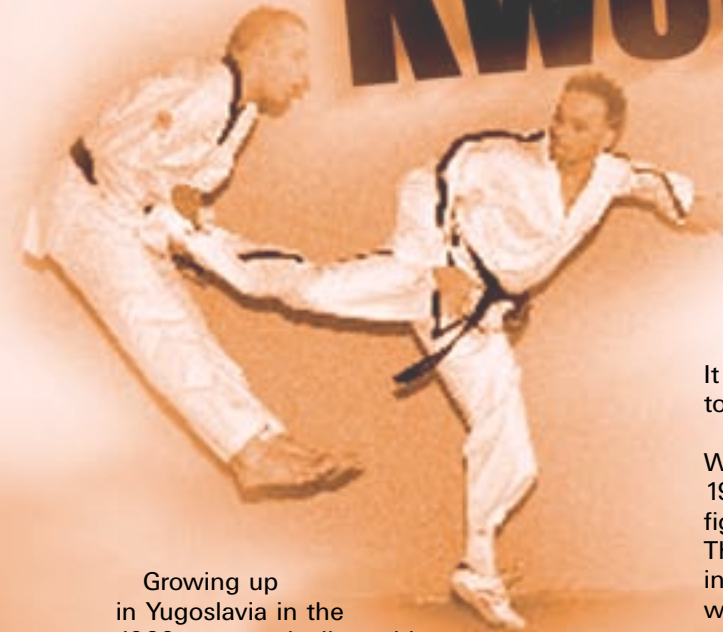


Anto Nobile:

Fighting for Tae Kwon Do

By Alla Rabkina



It was very hard for them to adjust to the touch-contact system."

Nobile attended the first Tae Kwon Do World Championship in Montreal, Canada, in 1973. At the time, neither Nobile nor his co-fighters had any sportive experience. They had trained in Tae Kwon Do as a fighting discipline and occasionally competed without physical contact, but never in a systematic way.

At the championship, Nobile and his peers saw American fighters who were deeply into sportive competition. They also saw a few of General Choi Hong Hi's masters who were technically ahead of their own time. This impressed Nobile's team and inspired them to continue and improve.

"At that time, Choi's masters looked like aliens to us," Nobile said. "I remember a demonstration by Park Jong Soo and Park Jung Tae, both from Canada, Kong brothers from the USA, and Hee Il Cho, also from the USA, who presented unbelievably advanced Tae Kwon Do. After that, I've never seen such a big difference between individuals and others.

"Today, more or less in certain boundaries, everyone is handling similar technical quality. Back then, the competition was held in front of 18,000 spectators and I had the honor of winning a silver medal in a power test for my country, Yugoslavia."

In 1975, Nobile participated in his first professional tournament in Western Berlin. His opponent was a European kickboxing champion. He had never encountered a full-contact fight with protective equipment before and needed a month to adjust to the fight style.

Growing up in Yugoslavia in the 1960s meant dealing with frequent street fights for Master Anto Nobile, a world-renowned Tae Kwon Do legend and an eighth-dan.

Known as Toni, Nobile began learning Tae Kwon Do in 1968 at the age of 17 and went on to earn numerous honorable awards in various tournaments.

"Although I was physically relatively strong, I just wanted to be the strongest in the city," Nobile said. "At that time, Tae Kwon Do was just a mystical fighting discipline meant for self-defense. Later on, I discovered Tae Kwon Do as a sport."

Today, Nobile enjoys sparring the most, but growing up in poor, Communist Yugoslavia, he was rarely able to travel to even the nearest circle of countries. When he did go to tournaments in nearby Germany and Hungary, he often attended open kickboxing tournaments. He and his peers would fight by any rules just to be able to fight.

"In a way, it helped us to spread the reputation of Tae Kwon Do because we would usually win all of the open kickboxing tournaments," Nobile said. "At the same time, our fighters had a problem because whenever they would go to official Tae Kwon Do tournaments, they would usually hit too strong.

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"The match ended with my victory," Nobilo said. "I won... by knocking him out in the 14th second of the first round. That was a shocking surprise for all."

Nobilo wrote his first book, "Taekwon-do – Forms of Fight with Arms and Legs," in 1976. This introductory volume provided Yugoslavian readers with a lesson in "the very meaning of Tae Kwon Do skill."

Meeting General Choi Hong Hi at the first World Championship in Montreal, Canada, led to a strong

relationship that aided development of the ITF in its early, critical years.

In the early 1980s, Nobilo became the leader of Yugoslavian Tae Kwon Do when Korean Park Sun Jao crossed over to the ITF. Nobilo and Choi met often. Choi visited Yugoslavia almost every year because there were Tae Kwon Do strongholds at the time.

Each time Choi came to Europe, especially near to Yugoslavia, he called on Nobilo to attend seminars and participate as a member of the

ITF demonstration team to introduce Tae Kwon Do to new countries.

Using his experience developing Tae Kwon Do in various Communist European countries, Nobilo published his second book in 1987. "Taekwon-do – Global Sport" describes and defines the martial art as a sport and provides methods for training. The book was meant to be a manual for trainers and serious Tae Kwon Do competitors.

Also during this time, Nobilo coached the Yugoslavian national team. In 1984, the team won the European team championship. After that, it won a third place and a second place at the world championships. In 1987, the team won the world championship in Budapest. Nobilo led that team for ten years.

Nobilo's third book, "The Native Taekwon-Do," was published in 1989.

"It is about Tae Kwon Do as a way of fight and Tae Kwon Do as self-defense," he explained. "I am defining the native Tae Kwon Do because at that time, the WTF sportive Tae Kwon Do is piercing toward the Olympic games, so I wanted to introduce readers in Yugoslavia to native Tae Kwon Do one more time."

Today, Master Toni Nobilo is 56-years-old and tries to train every day. He also leads daily trainings, and is trying to create a recreational system directly intended for women. Additionally, he hosts seminars whenever necessary.

Nobilo credits Tae Kwon Do with helping him to develop certain personality characteristics that aide him with other areas of his life. In his youth, the art

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gave him self-confidence, making him feel strong and powerful. Later, the sportive aspect of the art gave him the opportunity to travel and see the world.



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Tae Kwon Do helped Nobilo to develop working habits such as persistence.

"Since I was once a prosecutor and am now a lawyer, I see great similarities between Tae Kwon Do and my current work," Nobilo explained. "In Tae Kwon Do and in court, there are two sides: fighting to win, and a judge and rules by which the fight is being taken. In both forms, one is attacking; one must defend. One must have the reflex to fight back and one has to work really hard to prepare to win in this fight."

"Clearly, in both forms, the killer instinct is very important. Therefore, I find Tae Kwon Do has given me the basic characteristics that made it possible for me to make a great career as a lawyer in criminal law, both in my country and in international proportions."

Nobilo is involved with several current Tae Kwon Do projects. One project that he has just finished will soon be offered internationally. This is the new electronic power test system, called Safe Tae Kwon Do Target or Safe TT.

"This system is going to revolutionize and improve the classic power test and will import this old discipline into the 21 st century," Nobilo said. "All the analyzing and testing of each Safe TT model is finished and we are in the process of starting mass production."



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Nobilo is also working toward unifying Tae Kwon Do. "I believe that the largest misfortune for Tae Kwon Do is being disjoined between ITF and WTF," Nobilo said. "After the death of our founder, General Choi Hong Hi, the WTF has parted into at least two dominant affiliations and a few smaller affiliations. We can perceive that trend in ITF also."

"I believe that all aware and truthful admirers of Tae Kwon Do should put up all possible efforts to unify Tae Kwon Do and when unified, to stay in the Olympic Games program. Tae Kwon Do must stay in

a wide range of use. For some people, [it] is a form of self-defense; for the army and police, it can be a significant method of preparing for battle.

"On the other hand, Tae Kwon Do is an Olympic sport and the whole Tae Kwon Do, improved Tae Kwon Do, native Tae Kwon Do, must enter into the Olympics and stay as an Olympic sport."

Nobilo believes that Tae Kwon Do practitioners should start developing professional forms of the art in addition to recreational forms, such as old Korean traditions in which people get to know themselves better and strengthen their sense of community.

Master Anto Nobilo first learned Tae Kwon Do for self-defense in a poor, Communist country. Today, he uses his experience and vision to take Tae Kwon Do to a new level while striving to unify the art that has changed and shaped his life.●



Alla Rabkina is the Press Attashe for the Saint Petersburg Taekwon-do ITF Federation and has worked in the area of sports since 1980. She has organized large sporting events throughout Russia in several types of activities, including hockey, volleyball, gymnastics, figure skating and martial arts.

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