



National Association of Professional Martial Artists

NATIONAL BLACK BELT CLUB

NEWSLETTER

Black Belt Friendship

Martial arts training provides us with the opportunity to meet people and establish new friendships. As members of the National Black Belt Club, you share a common bond with those who have made a commitment to pursue a black belt. These relationships can facilitate the learning process and can help students to improve their skills.

Students learn from each other as well as from their instructor. This is what makes group instruction so vital in your overall training. As friends, we work together, helping each other become better martial artists.

True friendship develops when each person respects the other. As martial artists we are taught to be respectful to our fellow students, our instructors, and also to ourselves. Ask yourself what you can do to be a better friend? At our school, you may offer assistance with a technique or with stretching. At home, you may share a new toy or help with a chore. True friends never use each other or take advantage of another's good will. To be a friend is to make a commitment that you will be there for your friend if he or she needs you.



Black Belt Friendship transcends age, gender, race and religion. Family can be friends too! Martial arts has strengthened many family ties between parent and child and between sibling and sibling.

Make an effort to introduce yourself to fellow students. Get another family member to join you in class.

Martial arts is a special activity that brings people together and our school is a place where many friendships are born.

TRAINING TIP:

MEDITATION TAKING A VACATION IN YOUR MIND

Many people have attained higher planes of enlightenment through the ancient art of meditation, and have incorporated meditation into their work schedules and daily routines. The ancient monks lived longer due to the benefits they derived from meditation.

Zen sitting meditation is a period of nothingness. Doing absolutely nothing except focusing, relaxing and using proper breathing techniques helps to purify your mind and body.

Start with only five minutes per day. Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes, so you'll be able to sit on the floor, or a pillow or cushion. You may sit in yoga-style, with both legs crossed at the ankle in front of you, or sitting on both legs folded underneath you in a kneeling position. Don't sit in a position of total body relaxation. Try to keep your body upright and stable.

The first step in meditation is to try to clear your mind of what has been bothering you and of any other thoughts you may have. This is called inner chatter. Try to focus on some object, such as a piece of fruit or on the numbers one through ten, as you incorporate your breathing. Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. The timing of each breath should be in eight- to ten-second intervals. Count in your head to inhale, slowly, from one to ten. As you exhale, count from ten backwards to one.

As your concentration develops, you'll find your heart rate will decrease and your state of relaxation will increase. You'll also be able to meditate sitting in an office chair, the seat in your car or even a park bench. Remember that it takes time to excel at meditation, but the benefits are endless. Keep your spirit strong.

FELLOW MARTIAL ARTIST:

TONY JAA

Tony Jaa is a Muay Thai master whose martial arts skills have enthralled action film lovers in his movies, *Ong Bak* and *The Protector*.

Born in the Surin province of Thailand, Jaa took a cue from his Muay Thai-boxer father and began training at the age of 10. It was shortly thereafter that a Jackie Chan movie prompted young Jaa to begin a rigorous training regimen. With the permission of his father, Jaa, during the next three years, immersed himself in the film industry, while constantly practicing martial arts.

Jaa graduated from senior high school and attended the University of Physical Education in Sarakam Province. His study of Taekwondo, Bushido, Ju-Jitsu, gymnastics and fighting with stick and sword provided him with just the kind of well-rounded education he needed.

His fusion of gymnastics and Muay Thai boxing resulted in the formation of a group that performed in various high schools in the northeastern provinces of Thailand. He also formed a local sword team, which eventually provided Jaa with the opportunity to travel to China as an exchange student. Jaa was awarded multiple medals in sword, staff, gymnastic and track and field events.

In 1997, he appeared as a non-credited stunt double for Robin Shou in *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*, but it wasn't until the release of *Ong Bak* six years later that Jaa would receive full credit for his unbelievable martial arts skills. The result of Jaa's four years of Muay Thai training, *Ong Bak* proved that the human body is capable of amazing feats without the aid of computer animation.

Nearly every film critic from Bangkok to Hollywood named Jaa the heir apparent to the legacies of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. In addition, Jaa has developed a whole new form of Muay Thai, dubbed "Muay Thai Cochisai."

