

# Spirit Taekwon-Do

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## Training in Malaysia with Master Tan

Two students of Spirit TKD have decided to further their knowledge of Taekwon-Do by going to Malaysia and train with Master Tan. Master Tan has a good reputation and has pushed many students beyond their normal limits. After hearing and reading about Master Tan, Richard Sperrin (III Degree) and Andrew Fox (I Degree) decided to spend one month with Master Tan. After several months of planning, on Thursday 1st October 2009, Richard and Andrew flew out to Malaysia.



And so the story begins .....

### Friday 2nd October

After being greeted by Master Tan and taken out for various meals, Master Tan advised Richard and Andrew that he would be taking it easy on them for the first week so that they could acclimatise. After which, he then drove them for two hours to train with the Malaysian National Team. The team are currently preparing for a competition in Russia next week.

The temperature is very hot and the National Team are taking their training very seriously. Richard and Andrew are asking themselves, why have they chosen to embark on this journey of self-discovery. They are finding Master Tan is a very gracious man and has quite a sense of humour.

### Saturday 3rd October

#### **Just after the training - Written by Richard Sperrin**

Well that was not as bad as expected, a little daunting looking at the standard of everyone else and the expectations of everyone else looking at us. Master Tan comically told the team that Andrew and I are European champions. I think they smelt a rat when we were weighing ourselves. All I remember was hearing the gasps of the whole team when it was announced that Richard weighs a whopping 96kgs.

person can produce astounding power then I beg you to book your tickets to come to Malaysia now.

The food out here is absolutely amazing and unlike British food leaves you pleasantly full but the taste buds absolutely whacked out. Andrew and I were also fed a 'moon cake' which is a delicacy served at special times of year (this was a Chinese autumn festival) it consisted of lotus paste on the outside, red bean paste next and an egg yolk innermost. Our hosts appear to enjoy watching us enjoy their food, but suspect that Master Tans efforts to trim me down might not work.

I think I've made an enemy of my comrade already. At dinner I joked that Andrews mother had asked me to look after him. Master Tan loved this and decided that it should be announced at the table and indeed on the UK Vision website that Andrew is a mummys boy. SORRY ANDREW !!

Most prominent lesson of today was the sharpness of patterns. I always thought mine looked quite sharp but compared to these competitors, it looked like I was performing my patterns in a swimming pool full of syrup. To anyone reading you will just have no idea until you see it.

Master Tan is a man whose passion is Taekwon-Do and his family extends to welcome all his students. He is a very courteous man and has taught us a few valuable lessons for today.

\*You never offer your hand to a senior grade to shake, but you wait for them to offer theirs to you.

\*When bowing to a senior you stay in bowed position (15 degrees remember folks) for longer than they do

\*When a senior enters a room where you are sat, you should stand and shake their hand or bow.

Quote of the day - "ITF patterns are beautiful, like a song. Some of you are singing well and others are just ruining the song"

Tomorrow?! - Sparring with the National Team, Help !!!

### **Sunday 4th October**

Today we finish our training with the national team. We are staying at the Tower Regency Hotel in a place called Ipoh.

Ouch seems to be the word of the day. We did sparring today with the national team. I think it fair to say that Andrew and I worked hard and did the best we could given the humidity and unrelenting instructor. We did some ring sparring and although I would be the first to admit that sparring is not my favourite aspect of Taekwon-Do, I think I did well against another 3rd degree, I landed a beautiful downward kick right on his head with absolute precision. Granted it is not full contact, but I think at their level, a little bit more contact is expected.

I take my hat off to Andrew today for landing a very surprising, very controlled, very precise 360 back kick to his sparring partner. He even got commended by Master Tan for using a surprise attack. Well done buddy!!!!

Andrew and I left the sparring session totally worn out but really happy that we had pushed ourselves that hard. I have just finished washing my severely blistered foot and Andrew is in the bathroom now doing the same.

After day 2 of training with Master Tan our heads are already buzzing with stuff and really look forward to sharing with everyone when we return.

Quote of the day - "Richard and Andrew, always be generous, always!"

Richards blog:

Today we officially called 'The day of gastric problems ants and pain'.

The day started abruptly and early, alas not by a slave driving master but by some very sharp feelings in my legs, I think I brushed it off most of the night putting it down to muscular aches and pains. By 8am I decided to turn the light on and see if there was a problem. Unbeknown to me a whole army of vicious ants had started using my legs as the equivalent of the M1, to a packet of opened oreo cookies (at least they had good taste). Andrew swats a few and announces quite seriously " I think they are scared now, look they are running away" (nice one Andrew, show them your black belt and they may run faster). Our battle against the menacing ants of Malaysia has gone on all day and we think we have won for now.

Master Tan decided today was the day I would teach one of his classes. This particular class was an after school class consisting of some very young kids. I think it went well and Master Tan said nothing negative at least (I've learned that silence usually means 'satisfactory') Our first training session of the day had left us both very weak and tired (sets of 50 crunches interspersed with patterns and strength training) we then had an hours rest before going to the 'serious' class (gulp!!!)

In the serious class we did little more than sparring drills. During this session I started feeling a little nauseated and just after the drills I had to run out to the toilet to be sick, and so Andrew won the bet on who would be sick first. I wasn't yet defeated, I soldiered on and finished the session with a big beaming grin, 2 more blisters and a kind of lethargy I have never experienced.

Master Tan asked me today to have a look at his son Lyonel before he sets off in a weeks time to the international championships. It seems that the work of a chiropractor is never done. Indeed I did some chiropractic work with 3 other members of the national team to make sure they are all fit for their challenge. Wait till I get home and tell some of my colleagues!!!!!!

At the forefront of my mind today was all about how far and hard to push people I teach, is it something that would be welcomed with open arms? or is this kind of punishment only reserved for fanatics? whatever the answer it is clear that Master Tans students are completely loyal to his teaching, loyal to him and loyal to the art of Taekwon-Do, an example for every student to follow.

Rules of Etiquette - At dinner the (Grand)Master(s) has the highest rank students sitting with him/her unless specified otherwise.

Bow to senior instructors students when they enter the dojang.

The most junior in grade pours the drinks at dinner (most likely tea)

Some might consider these rules of etiquette archaic and unnecessary but I think are a small price to pay to a good instructor.

[Quote of the day "Death before dishonour"](#)

Andrew's blog:

Pain! and lots of it!

I awoke this morning at around 8am to hear Richard in pain. I had no idea why until Richard said look behind you. On the window, there were an army of ants making way for the chocolate we had stupidly left out. After much killing of ants later we left for a light meal before training. Our understanding was we would be helping to teach a class, however once that class had ended Master Tan gave us a 2 and half hour private lesson. Four words are now embedded in my head forever as once we had finished doing many basic techniques he says "Ok 50 crunches go!." Basic techniques here is doing 1 technique over and over again until it is perfect. Throughout the class we racked up 250 crunches!

We had a brief break to get to a pharmacy for tape and plasters for our blisters to prepare

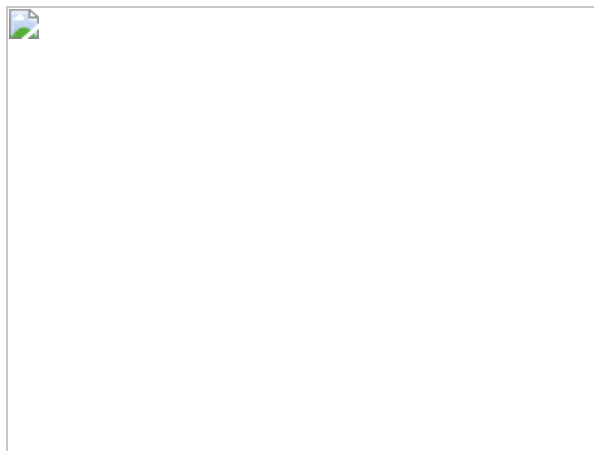


On a concrete floor we trained for 2 hours doing pad work and sparring drills. I made the worst mistake of picking my sparring partner. An hour later of being beaten senselessly as a human punch bag, I discovered the reason

- 1) I could not land a single technique and
- 2) Why I now have a severe headache, was he was the national champion. The only reason he was not in the national squad is he is only 16.

Back in England, Richard always used the term "Do you need a Wambulance" whenever he saw someone tired. Richard came up to me after the class and said "I need Wambulance" Ha! Karma finally comes back to haunt him.

Richard has already mentioned the amazing talent that the masters son has, but I feel I really need to emphasise this.



Lionel Tan produces so much power at such a fast rate it is scary. At some point before he goes away with the national squad to Russia, Master Tan has promised us that we have to face him. I can think of a million things I would rather do.

We then went for a meal to replenish our much used up energy. The food of the day was Stingray, a very exquisite taste served in spices and noodles were delicious.

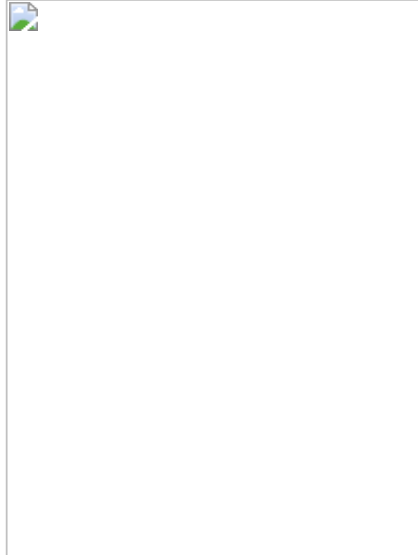
Eddie Izzard Recently ran a marathon 6 times a week for 7 weeks and swore by cold baths. They have been a godsend and have helped our muscles to heal quickly.

[Quote of the day "If you want to wear a Black belt, go buy one in the shop, but if you want to earn a Black belt you must train hard"](#)

A very important quote made by the master. I recently made the decision not to go for my second Degree because I felt I was not up to the standard, Master Tan took one look at my patterns and said "We have a lot of work to do" you cannot expect to grade if you are not at the required standard. You must work hard and earn your right to grade.

**Tuesday 6th October**

seemed to do as they were told. The second was a class of secondary school children of whom most didn't know how to tie their belts properly (hence began their first lesson of the day). Master Tan asked me for some sincere help, he desperately wants to watch his son Lyonel at the international championships and has requested that I take all his junior classes for a week. I'm quite proud I feel I have earned some trust there.



The feet are healing up nicely. I recall a few days ago I think I might have been looking for sympathy from a very gentle character in the class, I was moaning about the burst blisters on my feet, Michelle (international hopeful) says gently with a kind smile "If you rip the skin off entirely it means the skin underneath grows thicker faster" erm thanks Michelle :-).

I dropped Andrew in it again today by mentioning in passing about Andrew having brought hair straighteners (the master loved that and gave him a bit of a ribbing).

We paid a visit to a pet shop selling purely exotic and common birds. Master Tan said that he can speak bird language to which we thought what most would, that it was a load of rubbish. So Master Tan strolls casually past a load of cages and whistles a tune to which all the birds replied with the exact same tune at the exact same time. how bizarre!

Andrew and I were faced again with one of the masters favourite fruits, I think it is spelt Durin but is known better as the 'king of fruits'. I've been puzzling for days trying to work out the flavour and texture and all I can come up with is - a thick custard texture flavoured with banana, mango and papaya. It really is bizarre and smells dammed rotten but is strangely quite tasty.

We discussed with the master today the issue of rank and he told us many stories of masters who tricked or bullied the late General Choi into giving them a higher rank. On reflection I look at our club and see that all the people holding black belts have earned them through hard work, diligence and in some cases dogged determination and stubbornness. I mentioned to Master Tan about a recently promoted 1st Degree in our club who has found Taekwon-do very challenging, remained a 1st kup for a long time, had failed his first attempt at 1st Degree but who stuck at his training and finally passed. Master Tan smiled and replied "This is good Taekwon-do". My only regret is not seeing this certain person wearing his new belt and suit and not being able to go through Kwan-gae with him.

I'm at this point so excited and really want others to experience this kind of training where the body is pushed to the absolute limit of its capabilities and given very little rest before resuming more torture. I asked myself as a chiropractor whether this type of training damages the body and whether the body can keep up, and as I'm experiencing - it does damage the body and the body does keep up. I then reasoned that the body repairs damage and makes the body tougher, and it keeps up with this type of punishment because it has no other choice. So for anyone who ever complains about their training - "Don't wish the training

When giving a master anything hand to hand (such as an object, food or drink) it must be done with both of your hands

Quote of the day "Andrew and Richard, earn your grade and earn respect, don't ever creep"

Andrew's blog:

A day of rest!! ..... sort of!

The master gave us a semi day off. Richard was the chief instructor for the day while I assisted. We had a class of 35 which was difficult to handle, the master's daughter also helped assist. After Richard had warmed up the class we split the class into 3 groups. As an instructor it can be difficult getting your message across to the student however it gets significantly harder when some of the students can't speak English. The class only lasted around 45 minutes as it was for a primary school but once done, we headed out to a secondary school.

It was an international school with students from all over the globe including some American and English. It was a small class inside a weights room, the master instructed me to take some students outside to teach their new pattern, the problem was he asked me to do this on Tarmac. We have already given a description of the state of our feet, it was ok going through chon-ji and Dan-gun, however Richard asked me to take a newly promoted 1st Degree outside to go through Kwan-gae. Now Kwan-gae includes many slow motion sliding techniques which was incredibly painful to perform as it is, but at the end of the pattern with performing the stamping techniques it cut my blister.

The day was good for our muscles, especially my stomach muscles which still hurt from the crunches. Master Tan's shared stories with us from his experiences with General Choi, it showed how much the General was respected but also showed how much Master Tan has experienced and how much we as Black belts still have to learn and experience. Etiquette is key, when at dinner the junior grade must pour the tea for the table, as I'm always the junior here I'm trying to stay focused to carry out my duties.

Tomorrow we have at least 3 hours of bag work planned for us, fun!

Quote of the day "Don't worry about others, follow your own path"

**Wednesday 7th October**

Richard's blog:

Pain pain pain. a nice class doing elevated push ups and basic techniques then an hours rest before going to 'the hard class' oh.....my.....god!!!!!!

Bag work, patterns and sets of 30 push ups and sets of 80 (yes 80) crunches. There is a very distinct way Master Tan says his commands, it is calm yet masterful and somewhat growl like. We have echoing through our heads "Andrew and Richard 80 crunches.....GO" right about now.

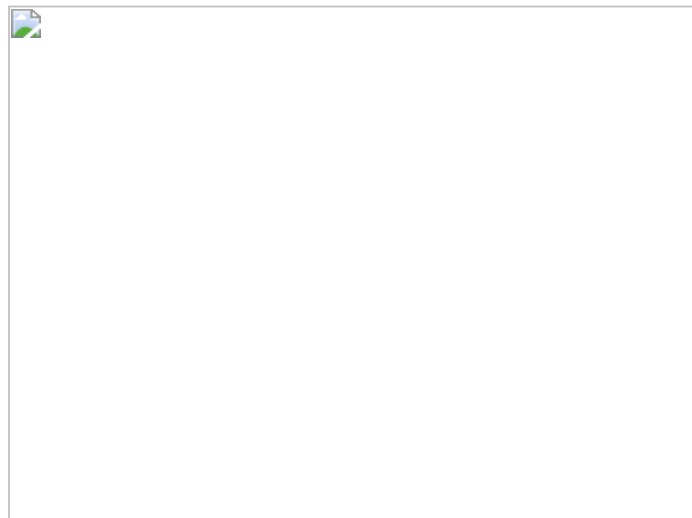
Master Tans comical side is really shining now and he asked Andrew to pose under a poster of Bruce Lee (adopting the same pose).



Lyonel turned to us and reckoned that he looked more like Bruce Lee and that Andrew was more like Chuck Norris.

I never knew in my infinite wisdom of the human body that blisters can form under a blister. I had the fortunate pleasure of having most of the skin from my blisters rip off today and so scabbled around the desk of the gym we were in, trying to find some scissors and do an oh so neat job of cutting off all the loose skin (sorry for the graphics people but me and Andrew are fast losing our dignity).

More lovely food today though which is always a pleasure.



We had curry, served on a banana leaf for breakfast (yes read it and weep English lads).

I think the lovely food here is helping our bodies to heal quicker.

Along with the many supplements we are taking (legal of course) and the new necessity - ICE BATHS. I believe it was General Choi that promoted the taking of cold showers and baths to build tenacity and pride, it also helps the body to heal quicker. I did get some satisfaction this evening of tipping a whole bucket of ice into Andrews bath while he was in it, to make up for his complete inability to prioritise and multi-task with the washing and bath running and cleaning. He was of course taking care of something important (talking to his other half on the phone), I too am missing loved ones but I wouldn't change this for the world - A whole month of Taekwon-Do!!!! We are living and breathing it and it is great, painful but great.

Andrew's blog:

basic techniques for a while until we started our first sets of push ups. 30 push ups off a chair in between basic techniques. In this class we did 4 sets (120 push ups in all) off a chair in about half an hour. We finished the class by going through patterns.

After an hours break Master Tan took us to a private Taekwon-Do gym. Here we began our bag work.



Two days ago I said 4 words will be in my mind for ever. They have now been replaced with "30 push ups then 80 crunches, go!" I have never experienced a class as such high intensity and endurance as this was. It lasted 3 hours, and in total we did 120 push ups and 320 crunches!, added to push ups earlier and we have done 240 push ups today. These exercises were made significantly harder as they were done after bag work. Hitting the bag over and over and over until you cant do another punch and then be told "ok down, 30 push ups then 80 crunches, go!" (take note push ups are done on the knuckles, ap joomuk) Our bodies are taking a brutal punishment but we are loving every second of this.

The ice bath was great, really what I needed after that session, tomorrow we have another 6 hours of training ahead of us.

Quote of the day:" I may not be a rich man but as an instructor I am rich in knowledge"

### **For Further Blogs, select link below**

[Week 2](#)

[Week 3](#)

[Week 4 - The Final Week](#)

#### **Richard Sperrin (III Degree)**



Mr Sperrin first started training with Spirit TKD in 1994.

He is a fully qualified Chiropractor and teaches Taekwon-Do on Friday evenings in Bricket Wood.

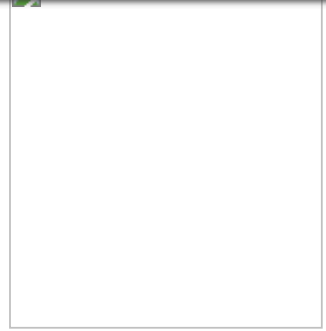
He enjoys helping students to improve their Taekwon-Do techniques and is respected for his ability to demonstrate the power that can be generated when using correct technique.



Mr Fox first started training with Spirit TKD in 2003.

A qualified instructor who enjoys attending seminars and passing the knowledge gained to other students of Spirit TKD.

Graduated at Hertfordshire University and is currently working in a Sales environment.



**Andrew Fox  
(I Degree)**

**Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Self-control and Indomitable Spirit**