

MASTER OF HER OWN DESTINY

Kylie Vaughan was only 11 years old when she entered her first Tang Soo Do competition. As a white belt she went head-to-head with the only other girl in the tournament – a 19 year old black belt. 'Back then there were fewer girls competing in Tang Soo Do and, because we had to compete in same-gender couples, I was forced to step it up!' says Kylie. Step it up she did, coming away with a silver medal for the entire tournament for her division.

This was the first of many achievements for Kylie, who earned her Masters rank in 2001 and is now the highest ranked Tang Soo Do female in Australasia - 5th Dan Black Belt. She is also the chief instructor of the South Australian Tang Soo Do Karate Academy on Victor Harbor Road in Old Noarlunga, where she trains students aged 4 to 70 years.

Tang Soo Do is a Korean martial art characterised by its strong, traditional style and its holistic approach to teaching self-defence. Like other martial arts, Tang Soo Do uses a coloured belt system that places a great emphasis upon discipline and respect. At the higher levels, Tang Soo Do also encompasses weaponry.

One of the biggest challenges Kylie has faced during her 26 years as a Tang Soo Do student is convincing her male counterparts to treat her as a physical equal. 'The boys sometimes hold back because we're female, but this doesn't help the girls hold their own in the outside world or identify their weaknesses. Getting the boys to treat us tough is sometimes difficult!' Kylie says.

A national and international medal-holder, Kylie has competed in sparring, board-breaking, hyungs – a series of movements that demonstrate form – and weaponry. Her favourite weapons are nunchucks and the sword, but she is also accomplished in the use of the dagger and staff.

Kylie's Dad, Master Stephen Washington, Head of the South Australian Tang Soo Do Karate Academy, has seen a lot of changes in the way the art is practised. 'When I began training in the sixties, there were no females in the game at all. Tang Soo Do was physically very rough and there was no protective apparatus whatsoever. Now our students use padded equipment, there is a renewed emphasis on emotional and physical fitness and approximately 40% of all Tang Soo Do students are female. I'm proud to say that Kylie has been a part of this gradual revolution.'

Kylie has since trained other women to very high levels in Tang Soo Do and the team she helped coach for the 2010 World Championships in Atlanta won 48 medals, including the title of Overall Female Black Belt Champion.

For further details contact Kylie Vaughan or Stephen Washington on (08) 8386 2166 or go to www.asiapacifictangsoodofed.com

