

# SPORTS

## Martial arts develop body, mind, and character

BY RICHARD LEVANGIE

In the early '70s, martial arts clubs didn't have to advertise or publicize their classes. Karate and kung fu were all the rage.

Interested beginners just had to walk down the street to the nearest theatre to see the latest Bruce Lee movie, or turn on the tube and watch Kung Fu – a hit television series starring David Carridine.

Children in school yards practiced kicks. Impressionable adolescents could spout the sage advice of Master Po or Kwai Chang Caine – both humble Shaolin priests – and somehow manage to keep a straight face. Adults found the various eastern disciplines great ways to stay fit.

Today's martial arts clubs, however, can't rely on movies or television to get the word out to the uninitiated. They have to be a little more practical if they hope to stay afloat.

The Dalhousie Shotokan Karate Club, located on campus, is no different. A non-profit organization, the Dal Club offers qualified instruction for beginning and advanced students alike, and each September, sponsors a karate demonstration to introduce interested students to the intriguing world of the martial arts.

Beginner classes start this Saturday. Cost for Dal students is \$50 for the three-month introductory offer, and then \$35 per term thereafter.

The Chief Instructor of the Dal Club is Tony Tam, a law school alumnus, and a fourth-degree black belt. He says karate is a good workout, but adds that there are other practical benefits that are not so readily apparent.

"Karate is a good sport for physical conditioning," Tam says. "It uses all parts of your body – arms, legs – and it's also aerobic. We practice a lot of endurance exercises. It builds strength, and increases [flexibility]. But karate is also a martial art. While it develops your body, it also develops your mind and your character as well."

"There is a mystique with karate. Basketball, swimming, all those sports are good for physical



fitness... (But a lot of the students find) that with the oriental philosophy, they get a little bit extra."

Stephen Tan, a brown belt with the karate club, and a second year science student at Dalhousie, is

quick to agree.

In fact, the 19-year old student says karate also gives him a much needed boost when school life gets stressful.

"Karate also helps wake me up. When I come here burnt out from class, tired, you can't think about anything, karate helps clear your mind... You come out feeling much more refreshed. In fact, [I make sure] I do karate when I have exams."

A typical karate class is a dynamic workout, which instructor Tam says is necessary to gain both the physical and psychological benefits. Beginners and advanced students train at different times, but Tam says classes are similarly structured.

Each class begins slowly, with easy stretching.

"A typical class includes four basic points," he says. "We start with callisthenics, so people can warm up. They are basically just flexibility exercises, and maybe take about ten minutes."

"Then we do basic techniques called kihon. This includes [a wide variety of] blocking, punching, kicking and stances – and combinations of those techniques."

Next on the list are katas – stylized fighting sequences against imaginary opponents. The lower belts – yellow and orange – practice fairly simple routines. With green and blue belts, the sequences

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