

## INTERVIEW in "TAEKWONDO-ACTUELL" (English)

### **7) What is your advice to athletes and coaches who want to train their psyche - where can they learn this, how can they start?**

7. Practicing Taekwondo on a daily basis nurtures a child's mental, psychological, and emotional dimensions, such as: self-confidence, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, positive self-image, courage, stress control, patience, resilience, perception, strong will, mentally coping with difficult situations, love for work, fighting spirit, competitive nature, dealing with and overcoming problems, goal-setting, right way to cope with defeat, failure, and injustice control of and overcoming disappointment, dealing with victory – success in a mature way, control of arrogance. The prerequisite for the student to reap those benefits is to practice Taekwondo systematically and for many years. Also, the instructor cannot rely only on his/her practical abilities in Taekwondo but must possess sufficient theoretical knowledge with respect to modern scientific views on a safe and effective physical workout, keep regularly informed on day-to-day developments and, above all, be of excellent character that will become a role model and an example to be followed by his/her students. This is why an instructor in Taekwondo is called a Teacher and the athlete is called a Student. We are not only limited to improving athletic abilities and conquering medals: we also focus on character-shaping, which is even more important.

### **8) You write “due to the numerous difficulties and complexities of sparring, athletes should not discontinue training for a long period of time; participation in competitions and performance control need to take place frequently. “This is precisely what is not possible now due to Corona. What do you think: How will the corona break affect the elite competitors right now?**

8. The Sudden and long-term discontinuance of a training program due to the Corona virus has negatively affected every professional group including top athletes, on a personal basis, as their routine has been interrupted. The negative effect is even more visible in Taekwondo, where the athletes are amateurs. The limited form of exercise that devoted students did at home could not cover the loss. Different quarantine measures have been imposed in every country (lock downs) resulting in athletes being negatively affected to a different extent. Time-wise, the pause is too long and affects even an individual's mental state. In addition, several problems have arisen on personal and family levels (and national as well), that are different for everyone. Financial problems make sports preparation very hard and create more emotional issues. The mind cannot remain unaffected and focused on training alone, as life has brought many extra difficulties, other needs and new priorities. All these will play a serious role in top athletes' performance from now on. The time until the Olympic Games is long but no one can predict developments and there are certainly no favoured athletes. I believe that no one has secured a head-start or their participation. Anything is possible.

**9) How long will it be before you can build on your previous skills after the corona break?**

9. Return to former high performance depends on every athlete separately. The higher his/her performance level before the quarantine, the faster he/she will catch up. Going back to normal lifestyle will take anywhere from 2 to 3 months for athletes to attain their former high performance. Each case is different; athletes who are affected by personal problems may need more time. However, one year to the Olympic Games is enough for athletes to achieve maximization of their performance.

**10) What is your advice - how can athletes and coaches minimize negative effects from the long break, how can they get back into the tournaments well?**

10. The first condition is that the athlete has maintained his/her physical state at high levels (aerobic and anaerobic stamina, strength, flexibility-suppleness) during quarantine, or he/she will have to start all over again! It is a given that the athlete has not been able to practice speed, technique and tactical ability and, as a result, there will certainly be a serious decrease in performance there. Great emphasis should be placed at the commencement of training. The second condition is that the athlete has maintained positive mental energy and is looking at the end goal – that is, even though the athlete is certainly rested, he/she is not off target. The third essential condition is that the training schedule for return to high performance – which has to consider the coaching principle of progressive overload – be individually tailored and scientifically backed up.

It has to consider sports medicine and ergometric laboratory tests which need to take place at the beginning of the new preparation in order to accurately determine the condition of the athlete's health and of his/her performance. This will help prevent serious injuries caused by a sudden increase in the load and intensity of training on a muscular system that is not ready – having lost any adjustments due to lock down. It is best that return to high performance be delayed and happen safely, rather than hastiness and premature or extreme stress of the training program causing an injury that will set the athletes more weeks back – in which case, returning to prior high performance will not be feasible. In the meantime, healthy opponents will have already reached their previous performance levels and will be training to improve them!

**11) In addition to the theory of sport, your book deals with the various techniques in application and in combination - if I understand it correctly, there are 477 combinations - so a whole lot. All techniques are also available as online videos, each filmed from two directions - very complex! How long did you work on the book?**

11. It took me five years to complete writing my book and publishing it in Greek. The book is distributed to students in three Faculties of Physical Education and Sport Sciences in Greece and many students and coaches have already acquired it. It took

me another two years to translate the book in English, revise it and correct it word-for word. During this short time frame, I have taken more than 500 photos from which I have created 231 sketches. At the same time, I have designed a comprehensive website: [kostasbeis-tkd.gr](http://kostasbeis-tkd.gr), which I have now renewed in English with lots of information on Taekwondo. Shooting and processing 632 videos and uploading them on the website happened at the same time as writing the book and this project lasted 6 months.

**12) In the past you have also dealt intensively with Taekwondo from a sports medicine point of view and with injuries in Taekwondo. What do you think about the risk of injury in Taekwondo? How high is this and what can athletes and coaches do to keep the risk of injury low?**

**12.** Protection against injuries is the most important thing for every athlete. Health is what will secure the athlete's high performance and his/her competing in championships: that will result in the athlete's dramatic development, as well as his/her progress in taekwondo, since he/she will not be giving up competition at a young age and before maximizing performance. Modern competition regulations and improvement of protective equipment gear has significantly contributed to reducing the number of injuries and their seriousness in championships. However, there is still room for improvement in these areas, which I could bring to the WTF's attention.

Nevertheless, many injuries take place in training, involving mainly the lower extremities and forcing good athletes to an early withdrawal from competition even before they have had a chance to prove their worth on the competition field. This is a loss for Taekwondo. I suggest that there be an international study with the participation of the national Taekwondo federations in order to accurately register injuries in training and intervene to reduce these injuries. Proactive protection is more important, as it secures health, can be effective, and is the reason why I dedicate a big chapter in the book "*THE WAY TO WIN. The Science of Fight*", where I analyze in detail the injuries, preventive protection, and proper management, should they occur. Every scientific study on injuries in Taekwondo has concluded that competition Taekwondo is a safe Olympic sport and the injuries recorded have been reduced in the last years as far as number and seriousness is concerned.

**13) Could you tell us something about yourself personally: How have Taekwondo been practicing since 1976 - what is it that fascinates you? How often do you train today? You were also active as an athlete and coach. Among other things, you coached the Greek Olympic team twice in 2000 and 2008. Which successes as athletes and coach mean a lot to you, what makes you proud?**

**13.** In 1970s, there were few instructors and athletes, however, we had great passion for taekwondo, we almost identified with it. Training was hard – military style – scientific knowledge and information limited, and internet, of course, non-existent. Since 1981, when taekwondo was introduced as a pre-Olympic sport, it started to develop as far as the Europe I know is concerned. It was a romantic period

with purely amateur athletes. The national and international Taekwondo organizations were also amateur with respect to modern standards, but they also had a coziness, the feeling we were a big family and the Sunday party after the matches was something everyone participating in the European championship looked forward to. Conditions were tough, national and international matches very few. Those days we were not many, us athletes and coaches; we knew each other, we had many difficulties (financial, injuries, bad training conditions, bad organizing or no support from the state, no recognition, etc.) but we had an unbelievable love for Taekwondo. We were the same faces all the time in the national competitions. Most of us coming from that period of time, still stay active in taekwondo in many ways. The big move came after the 1988 and 1992 Olympic Games and, of course, after designation of Taekwondo as an Olympic sport by the IOC in 1994.

Nowadays, there is a massive, huge, but impersonal participation, with many new faces who do not stay in Taekwondo for very long; they are not passionate about it, they are passers-by and leave Taekwondo even after achieving big distinctions! All of us older athletes have continued to be in Taekwondo since then and serve it in many ways with consistency. Some of us teach in schools, others in universities, others serve federations. That means less training on a personal level but major contribution to the sport and to the society. At the mature age we are at, we are content to exercise mildly and be healthy. Our duty now is to promote Taekwondo to young children in order to reap the afore-mentioned benefits and help it evolve. Many are the moments of great joy I can remember, but most important were the national teams success in the 1991 World championship, where Greece won medals for the first time and qualified for the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games: Morpho Drosidou, who won the first Olympic bronze medal there; then Michalis Mouroutsos who won the gold medal in the 2000 Sydney Games, the very first Olympic gold medal for Greece and for Europe; and then Alexandros Nicholaidis who won the silver medal in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

#### **14) Is there anything you would like to add?**

**14.** Taekwondo is rapidly developing worldwide. There are many important former athletes and coaches, with excellent knowledge in Taekwondo who have introduced it to universities around the world and instructors and/or professors with scientific knowledge who have done research. WTF could utilize these human resources for its own benefit. I suggest that WTF creates an electronic platform where scientists specializing in taekwondo and working in universities around the world can register and work with one another, as well as directly with WTF, which in turn could certify and acknowledge them. This electronic connection could help a faster advancement of taekwondo also quality-wise, as many scientists would easily and publicly submit their proposals on any possible subject (technical issues, injuries, regulations, etc.) and other scientists could form an opinion on the new proposal or idea and improve upon it. Propositions could be about improvement of modern conditions or new innovative ideas. Subsequently, and after consultation would be completed and the proposition taken its final form, experienced Technical and Scientific Committee comprised of WTF members would make a suggestion to Administration, which in

turn would make a decision. The other way around: should WTF consider introducing a new form of competition or a change in competition regulations, or any idea for that matter, that would be available for search through electronic consultation or scientists' opinions, so that the initial proposal be perfected to the advantage of Taekwondo. Either way, the scientists' platform would have an advisory and consulting form and the decisions would lie within WTF exclusive jurisdiction. It is a fact that ten people who are experts on a subject can think more effectively than one – a hundred specialists can think of even more and original things than ten would.