



DECEMBER 12 GMA NEWSLETTER

Congrats to some big time promotions:

Congrats to Miss Morgan Williams on finishing her 2nd dan
Congrats to Mr. Keegan Spires for finishing his 1st dan test.
Congrats to Carter Ewert for graduating lil dragons.

Upcoming events:

Dec 1st Stickfighting 9:00-11:30
Dec 1st HKD black belt/temp pretest
Dec 7th Parents committee meeting 5:30
Dec 8th Leadership team 9:00-11:30?
Dec 8th FAST kids class 10:00 am (closed)
Dec 8th Black belt prep class 1:00 pm.
Dec 13th GMA Xmas Party, Awards Banquet, and Dance: 5:30-9:00. Morgan Co Fairgrounds. No class
Dec 14th Deadline to be confident about receiving Xmas orders in time.
Dec 15th Demo Team 9:00-10:30
Dec 15th Black belt prep class 10:30-12:30
Dec 15th Black belt stripe testing make up 1:00 pm
Dec 24-28th NO CLASS—Merry Christmas! (see below)
Dec 27th Catch up camp 1:00-4:00
Dec 28-29th Winter Daycamp: Martial Arts for Movies/Stage 9:00-3:00
Dec 31st-Jan 1st NO CLASS—Happy New Year
Jan 2nd Winter Weapons camp 9:00-3:00

Xmas Party, Dance and Awards Banquet

This years Christmas party/awards banquet and dance has been scheduled for Dec 13th at the Morgan County Fairgrounds. Arrival and set up will be from 5:30-6:00. The dinner and awards banquet will begin at 6:00. Following the awards, Santa will make an appearance and there will be a DJ for a dance that will continue till 8:30 or 9:00 pm. This is a chance to join in some fellowship, recognize some key students and parents, and give Santa any last minute list revisions. Signs up for the pitch in dinner will be posted soon. We also need a very close idea of people attending for seating arrangements. No classes will meet that Thurs. We hope everyone will be able to share in our annual event.

Winter Camps Coming Up Fast

Rather than having the kids sitting around stuffing themselves with candy, we take the vacation time to offer something special. Don't forget you can also make it a X-mas present. Camp price includes lunch and all the weapons or gear needed for the seminar and you can put the gear under the tree! Deadline to register to ensure the gear is here for the camp is Dec 14th. As a camp, there will still be time for lunch and dodgepad.

Catch up Camp, Dec 27th This is an inexpensive chance for students who have missed/fallen behind the testing track or gotten a little rusty to be able to catch up in a specific rank requirement intensive. Also a great way to jumpstart a new belt color. Things can get hectic during the holidays. This is a chance to start the new year off strong.

Winter Weapons camp, Jan 2nd. This years camp is designed to give those students who do stickfighting, HKD, and others a special experience. We will be covering knife from a variety of perspectives. While we are certainly not encouraging knife fighting, our training will include how to use it functionally, as well as how to defend. Overall, great for reaction time, coordination, and a healthy appreciation and fear of a common weapon.

Movie/Stage combat camp Dec 28-29th. Things that look good on the big screen aren't always what they appear. Come see how they do the stunts without getting the stars hurt. Mr. Yoshida, who has worked on martial arts films and done fight choreography, will show some secrets. Participants will make their own movie fight scene, and we will unveil our action stars at a red carpet event. The release date of this debut has not been set. Great for anybody in demo or anyone with has interest in movies/theater, etc. Both the camp and red carpet event was a huge success last year.



By request, we have made the camp a two day event—for more practice and more filming time. However, as before, spaces are limited. Only a few can become action stars!

And the NOMINEES are:

This year we are announcing those students who are nominated for our yearly awards:

Student of the year: *Lise Roberson, Luke Gamble, Dominick Spires, Cathy Petraits*

Black Belt of the year: *Austin Brummett, Collyn Dodge, Morgan Williams,*

Most Improved Student: *Nathan Hawthorne, Luke Wilson, Ben Rahman, Carter Ewert*

Competitor of the year (BJJ): *Bryan Neal, Jake Waltz, Noah Wilson*

Competitor of the year (TKD): *Ryan Jerome, Gabe Wilson, Kyler Chylaszek, Bekah Wiley*

Training Anniversaries

AJ Bottorff (TKD 6 yrs)

Collyn Dodge (BJJ 4 yrs)

Dominc Tejera (BJJ 2yrs)

Grant Chapman (TKD 1 yr)

Quotes of the Week: This month, with goal setting in Jan and black belt excellence discussions last month, we will be focusing on enthusiasm and a mindset to accomplish your goals.

GMA Wishes a Happy Birthday to:

Elijah Roberson 12/02

Austin Brummett 12/03

Bill Wells 12/05

Richie Long 12/07

Joshua Roberson 12/8

Torrey Hansen 12/08

Mike Miller 12/10

Collyn Dodge 12/12

Kyler Chylaszek 12/12

Frankie Williams 12/14

Thomas Huff 12/15

Christian Marion 12/18

Don Roach 12/23

Mrs. Yoshida 12/26

Please Plan ahead for Xmas Items

If you have any last minute Christmas shopping to do (don't we all) or need that stocking stuffer or whatever, just a reminder to please plan ahead. Many of our suppliers go out of stock of seasonal items and we want to make sure we minimize the delays in getting any special orders to you! *The last day to order Xmas items to ensure shipping (assuming availability) is Dec. 14th. Keep in mind, some things are already backed ordered past the holidays.*

Give another person the chance to “be more” this Christmas

Don't forget that you can get a gift certificate for a uniform and month of classes –100.00 value, for only a 25.00 cost to you (BJJ uniforms more). If you know anyone who has ever “thought about” doing martial arts, or if there is someone you know who “this would be good for”, this is your chance to get them off the fence and really reaping the benefits of training.

Parent Committee news:

- Please sign up for the Xmas party—also please consider helping set up at the fairgrounds during the day, starting at 10:00 am.

Class Cancellations for Holidays, class adjustments, and general policies

- No class on Thurs Dec 13th on account of the Christmas party...see you there.
- Holiday class cancellations: No class on Mon Dec 24 through Tues Jan 1st on account of the holidays. Since the holiday calendar would only allow us to have a couple of classes, we decided to go ahead and close the remaining two days for a staff retreat and planning session. . Classes resume Wed Jan 2nd. (Evening classes in addition to the camps.)
- Also a reminder of our general policy regarding bad weather. We *try* to follow the lead of local schools—if they cancel school that day, cancel evening events or let out early, so do we. If on morning delay, we will meet as normal (tai chi in the morning will follow the 2 hr delay). This applies to universal problems such as snow and ice,



not things like flooding or other issues that may be more regionalized. The only exception to this may occur when the school cancels in advance of a huge storm and the forecast is *clearly* incorrect, or when crews have all day to work on the roads. When in doubt, simply call, check the website, check your email for announcements, listen to WCBK, etc.

The Black Belt—Epic achievement or Epic Fail?

A while back an interesting online article came out listing the “5 epic achievements that aren’t as impressive as you think.” An interesting subject, even if some of the rationale is flawed. It got quite a reaction on facebook from some of our black belts past and present who took offense to the article. I hope our students would. But honestly, the article had some good points—they just weren’t talking about us. But sadly, they were talking about a lot of people. The article makes a few points some are irrelevant and some are off base. There are more accurate parts, such as that the standards for black belts varying from school to school. This can lead to problems and misconceptions about the many different ways schools market getting a blackbelt.

The article cites a business practice in some schools to guarantee a black belt in a certain amount of time. I have seen variations of this used by some instructors I have the utmost respect for. One has fine print about making several classes a week to qualify, etc. If a student is really as dedicated as stipulated, it shouldn’t be a problem. Another sells a black belt contract, which is the standard time to get to the rank. The contract doesn’t guarantee the belt at the end, but if you don’t make it, you train for free until you do earn it. I like the instructor’s commitment to getting that student to the goal. We at GMA certainly share that commitment to getting our students to black belt, but we don’t share the 3 year contract requirement. Unfortunately, neither of these cases are the ones referenced by the article. It talked about schools who gave out the belts on a regular schedule, regardless of how well you know the material or how hard you trained. I have heard stories about our “competitors” from parents, who have acknowledged that as long your tuition was current, you were ensured of passing the test. The parents were aware of this, and so were the kids, who then realized they didn’t have to work hard and it would be handed to them anyway.

The article referenced the derogatory term of McDojo. Another term is belt factory. Sadly, there are many of those...although to be fair, several of the most successful schools, taught by top rate martial artists and the most professional instructors, churn out some of the best black belts but also in large quantities. Should it be surprising people around the best and most inspiring instructors succeed more often? It is an easy criticism for less successful instructors with their half dozen students in their garage to make. Not that I am putting us on the same level as some of the examples I am thinking of, but I am sure we have been called the same. Actually, I know of one person who called us that in one breath, but in the same conversation criticized us for expecting too much from children and actually failing people on belt tests—hard to have it both ways, don’t you think? Yes, we put up a good portion of the people testing for black belt at the last tournament, but we also represented 3 out of the 4 black belts in the Grand Champion division. We might have quantity, but we back it up with results as well.

The article makes the point that there is no such thing as standard accreditation for a black belt. Nothing is stopping anyone from wrapping a black strip around their waist and opening a school. We will let our credentials and professionalism at GMA speak for themselves, but sadly, the article is also correct on this point. I have heard of a student at another school who learned part of one of our purple belt forms for one rank, the other half for their next rank. Why? Because the instructor only got to purple belt under GM Choi decades ago, and had to split the forms he knew into parts to make them stretch to their new black belt curriculum. I have a student at DePauw who has done 10 years of HKD before—now we have kids who at or around 3rd dan with 10 years experience-- but he is a 5th dan (same as me!). He actually seems to be a nice, sincere student (not his fault his teacher told him he was 5th dan), but he hasn’t seen a lot of what is on our 1st degree curriculum!

This of course relates to standards for students passing their black belt as well. The article mentions one person who paid cash up front to be able to walk out of a Mc Dojo two years later with a black belt, without having to spar a single person. Just recently, I had a student/parent come and tell me of a friend who takes TKD elsewhere, and was proudly showing off their one board they had to break for black belt. Yes, just one board, and it is like our demo boards—a lot easier to break. Obviously, we expect a lot more, and the standards are high enough it is possible to fail.



All black belts are not created equal. I could go on about the various meanings and qualifications of black belts for days, but when GMA just promoted its 100th black belt in TKD alone (many more counting HKD, and congrats to Don Roach for the honor btw), I thought I would respond to the article a bit. Through our black belt prep classes, I know our new black belts ran a gauntlet not many others have. While in Korea, I saw a black belt being sold that was already pre-faded and tattered—like buying your jeans with holes already in them! I am sure someone, somewhere, is willing to short cut to make it look like they earned it, but personally, I don't feel like I am ready to promote again until I have made my belt look like that the old fashioned way. I am glad that our students—past and present—took offense to the article. The only black belt they know wasn't gotten by any shortcuts. There is a reason they take more pride in their belts, and I am proud of the fact that they are proud. So relax guys...they weren't talking about us. I don't know if I would call it EPIC, but is an impressive achievement. And for the others, it is more of an epic fail. --BLS