

True to Tradition

students were selected to represent Australia at the World Tournament in Japan, held in November 2004.

What was your own competition record?

I was two-time Australian full-contact ring-karate champion, NSW non-contact champion (teams event), NSW kata champion, NZ kata champion, NZ weapons champion (Sai), NZ teams kata champion, and [had] numerous second and third places in heavyweight, middleweight and lightweight at full-contact, non-contact and kata competitions at state, national and international levels. A few highlights were winning the 1998 South Pacific Full-contact Middleweight Championship in NZ and winning all my fights by KO, and fighting in the World Tournament in Japan and the World Cup in America.

Are you still competing?

No, I've retired from competition. My dojo had got to the point where it was not going to grow any further unless I dedicated more time and energy to it, so I made the choice. It wasn't terribly difficult, since I love teaching and I had a competition record that I could be proud of. Since I stopped competing, we have expanded to six dojos in the ACT and my own school has over 100 students. I teach 17 classes in an average week and about 50 per cent of the students are kids.

What are the major differences between teaching kids and adults?

Generally speaking, adults get to decide for themselves when and where to train, whereas most kids get sent to class. This usually means that adults are more interested in self-defence and the kids just want to have fun.

Being so busy, how do you expand your own skills?

I read a hell of a lot. Also, every time I train, even when I'm teaching, I try to improve my technique. I also attend as many seminars as I can and I haven't missed a NSW state training camp since their inception. I try to attend the national training camps as often as I can. I actually love training camps — it's like getting your batteries recharged. I also train with Hanshi Taylor when our schedules permit; even just talking to him over the phone can often be enlightening.

Do you believe it is important for a Kyokushin karate-ka to visit Japan?

Yes, I believe it is very important. Japan is the heartland of karate and visiting or training there is like a cricketer playing at Lords. I actually took a group of my students there in November last year. We attended the World Tournament, trained at our current honbu dojo [headquarters] under Kancho Matsushima, and we visited Sosai's [Mas Oyama's] dojo in



Tokyo. Then we went on a two-week cultural tour of Japan. At the end of this experience, my students returned to Australia with a deeper understanding of Kyokushin karate.

Where else has Kyokushin taken you?

I've been lucky enough to have travelled to Japan, New Zealand, America and almost every state in Australia for Kyokushin.

You obviously have a passion for Kyokushin, what then is your view on martial arts cross-training?

Whatever helps someone improve can only be a good thing. However, I feel that there are a lot of martial artists that seem to be jacks of all trades and masters of none. I believe all martial artists need a core art first; a solid base from which to build. Only then can you know if you need another art to supplement your own, and you can then choose the appropriate one.

Where do you hope to be in five years?

In my professional life, I am currently in the process of extending my dojo to incorporate kickboxing, so I look forward to the challenges this will bring. I hope my kickboxing school will be as successful as my karate school. In my personal life, I hope to be happy and still kicking.

*Sensei Gibbons would like to thank Sempai George Pudja (his most senior student, featured in the photos) and Craig Riviere. **BLITZ***

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Sensei Glen Gibbons with Kancho Matsushima (centre) and Hanshi John Taylor