

# The Spirit of Tukido Goes to the Olympics

*Words of wisdom from Master Teh*

DRIVING UP TO Tulliallan on a beautiful spring day, I asked Grand Master Hock Aun Teh why he, as the Chief Instructor of Tukido, had been asked to give a seminar to the members of the GB Wheelchair Basketball Team.

"Why don't you ask them that yourself?" he suggested, so I did. One of the team members told me that after Master Teh's last visit everyone who took part remembered his contribution more than any other. It was completely new to them. They all talked about it afterwards; the exercises, diet, preparation and changes in attitude, the emphasis on self-discipline. They felt better players and individuals after it. I guess that answered my question.

Of the 12 team members going to represent Britain at the Paralympics in Seoul, South Korea, on October 15th this year, the captain and 10 members were present, with a few others. Mike McCreadie, the British men's coach, explained that 16 national teams were taking part in the basketball championship; 4 groups of 4. Sweden, Brazil and the favourites, the USA, are also in Britain's group. Even with the USA in their group they were undaunted. "This is the best preparation we've ever had, and the best prepared team." They hope to reach at least the quarter-finals.

Before starting the session, Master Teh pointed out that physical fitness and co-ordinated exercises make you do better in basketball as well as in Tukido, and what is even more important, it increases team spirit. This team spirit, which he hoped to



*Flexibility exercises in wheelchairs.*

show them how to build, can be taken to the Olympics just as much as to their own clubs back home. He told them that when they have an off day they should still keep training. Then there are days when everything is ideal, when your body and mind are integrated. The atmosphere is there. You want to play, but even more, you want to win.

## Exercises

Master Teh then started on exercises combined with breathing, and on how important proper breathing is whilst exercising. It improves your flexibility and makes for better judge-

ment. Back arches, stretching forward as far as possible, Master Teh drilled them, pushing them further each time. All of these exercises were designed to give them confidence to push themselves even further than they thought they could. "There is no point in taking it easy. You must push yourself" he told them. It was encouraging for me to see that so soon after the start of the session, after a certain reluctance, they were all pushing themselves harder.

There followed more stretching exercises in wheelchairs and some designed to exercise the torso too. Master Teh treated them all as he would his own students, instilling discipline, encouraging them by alter-



Master Teh emphasises team spirit.

natively pushing them then, praising them when deserved, criticising when someone wasn't putting in as much as they could. So he aroused their spirit and drilled them.

## Punches

Next Master Teh started on some basic *Tukido* exercises; punches, double punches, four punches, first with one hand and then the other, faster and faster. 20 punches as fast as possible, pushing them harder all the time. Then he made them race up and down the hall. If they took too long he pushed them all the harder. He explained about good and bad

habits and how to adjust their weight and balance to increase speed. Master Teh had spent some time practising in a wheelchair, so he would know what could be done. "You must remove a psychological fear of falling. Don't be afraid! It won't happen!" he shouted; and it didn't! He sent them zig-zagging across the hall. "You have to train your body all the time, so that when you take part in a contest you do things automatically; you can anticipate things. It becomes second nature to you. You don't have to think about it. You must let your natural instincts flow to anticipate another's movements. You must have this in the team" he said. "You cannot be a top player until you can

anticipate! Give 100% of yourself."

He urged them to have faith in themselves: to tell themselves they are the cream, they are good enough to win. All the way through the session Master Teh expounded on the psychological approach to the game and to winning. He told them to believe in themselves, because if they don't, they won't be any good. As he said, "Just because you lost a couple of matches doesn't mean that you are no good. It doesn't matter. It doesn't mean that *this time you won't win.*" He told them that before a match they should visualise the game they wanted to play, to imagine themselves doing everything right. Think of themselves winning. Take time out to psyche themselves up. There is no use being a team made up of individuals. They must all be integrated and work together. He stressed that their attitude was crucial. "You should go out to show people what you can do. You want to win, but supposing you don't? It doesn't mean you are hopeless. You gain experience and you learn from it. You learn from each other and you learn from the other team. And if you feel under pressure or tense before a match, do a lot of warm-up exercises, coupled with deep breathing done slowly and that will help."

## Self-discipline

Towards the end of the session Master Teh returned to the theme of self-discipline. "It is self-discipline that builds a co-ordinated team. Don't ruin the team spirit by everyone doing their own thing. Do everything together, as one team not 12, and follow your captain. Do as he says and don't argue."

After this the cool-down exercises started and Master Teh prepared to answer any questions they might have. Because he had visited Korea before, a lot of questions were about what to expect there and what to do to prepare before the matches.

As Master Teh took his leave, he wished them all well. The captain invited him back again, as they had all enjoyed his session so much and felt they had benefitted from it.

Good luck in Korea!

Master Teh is bringing out a book soon on "Warm-up and stretching for all sports and Martial Arts" which will develop his ideas further.



*Tukido* exercises to develop co-ordination and strength.