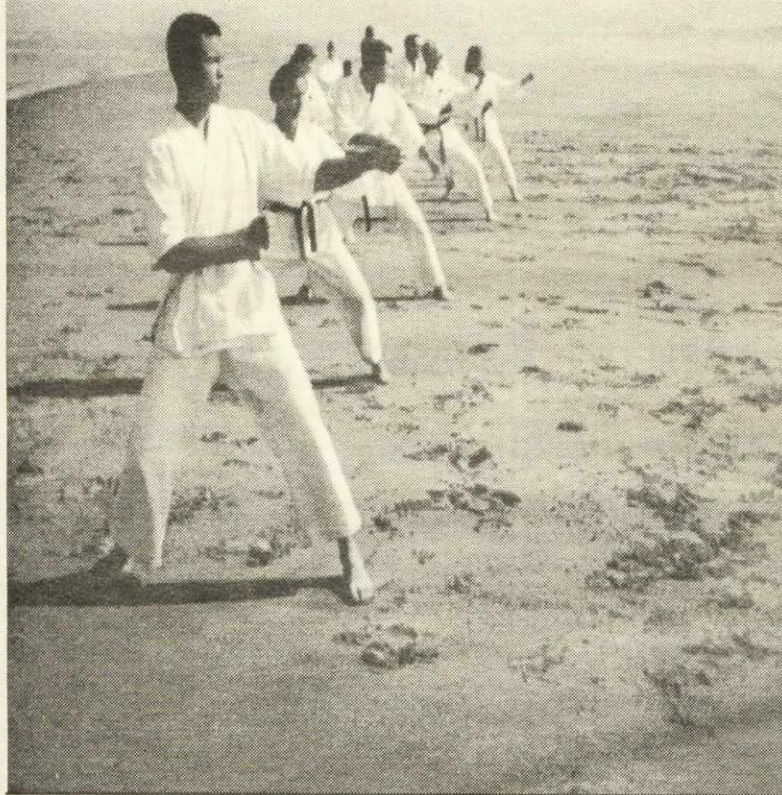


## Becoming a black belt



BY ALEX DAY

I remember the first time I sparred with a black belt. I was about fourteen and had just started studying Karate at a local club in St. Margaret's Bay. I had started Karate because it seemed interesting and the dojo — training hall — was only seven minutes down the road.

My first 'close encounter' with a black belt happened by chance. We had ended up beside each other in class and the instructor — sensei — paired us as sparring partners. We were told to practice a combination of two punches demonstrated in an earlier class.

Although it was not to be a real fight, I was rigid with terror and very intimidated as I bowed to my experienced partner. Bowing is actually very important in Karate and is usually the first thing we do when entering the dojo. Bowing is an expression of a student's inner spirit. It signifies the student's desire for mutual learning. What it meant at this moment was that I had nothing to fear. Of course, I had to be careful. I have often learned my lessons by getting hit and not blocking.

When the command was given, I executed my first punch, which was to be followed by a second. My partner blocked the first punch, deflecting it into the path of my second strike. My hands collided. I had punched myself and was

completely vulnerable.

I think my jaw must have literally dropped as I waited for a counter attack. Instead of striking me, my partner just smiled at me.

I am now a black belt and I practice with the Dalhousie Karate Club. It is a bit different from the club in which I started. Beginners do not spar with black belts. One of the advantages of a bigger club is that classes can reflect different levels of student ability.

There are three levels of classes at the Dalhousie Karate Club: beginner, intermediate, and advanced.

The beginner class is for people new to Karate. All the beginners wear a white belt. When the sensei feels a beginner is ready, he or she is promoted to the intermediate class. This class is usually bigger and the students progress through four different belts: yellow, orange, green, and blue. The advanced class consists of students ranging from brown belts to fifth degree black.

Having a black belt signifies that the wearer has come close to mastering the basics of Karate. Most black belts will tell you that they have only begun to truly understand Karate. They have eliminated any sloppy technique. A black belt is a person who has invested a good deal of time in his or her art, but is still a beginner on the road to

perfection.

What is Karate?

Zsolt Toth, a third year Kinesiology student at Dal and also a third degree black belt, says that Karate is traditionally defined as "the art of the empty hand." It dates back to feudal Japan when weapons were outlawed and the peasants had only their hands to defend themselves.

Zsolt started his study of Karate when he was eight years old. It has been a slow process of learning the basic blocks, strikes, kicks, and punches — called kihon — and then combinations of those basics — called kata, followed by free sparring — called kumite. He said it was a matter of starting at an early age, sticking with it, and eventually getting better at and attaining some skill and mastery of the basics.

Karate is something you can practice for your whole life. Everybody who decides to take up Karate starts off equal. There is no secret to becoming a black belt and there are no natural advantages either. There are seventy-year-olds who have sixth degree black belts and are masters due to their consistent training and not because of natural abilities or great strength and speed.

In some ways, learning Karate is like learning a language. We would expect somebody speaking it for seventy years to speak it well.

## Heideman X-tinguishes Dal comeback Tigers lose first game of 2000

BY TERRY HAWES

If the game last Friday night between the Dalhousie Tigers and St. FX XMen is any indication of what the rest of the AUAA hockey season will be like, then we're in for a real treat.

In what turned out to be the game of the year so far, the X-Men scored two late third-period goals to defeat the Tigers 6-4 at Dalhousie Memorial Arena.

The game had everything — lots of goals, great goaltending and a lot of physical play that kept the crowd on the edge of their seats for most of the night.

With the win, the X-Men improve to 7-7-3 on the season, while the Tigers drop to 3-11-2 and last in the Kelly Division. Next week, we'll have a summary of Wednesday's home contest with Acadia and their trip to Antigonish on Sunday.

St. FX 6 Dalhousie 4  
(Jan 7)

A respectable crowd of 500 turned up at Memorial Arena to witness an action-packed match between the Kelly Division rivals.

The TV cameras were out in full force as it was the only game in town on Friday night and what they saw was an early chance by Dal forward Jan Melichercik foiled by the glove of X-goalie Shawn Degagne.

Later, with a Dal powerplay

coming to an end, a clearing attempt by X got through to Dean Stock who went in alone and let a slapshot go that was stopped by rookie Scott Gouthro. While they both tried to retrieve the loose puck, Stock rammed into Gouthro, stopping play for a short period while he required attention.

Ironically, Gouthro denied Stock on a second breakthrough just thirty seconds later when he dove to the right-hand side to easily thwart Stock's challenge.

The game was getting chippy late in the period and once again an undisciplined penalty by the Tigers proved costly. With defenceman Jason Metcalfe in the box for elbowing after the whistle, the X-Men drew first blood with a goal by Guy Loranger at 18:54, helped by the fact that Tigers defenceman Craig Whynot redirected it into his own net.

Dalhousie had numerous chances to level the score early in the second period. Derrick Pyke and Warren Holmes had a 2 on 0 opportunity. Pyke kept the puck and tried to deke Degagne, but the goalie made a great glove save to rob him. The Tigers also failed to convert a 4 on 1 chance when defenceman Dwight Wolfe's shot was blocked when he could have passed to three other players.

However, Dal's hard work would pay off at the 9:01 mark as a Denis Aucoin pass found Chris Pittman who scored on a brilliant solo rush beating Degagne to the left-hand corner. Four minutes later, the black and gold took the lead as Holmes fed Pittman on a 2 on 1 break for his second of the night.

After a verbal tongue lashing from head coach Danny Flynn, the X-Men came out like a team possessed as they started to win the

battles along the boards. Within a blink of the eyes, X scored twice in ten seconds late in the period to lead 3-2. Paul Andrea and Jamie Roche scoring the markers for the visitors.

X increased their lead to 4-2 just 24 seconds into the final period when Kurt Walsh's initial shot was stopped by Gouthro, he managed to retrieve the loose puck and flick it past the stranded goaltender.

Any thoughts of a Tiger collapse were put to rest as Dallas Gray picked up a loose puck from behind the net and beat Degagne at 3:15 to close the gap to one and when Pittman struck three minutes later for his hat trick, the momentum had once again shifted to the Tigers.

They should have taken the lead a minute later when Brian Surette was sent in on a breakaway by Gray, but his shot missed the net completely.

X looked to have taken the

lead on an Andrea shot from inside the blue line that went off the crossbar and came down past the goal line, but both the goal judge and referee Bob Best disagreed, much to the displeasure of the X coaches and fans that made the journey from Antigonish.

Dal momentum was clearly waning and the boys in blue deservedly took the lead for good with 6:11 to go as Kris Heideman scored off of a scramble in front of the net. Andrew Warr scored the vital insurance goal three minutes later to put the game out of reach and confine the Tigers to yet another loss.

Game Puck: Dal right winger Chris Pittman, a third-year management major from Stephenville, Newfoundland, single-handedly tried to keep the Tigers in the game with a fine hat trick. It was the first three-goal performance from a Dalhousie player this season.

**Writers wanted**  
THE GAZETTE  
Meetings every  
Monday at 4:30  
Suite 312, SUB  
494 2507

**Pizza Hut**  
The Best Tasting  
Pizzas Under  
One Roof.

Call for Delivery or Pick-up Today!  
For All Locations  
**Call: 310-10-10**

**\$9.99**  
One Topping