

# Khan Master Mujahid

**W**hen the art of Tang Soo Do is mentioned, almost certainly Master Khan's name will crop up in the conversation. A genuine Tang Soo Do pioneer, he was chosen as the model for Grandmaster Shin's book 'Traditional Tang Soo Do Volume 3', highlighting his phenomenal kicking ability and in 1987 he was awarded Instructor of the year. In 2000 he made history by becoming Master of the Year, the only person (from 500 Masters) to do so. Originally known as a fighter, his passion for Tang Soo Do is undiminished but nowadays Master Khan's thoughts are less on his own career and more on developing the next generation and to this end he is actively researching the techniques within the Hyungs, believing that knowledge is there to be shared and passed down.

*TKD-KMA: You've always loved competing and testing yourself against other arts, haven't you?*

**Master Mujahid Khan:** In the 70's we didn't have many competitions and the first one we had was in 1975, an open competition, and I was a black belt at that time and I was nervous and fought really bad! At competitions nerves can often mean that you only use seventy percent of your ability and the more you do it the more the nerves become secondary. My experience came from training with different people. I gained my black belt in April 1977, then I started training with other people and that's how we used to compare techniques, Kickboxing, Tai Chi, and some Japanese systems.

*TKD-KMA: You also boxed, didn't you?*



**Master Mujahid Khan:** In the Huntingdon area is the famous boxers, Dave 'Boy' Green. I trained in the same gym as him but never sparred him—he was far too powerful for me in those days. Joe Bugner also trained there and the last time he fought Ali we were teenagers and told him, 'Joe, you better do good for us but Ali's going to kick your butt!' (laughs) and he chased after us. The coach was Andy Smith and Dave 'Boy' Green had just fought Sugar Ray Leonard.

*TKD-KMA: Despite testing yourself in these other disciplines you remained true to your core art.*

**Master Mujahid Khan:** I left school at the age of 15 and the first (Kung Fu) movie I saw was 'Five Fingers of Death' and I thought 'wow!' As a teenager that really started me off and my older brother and I were fighting in our workplace and a gentleman called Brian Burton told us to do martial arts—a Taekwondo club had opened in Huntingdon but luckily for me it was full and the instructor, Vince Cooper, who was in the RAF was friends with an American military instructor and said to us why don't you go to Tang Soo Do with him?

*TKD-KMA: This was possibly the first Tang Soo Do club in the country.*

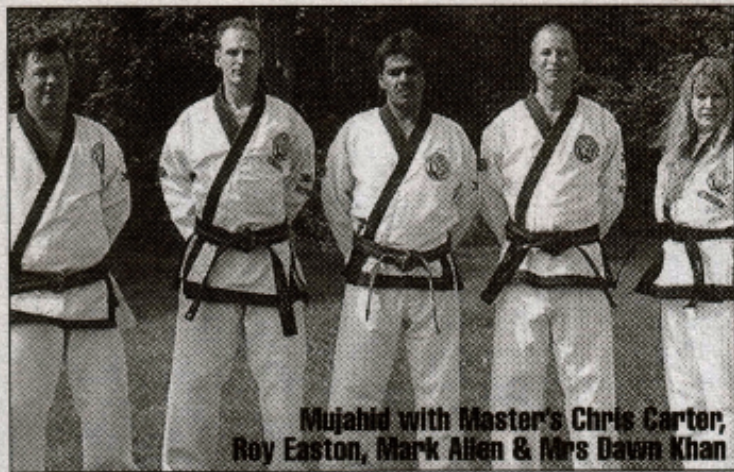
**Master Mujahid Khan:** Exactly. Steven Coleman, our first instructor, was based at the military base and had come over from Korea and even our founder, the Grandmaster, would say that he was the first in this country. I was his senior pupil and the first black belt in the Cambridge area and it was a hard road. There were many styles out there and my instructor said that if you want to join other clubs and do other arts, make sure you have one system foundation first.

I could have been in Taekwondo today or a Japanese sys-



**‘Techniques are  
just a label.’**





**Mujahid with Master's Chris Carter, Roy Easton, Mark Allen & Mrs Dawn Khan**

tem but when you're looking for a reason why I stayed with Tang Soo Do, I think it's because when I joined the club I stood at the back but I caught up quickly and by the time we opened a club in St. Ives, I was a higher grade than everyone else and standing at the front and I didn't want to give that position to anyone else! It gave me a sense of achievement and it gave me more determination to remain committed to what I did and that's why I kept going.

**TKD-KMA:** *Training was tough during the seventies heyday, just after the Bruce Lee boom.*

**Master Mujahid Khan:** I think all training was hard at that time and the attitude was that you had to virtually crawl out of the club after a lesson, as the Master's did push us-you know, 'no pain, no gain!' If you look at America in the 1970's, the top ten people who were competing at the time, including Pat Johnson and Chuck Norris, were all training in Tang Soo Do.

**TKD-KMA:** *It was also a time when you never questioned anything. Do you think we should question things?*

**Master Mujahid Khan:** Sure. I'm a strong believer in the belief that you must question. In the past martial arts came from the military background and the military has a tradition of giving commands and you will simply follow orders but the new generation wants to know everything and you should be able to hand down everything. To improve yourself you have to know why and how and now every technique I demonstrate to my students they can immediately tell me if they don't understand it and I break it down for them.

**TKD-KMA:** *Martial arts are considered more of a science now.*

**Master Mujahid Khan:** Martial arts are a science now, they have developed triple fold since the seventies, in the same way we have seen the dramatic development of the car. The early masters were good but there were barriers, tradition, different way of life, language barriers, but nowadays we have to pass on the knowledge otherwise it is wasted. So it is important that a student asks many questions and a good instructor will pass their knowledge on to future generations.

Now instructors have a better level of knowledge, warm-ups and cool downs etc, through thirty years of knowledge and the maxim 'no pain, no gain' no longer applies. As technology improves, so we get better knowledge of teaching methods.

**TKD-KMA:** *Does this mean that Tang Soo Do can be an art for life, rather than just fit young men?*

**Master Mujahid Khan:** Exactly. When I started teaching in 1981 we had maybe 5% ladies, my wife was the only one in my class but right now we have 50%+ as ladies, based on self defence. We must remember that martial arts should be beneficial for health and welfare.

**TKD-KMA:** *You mentioned that Tang Soo Do was very big in the USA, are we lagging behind them in the UK?*

**Master Mujahid Khan:** No. They may have full time studios in the States but we are hungry for knowledge here and so we are not that far behind and will continue to improve.

**TKD-KMA:** *How have your experiences changed your approach to teaching?*

**Master Mujahid Khan:** I still teach the same, I'm a hard task-master but there are certain things that change, for example in the seventies, if you didn't want to fight, the instructor made you fight but nowadays you can do your forms instead or pad work, in this respect we must change with the times and fulfil the needs of the students rather than simply do what I feel is correct. I had a gentleman I was testing one time and he said I can't do the break with my hand. I asked him why and he told me he was a brain surgeon, so he used a kick or elbow, you have to adapt. Our local MP trained to black belt status with us, we take students from six to sixty and we ask them what their needs are, not everyone wants to be Bruce Lee any more and we have to be aware of their needs.

**TKD-KMA:** *I take it you are in favour of cross training?*

**Master Mujahid Khan:** Some people believe that martial arts are a religion, they all believe that what they do is the correct way, but there's only one God! The martial arts are the same, as a whole the martial arts are one thing. If people don't





know about a system they tend to knock it down-go and train with them, take the good things and bring them back to your system. For example, just because you are a black belt it doesn't mean that you are a good fighter, Chuck Norris trains in Tang Soo Do but to become a seven times world champion he trained in Japanese systems, Chinese systems and Jiu Jitsu. You need to arm yourself with various techniques, as long as you keep one core system. Once you fully understand one system, then it is easier to adapt to other systems, techniques are just a label.

**TKD-KMA:** *Do you believe there are elements that typify Korean arts in general?*

**Master Mujahid Khan:** Koreans are a very slim nation and

they developed 'hip' kicking, they are renowned for their kicks but having said that, I don't think it is unfair to say that our system is a complete system.

**TKD-KMA:** *What do you feel are the most important elements of Tang Soo Do?*

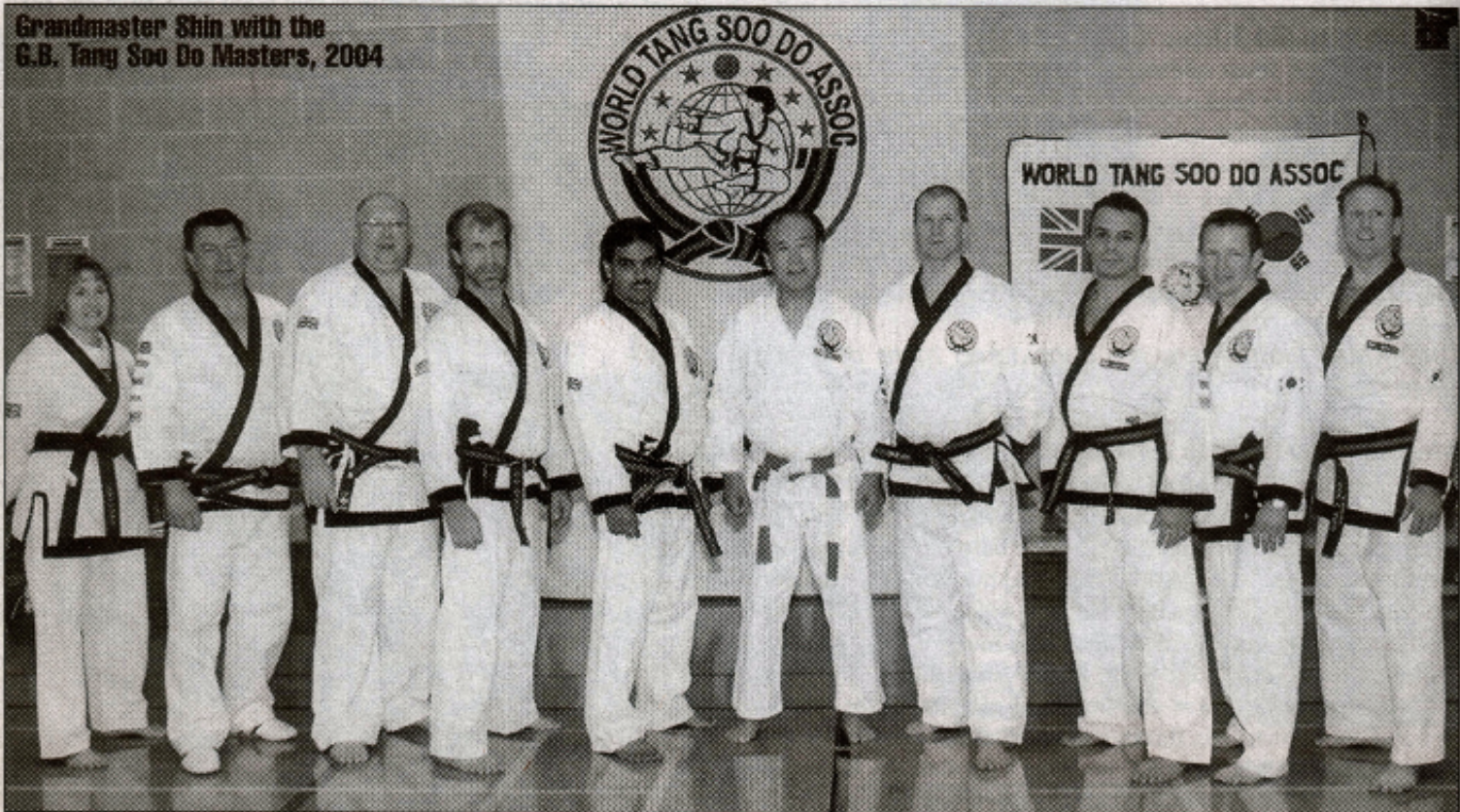
**Master Mujahid Khan:** I think all martial arts have the same criteria, building basic foundations-discipline, the tenets, confidence; it's a tricky question because it's also about how much the individual wants to work with you.

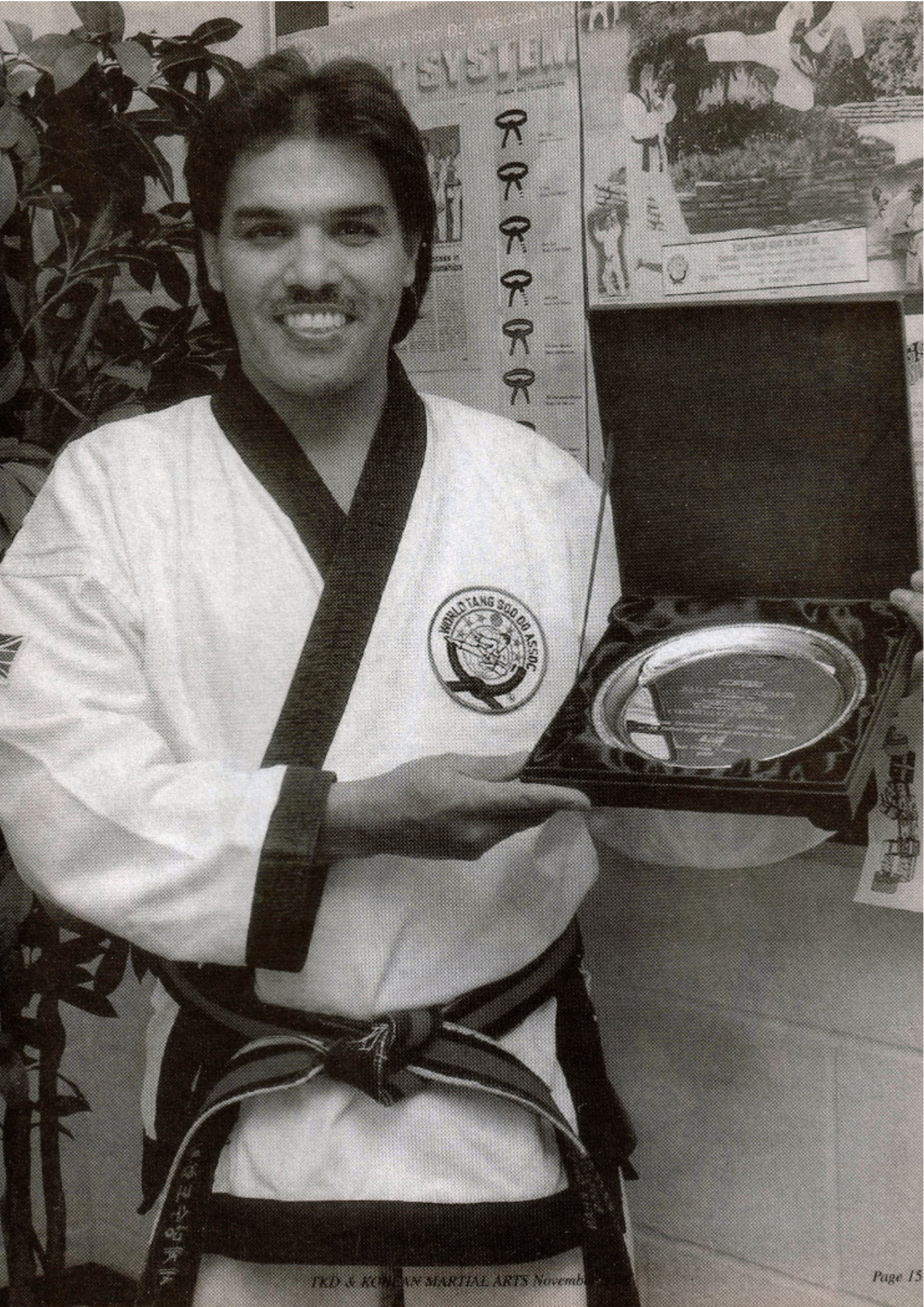
**TKD-KMA:** *You said that when you were younger you couldn't be bothered with the Hyungs, now you're a noted scholar of them, how did that conversion come about?*

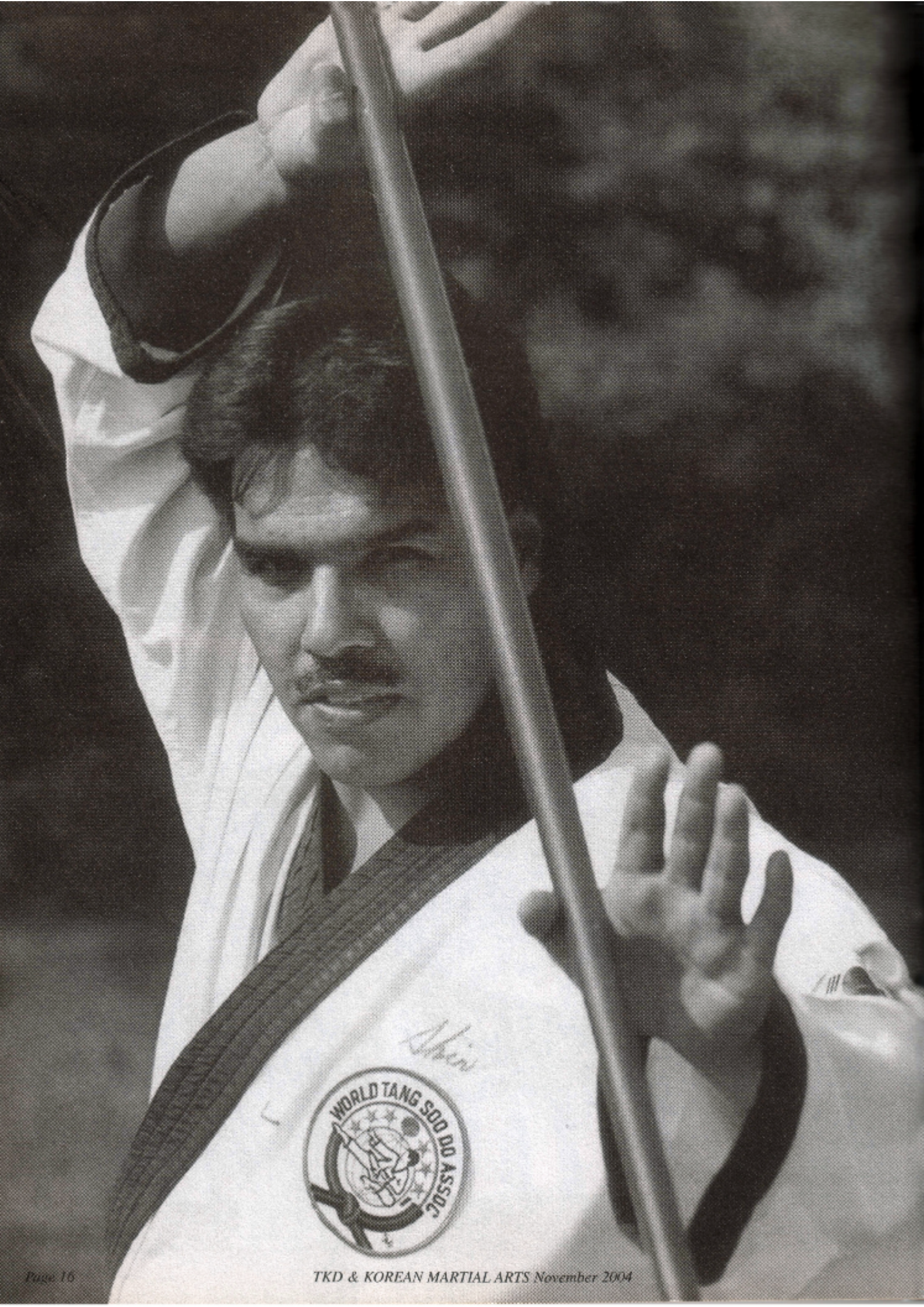
**Master Mujahid Khan:** (laughs) All my life I've loved fighting, boxing, kickboxing, and when you're at that stage you simply want to compete and win titles but when you become an instructor, the role changes and as a role model, once a student asks what is this move in the Hyungs, you need to know the answer. Over the years I changed and my instructor told me that if I wanted to be a good fighter I needed the Hyungs, they are the most important things. The Hyungs relate to very close in fighting, a lot of people don't know this and now, as an instructor, I want to find out more and break the Hyungs down, something I would not have believed if someone told me twenty years ago!

In boxing or kickboxing, at a certain age you hang up your gloves but in a traditional martial art the Hyungs can carry you on into your nineties, so now I've gone heavily into the research, research I want to hand down to my students. It's a science and I often ask myself did the early masters know those techniques and not hand them down to us, or did they simply not know? My personal view is that they knew but cultural factors were involved-maybe our attitude wasn't correct

**Grandmaster Shin with the G.B. Tang Soo Do Masters, 2004**







in those days and they felt we weren't serious enough. I want to point out that I haven't hung my gloves up yet! But I am going into a different field now.

**TKD-KMA:** *Thirty years in the martial arts since starting as a teenager, how are you going to continue to shape your future?*

**Master Mujahid Khan:** To be a good instructor you must remain ahead of your students, technique wise, physical conditioning and philosophy, because those students are looking up to you as a leader, so you have to sacrifice your own time and train. My personal belief is that if a student of mine beats me in push-ups, then I've become lazy, so I always strive to be my best. Over the last thirty years I cannot remember a day I didn't put my suit on and train-I'm a full time instructor and believe that I should take every class myself; if you're not putting your heart and soul into the teaching then the future is poor.

The association in the UK is not about one man; one man cannot do it all. I have a team of masters including Master Carter, and they help me across the country. My wife is a fourth dan and a master candidate and she handles all my association business. Without those good people around me I could not manage on my own, so I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of them for standing by me these last thirty years.

Also, to all those Tang Soo Do Masters out there, whatever association you are with, we should take time to sit and

chat. Associations are something but Tang Soo Do is one thing, we are all interested in Tang Soo Do, let's not let our egos get in the way, forget the dans and grades-if we have any differences we are all only a phone call away.

**TKD-KMA:** *What about your relationship with Grandmaster Jae Chul-shin?*

**Master Mujahid Khan:** I'm a great admirer of Grandmaster Shin, he's Chuck Norris's instructor and our association is based around his teachings and philosophy. We go to America once a year and train. We go to a university in the spring holidays and it's like going to the Shaolin Temple-we go in on the Thursday and don't surface until Sunday. There's no TV, no radio, one time we were training there was a hurricane coming and we didn't even know! We simply train from six in the morning until ten at night and then we do the Master's testing, from midnight until five in the morning. When we get back the student's say how was America, we bet you had a great time!

Grandmaster Shin has developed a European Masters Seminar and every year he comes here and does four days training with us Masters and Master Candidates and now he is also doing the same in South America-the developing countries can't afford to travel to America, so he travels to them. He is not only an example, he is leading us to the future and I'm going to follow in his footsteps and do all in my power for him. Go all the way and you will succeed!

