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# BLITZ

AUSTRALASIAN MARTIAL ARTS MAGAZINE



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# Good Competition



*To have a play sharp & be positive. Never give up.*

The role of competition is important in helping each of us to strive to new heights in the martial arts, and it's a major component of many systems. However, it can also cloud our focus on what's really of greatest value — especially when we forget that our biggest competition, and our best marker for improvement, is ourselves.

Last issue I discussed how our egos, if left unchecked, can trip us up in our quest to master a chosen martial art. In that column, I also touched on how our competitive nature can get the better of us and actually have a negative affect on our development if we adopt the wrong attitude.

This happens when we become fixated on others in our class or team as the means of measuring our progress, our ability and our worth. The problem with this is that in doing so, we start to define success only in terms of winning or losing — that is, defeating another person or being defeated ourselves.

However, in the many contexts in which competition can occur — in a tournament, during sparring in class, when doing partner drills, or even exercises like push-ups — the aims are very different. In a tournament, one is aiming to test one's fighting skills against a variety of opponents, whereas sparring, though competitive, is a tool for developing those fighting skills. Because we'll never develop if we don't try new things and work on our weaknesses, we inevitably must lose sometimes if we are to make progress in these areas. But if we let our competitive nature control what we do, and always try to win, these opportunities for development are lost.

The results of over-competitiveness can be seen in many elements of a martial arts class — for example, students doing half-baked push-ups as they race to finish first. Through a desire to win at all costs, these students hinder their own development.

Many readers will probably be familiar with another breed of student, who is physically gifted and athletic, and seems to pick things up easily — but for some reason, doesn't stick with it. Why? The same competitive syndrome; in comparison to their class-mates, they find it too easy and lose interest. But could they improve, when measured against their own current performance? Of course they could — we all

can. The same happens with those who are perhaps a little slower than average when it comes to mastering the physical skills — they become disheartened by their lack of comparable progress and quit. But if they stayed, would they look back a year after they began and be amazed at the difference in their own knowledge and skill? Of course.

Competition can, however, also play a very positive role and shouldn't be discounted as a valuable driving force. There's a good reason that teams of elite athletes, even in individual disciplines like karate fighting or gymnastics, train together in elite squads: because they lift each other to a higher level. However, they do this not only by trying to outdo one another in competition, but also through co-operating, helping and inspiring each another to achieve.

We should keep in mind that beating an opponent is just one measure of improvement. Martial arts are a vehicle for self-development, and many of the things we seek do not fit the win-or-lose mould of competitive behaviour — for example, finding inner balance, developing conflict-resolution skills and improving our health. Even in competitive situations, our mark should be based on bettering our previous performance. We'll know, regardless of whether we win or lose, whether we've done so.

Of course, it's natural — and useful — to use others, be they our peers or instructors, as a benchmark and for inspiration. However, for most of us, the greatest inspiration comes when we see evidence of our own progress. Sometimes it's hard to gauge progress because it happens gradually, so making records of our efforts and notes about our training is a good way of allowing ourselves to reflect on how far we've come and where we need to go. And, most importantly, we should ask ourselves, am I a better person than I was, as well as a better martial artist?

*Silvio Morelli*

# RED BAK



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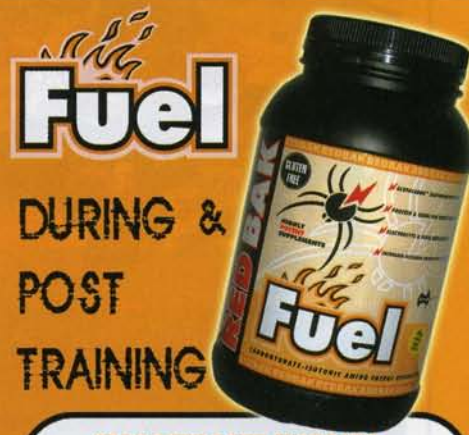
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## Melbourne kickboxers try Hakarac

Perth Instructor Mannie De Matos was invited to share his style of Hakarac Martial Boxing at a seminar on 16 June at Monash University in Clayton, Melbourne.

Hosted by Kacey Chong of the Monash University Kickboxing Club and Robert Halajian of the AIM Academy, the seminar covered the finer technical points of Hakarac's footwork, strikes and defences, pad and kick-shield drills for conditioning people for both ring-fighting and self-defence, as well as variations on training methods for preparing fighters and pushing them to their limits.

De Matos also shared his real-world experience acquired from over 15 years working in the security industry, demonstrating various restraining procedures used by law-enforcement and security personnel, and explaining how people can use the 'predator mindset' to gain an advantage over their attackers in self-defence situations.

Founder and Chief Instructor of Monash University Kickboxing Kacey Chong creates opportunities for her students to cross-train with instructors who are leaders

in their field by regularly hosting seminars at the club.

"My intention is to provide an environment for continuous learning, and inviting Mannie over to teach a seminar on Hakarac was a great opportunity to see what concepts and drills could be incorporated into our current training syllabus," said Chong. "My impression of Hakarac, which means 'many ways' in Mannie's native East Timorese dialect, is that it blends the best hand-skills that traditional martial arts has to offer with the efficiency of modern day Western boxing."

*Blitz* also caught up with de Matos while he was in town — check out his conditioning drills on page 48.



De Matos (standing centre, in white) with the seminar group

## Genesis growing in SA

Heidi Stechwey, a long-time student of Genesis Martial Arts' Renshi Brett Harrison, recently sent us this photo in recognition of her teacher's 25th year in the martial arts and the growth of his dojo in Aberfoyle Park, South Australia.

The dojo is now in its 14th year and Renshi Harrison (pictured) often teaches classes of 40-to-50 students in the Genesis freestyle karate system, which incorporates submission techniques, weaponry and self-defence.

"His passion for karate and love of teaching has never wavered in the 13 years I've trained under him," said Stechwey. "He is especially good with teaching young children and making martial arts fun for them while still teaching them discipline and respect of martial arts."

Harrison began training in Zen Do Kai under Billy Manne while he was in the army in the early 1980s. He then trained under Sam Chapman of Zen Do Kai/Golden Knights when he returned to South Australia and started his own club in 1992. In 1999, Shihan Andrew Mitchell (Genesis' Head Instructor) and Renshi Harrison left to form the Genesis style, which now has eight clubs across South Australia.

Renshi Harrison is also a police officer and has been a bodyguard for U2, Madonna and the Premier of SA.



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