

How my World Championships preparation changed my lifestyle, by Jack Watson.

Four years of hard training, four international campaigns. However this fourth campaign that has taken me on a journey to the ITF World Champs in Germany, has changed my lifestyle for the better and most likely forever. The hours of sweat put into hard training in the dojang and at home, hours spent running the pavements and time spent ensuring my body is in the best condition possible to compete, has made me a healthier person and a much more rounded martial artist.

The journey of this campaign has pushed me harder than I have ever been before and it has made me realise just how I implement the Tenets of Taekwon-Do into my everyday life, and these have been essential in getting me to the position and physical condition I am in now. Not only did it change the physical side of my life, it also changed the mental side. My nutrition has changed dramatically, my training has changed and my body has changed. Looking back I had a fairly average lifestyle and this changed to a very healthy one. The Taekwon-Do training that I completed transformed my lifestyle.

One way the Taekwon-Do training for the tournament altered my lifestyle was the changes I had to make to my nutrition and diet, which was essential in my success in the build up to this campaign. My diet previously consisted of 4 main meals a day. These were generally healthy, however the portion size was large and often included me paying a second visit to the kitchen for leftovers. There was a lot of snacking on foods such as muesli bars, bread and other refined sugars and carbs, which appeared healthy but were instead quite nutrient deficient.

I was feeling good I thought but when I reached 5 kilograms above my sparring division weight I realised this had to change. Out went all sweets, treats and everything else I thought I enjoyed. I also reduced the amount of refined carbs such as bread and starchy food like potatoes. In came an increase of the amount of fruit, vegetables and good fats I was consuming. I felt I was now only eating what my body needed, and on top of that I was now getting more than my 5 fruits and vegetables a day.

The change in nutrition had many benefits to my everyday life and my training. The difference almost seemed instantaneous. After a clean day of eating my body was feeling very energised, this resulting in me being able to train harder for longer. For example, I was training once a day but once I changed my diet I had much more energy and was training consistently 2-3 times a day. Every single day. Along with the increased energy I felt much stronger and faster. My sparring became much faster and I felt I was able to generate more power, and in turn my patterns became much more explosive and powerful. Obviously I was very pleased to feel for myself just what effect a change in diet had on improving my Taekwon-Do training. Not only did this change in diet and nutrition alter the training and Taekwon-Do side of my life, it also affected my everyday life too. On my previous diet my body was not getting enough proteins and good fats so often I felt weak and drained throughout the day, however with the change in diet, as stated earlier, I had more energy and I felt much stronger. I felt I had better concentration and generally felt healthier. Also I felt fuller throughout the day as I was eating more wholesome meals, and this in turn stopped the snacking that was prevalent in my diet previously.

Out of all of the things that changed due to my improved diet, the two things that I felt were most important from this change was the large weight loss that occurred and my recovery times after training. After training my body used to take days for aches and pains to go away and I would not see as much improvement. However, the change in diet helped my body to recover much faster and feel improvements faster than before. This is essential for training because my body had to be in its best condition as possible at trainings to get as much out of them as possible. The biggest change I went through in this change is weight loss. In total I lost 7.5 kilograms. This had a significant impact on training and everyday life, I felt much lighter and fitter for my events I had to compete in but I also felt much healthier and better as a person. This is how the first change I had to make in my life for the World Champs affected my lifestyle.

Another way the Taekwon-Do training for the world championships changed my lifestyle is in the physical aspect of my life, which was largely based just around specific Taekwon-Do training. At the

beginning of the campaign I was training 4 times a week however I knew this would not be enough to get to the fitness and skill level of the champion I wanted to be. From here my new found energy from my changed diet allowed me to pick up the amount of times I was training to two or three times a day. By doing this my body was getting much stronger and fitter which was not only having a positive impact on my training but my lifestyle as well. It was making work much easier as I was getting stronger and it was generally making me feel better about myself and healthier.

Along with this extra training I was doing I also incorporated a running plan, which meant I would wake up and run each morning before school. This was my key to success. The thing that was missing from my life all these years. As soon as I started running my body felt much healthier and fitter, my stamina was much longer lasting in sparring. I could feel the physical condition of my body improving day by day as I continued to run and complete these extra training sessions. My skill was developing as I was becoming snappier and more powerful in my patterns and faster in my sparring.

My lifestyle was being greatly affected by these changes in multiple ways. The first one is my weight continuing to drop down. This meaning I felt lighter I became out of breath less often. I had much more energy from this weight loss and I was sleeping much better, even though I was waking early I still felt supercharged with energy. This new found energy was very good for my everyday life as it allowed me to get more school work completed, hand in assignments early and have more focus at work. It seemed everything in my everyday life was benefitting positively through the increase of training for the Taekwon-Do world championships.

Another important aspect of this increased training and diet changes was the impact it has on my asthma. I have had asthma since I was born and it had always held me back whether it was running, swimming, sparring or patterns but with the training and running I had done it caused my asthma symptoms to occur less frequently and when I did have them they were not as bad. I believe this is because of the amount of training, running and physical exertion I went through during the campaign and I feel like it will have positively affected me forever. This has made my everyday life much easier and simpler as I no longer have to carry an asthma inhaler on me and rely on it as much as I used to. This, along with the other changes already mentioned, show the benefits of how Taekwon-Do training for the world championships has changed my lifestyle.

The final way the Taekwon-Do training for the world championships changed my lifestyle was not in a physical way. It was in a mental way. The build up and training for the world championships affected my mental resilience in many positive ways. One thing it taught me mentally is that if you focus on something enough and put your mind to it anything can happen. I learnt this from the campaign because I wanted to become fitter but no matter how hard I tried I couldn't. However, when I focussed on it and really tried to achieve it, it was possible, my fitness sky rocketed and I felt so much healthier. The reason why I feel like this changed my lifestyle is because I realised I could implement this into my everyday life, in order to achieve things academically and socially that I didn't think would be possible. For example, I began to get higher grades at school and complete work and jobs faster as now I was more focussed on them. This had a very large impact on my lifestyle and definitely changed it for the better. The new found focus was helping me improve much faster in training but as a person as well, thus changing my lifestyle.

Another thing closely associated with Taekwon-Do that I learnt to apply to my everyday life was the Tenets of Taekwon-Do. The three that had the largest effect on me were integrity, self control and perseverance. The reasons these three things were so crucial to my training was because: The self control tenet always reminded me I can't slack off from training and have to stop temptations of breaking my diet and eating the wrong foods, I had to ensure I controlled myself. The perseverance tenet reminded me that even when training gets really hard I have to keep pushing and training more because that was the only way to get better than everyone else. The integrity tenet affected me in a different way than I thought it would. It was not about showing integrity to others as much but actually to myself. I had to be honest to myself and never cheat myself as I knew I would be the only one negatively affected by my wrong doing, not others. The use of these tenets ensured I would stay on track with my training and continue to

succeed. However, the reason why the use of these tenets changed my lifestyle is not only the difference it made while I was training but also in my everyday life. I implemented the use of these tenets in my everyday life in order to make myself a better person. It stopped me from sometimes not giving my full one hundred percent at school, to always giving my best because I now knew I was only cheating myself. It made me stop giving up at work when things got too complicated or when the overload of school work was feeling like it was too much and I couldn't finish it. The use of these tenets definitely helped me succeed more in my everyday life and changed my lifestyle for the better.

As I stated earlier the increased focus and drive I had helped me believe anything is possible which then led me to figuring out that everything revolves around the idea of mind over matter. I thought this fitted in nicely to some of the theory I was reading whilst studying for my upcoming grading. This was an idea that the philosopher and Buddhist monk Wonhyo did a lot of his research and based his ideology around and as I continued to train I worked out how this principal works for me. As soon as I believed in myself I felt anything is possible and I can achieve it no matter what. No matter how hard it is. The mental picture I had that when I thought I could do it, I would do it. This is what mind over matter is. This is an idea I have realised throughout my training for this championship and it will change my Taekwon-Do training and everyday life forever. This is how the world championships training positively affected me mentally and changed my lifestyle.

The build up and preparation for the world championships affected me in many ways, however not all of these affected my lifestyle. The things I had to do to and change in the preparation that I feel changed my lifestyle was the changes in nutrition, training and mental state of mind. These changed my lifestyle and I will continue to implement these into my everyday life in order to make me a more successful person and allow me to live life to the fullest.