

February 2005 to April 2005
An unforgettable experience!

It was during the month of February 2005 that our local karate organization hosted our 1st youth full contact selection karate tournament. All students achieving 1st, 2nd or 3rd place would received certificates and letters of invitation to participate in the 1st Youth



international full contact karate tournament to be held in Japan in April of the same year.

I selected 16 students to prepare for the selection tournament and we started our preparations as soon as the schools closed in December 2004. While most youngsters enjoyed the school holidays, my selected group had to train twice daily as there was a good chance they might be selected to do battle against the rest of the world. By February my group was ready to face youth from all over the country. The hard work had been done and we were ready to prove that we are one of the toughest clubs in the country.

The team to do battle in Japan consisted of 30 students all members of kyokushinkaikarate South Africa. I entered 16 students into the selection tournament. 15 students returned home with certificates and letters of invitation to represent South Africa at the 1st Youth international kyokushin karate tournament.

At a meeting soon after the selection tournament I learned that it would cost around R 12 000 per student to attend the event in Japan, but that this cost would be for the account of the parents and students. It only took one meeting to convince my parents that this would be an opportunity of a life time for their children and that I though it would be a worth while effort to raise the funds needed.

The most stressful time of my life started, it was during the two months leading up to our departure that I lost the most sleep and developed the habit of pushing my hand over my head and then scratching the back of my head as if I was expecting money to fall out of it.

I had made a commitment to raise R 180 000 within two months and take 14 of the 15 students selected, who's parents indicated their willingness to assist to a karate tournament to be held on the other side of the world. Madness I say!
"You're crazy", "you'll never make it", "why not wait till next year, I'm sure the Japanese will run the tournament again and it will give you more time", "my friend stop kidding yourself", "R 12000 per person are you crazy?, I would never do it", "I'll go in a year or two and I guarantee you its not going to cost me as much, in fact I think I'll take my daughter along, she can go sight seeing while I attend the tournament..." words of encouragement from well, all friends...

None of us had passports...Fortunately I had a Kombie at the time and could get the students to do their applications for passports all at once. Naturally it took a few trips, a few days of skipping school to stand in long lines and we ended up applying at two different departments of Home Affairs offices. 4 weeks they said, 4 weeks it was. Then there was the medical, another day away from school as we packed one of the local GP's waiting rooms. Last but not least we spend a full day at Heidevelt day hospital, this to check our HIV status.

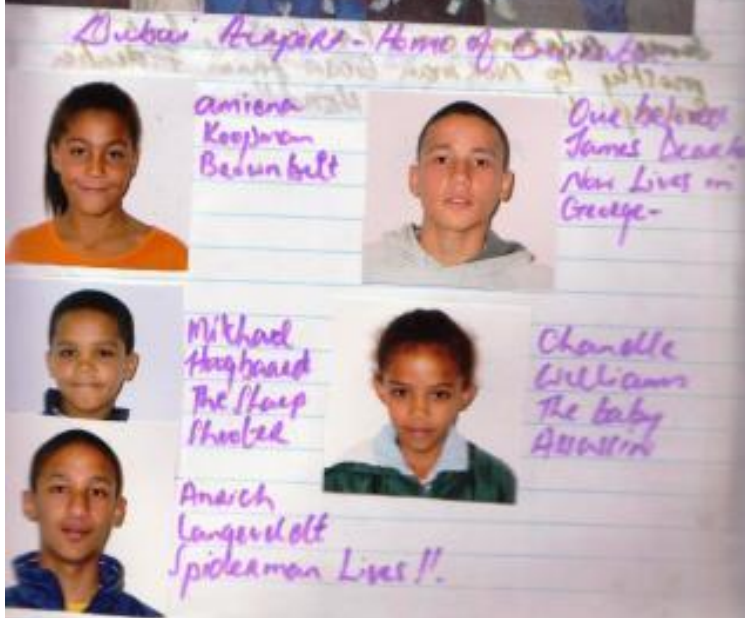


They could not release any results as the parents had to be present. That in it self caused a bit of a worry. Strange things go through ones mind when these things happen. We have the results but your parents must be present... There are a great many folk out there who do not give their HIV status a 2nd thought, I haven't done anything wrong so I know I'm HIV negative. Funny thing is after the 15 minute consultation session and after learning

how one could extract the virus, the 20/30 minute wait for your result can become a scary never ending period.

The main concern was naturally how do we to raise R 180 000 in two months?

We kept praying, praying for a miracle, praying for the one big sponsor who was going to hear our call. We kept at it with collection lists, car washes, bazaars, karaoke, you name it,



we did it, but the big sponsor kept eluding us. We featured in community news papers and had our first interviews on radio, what a great yet nerve wrecking experience. It was probably the most exciting time in all our lives and yet also the most uncertain...

Our travel agent waved his magic wand and he arranged that we pay our airfare off,

This was great and gave us more time to get some money.

The passports arrived our letters of invitation arrived and it was beginning to look more and more like we were going to shut up the negative ones around us. When monies did come in, it went from my hand to that of the travel agency.

Our Agent Mark from Millway travel in Mowbray, what a great guy, had all the

patients in the world. He too wrecked his brain trying to help our situation. "Why don't you guys try this or that or maybe give a..." I can still hear him say. Two weeks to departure date and sleep will come no more. I have made this commitment and have got fourteen kids on edge, every morning I'm up at the crack of dawn, wondering planning, praying. Who to ask next, where to next... Our short fall at this stage some R 30000 on the flights alone, one of two thoughts crossed my mind, cancel and accept that everyone else was right, this is madness and two tell 5 or 6 of the students we just don't have the money.

This brings me to the group of students meant to go with me, Chanelle Williams 8 years old place 1st in her division @ the selection tournament, the baby amongst us the rest of the gang aged 10 to 15 years old where Keagan Daniels 10 placed 1st, Amina Koopman 12 placed 1st, Jonathan Solomons 14 placed 2nd, Kevin Maggerman 11 placed 1st, Naazera Daniels 13 placed 1st, Marelize Smit 15 placed 1st, Neo Chekka 12 placed 1st, James Dearham 15 placed 1st, Michael Hoogbaardt 10 placed 2nd, Anrich Langevelt 12 placed 2nd, Charl Jordaan 14 placed 2nd, Mardiyah Rademeyer 11 placed 1st and Kyle Le Roux 11 placed 2nd. I just could not see myself telling any of them that they would have to stay behind.

A few parents managed to secure personal loans from various sources, time was running out and it seemed a lost case. Mark was kind enough to organize our tickets so we could go and apply for our Visa's, more money from our empty pockets...eish!

Finally with about three days to departure four parents brought in around twenty thousand rand. Today I thought, is the day that I convince our agent to allow us to pay them what I have and beg him to arrange that I pay the shortfall when we return, but I just new I wouldn't have the guts. Then waiting on Mark to give me my final total due, he looked at me as he counted the twenty thousand rand I had just handed him, "why are you paying me so much money Deen?" he asked. Well what's my total due then Mark?

I had forgotten to take into account the students under 12 years old, turns out their flight costs about R 2000 less per person than that of the over twelve year olds. Mark took around three thousand from me, gave me my tickets and wished me well. Before I new it I was on my way to exchange the rest of the money for yen. WHAT A PLEASURE...I was so emotional, I cried and cried all the way from Mowbray to Claremont. I kept staring at the tickets, counted them over and over; it was all there all 15 of them. We made it, WE ARE GOING TO JAPAN, OH MY GOD, I kept singing it in my head like a pre-scholar singing Ring o' ring o' Rosy, WE ARE GOING TO JAPAHANN, WE ARE GOING TO JAPAHANN. ! Then it HIT me, The Almighty surely does work in mysterious ways. I was praying for this miracle, praying for one big sponsor, but instead



He gave us hundreds of sponsors. Everyone who made a donation, from 50cent to a thousand rand, every single one of them they were the once who made this dream come true, the sponsors send by God Himself... On 26 April 2005, together with 14 students I boarded an airplane for the 1st time in my life...British Airways, Cape Town to Johannesburg mind you... not to shabby for a group who practices karate in Ruyterwacht and Hanover Park.

In the end it turned out to be a simple case of if you believe you will achieve...osu!!