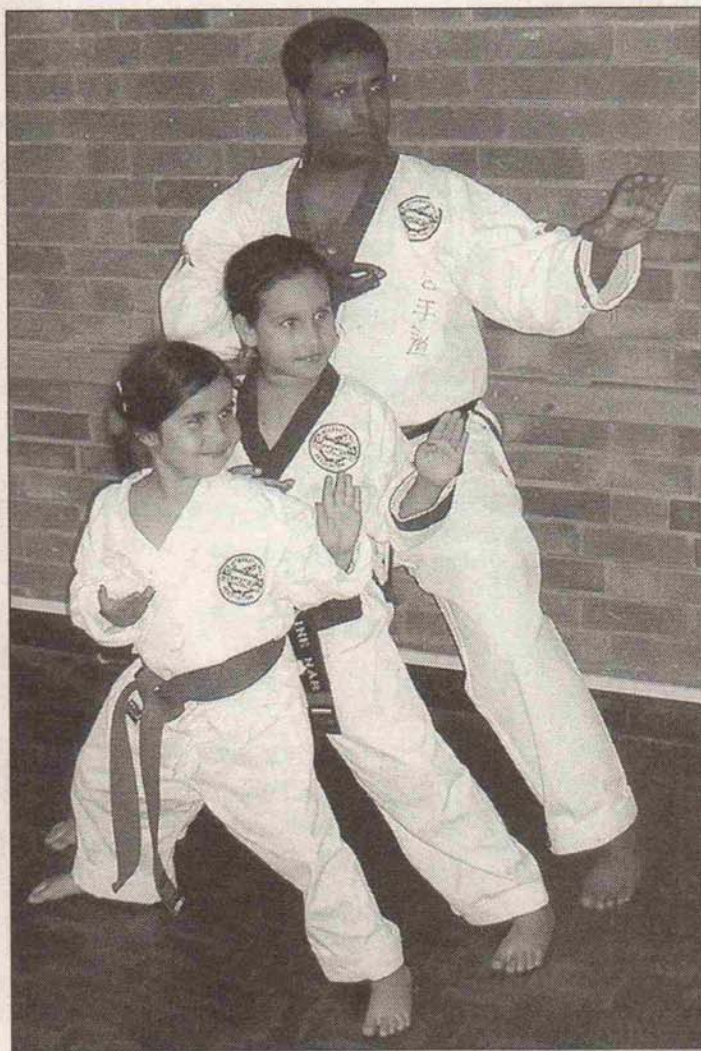


Master Suresh Nar

On a recent visit to Britain for his association's World Championships, Grandmaster Ki Yun Yi became a TKD cover star and this month we feature the man who ensured that the World Championships the Grandmaster presided over were a huge success, Master Suresh Nar. The World Championships were the culmination of an incredibly busy period for this intensely likeable man and when the dust settled and he could put his feet up for a short period, TKD talked to Master Nar about recent events, the ongoing growth and popularity of Tang Soo Do in this country and what the art means to him

TKD-KMA: The last time we spoke you were preparing to host the World Championships, how did that go?

SURESH NAR: The World Championships were a tremen-



dous success; firstly, and most importantly, there were no injuries on the day. Secondly, we had a tremendous turn-out, in that every club we have in our association participated. We finished on time and the feedback I've had is that it was the most well run, smooth tournament that even people from overseas had been to.

Before the tournament I was under tremendous pressure, for four or five weeks before I was doing something to prepare for it every single day but I was very fortunate because we already had a schedule for the day planned and my senior instructors were fantastic on the day, they did not stop and worked constantly to ensure the tournament was a success.

TKD-KMA: What was the Grandmaster's response?

SURESH NAR: In Grandmaster's view, that was the best IMA Tang Soo Do tournament to date but it also showed that we have discipline and order in Europe, in the way that we conduct ourselves, and that was reflected in the way the tournament ran. The main thing that stood out, however, was the friendship and brotherhood, which was in abundance. Grandmaster has the same view as I have, in that if we share the same values and goals, then tournaments can be a very worthwhile experience, in terms of creating a bonding within our organisation. It was exciting because it was purely our association-sometimes some open events, with different associations, values and goals, can cause problems, so when we run our own association tournament we know it's going to run smoothly and we know we can tackle any problems that may arise and that makes everyone feel comfortable, including Grandmaster.

TKD-KMA: How did technical standards differ between the Europeans and the Americans?

SURESH NAR: Even though we're traditional in terms of our values, our training methods are modern, we are a forward thinking organisation. Ten, fifteen years ago you might



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**“Time is the
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thing you can
give anyone!”**



have seen the odd spinning kick but at this tournament there was so much talent, in terms of a whole arsenal of techniques and I was very pleased because one of my students, Natasha Foster, won the female grand championship for the second tournament running and I believe that pound for pound she's the best female fighter in the UK. We also have Deane Konstanienis, another great fighter and it's great to give credit to very talented females who are not only successful instructors but also extremely loyal with a great attitude.

Overall, I think that, medal-wise, the UK did better than the US, and that reflects the attitude we have towards training and the skill we have here. People are always talking about great technicians from the States, which is true, but I don't think we give ourselves enough credit. Having trained five World Championship teams, from 1992 to date, I can tell you that I've been right across America and Europe and the teams they fear the most are the UK teams and I'm very proud that I have had some input into the way people overseas think of Tang Soo Do here because of the standards we have set.

TKD-KMA: These World Championships were also special to you because of the induction of three Masters, who had been taught by you.

SURESH NAR: Having already trained a student, who had been with me for fifteen years, was a tremendous achievement and the three who were inaugurated at the World Championships, that, in my teaching/training career was the biggest event for me because these people have been with me for nearly fifteen years and I bet that they never dreamed that

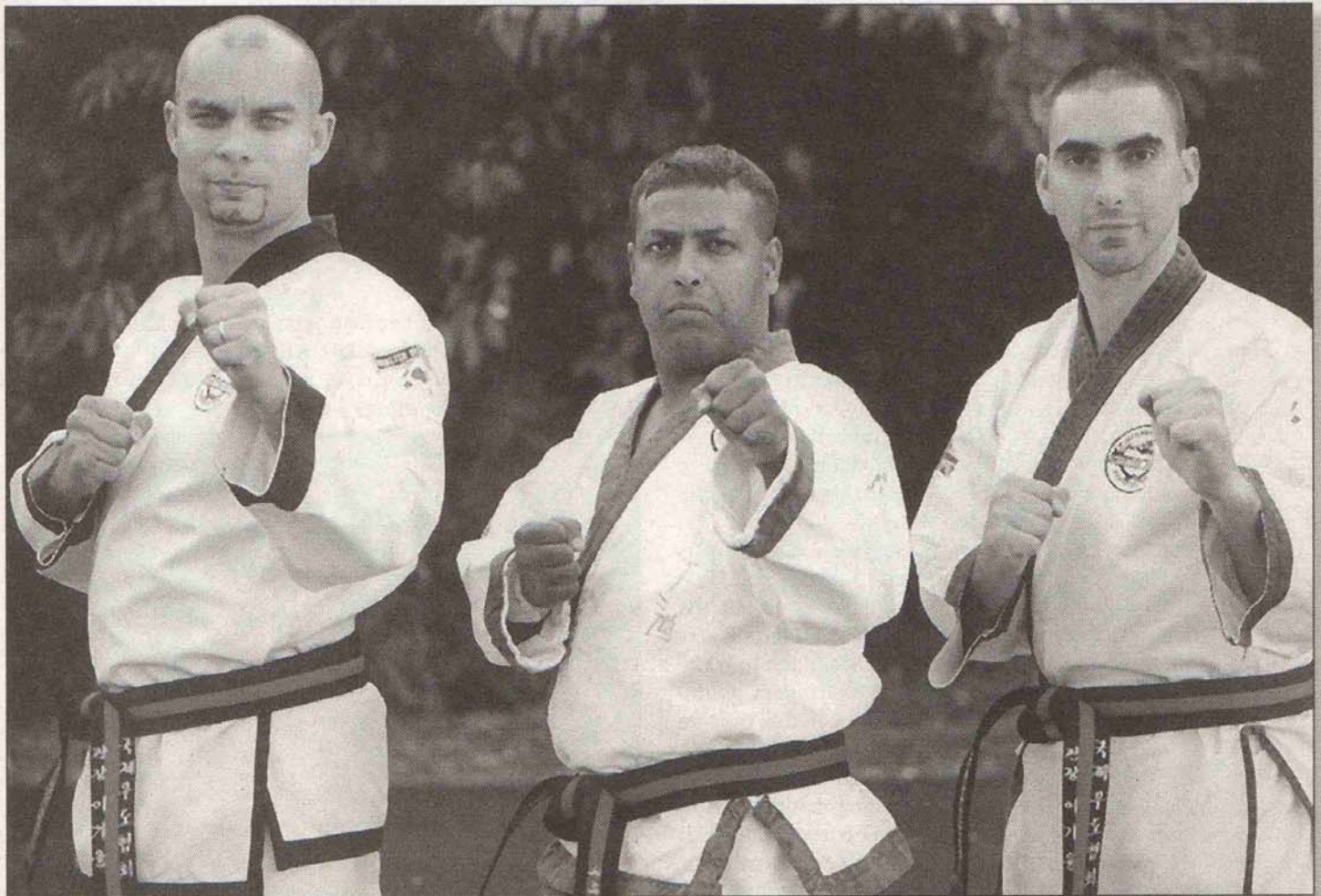
when they walked into the dojang that they were going to become black belts. When they did become black belts, I'm pretty sure they felt that they may not get to 2nd dan. So, the reason why I'm so proud of them is because of the commitment they've put into the association and the sacrifices they've made in order to become a Master. A good Master is not so much reflected in your technical ability but in the sacrifices you make for your association.

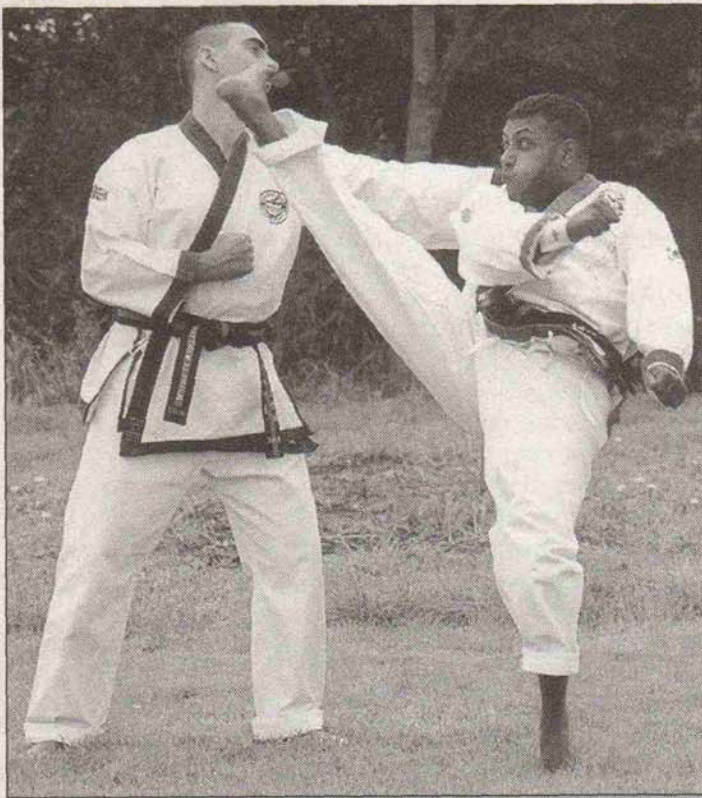
TKD-KMA: It must have been special to be awarded at the World Championships, in front of so many people.

SURESH NAR: Leading to their Master belt, they didn't just go to the States, do a one hour testing and then get awarded their Master belt; they went through a stringent programme that I developed in order to get them not only through the test but thinking a different mind-set. We did a weekend training course in the Brecon Beacons in Wales in the middle of winter. At six they went running (I did everything with them) in the freezing cold—we trained from six in the morning until five in the evening, going through our physical techniques, forms and exercises, including going under a waterfall at minus 9 degrees and I think it was at that point the candidates realised what our Tang Soo Do spirit and achieving a Master Belt was all about.

TKD-KMA: What qualities do you feel a person needs to be considered a 'Master'?

SURESH NAR: In my view, a Master belt is not just a fourth,





fifth, sixth dan in Tang Soo Do. A Master belt is a person who is skilled in martial arts and conducts themselves in a way that reflects integrity, concentration, perseverance; a good Master belt lives by the tenets and codes of Tang Soo Do and the way our Master belts conduct themselves is the way that traditional Tang Soo Do-ists conducted themselves. Master belts are not just your regular black belts; they've sacrificed their time away from their families, travelling to Europe, so they could realise the wider implications of being a Master belt, the responsibility. Time is the most important thing you can give anyone.

TKD-KMA: You've also been busy overseeing the setting up of three new associations.

SURESH NAR: I was appointed Chief Instructor for Europe by Grandmaster Ki Yun Yi and I've been responsible for setting up Tang Soo Do organisations in Ireland, Poland, and Malta. In fact, we tested our first five black belts in Malta last year, which is another fantastic achievement and my ongoing goals are to promote Tang Soo Do throughout Europe.

When you set up organisations like this, you need trust in the person you are leaving it to. I'm very fortunate in Ireland, in that we have Master McManus, who was one of my students here and moved to Ireland, so I have full trust in his ability. Again, one of our students moved to Malta, so I have no worries there. What we did in Poland was to put the instructor there on a one year probationary period, setting certain goals that he had to achieve-he came to England to train, I went to Poland to do seminars-there were stringent guidelines to be adhered to, but I've been very lucky in that they've all been very loyal.

When we went to Poland we had a lot of enquiries, particularly 2nd and 3rd dan Taekwondo, wanting to join because it was new and exciting but I refused them because first of all I wanted to lay the foundations and have a Chief Instructor that I could trust, then the rest could follow.

TKD-KMA: How widespread are your plans for Europe?

SURESH NAR: I can't ask my students to go to different areas of Europe to expand our association, what I have to rely on are people who want to join our organisation from those countries but, having said that, to me, it's not important. I'd rather continue with what I have, with the people I have, sharing the same values, traditions and mind-set for training. Now, if people want to join and they want to be a part of that and can change to become what we are looking for, then that's fine, if not, that's fine too, we're happy with what we've got.

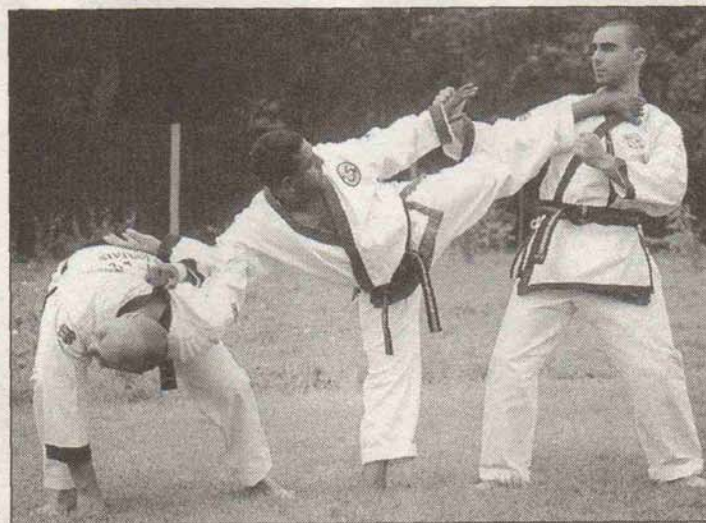
TKD-KMA: The development of those under you is directly related to your own personal development, how do you ensure that you keep developing?

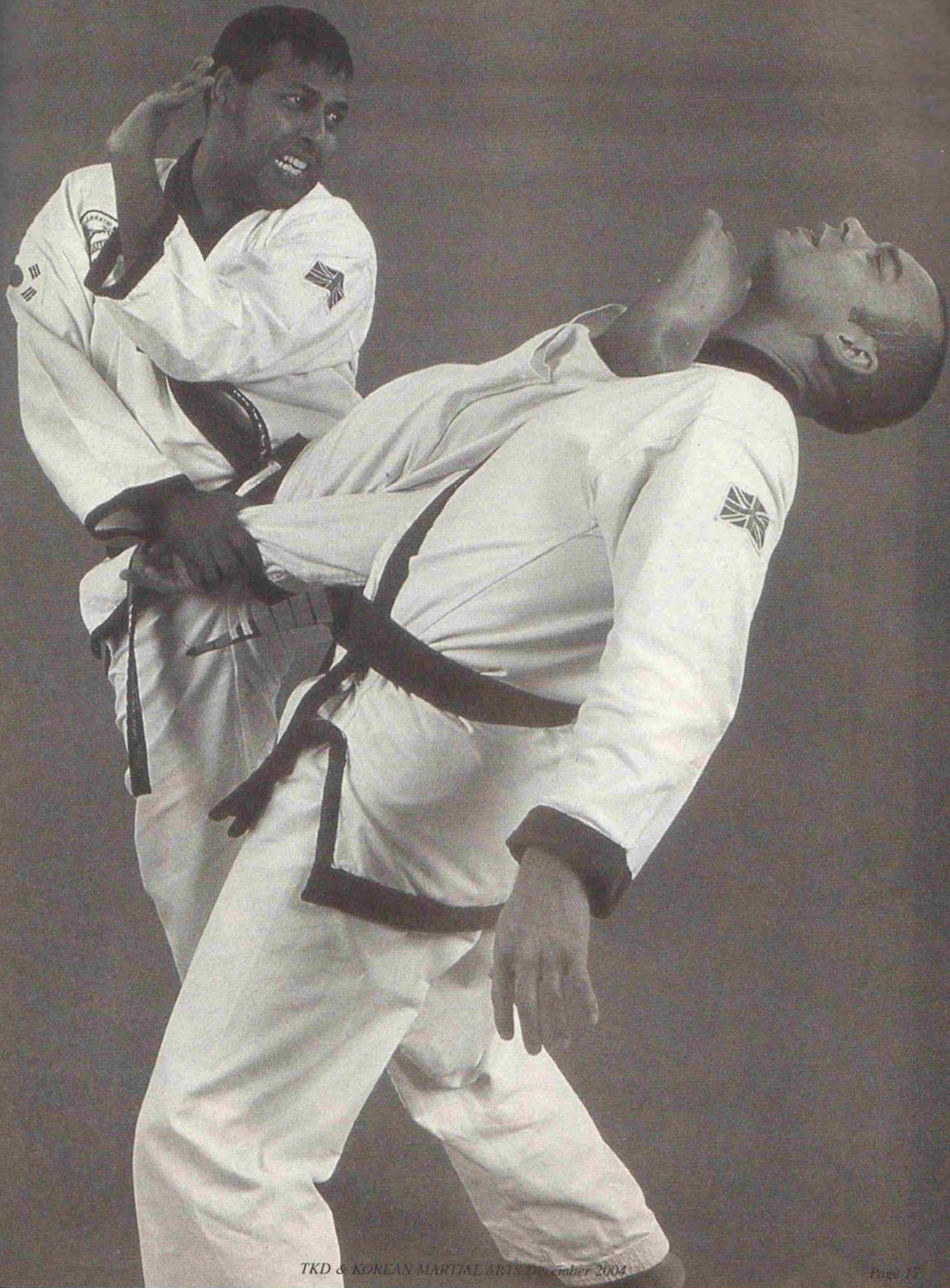
SURESH NAR: That's a very good question! People have to keep learning and, when you get to the point where your black belts or Master belts feel that they are not learning or developing, then they are going to go elsewhere. What keeps you together is trust and the common bond that you share in martial arts, however, you need to grow and to that end I regularly go to the States to train with Grandmaster. The association itself has recently produced two advanced dagger forms, which I taught at the inaugural seminar to introduce the forms.

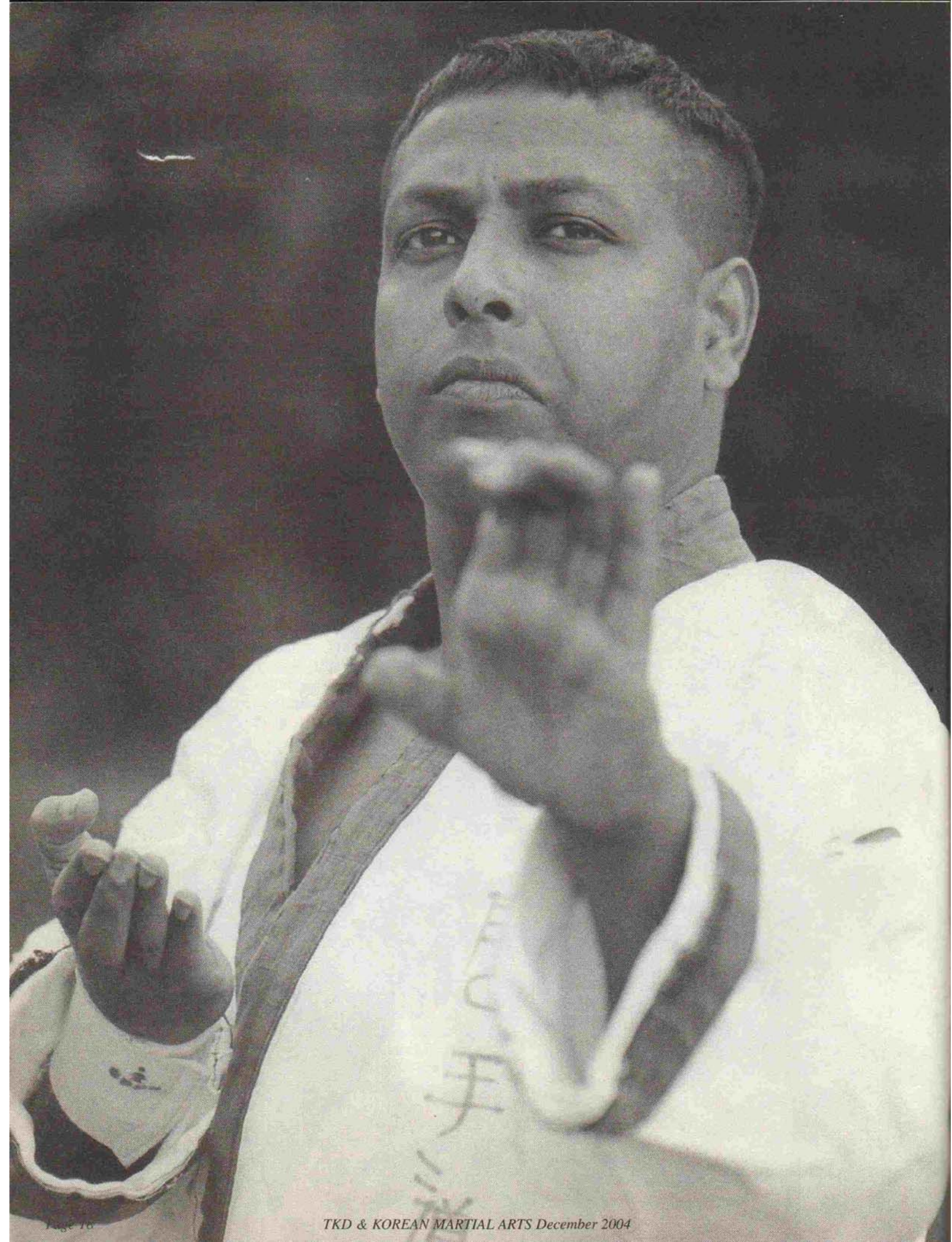
The World Organisation is also working on introducing an advanced sword form, so some of the learning and developing processes have to come from our mother organisation. What that shows is that the organisation is developing constantly and the Grandmaster is not sitting back on his laurels. Myself, I'm always researching, you have to move with the times, modern research and science, in order to train safely. Now, we learn about physiology, pressure points, knowledge that we didn't have access to years ago, in order to develop myself and my students. We can still train in a strict, traditional way, but we have access to more knowledge.

TKD-KMA: Has this scientific approach to training widened the actual training base?

SURESH NAR: Yes, because years ago we didn't know what we were doing! Now, I explain what we're doing, why we're striking to hit a certain nerve, so there is more explanation. I'm still teaching the things I learned twenty seven years ago







but I'm explaining it, what we're doing. When I started training I was a thirteen year old boy in a very big class and I used to get battered around the place-the training was very strict, repetitious, we didn't get the explanations but what we did get was character and spirit building and that's where I am today, I still have that spirit and strength but with more knowledge.

TKD-KMA: During 27 years training, what are your most memorable moments?

SURESH NAR: I know what stands out for my wife, and she won't ever let me forget it, is that when we got married our honeymoon was at the World Championships! (laughs) She still hasn't forgiven me for that! When I started teaching in 1982 I was quite young and bold and wanted to prove myself with anyone who came into the hall and that reflected on my students, so you can imagine that free-fighting was one hell of a ding dong and the hall we trained in, its walls took a battering, there were holes all over it. It was a private sports centre and the manager confronted me one day about the damage and I blamed the Karate guy that also taught there without realising that he was the manager's brother! (laughs) So I didn't get away with that one.

I remember when Master Andy Young first started training with me it was a big class in South London and for the first six months I called him Tony and one day I shouted out

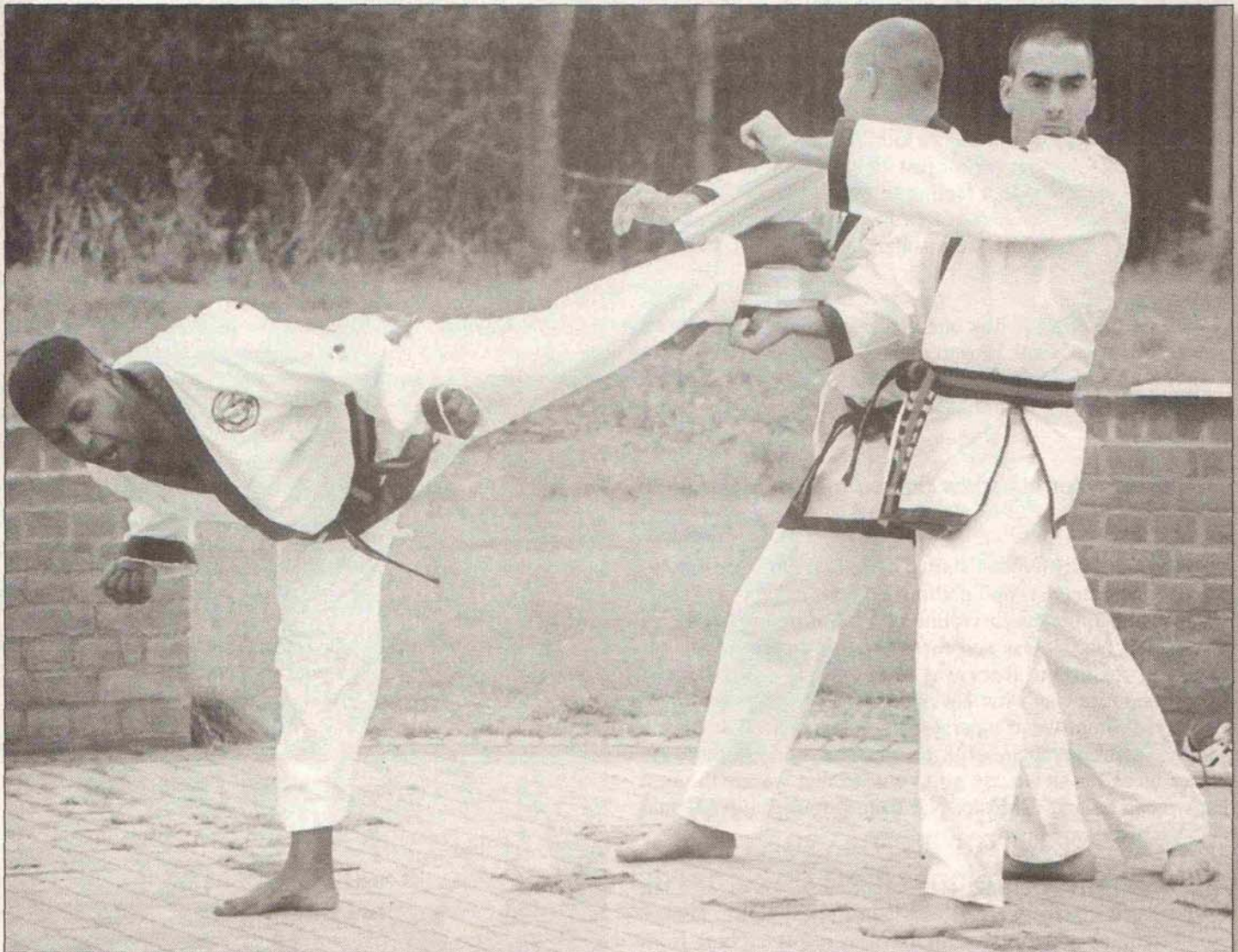
'Tony' to correct his stance and got this blank expression, so I went over and kicked his legs into the correct stance and it was only then, six months after starting with me, that he drew up the courage to tell me his name was Andy. Over the years there have been hundreds of good memories, stories and occasions.

TKD-KMA: The World Championship teams must rank highly in your treasured memories.

SURESH NAR: Training five World Championship winning teams; I don't know of anyone else (in Tang Soo Do) who has done that but for me the first time, I just didn't believe I had done it. The look on their faces when they won, it was a joy, and I never thought I could achieve that again but we work hard at what we do, a little bit of creativity and a lot of determination-that's why I say to you that when we go anywhere abroad, it's the British teams they look out for and I am so thankful that I have had some input into the way Tang Soo Do practitioners are perceived abroad.

TKD-KMA: Tang Soo Do seems to be gaining in popularity in the 21st Century.

SURESH NAR: We have some exceptional Tang Soo Do teachers in the UK, so when people have branched out and





the black belts that taught us as white belts and that system hasn't changed today, it's still hard training and from that you get the best out of a person.

TKD-KMA: *What do you hope to bring to Tang Soo Do as Master Grades?*

MATT ELPHICK: I will support Master Nar in anything he asks me to do within the association and along with that, expand where I can and teach others, bring more students in, keep the same discipline and methods of teaching and expand the association from within.

ANDY YOUNG: I want to reflect the same standards that Master Nar has instilled in us, through different areas of the country. I've recently moved to Peterborough and will try to build the Association in that area. Within myself, I will be trying to expand my knowledge and enhance what I already know because there is always room for improvement.

TKD-KMA: *And finally, how are you going to be 'pushing forward' Master Nar?*

SURESH NAR: For me, it's continually developing, I teach nearly every day of the week, I train on my own at least four or five days a week, it's endless, because you never have the time to do everything you want to do. I want to keep training, keep developing, keep learning and to continually be an asset to Grandmaster and the IMA. Grandmaster tells me I'm a very important person and when he introduces new forms he'll consult me and he's told me that he wants me to work with him on the long sword form, so it's making myself available for our mother organisation, in order to develop it with Grandmaster on an ongoing basis and that's a lifetime journey.

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gone their separate ways they've wanted to publicise this and when they've publicised themselves, they've publicised Tang Soo Do and I think it's been a long time coming and for people to know about you and what you're doing the only way for that to happen is to push forward and promote yourself.

TKD-KMA: *If I can have a quick word with two of the three new Master's, Andy Young and Mathew Elphick, who were inaugurated at the World Championships. What did it feel like, getting your Master qualification at such a prestigious event?*

ANDY YOUNG: Getting the Master belt, let alone in front of the Grandmaster, was probably my biggest achievement in anything. My wife will probably kill me for saying that but it meant a hell of a lot. It wasn't just about having the new belt around my waist, it was a feeling of awe in what I had done and what Master Nar had got us to, where we can go and spread Tang Soo Do to the standard in which Master Nar would expect.

MATT ELPHICK: It was one of the greatest achievements I've ever had; it meant a lot to me and to be given it in front of all the students I train with and the Senior Masters and then to be given it by the Grandmaster, you couldn't ask any more than that.

TKD-KMA: *What strengths do you feel were bred into you?*

ANDY YOUNG: Before I started Tang Soo Do I had actually looked at other arts and nothing I'd seen caught my fancy, there was no spirit, no discipline in a lot of them, and then I saw Master Nar's class and there was a different attitude-it was hard, rough, but there was total discipline, loyalty and respect and that was what I wanted. As I've progressed, I've seen myself improve as a person, not just a martial artist-the way I can communicate with people now, for example. He pushes us as far as we can go to ensure that we are the best that we can be and if Master Nar hadn't done that we would have been very mediocre.

MATT ELPHICK: I had also experienced other arts but Master Nar's classes were always hard, always firm, always good discipline and everyone in the class respected him, from