

Theo Buyse, in the middle, back with black hair, standing between two girls.

By Gayle Vanvooren



Mascot Editor

Theo Buyse earned his Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do in June, and he stated that, "it has helped to shape my life."

"I am a bit more in control of my actions," said the MHS sophomore, "and it has definitely taught me respect."

Buyse has been a student of Lee's Tae Kwon Do since he was six years old.

He has gone through all the colors of accomplishment: white, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, purple trim, brown, red and now black.

Each advancement meant that he had learned and tested out of that discipline.

Buyse trained under Grand Master Mike Lee and now has Master Kevin Knight as Lee retired.

"I feel very thankful to have had Master Knight helping me through the black belt discipline."

"It's been a lot of fun watching Theo grow up in the gym," said Master Knight. "He's taken more of a leadership role and his confidence has grown. He's very caring of others and is so willing to help them out."

Tae Kwon Do is based on some very high principles: courtesy, integrity, self control, perseverance and indomitable spirit. Added Buyse, "You are taught to respect your elders and not be shaken by the challenges of life."

And this is from a 15, soon to be 16-year-old, high school student.

Now that Buysse has attained his Black Belt, he will be going to weekly classes to help out in the gym. He will hold targets for the younger learners and, basically, give back to the tae kwon do community.

"After this year, then I will be an 'official' Black Belt holder," added Buysse. "It's really a good way to help the younger ones."

Tae Kwon Do is sometimes a very misunderstood art, or sport, whichever you want to call it. There are all the disciplines that are learned, and then there is the physical activity that goes right along with it.

"It's a great way to get in shape," added Buysse.

The testing for the Black Belt is very strenuous, and Buysse did not pass it the first time. But the second time around, he was elated to come through it all.

Included in the testing, was a three-minute oral history of tae kwon do, doing various patterns, or segments of moves in six different patterns, a series of 30 attacks and moves between two people, five sets of patterns dealing with self defense and basically mock combat.

And there was the learning of body parts in Korean, and the actual breaking of boards using the hands, elbows and feet. All of it took intensity.

"I've really been pressing last three months," added Buysse. "I wanted to pass this so badly. When I passed the 30 series, that really made my day."

Tae Kwon Do is not about combat, but more about self defense. "It's not about violence," added Buysse. "We are only allowed to use Tae Kwon Do out of the gym if it's for self defense or in defense of others," he added.

When asked if he would go further in his training, Buysse was unsure. He said, "There are more ranks to go. But once you reach the fourth degree, you are considered a Master and you are, basically, thinking of a career in the discipline.

"It takes awhile to get up that high," added Buysse. "I like it where I am right now."

When the Black Belt testing took place, people and trainers from surrounding gyms came to take part, as this testing is not given very often. It was a closed test, and very intense.

Lee's Tae Kwon Do is a very busy place, with youth from a large area taking the training throughout the year. And Theo Buysse thinks it "very cool" that a younger sister and brother are also taking this martial arts training.

"It's a personal choice," he said, "but I'm really glad I stuck with Tae Kwon Do."

Theo Buysse is the son of David and Joy Buysse of this community, and a student at Minneota Public School.