



Kristin Thompson

Sophomore Danielle DeAngelis, a blue belt, does a kick.

Getting a kick out of karate

Club gives members confidence, camaraderie

By ZACH EVERSON
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Most students' evenings are spent studying, resting or socializing. Not the the members of the Wake Forest Karate Club. Three to five nights a week they exercise, practice kicks and simulate fighting situations.

Competitions are one way the karate club's members can see the results of their training. "We've always done some sort of competing. It's an important way of judging yourself against other styles and other martial artists in the country. It's not a big part of what we do, but we like to do it a couple of times a year, at least," said Chris Forsyth '92, a campus microcomputer technician and president of the karate club.

"At the end of last semester, we went to the Battle of Atlanta, which is one of the largest tournaments in the country," Forsyth said. "It's an international tournament."

"Usually there'll be two different styles of competition; the forms competition and the sparring/fighting competition," Forsyth said. If they desire, members can compete in both contests.

The forms competition allows the club to examine other schools of martial arts. "Maybe one of the best things about going to tournaments is you'll see a lot of different styles of karate," Forsyth said.

"In fighting, you fight against similar level opponents and it's usually point sparring, which means as soon as somebody scores a point, the fighting stops, the judges make the call on who got the point," Forsyth said. The winner is generally the first to earn five points.

The karate club also performs demonstrations. "We've given self defense seminars and exhibitions and the occasional demo a couple of times a semester," Forsyth said.

One of the purposes of the demonstrations is to attract new members. "We usually do some of our forms and we might do some fighting and occasionally, although it's not a big part of what we do, we'll do some breaking of boards," Forsyth said. "We hope that people will be interested in what they see."

Official meetings take place three times a week in the basement of the Benson University Center.

"We have formal classes Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.," said junior Lisa Zavaleta, the club's treasurer. "Monday and Friday are informal workouts."

Other than dues, there are no requirements to be a member of the group. "Most of the people who start in the karate club are beginners, what are called no-belts. People always think that they have to know something about karate before they start, but that's not true," Zavaleta said. "What you have to do to join basically is show up at the beginning of the semester."

Dues for the club are approximately \$15 a semester. Since private instruction would cost about \$100 per month, the fee is a low one. "What that takes care of basically is (paying) the black belts (the club's instructors)," Zavaleta said. Additional costs, however, can be incurred. "When belt tests come along, if you want a test, you actually have to buy the belt, so you pay twenty-five dollars if you want a test," Zavaleta said. Tests are never required.

The meetings usually follow the same agenda. "We are asked to line up by the black belts and you have a formation where you line up according to rank, from right to left," Zavaleta said. "We bow to the black belts. Then usually one of the upper belts warms us up while the black belts just walk around. We warm up for about twenty minutes. After we stretch out, we ... do what are called 'slow kicks,' which are an exercise everyone does at once, which are kicks to the count of a black belt. Then we split up into groups depending on our belts."

The class concludes with sparring. Only green belts and higher may spar, Zavaleta said.

The group is lead by black belts, people who achieved the highest level of instruction. "We have five black belts, who are the 'professors' (of the karate club)," Zavaleta said. "Currently, I don't think that any of the black belts are undergraduates, although they have been in the past. Three of them that I can think of are Wake graduates. One of them is a member of the faculty."

The head black belt is Charles Richman, a professor of psychology. He is a third degree black belt.

The black belts are also in charge of promoting people to higher ranks. "We have testing, twice a semester, where you can advance a belt," Zavaleta, a second degree brown belt, said. "The fastest you can possibly do it (achieve a black belt) is, I think, two and a half years."

"It's very rewarding, I think, to see somebody go from a white belt all the way up to a brown belt or a black belt."

Lisa Zavaleta
Treasurer, Wake Forest Karate Club



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Sophomore Bill Scheidt, a blue belt, does a hook kick, while sophomore Nancy Hechenbleikner, also a blue belt, blocks. While sparring, members of the karate club often wear the protective headgear, handgear and footgear shown here both to soften hits and to protect against injury.

Members can earn seven major belts. "A white belt is the very lowest (belt)." Members go through four belt colors before testing for brown, which has two degrees. Then they test for black. "Black belt has different degrees," Zavaleta said.

It takes less time to advance for the lower belts than it does for the higher ones. "It took me a little under two years to get to first (degree) brown. I've been a first brown for about eight months. It takes a little longer to go from first brown to black than it does to (advance) from some of the earlier belts," Forsyth said.

In order to be promoted, several criteria must be met. "For every belt there are certain forms (to be demonstrated) — a set of combinations that correspond to the belt level. There's a certain exercise called a counted kick which is basically a kick that

you perform for the black belt, at their count. Then you have to spar if you are higher than a green belt. The sparring has to be at what is a satisfactory level," Zavaleta said.

Degree promotions, however, can only be granted by people who have higher degrees than the person they are promoting. "Nobody can ever promote someone to their own degree," Zavaleta said.

Belt promotion gives members tangible symbols of their progress.

Zavaleta said, "It's very rewarding, I think, to see somebody go from a white belt all the way up to a brown belt or a black belt."

The club has been active on campus since 1973. "In 1973 Rick Heatley, a former professor of classics, came to school here from a university in Texas. He studied with Jhoon Ree, who brought tae kwon do to America," Forsyth said.

"In 1974 he started working out with people. I think the club was actually formed in 1976."

In the early '80s, the club was led by John and Howard Chung. "Two of Jhoon Ree's students, John and Howard Chung, came here and they're both world champions. They taught while they were in school here," Forsyth said.

Members derive many benefits from the club. "It's helped build self-confidence and just the general good feeling of doing something that's difficult and takes a lot of work and then succeeding," Forsyth said.

"Apart from the exercise ... there are two things that I have gotten out of it," Zavaleta said.

"Number one is the camaraderie that you derive from working out with a number of people that are all very dedicated and very talented. Also I think it helps you build a lot of self-confidence ... because it makes you feel empowered."



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Scheidt demonstrates a crescent kick, in which an extended leg is raised in an arc. Hechenbleikner raises her arms to block the kick.

Martial language

Here are explanations of terms used on this page, along with other familiar martial-arts terms. Foreign terms are Japanese unless noted.

Crescent kick: A kick in which the leg rises fully extended and makes an arch. Can be used to block an opponent's punch by striking opponent's forearm with the sole of the foot.

Hook kick: Kick in which the leg is extended during the kick and is snapped back upon full extension. Used mainly as an offensive maneuver.

Jujutsu: Method of combat consisting of both armed and unarmed combat developed by samurai in feudal Japan. Comes from *Ju*, meaning technique, and *jutsu*, meaning harmony. Judo is its modern, sportive form.

Karate: From *kara*, empty, and *te*, hand. Was originally developed in Okinawa as self-defense for the unarmed, consisting of blocks and counterattacks.

Kung fu: Chinese term meaning high quality or best in the field. In America, refers to Chinese martial art that incorporates wrestling, boxing, karate and other styles.

Ninjitsu: Arts of disguise, combat and survival practiced by the *ninja*, who were spies and assassins in medieval Japan.

Samurai: The warrior class of feudal Japan. Consisted of both men and women. It used weapons, particularly swords and spears.

Tae kwon do: Korean martial art similar to Japanese karate. *Tae* means to kick or smash with the feet; *kwon* means to punch; and *do* means path or way.

Definitions were taken from *Korean Karate* by Sihak Henry Cho and *Running Press Glossary of Martial Arts Language* by Amy Shapiro.

A brief history of karate and other martial arts

By CHARLES STARKS
PERSPECTIVES EDITOR

The images brought to mind by the words "martial arts" can be contradictory ones.

We see students of karate exercising strenuously in modern gymnasiums, yet there also persists a belief that they follow an ancient fighting wisdom of the "inscrutable East."

Some knowledge of the history of martial arts is useful to help sort out these images.

The origin of karate and other martial arts is shrouded in ancient history, but it is almost certain that by the fifth century A.D. some type of fighting using only the hands had developed in China.

According to John J. Donohue's *Warrior Dreams: Martial Arts and the American Imagination*, Bodhidharma, perhaps the founder of Chinese Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism, used bare-hands fighting techniques to train his monks, whom he thought were badly out of shape, around 500 A.D.

These fighting techniques, called *quan*, or fist, methods, probably developed earlier in Chinese history along with the Taoist philosophy and religion.

The techniques later spread to Japan, where they became very highly developed.

The feudal structure of the Japanese islands at the time necessitated that powerful noble families develop armies of *samurai*, who began to further develop martial techniques, particularly those with weapons.

These techniques, known as *jujutsu*, were the

forerunners of modern judo, a martial art form that concentrates on holding and throwing.

A philosophy, too, was established around these techniques. "These arts ... came to be understood not simply as techniques (*jutsu*) but as martial 'ways' (*budo*) which could lead to spiritual development," Donohue says. Confucian spiritual and moral ideals were also emphasized.

Tae kwon do, the martial art form practiced by the campus karate club, is Korean in origin.

Its name is straightforward: *Tae* means to kick or smash with the feet; *kwon* means to punch and *do* simply means path or way.

In *Korean Karate*, Sihak Henry Cho says that *tae kyun*, tae kwon do's forerunner, was at first a kicking exercise.

As with the Japanese and Chinese martial arts, there was a spiritual aspect to *tae kyun*, and its practitioners lived apart from Korean civilization.

Despite the similarity in name to *tae kyun*, modern tae kwon do has little in common with the ancient discipline, Cho says.

Rather, it was developed in this century from Okinawan karate and Chinese techniques.

An action of the Japanese government in the 1600s inadvertently led to the development of modern karate. A newly unified Japan conquered Okinawa, an island which lay to the south, and it immediately banished weaponry from Okinawa.

This action led to a weaponless martial art form known as *te*, meaning "hand." *Kara*, empty, was

eventually placed next to *te*, and the familiar word *karate* was the result.

In 17th-century Okinawa, karate was illegal and had to be practiced in secret, which helped to give it a somewhat exotic image.

It is from the Okinawan school of karate that most modern forms, including tae kwon do, sprang, beginning in the twentieth century.

Around the same time, these martial arts became popular in America.

Now there are literally hundreds of forms of karate and tae kwon do alone, in addition to judo, Chinese boxing (commonly known as kung fu) and *ninjitsu*. According to Donohue, the primary difference between the way these arts are practiced today and the way they were practiced in ancient times is that now there is much more emphasis on the "arts" aspect of them.

While there has always been a philosophical aspect to martial arts, personal growth has of late perhaps become the primary reason to participate in them, Donohue says.

"The martial arts are not just about physical movement, they are about the linkage of such movement with psychic predispositions, individual hopes, mythic beliefs and social conditions," he says.

Sources for this story included *Warrior Dreams: The Martial Arts and the American Imagination* by John J. Donohue; *Korean Karate* by Sihak Henry Cho and *Running Press Glossary of Martial Arts Language* by Amy Shapiro.

The belt way

Belt advancement varies widely from program to program. Here is the progression, from lowest to highest, used by the karate club:

1. White
2. Gold/Yellow
3. Green
4. Purple
5. Blue
6. Red
6. First degree brown
7. Second degree brown
8. Black (also separated into degrees)



Belt progression in modern karate is based on a system developed for judo. Degrees of advancement lower than black belt are called *kyu*, and black belts are classified in *dan* grades.

The founder of the belt system, Kano Jigaro, was a twelfth degree black belt in judo in the early 1900s. But he wore a white belt, used to indicate that he had transcended his own system.

Compiled from staff reports and The Running Press Glossary of Martial Arts Language.