



National Association of Professional Martial Artists

NATIONAL BLACK BELT CLUB

NEWSLETTER

Black Belt Achievement

The moment any person puts on a uniform, that person begins a journey down the road to achievement. The road is neither straight nor flat, but rather has many curves and hills.

These are the obstacles that a martial artist calls challenges that stand in the way of achievement.

With hard work and dedication, the martial artist overcomes challenges and continues forward, with stronger character and greater knowledge, awaiting the next opportunity to achieve. Along the road waits a black belt—the symbol of the achievement of knowledge, experience and character gained through hard work. Martial artists understand that it is the accumulation of many small achievements that propels us forward in the journey to achieve great things in life.

The dictionary defines achievement as accomplishing something by special effort. Each week the martial artist trains hard and progresses, but it is the special effort that allows the martial artist to conquer the small and large hills and provides the patience when curves prolong the time it takes to achieve.

At your school, opportunities to achieve are presented as you progress in your training. We know that your journey has difficult challenges that you must overcome. These challenges are part of your training.

Achievement is not easy and can't be given to you.

You must earn it with special effort. This means coming to class consistently and giving it your all.

As a martial artist, you will use your knowledge, experience, and character to make decisions both in and outside of class. These decisions will propel you forward on all life's roads you choose.

You will be able to complete each journey and to achieve because you are special, and because through your training you have developed all the tools you need!



Training Tip: BUILDING QUICKNESS

Have you ever watched a martial artist who seems to move with “abnormal” speed or agility? It’s not uncommon to wonder if such speed is the result of genetics or whether it’s from years of hard training. In many cases, quickness is genetic. Some people are blessed with the genes that enable them to more easily demonstrate athleticism, while others need to work three times as hard for the same result.

The good news is that with a little motivation and dedication, everyone can substantially improve overall speed. Quickness can be enhanced through a good training program that builds muscle and shortens reaction time. These can be accomplished through supplemental effort outside of your martial arts classes.

Here are a few training tips to help you improve quickness, which is an important skill for any martial artist:

1. **JUMP ROPE:** Jumping rope has worked for decades to build athletes’ muscles necessary to enhance quickness. Vary jump-rope routines for 30 minutes per day, three days per week, and you can help build and maintain muscle composition. Jump-rope variations include single jumps, double jumps, single leg jumps, skipping and running.
2. **RUN:** Superior technique while running can dramatically improve your quickness. When you run, focus on three main things. First, fall into the run like a falling tree. Allow gravity to pull you down right when you take off to help you explode with more speed. Second, focus on stepping into the ground. Force should be applied downwards and back to increase explosion. Third, focus on dorsiflexion of the ankles. This means pulling the toes up so that the foot is in a “loaded” position when it hits the ground. Run for 30 minutes per day, three days a week, and your body will sense and focus on mechanics, dramatically increasing your speed.
3. **SKIP:** Skipping forces higher brain mechanics to communicate with the muscle receptors, which decreases reaction time. Skip in all directions for a short period of time each day to have a big impact on your body’s quickness through movement.

All of these at-home training regimens will have significantly improve the quickness of your body’s movements. You do not have to inherit special genes to be quick, but you do need the motivation and dedication to increase your skills and abilities.

FELLOW MARTIAL ARTIST:

MIKE SWAIN

Mike Swain was born December 21, 1960, in Elizabeth, New Jersey. He is a Sixth-Degree Black Belt in Kodokah Judo. He began his training at the age of eight after his uncle suggested to his parents that Judo would help him develop stronger confidence and discipline.



At 17, he moved to Japan for several years to seek the best fighters and intensify his practice. He applied what he learned in Japan to become a better person and athlete. He felt that this would help him achieve his goal of winning a gold medal at either the World Championships or the Olympics.

Mike continued his intensive Judo training while attending San Jose State University in California, from which he graduated in 1985.

Mike was a member of his first World Team in 1977. During 1987, he realized his goal when he won a gold medal at the Judo World Championships. He was the first man from the Western Hemisphere to win a gold medal at the event since its inception in 1956. He has been on four U.S. Olympic Teams, 1980, 1984, 1988 and 1992. During the 1988 Olympics, he won a Bronze Medal. He was the men’s Olympic Judo Coach at the 1996 Olympics.

Mike is currently the assistant coach of the San Jose State University Judo team, an author and seminar presenter, and owns and runs a successful company called Swain Sports International.

He is married to Chi Swain, a Brazilian Judo Olympian. They have two children, who also participate in the martial arts.