

Features

13

Fit For Life

Did you know that government surveys estimate between 68-75% of adults and children are defined as seriously obese and fewer than 20% would pass the basic President's Physical Fitness Test for their age group? Learn how Martial Arts is keeping America fit physically and mentally from ages 12 to 60+.

14

Nurture Joy and De-Stress Your Life!

Stress is one of the leading causes of heart attacks, strokes, early hair loss, and let's face it our family members sometimes wonder if there is a suitable insane asylum for us at our stressful times. Save your sanity! Learn what stress really is, what it does to us physiologically and how we can deal with stress by incorporating joy back into our life!

16

Awesome Abs

Summer is right around the corner. Beaches, jet ski's and awesome abs! Start training now and get that 6-pack in no time!

18

Improved Health & Fitness: The Forerunner of Homeopathy

Alternative health and wellness modalities have been around for centuries. Learn about alternative health, how many insurance companies are paying for certain holistic modalities, and what it can do for you.

26

To Breathe or Not To Breathe: That is the question!

Learn how to breathe again! Let us show you various ways to be bright eyed and bushy-tailed in the morning by increasing your breathing abilities.

31

Energetic Medicine – The Wave Of The Future

Can aging and disease be slowed down by energy? Can you enhance your sport performance? Through this article, learn about Tachyon and what modern medicine can do for you.

54

Alternative Medicine For Sinus Disease

Sinus Disease is a serious problem in America. Millions of adults and children around the world suffer from these symptoms every year; up to 15% of adults in the United States report sinus problems and allergy season doesn't help. Learn the symptoms of sinus disease and how alternative medicine treatments for sinonasal disease can make a dramatic impact.

In Every Issue

9

Editorial

62

Index of Advertisers

62

Coming Next Issue

On The Cover: Model: Adam Fiore

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(609) 931-4160

Marketing Tools, Inc.
204 Harding Ave.
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Editorial

THE "GRANDMASTER" DILEMMA

Matthew Flacche, Editorial Staff

When I look in martial arts literature, I notice everyone is a "Grandmaster"?! What is a Grandmaster in martial arts? It is my understanding if a person develops a system of martial arts which proves itself *unique* in one or more ways, then this individual could name the system. If the system attracts followers, eventually the developer/founder would be hailed as the "Grandmaster" of that fighting art.

How does a stylist *earn* this god like label? Simple... they call themselves "Grandmaster". There is no training program, nor set of criteria to fulfill. In addition to self-proclamation, there exists organizations which invite and/or seek sponsorship of individuals who wish to display the coveted title. This gives the impression there is a "Supreme Master" of the Grandmasters who possesses the power to grant Grandmaster promotions. Obviously this is not the case.

There should be fewer Grandmasters in the martial arts if they are to be considered legitimate titles. One *leader* of Tae Kwon Do, Tang Soo Do, Shotokan Karate, Kung Fu, Jui Jitsu, etc., is enough!

For example, if someone learns Tae Kwon Do from a master instructor or a Tae Kwon Do school, it would seem bogus to change some moves, maybe add some grappling, wear black uniforms instead of white uniforms, and start a *new system* called "Joe Karate's Black Panther Tae Kwon Do", where Joe Karate is the "Grandmaster". This is not to say that Joe couldn't study Tae Kwon Do until he reaches the master level (a rank one could earn) and open his own school, but he is not a Grandmaster by any means. Furthermore, Joe is failing to acknowledge/credit his teacher(s), an extremely disrespectful demonstration.

One of the most noted, innovative martial artists of all time was Bruce Lee. He invented a system of fighting which included a "no waste" philosophy. This meant if movements or techniques were deemed ineffective by the practitioner, they were discarded. However if newly acquired information proved useful, practical, and efficient, the information was added to the bank of fighting knowledge. Even today, almost thirty years later, people practice martial arts while incorporating that same philosophy. Considering all of his many contributions to the advancement and improvement of martial arts, did he call himself a Grandmaster? Absolutely not! If a person practices a martial art, and decides to punch a different way, or defend with a different strategy, then the person is practicing Bruce Lee's philosophy, but he/she is not a Grandmaster.

There is a need in the martial arts to reserve the title "Grandmaster" for more appropriate situations. As a consumer/participant in the martial arts, it is your responsibility to be cautious, even skeptical when deciding who to train with. Chances are if you encounter a school owner that claims to be a "Grandmaster", the title was self-proclaimed or loosely appointed. Would you want your *master* (primary) instructor to be a humble, honest, person who respects the source of his/her great knowledge, OR would you enjoy training with someone so full of them self they want people to think of them as the ultimate being, impossible to dispute, be all end all of martial arts? The choice is yours.

