

## **The Difference between ITF in Malaysia and New Zealand that I experience.**

### **Introduction**

International Taekwon-Do Federation martial art founder by General Choi Hong Hi in 9 November 1918 was the art I been doing more than 20 years since I started in my 90s until present. The art had helped me to build up my character, confident and self discipline in my daily life also helping me to learn how to defend myself in a dispute or unexpected situation such as involving in a fight scene or attack by stranger by surprise. The art also disciplining me not to used force unless it is really necessary. ITF organisation spread in worldwide that allowed me to connect to the world through different club in same organisation throughout the world. There are different training and grading syllabus in different countries even in same ITF organisations. Different countries carry different training and needs. I had been trained and graded back in Malaysia for more than 10 years before I migrated to New Zealand to work and live in New Zealand. There are vast amount differences when I trained back in Malaysia compared to New Zealand such as the environment, the peoples, the resources, the training system, the grading syllabus, etc. Back in Malaysia I mostly train on flexibility, Jumping kicks, various sparring, self-defence bare hand and with weapons and patterns but not into technical and deep understanding and applications of the kicks, punches, blocks as I trained in New Zealand.

### **Flexibility**

Flexibility is important as a taekwondo practitioner and also the main focus skills to increasing the ability and strength to performance great kicks without limiting and hurting your body to perform the specific movement so must do sets of exercises involved front split, side split and body arching will be included in every training to build up the habits and slowly adapting and increasing the flexibility to unrestricted the height of the kicks and the holding power of the legs in the air without stressing the parts of the body. So the fundamental of the flexibility training need to be practice to certain degree to make it happen. The following skill that needed to be work on will be the jumping and flying techniques. To master those skill that lifting the body into the air and getting the feel of the body to be light in the air to performance a jumping or flying kicks or maybe a multiple kicks and hand techniques before landing on the ground. The exercises will involved a lot of leg lifting and leg pushing, continue tuck jump on the max height, box jumping and gradually increase to slowly push the legs muscle to extend further higher of the jump and other sort of ideas to make the jump higher in lighter. Once I understand and getting the jumping technique reaching up at least half the height of the body I then start to move on to how to turn in the air and land on the ground softly without dropping with a hard fall bang on the ground. Once I get to the stage that I can jump and land safely I then precede to adding

kicks like high front kick, flying side kick, jumping back kick, jumping reverse hooking kick. Once I get used to those kicks I will then add to combo kicks and speciality kicks like jumping triple front kicks, flying front turning kick, jumping side kick and back kick, twin front kicks, twin side front kicks, flying twisting and side kick, etc. If the fundamental flexibility is not followed or not putting effort to doing it regularly it will then create problem and limit the body from performing a good kick and not say a jumping or flying. Start from basic to slowly work the way up for a good result because every step will work toward a better in performing a good kick later

There are some examples that I used to do to get my flexibility:

Side split



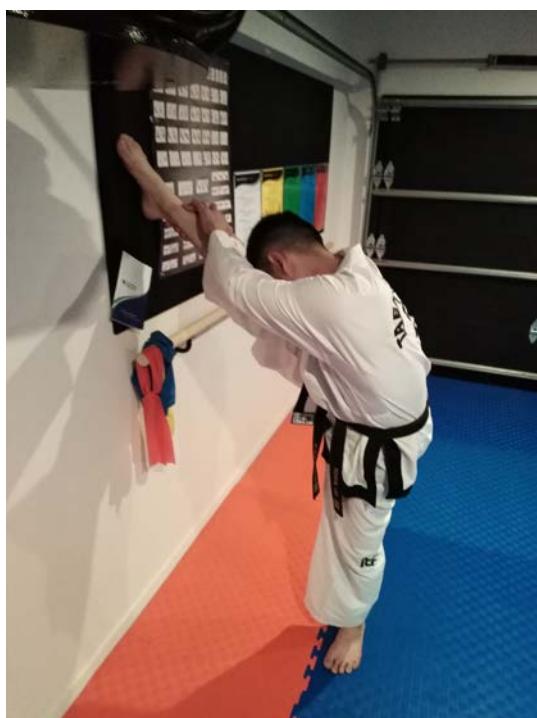
Front split



High leg side holding



Front leg holding



## **Line Work**

Line work is great for helping to practice better kicks and arm techniques over and over again with the same kicking or punching techniques with different stances that can be checked if it correct or not in every time the same movements is performed. Line work can also do as a break down of pattern that needed to practice more in certain movement to perform a good pattern. Line work that I learn in Malaysia and quite flexible mostly the line work comes with few combinations. Some of the examples like fore fist punch with back fist follow with turning kick and back piercing kick, jumping turning kick before landing follow by back kick and side kick follow with downward kick and jumping reverse hooking kick, but when come to grading syllabus I had a lists of line work I need to work on in sequences performing to the examiner in our own time, for example kicking front kick 4 times forward and backward so we need to starts from right kick and after 4 times I need to turn back and kick another 4 times and then will be back to the starting spot with forearm guarding block. There will be no punching on the line work in grading syllabus except for the white belt. When I get to more senior colour belt level, from ground kicking like side piercing, turning kick, back kick will then move on to jumping and to jumping back or reserve kick like jumping turning kick, jumping back kick and jumping reverse turning or hooking kick. When I reached to black belt I had a various line work kicks that needed to performs to the examiner with no fix sets in the syllabus. The examiner will call out some of the techniques and I need to perform it accordingly and so the more combination techniques I learn from practising in dojang the more I can families it and showing it well when needed to.

## **Self Defence**

Self defence is the one that most people will think and do when come to martial arts. It is because self defence is so important that it can save anyone that got into surprise attack or in a danger situation when it been taught well and experience it well in training. Everyone that been trained in self defence had different skills that suit them, when in junior rank, everyone will taught the same techniques and skills but once we reached to senior belt or to black belt, we tend to experience what skills that suit our body, the size and the height so we train the skills that suit us to protect ourselves when we on the streets.

Self defence in Malaysia taught differently we doesn't have traffic light system so the A type response will not be taught like the speech and the hand up. All the self defence I learned and trained will work toward type B response only. When I train self defence, attacker will attack straight away and the defender will be doing the defend, release, dodge and counter either will hand locked back the attacker, drop the attacker or attacking using the hand and leg. I trained a bit of ground self defence back in Malaysia like lock in by someone on the ground

and how to react and release from the attack. When come to grading the self defence syllabus in Malaysia will only do standing position attack only and no ground attack but it include weapons attack such as knife, baton, stick, etc. Thus it test me how to do self defence on weapons as not every time people will only used bare hand but will grab whatever weapons they will find on the place when argument happen or thugs that wanted something from you.

## **Step Sparring**

Step sparring according some book is a form of drill training used by Taekwondo students to practice and perfect basic stances, blocks, strikes and kicks with a partner. It includes 1-step, 2-step and 3-step sparring, which are characterized by the number of steps forward that the attacker takes at the beginning of techniques. In my time step sparring in Malaysia only consists of 3-steps sparring, 1-step sparring and semi free sparring. In 3-step sparring I trained on the steps for the attack but only in middle punch and it doesn't have set counter attack when the defender finished with the blocking, the counter attack will be flexible as long as it make sense and workable. 2-step sparring doesn't not exist in my time back in Malaysia so this is new to me when I came to New Zealand. The 2-step sparring will be a new step sparring for me to learn and understand it. 1-step sparring in Malaysia will also be free style as once the attacker finished with the punching technique the defender will counter with a few combination techniques like will be from normal hand strike to kicks to jumping kicks and when coming to senior grading dropping the opponent will be compulsory. Now as I know the 1-step sparring will only either performing dodge, block and with only one counterattack which I needed to adjust it to make it suit the criteria.

## **Free Sparring**

Free Sparring is one of the activity that most people like and don't like because is a very physical activity that involved you might get hurt if you not used to it and most people scared of it because it really going to get hurt if not enough training, not careful and not experience. I find out free sparring involved mental and physical games. With you good at mind techniques but physically not flexible to do it is not going to work well and either way. So free sparring is very fun to join also it helps with the bravery and confident to deal with opponents that you never spar before.

Free Sparring in Malaysia are not so extreme because our training for free sparring are not so technical in term of skills but only unless we go to work champs tournament and experience it and bring back their technique and study it then our free sparring technical knowledge will be better but still free sparring in Malaysia still cannot compete better with other countries as lack of commitment and training from individual. 3-step semi-free sparring will be compulsory in junior rank grading, where kicking 3 times from each side with any combo kicks and 1-step semi free sparring will be either hand technique or leg

technique doing it once each. This actually is good to practise the kick that will be using in free sparring but is a step mode so it can bring a lot of techniques that it might not be able to use it in free sparring but can make it happen by doing it in this kind of step sparring condition.

Free star sparring that I only experience in Malaysia where you stand on the spot and perform various of combo kicking and punching and jumping within the spot, imagining there are a group of attacker coming toward to attack you so you defend yourself by performing all those attacking tools. This kind of sparring is good on where you attack by lots of people and you need to learn how to encounter this sort of situation in a way that you familiar with your kicks and your hand techniques also your stamina level.

## **Board Breaking**

Board breaking also called destruction is to test a person accuracy, speed and power to break a certain amount of board. Board breaking in Malaysia usually train before tournament, grading and performance. I do not have the steps in board breaking, I just break like on the spot for example side perching kick, for what I had train in New Zealand the step involved to increase the agility and distance to break but back in Malaysia I just kick straight on where I stand without doing the extra steps. The type of board I'm using back in Malaysia was rough sawn boards, not in New Zealand that have those dressed smooth board. The board breaking eventually only introduced to me after I graded to red belt and above, thus the only added the breaking into the black belt grading syllabus to test your accuracy and strength. In board breaking grading syllabus in Malaysia very similar to New Zealand because the execution are likely be knife hand strike, elbow strike, front punch, etc. the kicks will be turning kick, side piercing kick, high front kick, flying side kick, jumping back kick, etc. When come to demonstration and performance, beforehand we will practice the speciality kicks for like jumping 360 degree Downward kick, splitting kicks, 360 degree turning kick, front flip kick, jumping turning and reverse hooking kick, etc.

## **Theory**

Theory and technical study in Malaysia are extremely minimal I do not have any theory syllabus book to guide me thru the grading. All our grading coming from the lists given from our instructor and I will had to memorize it by heart, train and perform it on the grading. My grading will be conducting in every 3 to 4 months. When I do colour belt grading there are no theory and technical questions such as how many degree the position foot placing for like L stance, the application for the block or the strike. Therefore only physical strength and

memory will be tested on the grading and understanding some Korean basic words will be enough to get thru all the grading. When I come to New Zealand there are so much theories I needed catch up and to understand that I feel really hard to cope in especially the training style I been in the past. Therefore I can only study whatever I can understand and hopefully my understanding will get better when day go by.

## **Patterns**

According to the taekwondo books taekwondo patterns are a series of standardized movements that Taekwondo students use in order to practice “offensive” and “defensive” techniques without a partner. Taekwondo students must perform the movements correctly in Taekwondo patterns in order to pass their belt tests.

The ITF Patterns I trained back in Malaysia will be the same as the ITF patterns from the rest of the world as the patterns created by General Choi and passing the pattern movement to every ITF martial artist in the same way but because of different body type and understanding, there were very quite different with the techniques from different instructors. Different instructors will have a different technique and understanding to pass it to their students and for me I do not have the opportunity to access the encyclopedia to read and understand how the movement works, my knowledge and techniques are all coming from our instructors experience to teach us. When come to grading I needed to know all the side to performance our pattern from the normal start in front; we can start from the back, side even start in 45 degree and finish on the spot where you start. We be always tested in a different start position this actually to test how well you understand the movement in each pattern but I never go thru in details for example the hand placing for the block, the side kick with different placing for the hand and the stances degree. So when I corrected by Masters in New Zealand they told me my movement is somehow very different so from then I need to changing a lot of my movement and techniques to a better understanding of the patterns.

## **Summary**

Final summary is in Malaysia I focused more on the physical aspects, for example flexibility will be the priority in Taekwondo as we practice it weekly and daily at home to ensure we got a good kicking and jumping skills. I do a lots of line work as well this to help me get a grip of a good combo of kicks and hand techniques. For Self defence everyone have a different techniques to suit their body so my self defence is also different from I learned in a club in New Zealand which is good to add to my knowledge.

Step sparring for my time is different and I know different country have their own set of step sparring but is good to learn something different and also with free sparring. Board breaking also quite different where I'm now but not gonna be a hard things for me to catch up. Theory is not the priority if compare to physical training, we just have to understand the fundamental Korean to get us thru to grading and promote as long as the physical performance is completed it will be awarded. I need to perform all tasks given in grading without dropping any tasks. Kicking in grading has to be higher than the belt and if you not able to reach still you need to get to put effort to reach to the minimum height or else it will minus marks from the grading. Discipline in Malaysia is different, student follow and obey whatever instruction given and very seldom they raise their opinion. There are no reference book or syllabus book for grading in Malaysia, student learn their theory and syllabus directly from instructor during the training and remember it. Our training ground coming from concrete floor, grass field, running asphalt track or tile floor, without foam mat lay on the ground so I train whenever we able and had the space to train. When comes to competition venue, our regional and national tournament area mostly in shopping mall, sometime will be in some stadium but depend on the budget. Mats are will not be provided in some tournament so we just had those duct tape on the ground to make a ring. As I know proper equipments and proper tools will make lots of different but from my generation of training we just got to adapt what we have and train whenever we able to train. I'm so grateful that I come to New Zealand I got a proper training area like foam mats or even a proper wooden floor that only I knew if we don't do in a proper ground we will hurt our knees in the future. One things I know is training in everywhere is not a problem as long as the people we train with, gonna help each other to grow and grow strong to promote a proper International Taekwondo Federation.