Laura Palm, Alex Minghine, Omar Gates, Renna Ayyash, Kevin Laforest, and Courtney Petersmark. Under their leadership, the club was successful at a number of tournaments, including a collegiate champion in Avery Clinton. Dr. Hussein and Dr. Cole, in particular, contributed greatly as leaders and instructors from 2006 to 2013, 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.

The Michigan Taekwondo club won ECTC Division 3 the 2010-2011 season, moved up and won Division 2 for the 2012-2013 season, placing 4th overall. This was quite an accomplishment, given that most of the top teams are fairly close to the competitions, while UM would need to take 3 days for each competition in order to travel.

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.

50th Anniversary and Grand Master Chong's Retirement

In the fall of 2014, The University of Michigan Taekwondo Club celebrated its 50th anniversary with an alumni reunion party. Distinguished alums, such as founder Mr. James Young, Master Jehangir Saleem, Master Joseph Lloyd, Grand Master Han Lee, and Grand Master Chong were in attendance, along with 75 alums and club members.



50th Anniversary Party

Later that fall, Grand Master Chong decided to retire from active teaching at the University of Michigan. Shortly after this, Grand Master Chul Hee Park retired as worldwide leader of Kangdukwan and Grand Master Chong was named President.

January 2015, the club officers and black belts assembled to decide what to do following Grand Master Chong's retirement. Following two meetings, where options were discussed and debated, the club leadership decided to name Master Steve Busch as the club's Master Instructor. Grand Master Chong is now Master Instructor Emeritus and still attends belt tests.

Changes were also afoot in Club Sports. In the years following the foundation of the Taekwondo club, several other martial arts clubs were founded, such as the Shotokan and Shōrin-ryū Karate clubs, and the Judo, Jujitsu and Ninjutsu Martial arts clubs. Workout space was often an issue with all these groups. In 2014, club sports decided that it would formally sponsor and support club sports that meet certain criteria. These criteria included attendance, non-student coaches, collegiate competitions, and fund raising. The Taekwondo club was the only martial arts club to meet these requirements. Key in this was membership and competitions in the ECTC. Most of the other clubs have since folded. It was primarily due to the foresight of club instructors Dan Santiago, Jacques Cole, and Naji Hussein, that the club was in such a position to meet this key requirement and survive.

Club adds a Head Coach

By 2018, club had a good track record of competing in the ECTC, often winning their division, despite the long travel. Club benefited from several talented student head coaches: Dr. Hussein, Alex Minghine, and Miguel Mendoza. Unfortunately, they graduated and moved away, and a good internal replacement was not available. Master Busch had become friends with Master Russel Gale, who had a school in Plymouth MI, and worked with the US National Team. Master Busch approached Master Gale to see if he had an experienced student who might be interested in becoming the Club's head

coach. Master Gale introduced Master Busch and the club to Master David Reitz. A 4th Dan, Master Reitz was a very successful national level competitor, winning gold at the 2017 US Nationals. Master Gale even joined Master Reitz for the 2019 Collegiate competition season. Master Reitz has since become a regular at club practices and tournaments.

Two crises in one year

In the spring of 2020, Covid hit. Club was forced to stop all practices in March of that year. At the same time, Club Sports requested a meeting with the Club Officers and Coaches. In this meeting they informed Club President Liam Blanchard that due to a recent Risk Management Audit, the Taekwondo Club and Boxing Club were on notice for possible termination due to concerns of concussions. The club was given 6 weeks to respond for reinstatement. Master Busch took the lead in drafting the response, with the assistance of President Blanchard, former Presidents Eleanor Martin, Ezra Gans, Alex Minghine, and Coach Reitz. Professor Johannes Foufopoulos provided significant assistance, and Secretary Carin Queener did reviews of the document. Club also received assistance from the ECTC. Master Dan Chuang helped the club get performance data that showed that Taekwondo was less risky than many sports. In July, the club was formally reinstated.

While all this was going on, club continued to operate. In April, members began having informal Zoom sessions, with Jamie Toh and Julia Smith leading the way. This soon became more formalized, with regular practices via Zoom. Later in the winter term of 2021, club was able to have occasional distanced practices, and even a belt test. There, President Blanchard received his well-deserved black belt. No club president has had to deal with as much as Liam did that year. Additional leaders before and during this time included Eleanor Martin, Ezra Gans, Rishi Merchant, Carin Queener, Jamie Toh, Julia Smith, Helen Pan, Katherine Springer, Alicia Wang, Hyoung Cho, Jennie Paik, Rose Popma, and Mitchell Milne.

Epilogue

The University of Michigan Taekwondo club is the oldest, and 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 either folded after the founder left or required regular support from an outside school, until the most recent Club Sports requirements.

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. Grand Master Chong could have made more money by opening private schools. Now head of Kangdukwan worldwide, Grand Master Chong is one of the top Taekwondo masters in the country. He recently served on the executive council of the World Taekwondo.

Another strength of the club has been Grand Master Chong's balanced teaching and lessons. Taekwondo is more than just kicking and punching. Grand Master Chong has shared a number of lessons on philosophy and leadership, the 'do' of taekwondo.

One of the first lessons many students remember is how the study of taekwondo can help make you a cosmopolitan. Unless you are from Korea, studying taekwondo requires you to learn about the Korean ways and culture. This can help a student by broadening their horizons, understanding that there are different ways of viewing and approaching the

world. There is not a right way and a wrong way. This understanding helps one become a citizen of the world, a cosmopolitan.

Another is the unity of theory and action, which is the club motto. Action with little thought can result in misdirected activity and stagnant growth. Theory with little action does not result in progress either. It is the proper balance of both that results in continued growth and development in a generally positive direction.

More recently, Grand Master Chong has been sharing the 'Five Blessings of Life': Soo (Longevity), Bu (Wealth), Kangryung (Sound Body and Mental Health), Yuhyoduck (Building Virtues through benevolent conduct), and Kojongmyung (Peaceful End of Life). The 'Way' or 'Do' of Taekwondo is a journey. The Five Blessing of Life provide a map of the way, a goal of the journey.

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 most recent changes in club sports, with the emphasis on competition, is also driving change. The upcoming decade will see further changes and evolution.