



Central Taekwondo's 30th Anniversary

Central Taekwondo Academy celebrated it's 30th Anniversary on 30th November 2023. The club provided every member with a commemorative t-shirt and over 120 members turned up to help mark the occasion.

The club was established in 1993 by Grandmaster David Bailey after he moved to Scotland to be with his wife Angie. David was 4th Dan at the time and left behind Halton Taekwondo Club, where he had been Chief Instructor for over ten years. David had recently retired as a kyorugi player, after competing at his third World Championships at Madison Square Garden in New York in August '93. Just three months later the first Central class was held.

Along with wife Angie (now 5th Dan), they built Central Academy up to be one of Scotland's biggest and most successful clubs.

There can't be that many clubs around that have lasted 30 years in the same venue with the same instructor!

Here GM Bailey recalls some of his highlights from the last 30 years.

1993

I moved to Scotland 3rd Nov 1993 and started Central Taekwondo at the end of that month. It was a Tuesday night and only a handful of people turned up but after a few weeks, numbers started to grow. It wasn't long before we were adding more classes and students started to move up through the ranks.

1995

Graded to 5th Dan by Grandmaster Shin in Cumbria. By this time the club was flourishing and starting to attend competitions and seminars around the country.

1996

First time back in Korea since the Worlds in 1985. UTA team trip. We trained at high schools, universities and private dojangs. Kicked until we could hardly walk and learned so much my head was spinning! Fantastic trip and lots of experiences to help inspire the growing number of Central students.

1997

In April Central produced the first of its black belts. Four club members were promoted to 1st dan at the UTA Dan Grading in Manchester. The club has gone on to produce 249 black belts and every one of them has been graded by Grandmaster Shin!

2000

1st Sep - Achieved 6th Dan Black Belt (Grandmaster Kim Soon Bae - Seoul).

Having spent the previous few years having kids it was time to go back to Korea again. This time we ventured out of Seoul (after taking my grading there) and toured right around the country. Lots of travelling and very tiring but so many amazing experiences. The story about the university professors eating live seafood is still my go-to after dinner tale to this day.

2005

After a few years building up Central Academy and helping bring up the kids (3 under 3 at one time!!!) back to Korea we went. Took part in the first ever Korea Open. My first international poomsae event. This was before the current scoring system was invented. Knock out system was used. Came away with a bronze.

2007

Promoted to 7th Dan by Grandmaster Kim Soon Bae in Seoul.

I was preparing the thesis for my 7th Dan grading when I came across the details of the “Non-Korean Overseas Masters Essay Competition” being run by the Taekwondo Promotion Foundation (TPF). I re-jigged the thesis and turned it into more of a taekwondo life story – about how I had built up a big club in England and then moved to Scotland, started from scratch and did it again. I added a bit about the positive effect taekwondo had had on my life, sent it off to Korea and forgot all about it.

Later in the year I was back in Korea again! This time I organised the trip myself (no GM Shin!). A bit daunting, especially as was taking a dozen Central students over with me! It turned out to be one of the best Korea trips I've done. Became 7th Dan, lived as a Buddhist monk for the weekend and generally had a great time.

The day after we got home, I received an email from the TPF. I had won the essay competition! The prize was a VIP trip to Korea to receive the award from the WTF President. So, three weeks later I was back on the plane to Seoul. I was lucky enough to experience an unbelievable seven days as a guest of the TPF. One of the highlights was a visit to Muju to visit the site for the planned Taekwondo Park. It was just a valley in the middle of nowhere at the time. It was opened in 2013 and is now visited by thousands of taekwondo practitioners every year.

Later I received a hard-back copy of a book which included my essay. Couldn't believe I was a published author!!

2008

Had a proud dad day in October, when all three of my daughters became black belts at the UTA Dan Grading at Carronshore under Grandmaster Shin.

2009

The standardisation of poomsae worldwide was kicking in and the new poomsae competition rules were up and running. I was selected for the European Poomsae Championships as part of the overs male team, alongside Masters Glen Culbert and Simon Negus. Came 5th (just pipped for a medal by the Germans!).

2010

Won the Masters 2 category at the National Poomsae Championships and then partnered with Angie to win pairs too! (Won both individual and pairs again in 2012).

2011

A very busy year started with the Commonwealth Championships in Chennai, India. I was there as Head of Team for Scotland. Most of the Scottish Team comprised Central members. My over-riding memory is travelling around the hectic streets of the city in Tuk-Tuks. It was like taking your life into your hands every time you ventured out!

Qualified as a poomsae International Referee in Feb in Sweden and was selected to referee at the European Championships in Genoa, Italy in May. Angie was competing for GB. At one point I was judging the Russian men's team whilst Angie was on the big screen at the back of my court, she was competing on the centre court. That was a difficult few moments!

I went on to referee at the World Poomsae Championships later in the year. It was in Vladivostok, Russia. A 12 hour internal flight from Moscow! A high pressure experience, particularly as the Chief Referee was a very strict Korean Grandmaster, who put the fear of god into all the referees! Angie was competing there too and was

so unlucky not to make the final. Referees and competitors are kept apart at the Worlds. We were restricted to a few secret liaisons in the corridors at the back of the venue!

British Taekwondo held the first ever veteran British Championships in Manchester. As I was due to turn 50 I decided to mark the occasion by making a comeback in the ring. I had 3 matches at -68kg and won it! It felt a bit like slow-motion taekwondo and the bruises took a bit longer to heal but it was a really enjoyable experience.

Also in 2011, after 9 months training and studying, I qualified as a Level 3 Personal Trainer & Advanced Fitness Instructor. It was hard work and quite expensive but the course was fantastic. I learned so much and it was all relevant to taekwondo training. It gave me a lot of confidence as a coach and so many things I could use in class.

2012

My daughter Asia had just started to make her mark on the international scene. She was selected for the Junior World Championships. It was in Egypt and I went along to support her. She was meant to be there to gain experience. It was a memorable trip! She was amazing, winning dramatic games against much more experienced girls and became Junior World Bronze Medallist. This was the start of a few amazing years at the top of her game. She became a role model for all the other club members.

Both Angie and I were in London for the duration of the Olympic Taekwondo event. Whilst Angie was right in there with all the competitors as a Technical Official, I had a role as a volunteer Games Maker. Event Director, Mike McKenzie, gave me the best possible role. I was in charge of a small team of people in the Field of Play. I stood at the end of the control table (a few feet away from the court) and watched every single match, live and up close for four days! This included seeing Jade make taekwondo history. Thanks Mike!

2013

I fancied getting back in the ring. The World Masters Games was being held in Italy. Veteran categories begin at over 35!! But here there was a further category for over 46. I gave it a go! Everything went my way on the day and I beat guys from Denmark, Iceland and Canada, who had all been ex-players like myself. The whole experience was fantastic and I was crowned World Masters Games Champion (still dining out on that one!!).

2014

Asia had recovered from injury and was selected for the Senior European Championships in Baku, Azerbaijan. It was the first time Angie had travelled with me to watch Asia compete at an international. Asia was 16 and I think the youngest player at the event. She fought with some of the highest ranking players around and she was brilliant. She got bronze and was one of GBs "Magnificent Seven", which included Lutalo, Bianca and Jade. To say we were proud would be the biggest understatement ever. Later that year I was invited to be Event Director for the Commonwealth Taekwondo Championships. It was held at Meadowbank Stadium in Edinburgh and was by far the biggest event I've ever organised. There were massive teams from the home countries, Canada and Australia and many more players from all over the Commonwealth. As there were Olympic ranking points on offer some of the best players around were competing, including the likes of Jade Jones. Thanks to the help of hundreds of helpers and volunteers, it was a memorable event and a massive success.

2015

This was the year Central Academy's Jordyn Smith really made her mark. We were in Strasburg, France to see her become Cadet European Champion and then followed her to Korea to see her become Cadet World Bronze Medallist. Jordyn went on to have a great career, which included becoming Junior World Champion and Senior European Bronze Medallist!

The Cadet Worlds were held at the Taekwondo Park in Muju. It was the first time I had been back since visiting the area in 2007. It was incredible to see such a vast area dedicated to taekwondo. The Park houses the National Taekwondo Museum. It is a slick black glass modern building with 3 floors. We spent a couple of hours exploring during our visit. On the second floor we found extracts and pictures from my competition winning essay from 2007. It was a very humbling experience to find out I had a mention (albeit small) in the National Taekwondo Museum in Korea!

2016

10th June - Achieved 8th Dan Status (Kukkiwon - Seoul).

It had been 9 years since my last grading. Arranged to meet Grandmaster Shin in Seoul. He had arranged for me to grade at the Kukkiwon. I had trained there many times but this was the first time I was eligible to take a grading there. Despite there being only a handful of candidates, it was all it was very formal and nerve wracking. It concluded with an interview with the Kukkiwon President in his office. It took 34 years to get to that point. It really felt like achieving something very special!

Asia and I were invited to be interviewed on the STV News to discuss achieving 8th Dan and to talk about the many benefits of taekwondo. It was a great experience.

The year was made even more special when Angie passed her 5th Dan grading in October and became Master Angie. And I was appointed as a High Performance Coach for BT Poomsae and started taking sessions for the National Poomsae Squad.

2017

Went to Rhodes, Greece in April as British Team Coach for the European Poomsae Championships and then in October switched to kyorugi coaching and went to Budapest, Hungary as one of the GB Team Coaches for the European Cadet Championships.

2018

Went back to Rhodes in April as GB Coach for the World Beach Championships. Sun, sea and taekwondo. Brilliant!!

In November we celebrated 25 years of Central Taekwondo Academy with over 100 guests at the Millennium Suite, Beancross Farm. It was a great way to celebrate a very successful quarter of a century for the club, with great food, a few drinks and fantastic Scottish and Scouse entertainment.

2020

Angie and I celebrated our 25th Wedding Anniversary in February. We decided as we had spent our whole married life involved in taekwondo and taekwondo has been very good to us, we would try give something back. I have been doing taster sessions around primary schools for many years and the kids seem to really enjoy the experience. We found a charity that provides education for the street kids of Nepal. Through "Kids in Kathmandu" we organised some sessions at a school in the city. We combined this with giving a number of free seminars to local clubs. We then travelled from Kathmandu to New Delhi in India and did a similar thing there. It was great to share taekwondo knowledge and experience with students from a totally different cultural background. We will never forget the hospitality and gratitude we received. This trip was one of my favourite ever taekwondo experiences.

2020/21

As with all taekwondo clubs it was a very tough couple of years due to the Covid restrictions. However, Central members showed great resilience. With the help of some members of the local community, we were able to convert the grounds of the Community Centre. The area outside the hall was levelled off, astroturfed and a marquee erected. This allowed us to continue training under the outdoor regulations, when training indoors was forbidden. Training in a tent throughout the Scottish winter was some experience but Central student's indomitable spirit shone through. Once the restrictions were lifted the classes quickly got back to full capacity, in fact a waiting list was required. All those who stayed loyal to the club throughout the difficult period, had lots of new members to share their taekwondo journey with.

2023

In June another Central student was invited to join the World Class Programme. Teigan Smith moved to Manchester to start her career as a full time athlete. In August I was lucky enough to be selected to referee at the very first WT World Demonstration Team Championships held in Chuncheon, Korea. It was a truly spectacular event and the most entertaining TKD event I've ever attended. To top off a great trip I was presented with the Best Referee Award by the World Taekwondo President. Finished off another busy year by taking on the role of Chief Referee at the National Poomsae Championships and then travelling to Austria as a GB team coach at the European Poomsae Championships.

I'd like to think my own personal experiences of training, competing, coaching and officiating in all kinds of taekwondo events around the globe, have helped toward the success of Central Academy over the last 30 years. I have always endeavoured to pass on the experience gained and give my students the opportunity to follow my lead and experience taekwondo on every level.

I would like to say a massive thank you to all the coaches who have worked with me over the years. In particular Master Ann Haston and Master Irene Tasker, who have been coaching at the club for over 25 years. And to our kyorugi coach, Darren Smith, who gives up lots of his free time and continues to produce players of the highest quality.

The fantastic support of all the coaches, students and their parents is the reason the club has lasted so long and continues to thrive.

Thank you to everyone who has been part of our history. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Here's to the next 30 years!!!