



Being a master at 18 is 'cool' for Earl

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Jordan Earl could have given some bogus philosophical reason for starting taekwondo.

He could have said he felt like he was drawn to the life-long spiritual journey, or he liked the beauty in movement of the martial art. But let's face it, Earl was five when he took up the sport and most kindergarten-aged children don't think that way.

"I wanted to look cool," said the soft-spoken Cambridge native.

"When I was really young I used to watch those old kung fu movies with my dad and I just figured I'd like to do stuff like that. All I wanted was to learn how to do the crazy things I saw on TV. When I got my green belt I started doing these crazy kicks that I wasn't supposed to do yet. Yeah, I really just cared about looking cool."

But it's hard work to be cool. Earl kept with the discipline and earned his black belt, incredibly, at eight. That seemed to make him take taekwondo more seriously and it paid off for Earl as he recently achieved masters' status as a fourth degree black belt. What makes it even more incredible is that he did it at the age of 18. Now that's cool.

"I really don't see it as happening so quick," Earl commented on his rise to master even before reaching the age of majority.

"I've been in it for so long, almost as long as I've been alive, that age doesn't really matter. I've put my time into it.

"I used to put three times the work into it than I do now, because now I have a job. I don't have as much time as I used to train, but I try to get out as much as possible."



Jordan Earl recently became a taekwondo master, even though he is only 18. The Cambridge Taekwondo Academy part-time student earned his fourth degree black belt, just 13 years after starting in the martial art. He earned his black belt at age eight.

Earl admitted that he really didn't start to see a future in the sport until he achieved black belt status. His father did, Earl stated, as he put his son in taekwondo instead of other forms of martial arts because it was already recognized as an Olympic sport.

"Once I got my black belt, I was training with a very competitive club," Earl said about his time with Young Chong Taekwondo in Preston, which no longer exists at that location. He's now based at his mother Laurie's Cambridge Taekwondo Academy, but travels to Toronto and Kingston to train with experienced black belts.

"So I started training with all the black belts all the time. I was training with all the provincial and national guys, and fighting with them. After I went to my first provincials, I just wanted to keep going. I was really influenced by the other people there."

Fighting members at equal or higher caliber did the trick in tournaments, as he's won eight provincial gold medals, is a two-time national champion and won on the international level. He can't remember all the silver and bronze medals he's hauled in.

He brought his impeccable resume to the 2008 Olympic team trials and lost by one point to Quebec's Sebastien Michaud in the quarterfinals.

Michaud went on to win and was Canada's only male representative in the sport at the Beijing Olympics.

"It was my first time and it was scary," said Earl, who was finally old enough to compete at the trials last year.

"You know all the guys there and you know all of them are good fighters. It's really the best of the best, and a lot harder than the nationals because only the best show up. I think now that I've been once, it will give me confidence to go farther next time."

Of course, things don't always go as planned at big tournaments. Three weeks ago he competed in the lightweight division at the US Open Taekwondo Tournament and lost in the second round to the eventual winner.

"It seems to be just my luck running into those guys," Earl said with a laugh.

At such a young age, Earl will be experiencing more opponents like that as he goes along, especially since he wants to get to the highest degree of black belt in taekwondo: ninth. And that will take years, since you have to do as many years of training as your next degree. He's looking at five years before he can even achieve the fifth dan.

"You'll never see a ninth degree black belt under 30, it's almost impossible. Unless maybe they get their black belt at four and cheat along the way."

With a long road ahead of him in taekwondo, Earl has decided to spread his wings a bit.

“Right now, I’m trying to work my way into MMA (mixed martial arts), but since you can’t do it in Ontario, it’s not that easy. I’ve been working on ju jitsu to help with that, but I’m just looking at something else to do. But when it comes down to it, taekwondo is first.”

Earl wasn’t the only one from the Cambridge academy to earn masters status, as June Sadowsky, George Long and Virgil Hoy also accomplished the feat. Andrew Baker and Rikki Beitz were upgraded to first dan and Dana Beitz is now second dan.

In addition, Baker recently placed third at provincial team trials, while Dana Beitz was third and Rikki Beitz second in their respective divisions.

Those three, along with Earl, Brandon Araujo and Emanuel Turkonje, will be competing at a provincial tournament this weekend.

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