

# TRUENEWS - OVERLAKE

The TRUE way of the warrior is honor, strength, and love.

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## Memories of Training With SBN DiVito

*By SBN Thomas Zoppi*

I first heard of Dan DiVito when I was living and practicing Tae Kwon Do in Nevada in 1973. My Instructor at the time had been a student of his. Mr. DiVito lived in Los Angeles and owned Choi Karate Institute of Los Angeles. He had an awesome reputation as a Martial Artist and was a supremely well-conditioned athlete. He had grown up in Chicago and won honors in baseball and wrestling during college. As a boy, he won city championships in dancing and checkers. He was probably the most well known for being an ethical and caring teacher of the Martial Arts. That interested me and I wanted to meet him very much.

I planned a vacation to Los Angeles and asked my instructor if he could help me get in touch with Mr. DiVito when I was there. He did better than that and arranged a vacation for himself and planned for the three of us to work out together.

The first workout was fantastic. Mr. DiVito, who was then Kyo Bum Nim, made me feel very welcome. First, he had me show him some of my movements and a form or two. I was a somewhat clumsy Green Belt at the time, but he mentioned only my qualities and abilities. He complimented me for my speed and power and made me feel like I was a capable Martial Artist.

Next, he demonstrated a couple of his forms for me. The way he performed his forms was amazing. Those images of him doing form remain to this day as my standard of how a form should look, when done correctly. When he finished, he asked me if I wanted to spar. I was surprised and excited to have the opportunity.

Sparring with Mr. DiVito was totally exhilarating. He scored on me many times but he never hurt or injured me. Each technique that came through my defense had the speed and power of a lightning bolt thrown by Thor. Yet his focus and timing were so precise that I was only nicked by these potentially lethal moves. As we sparred, his skills beckoned me to try harder and harder-and I did. Each time I increased my efforts to a higher level of speed and skill, he raised it up a level, also. It was wild; no matter how well I fought he was always just a little better than me. Not by a lot, only by a little.

Later I realized that he was like a magnet pulling me up a mountain, staying just far enough in front of me so that the magnetic pull didn't lose its effect. I fought the best I had ever fought that day. I fought like a black belt.... Yet I never scored a point or landed a technique. A day or two later, I decided I would someday move to Los Angeles and study at Choi Karate Institute. Two and one-half years later, I made the move.

When I arrived at Mr. DiVito's school, I was an advanced brown belt and the best fighter at my old school in Nevada. Toward the end of my first class, Mr. DiVito asked me to spar with his advanced brown belt. It didn't take long into the sparring before it was known to all that this guy was much better than myself. Mr. DiVito gave me a break and had me spar one of his blue belts. He too, was better. Another break... a smaller blue belt.... another one better than me. Finally, I was matched against a green belt named Kelly. Kelly was smaller than me, but very quick. And finally, he wasn't better than me...we were even.

Mr. DiVito has a talent for teaching people to use their full potential, and I am proud to say that when I left Los Angeles five years later, I was the best fighter in his school.

In 1977, Kyo Bum Nim DiVito went back to Chicago to test for 4<sup>th</sup> degree black belt: Sa Bum Nim. His Instructor, Mr. Choi, was always asking him to come back and test. Everyone who knew Mr. DiVito knew he was easily equal to a fifth degree at the time, probably sixth degree in ability. However, Mr. DiVito was never interested in acquiring rank. I think he only tested to make Mr. Choi happy.

When Sa Bum Nim DiVito came back from Chicago, he started having an open class for black belts. Many great fighters came to our school to train. Sa Bum Nim used to trade information and techniques with any of the black belts that practiced other styles. This is when I learned much of what I know about styles other than Tae Kwon Do. This open class was a *take off your belt and let's get it on* type of workout. We had some incredible workouts with some amazing Martial Artists. One guy was the first full-contact PKA Heavyweight champion of the world, another guy owned a Karate school in an incredibly tough part of town in Watts, and another was the Texas State Champion. They called that guy "Super Feet", as a response to the Middleweight World Champion at that time, Bill "Super Foot" Wallace. They called him "Super Feet" because he was incredible with both feet unlike Wallace, who only used one foot.

There were many other champions that came to spar, including Fred King, who was then the top-rated fighter in the Northwest and rated third in the country. I remember the first time I fought Fred, I was still a brown belt. I beat him and he was amazed. At the time, I didn't know who he was and when I found out, I was amazed too!

All of these champions came to train and fight with Sa Bum Nim DiVito. One odd thing was that after their first workout, most would show up late for the next. For the first hour of the workout, Sa Bum Nim might have done something like a hundred fifty pushups, three hundred sit-ups, three or four hundred kicks, several hundred punches, and then some heavy bag work. After that, those who were still standing would spar. That's when all those other black belts would show up!

I guess Sa Bum Nim had a reputation for being a wild man at working out. One thing that I do know is that every one of those great fighters had the highest respect and admiration for Sa Bum Nim Dan DiVito. He is a person of such great determination and he could not be defeated. If you beat him one time, he would certainly beat you the next time, no matter who you were. This is the kind of challenge that the great ones love.

As I look back, the important thing that I learned from Dan DiVito was nothing about winning or losing. I learned about Indomitable Spirit. He was always able to move to another level of ability because he understood and lived by the concept of not limiting yourself.

Sa Bum Nim DiVito is a most amazing man. He taught me a lot, and I love him very much. For a long time, I thought he made me the Martial Artist that I am today. That isn't exactly right. What he really did was make me make myself the Martial Artist that I am today, and that is so much more.

## **Summer Camps**

Summer camps are a great way to supplement your martial arts training and also a great way to introduce your friends to our school. Our full day summer camps run from 9:30 am – 2:30 pm. Students come Monday through Friday, learning new techniques, honing their skills, and perfecting what they've learned in the past. They also work in teams, learning leadership and cooperation, and create a demonstration that they perform on the last day of camp. Extended care hours are available after the full day camps - check the registration form for details.

Our summer camp dates this year are: June 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> (subject to change if snow days affect when school gets out), July 15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> (Black Belt Club only), July 29<sup>th</sup> – August 2<sup>nd</sup>, and August 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>. Registration forms will be available at the front desk.

## Upcoming Activities for February/March

<b>Feb 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Arnis Seminar, 10:00 am (no make up class)</b>
<b>Feb 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Breaking Seminar, 6:30 pm (no make up class)</b>
<b>Feb 18<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>½ day Presidents' Day Camp, 9:30 am – 12:30 pm</b>
<b>Feb 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Tae Kwon Do Test, 6:30 pm (no make up class)</b>
<b>March 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Arnis Seminar, 10:00 am (no make up class)</b>
<b>March 16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>SBN Thomas Zoppi Championship Tournament</b>
<b>March 29<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Private Black Belt Test, 6:30 pm (no make up class)</b>
<b>March 30<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Tae Kwon Do Test, 6:30 pm</b>

## NOTABLES

### CONGRATULATIONS STUDENT OF THE MONTH – JAI BINDLISH

Jai is an advanced blue belt who has been training for nearly three years. He comes to every class with enthusiasm and is eager to learn. He works hard, stays focused, and is a pleasure to teach. Keep up the great work, Jai!

### Welcome Our Newest Students

Riddhi Agarwal, Mackenzie Carver, Ananya Chittimalla, Mayukh Chittimalla, and Yan Mariz Bogado

### Welcome to the Black Belt Club

Dafna Apple, Raehan Baliga, Rohan Baliga, Jai Bindlish, Joshua Phan, Laura Rabellino, Sandra Rabellino, Ivan Tarapov, Vasyl Tarapov, and Lucas Xue

### Arnis Promotions for January

**Yellow Belt:** Hannah Aramaki, Amish Bankuru, and Wren Nowers

**Brown Belt:** Veeral Goradia

**Provisional Black Belt:** Rachel Benincasa

**1<sup>st</sup> Degree Black Belt:** Alyona Kerekes

### Tae Kwon Do Promotions for January

**Adv White Belt:** Harsh Biradar, Ariel Elnekave, Nicole Erwin, Atlas Karamfilov, Ria Mahajan, and Manasvi Ramanand

**Yellow Belt:** Mackenzie Fiendell, Weston Fiendell, and Beck Robertson

**Adv Yellow Belt:** Nathan Haile, Prarav Kairamkonda, Hemanth Kambhampati, Russell Morris, Benjamin Paris, Denise Rieman, Riddhi Sangani, and Sakshi Sangani

**Green Belt:** Guru Charan Banda, Maxime Dahan, and Samanvita Singhania

**Adv Green Belt:** Tiernan Conklin

**Blue Belt:** Rishit Behera, Mylie Johnson, Genevieve Spangler, and Ivan Tarapov

**Adv Brown Belt:** Isaac Tolman

### February Training Anniversaries

**One Year:** Satviki Banerjee, Mackenzie Fiendell, Weston Fiendell, Beck Robertson, Virudhambal Sankarakumar, Ryan Olsen, and Yueyang Sun

**Two Years:** Neev Ansel

**Four Years:** Claire Benincasa

**Five Years:** Isaac Tolman

**Twelve Years:** Kyle Jamison, Kaarina Tulleau, and Michael Voskanyan

### February Birthdays

Itamar Gendelman, Nathan Haile, Cara Hulverson, Shivani Jayaprakasam, Joseph Moreau, Nogah Mugrabi, Riddhi Sangani, Vasudha Sundaravaradan, and Kaarina Tulleau

*We apologize if any of the above information is incorrect. Please submit corrections, in writing, at the front desk.*

# 30<sup>th</sup> Annual SBN Thomas Zoppi Championship Tournament



**SATURDAY, MARCH 16<sup>TH</sup>**  
**MARTIAL ARTS TOURNAMENT**

**Sparring & Form Competition**  
**Exciting Black Belt Demonstrations**  
**Team Sparring Competition between Schools**  
**Lunch, Snack & Beverage Concessions**  
**Raffle Grand prize: Nintendo Switch**