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evolution

Always Moving Forward

By James Cockill

DO YOU KNOW?

Evolution MAA teaches practical martial arts by taking practical aspects from lots of different styles and teaching individuals how to defend themselves in a realistic environment - the street.

This article is well over due, I am embarrassed to tell you how long ago it was since I called Bob and asked if I could write an article for his magazine. I have been thinking about what topic to write about and what knowledge and experiences that I could share with the MAI readers. The problem being is that there are so many good articles and writers that I am finding it difficult to come up with something that has not already been covered (students point of view as opposed to instructors).

At Evolution Martial Arts Academy we teach Mixed Martial Arts for self-defence. To us, self defence is not just about learning how to protect yourself from a physical encounter, it covers

much more; keeping fit to fight off colds and flu, being strong and flexible so that growing old has less limitations and to have the mind set and determination to achieve your goals.

It is always hard to explain what Martial Arts can give to someone who has never trained or studied them before. At Evolution we push our students hard both mentally and physically. Why? Because this is where you will find out so much more about yourself; finding your limitations and then learning how to surpass them. Through great struggle comes great strength. Has anyone heard the story about the moth becoming the butterfly? You better email me about that one.

So I would like to share with you an essay from one of our now black belts that he wrote for his Shodan exam.



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A BLACK BELT BY CHARLIE WEIR

To be honest I never in my wildest dreams thought I would be writing an essay with this title but there you go. Now I'm sat here thinking back over god knows how many punches, kicks, sit ups, press ups, skips, runs, and hours of training, but I'll begin with why I started in the first place.

Writing down or telling people the reason why I joined evolution martial arts academy is still quite hard for me to talk about. When I was 8 years old my dad died, he was on the list for a heart transplant and a few days before the appointment with the consultant he passed away.

It all happened so fast at the time and being so young I never really came to terms with it. That was until I was around 13 years old when I realized that I would never see him again which did mess me up a bit and I started suffering from "delayed depression," whatever that means, so the doctors decided I needed counselling and medication. My life was pretty much school, therapy and tablets for a couple of months but I just couldn't talk about how I was feeling with doctors and people who didn't know me or what I was going through.

One day when my mam was walking through town she took an Evolution Martial Arts Academy leaflet and convinced me to give it a go. I desperately wanted a few of my mates to come along so I wouldn't be turning up by myself but they all bottled it so I started on that Monday by myself and I haven't had, wanted or needed to go back to counselling or take any more tablets since that lesson 4 years ago.

When I really think I can still just about remember my first session. For a start I went to the sports hall, not the gym, and there was a load of people playing 5 aside, I'm watching thinking, I'm pretty sure that isn't Karate.

How I got lost at the school I went to god knows!

When I did get to the right place I was bricking it, I mean there I was 13 years old in this class with a load of blokes. I was stood there thinking, what has my mam got me into! But I couldn't have been more wrong.

Back in them days we used to warm up by playing footy, how great was that. In my first lesson I worked with James on

At evolution MAA all black belt candidates need to write an essay entitled 'What it means to be a black belt'. There is no set word count on the essay but it should give examiners a deeper understanding into what been a black belt means to the student. Candidates can write about personal training experiences and what preparation they have taken leading up to the exam.

the pads not knowing what a stance was or how to jab, hook, uppercut, or kick so that didn't make me the greatest student but I made it through my first lesson.

There were a few slip ups in those early days, like the first time I tried skipping, the less said about that the better, and putting my Gi bottoms on back to front which still happens from time to time!

I can also remember the first time I really gave 100%, it was at Carmel, it was maybe about a month into my training and we had to run the length of the gym and do 20 punches and run back in a 2 minute round. I don't know what happened but something just clicked, I put my head down, I just ran and I was faster than people!

I couldn't believe it, me, this scrawny 13 year old was beating men at running. That was when I realized, I can do this and when I put my mind to it I wasn't bad. Then slowly but surely the same thing happened with my punching and then my skipping then my sit-ups until before I knew it I wasn't half bad.

So the weeks and months went by and I never wanted to miss a session.

I could feel myself getting more and more confident in what I was doing at training which transferred over to other areas of my life. All my family and friends noticed this change in me, I wasn't worried about this or that, I was just back to my old self.

Then we moved premises to Banks Road and the real training began.

Some moments from training stick in my

mind more than others, like the inter club sparring we had. Those were the hardest 9 minutes of my life! The hill runs, they are always an experience. The gradings make me nervous, the beatings from Luke (cheers, mate), pulling off a sweet punch or kick on the bag or in sparring, grappling well and knowing you're constantly improving and getting better. So being a black belt means to me that I can follow something through from beginning to end, no matter what tests my Sensei has for me.

Over the years at training so many things have happened, people have come, people have gone, I've given it my all, I've given up, I've laughed, I've just about cried, I've sweated, I've bled and I've loved every minute! And without sounding too corny starting at Evolution was one of the best decisions of my life and I really don't know where I would be or what I would be doing if I didn't bite the bullet and go for it.

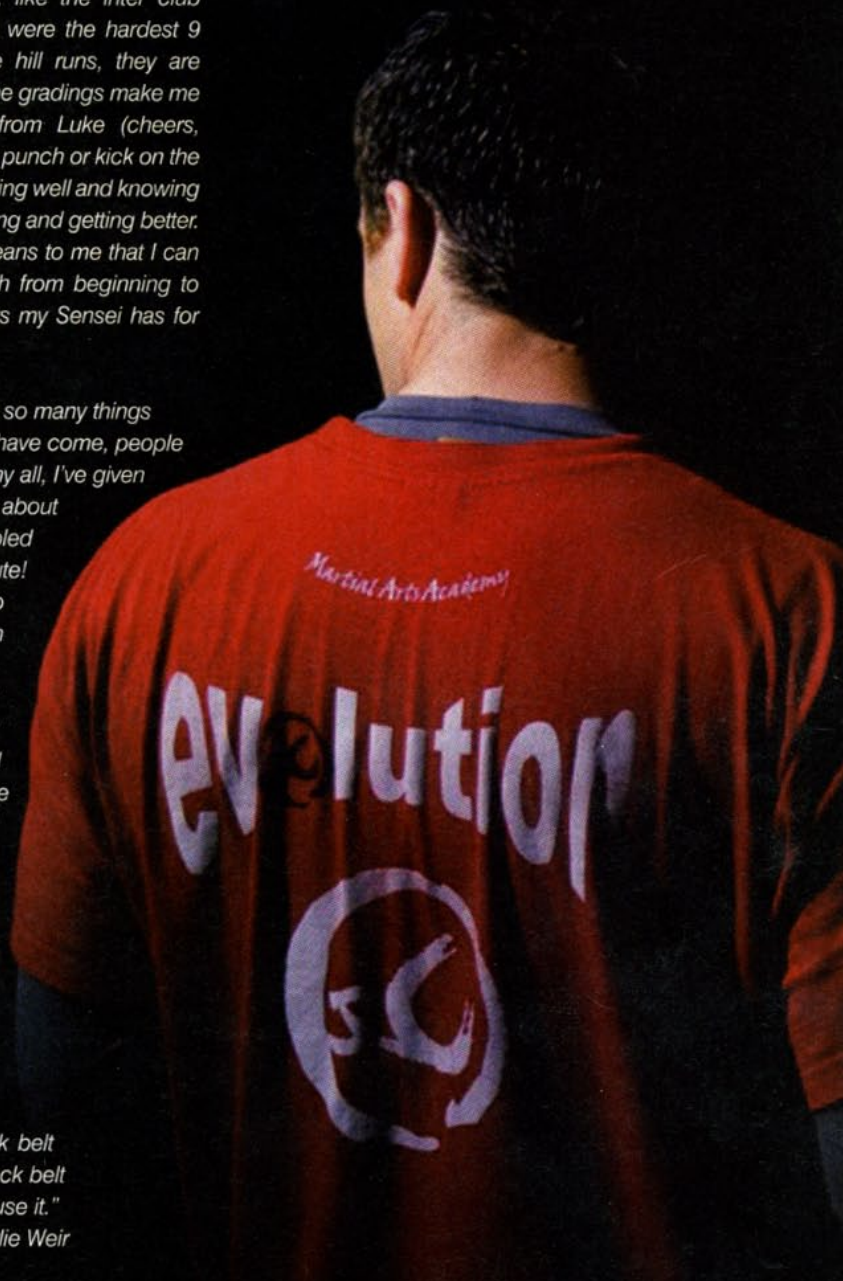
One of my teachers told me in school that it's always good to end an essay with a quote because someone else must have said it better than you would.

"From white belt to black belt you shape the tool, at black belt you start to learn how to use it."

- Charlie Weir

The martial arts means different things to different people and there is room for everyone regardless of their goals. I always say to my students the more you put into the martial arts, the more you will get out of it. It can be everything, from a social hobby to a way of life. Some people are happy with the techniques they learn (punches, kicks, arm locks etc) but when you push really hard you get so much more. ■

Sensei James Cockill has been studying martial arts for more than 24 years, initially in Shukokai Karate, then he cross trained and studied various other martial arts, including: American Freestyle Karate, Gracie Ju-Jitsu, Kata No I Aikido, Kickboxing and Boxing. Cross training in these styles resulted in Sensei James Cockill and Sensei Luke Randell developing a unique and realistic Self Protection Programme at Evolution Martial Arts Academy. The programme consists of pre-fight strategies, focussing on body posture, conversation and evasive techniques, heightening awareness to avoid and escape dangerous situations. The programme also includes in-fight techniques, making use of effective striking, joint destruction, and restraints. Combined with the Self Protection skills taught at Evolution Martial Arts Academy, the programme also includes a Children's Character Education Scheme. This covers stranger awareness, creating positive attitudes, anti-bullying, promoting self confidence, developing listening skills and many more.



DID YOU KNOW?

The ethos at the Evolution Martial Arts Academy is to keep moving forward with the progression of modern martial arts around the world. As our attacker changes we have to change our defence. Using the word attacker I don't just mean a physical attacker I face many obstacles in life, mental, physical & spiritual. A healthy body and mind will help us over come these.