

# The History of ITF Nelson and my personal relationship with the martial art

By William Lunai

My name is Mr William Lunai, and this thesis is supporting my grading to third Dan in ITF Taekwondo on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2023 in Nelson, New Zealand.

In the following essay I would like to explore and document the history of the Nelson ITF Taekwondo Club and my own personal relationship to the martial art as well as the Nelson club.

Taekwondo is a martial art that has been founded by General Choi Hong-Hi in North Korea in the 1940's during World War 2. It was mostly initiated by the general as a method to train his soldiers for great mental and physical fitness.

This martial art consists of pattern work, sparring with kicks, power brakes, self-defence techniques, fundamental movements, and theory.

The sport was officially recognized as such after World War 2 in the late 1950's and started gaining world-wide recognition and popularity from there onwards.

The initial organization was called the Korean Taekwondo Association formed in 1959. Since then, 3 major Taekwondo bodies have formed in the world being: International Taekwondo Federation (ITF), World Taekwondo (WTF) and the American Taekwondo Association (ATA). Even though all three bodies have the same origin there are now major differences that can be observed between the establishments in terms of techniques, tendencies, approach, rules, patterns, and forms.

While World Taekwondo was developed largely for international competitions (such as the Olympics), ITF Taekwondo is predominantly traditional and most true to the teachings of General Choi Hong-Hi. The American Taekwondo Association (ATA) practises a blend of both the World Taekwondo and ITF Taekwondo style and approach.

The first official ITF Taekwondo Club in New Zealand was founded in 1970 in Palmerston North and run by Mr Norman Ng who was first introduced to Taekwondo by Mr Raymond Yap training at the Palmerston North Massey University Campus.

Taekwondo gained in popularity during the following years across the world and within New Zealand. Multiple clubs were established in the countries' bigger cities during those first years.

It was at that time that Mrs Pamela Colee got introduced to the martial arts in her hometown of Christchurch. She soon learned to love the sport and put a lot of her heart and soul into it until she gained her first Dan in Hanmer springs in 1997.

Soon after she got her first dan, Mrs Pamela Colee relocated to the beautiful city of Nelson in the upper South Island of New Zealand. The move occurred due to family commitments in 1998.

She soon missed her regular training and connection with like-minded people as there was no ITF Taekwondo Club in Nelson at this stage.

Taking things into her own hands, Mrs Pamela Colee started her own Club here in Nelson in 2001 in collaboration with Mr Will McIvor who was her assistant in the early days.

The first training sessions were held at the Richmond A&P Showgrounds and later at Henley Primary School in Richmond, a suburb of Nelson.

It was at one of those trainings at Henley School in 2004 that I was introduced to the sport. I was invited by Mrs Pamela Colee's children who suggested I came and watch the training.

Initially I thought I would just watch, but Mrs Colee quickly told me that "if you are in this class, you are joining in!" and before I knew it, I was up there doing my first pad rounds amongst the small group of 7 other students.

Having always been an active person and having fostered an interest for martial arts for a long time, this was a portal opening for me that allowed me to follow my dream of becoming a martial artist.

I continued to green belt, which I received in 2005; I then paused my training as I moved overseas, travelled the world, fell in love, got married and so on.

I rediscovered my love for the martial art 5 years later in 2010 when Mrs Pamela Colee insisted that I rejoin the club.

I struggled at first.

The first grading back really tested me mentally and it became apparent to me for the first time, that Taekwondo is not just a physical discipline but also a mental one.

I regained passion for the sport and swiftly moved through my colour belts under Mrs Pamela Colee's, Mr Richard Hall and Mr Aaron William's instructions (see below for more information on their roles within the Nelson club).

The club grew significantly during those years, doubling in size while I moved through my colour belts.

It came as a shock to all of us when Mrs Pamela Collee fell sick with breast cancer in 2009.

Around the same time Mr Richard Hall relocated from Wellington to Nelson and offered to take over the club from Mrs Pamela Colee while she was undergoing cancer treatment.

Mr Richard Hall trained from the City Fitness Gym in Tahunanui for some time until the club was moved to Nayland College in 2012.

Even while undergoing cancer treatment Mrs Pamela Colee still turned up to trainings and was always there to support the club mentally and physically (where she was able to do so).

Her determination and dedication to the martial arts was second to none and an inspiration to all her students.

In 2010 Mr Hall combined two ITF Taekwondo Clubs together when he joined his club with that of Mr Glenn Kennedy.

The club continued to operate out of Nayland college.

When Mr. Hall moved to Palmerston North in 2012 he handed the club over to Mr Aaron Williams who was one of his students and had gained his first dan in 2012.

Mr Aaron Williams moved the Club to Boys college in 2018.

He also initiated the start of a kids' class in 2014 at the Nelson ITF Club which was assisted by two of his students Mr Garth Crosbie and me.

Mr Aaron Williams was my main instructor in preparation for my first Dan, which I passed incomplete in a grading in Blenheim in 2014 alongside Mr Garth Crosbie and Mr Taine Williams. I gained my first Dan later in 2015 by Grand Master Davidson.

After I gained my first Blackbelt, there were 5 Blackbelts in the ITF Nelson club.

I swiftly trained to ready myself for second Dan, which I gained in 2017 in Nelson at Waimea College alongside Mr Garth Crosbie and Mr Aaron Williams.

Mr Aaron Williams moved to Tauranga in 2020 due to family commitments. He handed the club over to Mr Garth Crosbie and me, who have been co-instructing the club since.

I (William Lunai) have mostly been overseeing the kids' classes and Mr Garth Crosbie the senior training.

Mr Adam Schwass has recently (2023) been named assistant to both Mr Garth Crosbie, myself, and the Nelson ITF committee.

The Club's inception marked the beginning of a journey that would see it grow in size and also influence over the years.

In its early days, the Nelson ITF Taekwondo Club faced the challenge of establishing itself in a region, where traditional martial arts were not as prevalent as in the more urban areas of New Zealand. However, through the dedication of its founding members and instructors, the club has slowly gained recognition and attracted students who are eager to learn the art of Taekwondo.

Over the years, the club expanded its offerings, providing training for both children and adults. It quickly became known not only for its martial arts instruction but also fostering a sense of community and discipline among its members.

The instructors at the club emphasise the core principles of Taekwondo, being:

Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Self-Control and Indomitable Spirit, instilling these values in every student coming through the club.

The Nelson ITF Club only has a young past but has managed to make a remarkable impact in the New Zealand ITF history.

The club's growth and success can be attributed to its commitment to excellence in both the training and competition environments.

Many of its members have achieved significant accomplishments over the years in regional, national, and even international Taekwondo competitions.

These achievements have brought recognition to the Nelson ITF club and have inspired new generations of martial artists to strive for greatness.

I would like to name some of the highlights below:

- Nelson ITF Taekwondo hosted the South Island regionals in 2003 and again in 2014.
- Nelson ITF Taekwondo has contributed to the World Cup and World Championship New Zealand teams. Competitors from the Nelson ITF club are:
  - Mr Taine Williams (World Championship 2015 Italy, 2017 Ireland and 2019 Germany)
  - Mr Adam Schwass (World Cup Competitor 2018 in Sydney)
  - Mr Misha Worboy (World Cup in Slovenia in 2022 and World Championship in 2023 Finland)

Mr Adam Schwass and Mr Misha Worboy have been part of the Nelson ITF club since white belts and have been trained by Mr Aaron Williams, Mr Garth Crosbie, and me (William Lunai).

It came with great sadness when Mrs Pamela Colee lost her continued battle to cancer on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

The club felt a great loss, and this was apparent by the representation of its members at her funeral.

The Nelson ITF Taekwondo Club members carried Mrs Pamela Colee to her grave in a guard of honour.

We all know that she would have loved this meaningful send off.

Mrs Pamela Colee's legacy is continued by her daughter Mrs Selina Fensom and her grandson Kayden Fensom who are still a part of the Nelson ITF Taekwondo Club to this day.

In my opinion this illustrates another side to the Nelson ITF Taekwondo club that is important for me to highlight: the active engagement with its members and our local community.

Nelson ITF Taekwondo has organized several workshops, demonstrations, black belt gradings and tournaments as well as a camp (2022). All these events showcase the positive impact Taekwondo has on people's lives beyond the confines of the training hall.

The club currently **has** members, including 6 first Dans and 3 second Dans.

The impending grading for my third Dan will be the third blackbelt grading that is held in Nelson, another indicator of the growth the club has endured during the last century.

My own relationship to the martial arts has deepened over the past 13 years.

I have stepped up to become the kid's instructor and co instructor for the club in conjunction with Mr Garth Crosbie.

I have achieved two black belts and endured great physical and mental pain to get there but gained so much strength from these achievements that certainly outweigh the pain.

My children have seen me do Taekwondo from the day they were born and have also joined the club since.

My passion for the martial arts, my deep commitment and respect is carried with me wherever I go.

When I travelled to Germany in 2019, I made sure to visit the nearest ITF Taekwondo Club I could find, the communal spirit that is upheld within the Nelson ITF Club can be found anywhere in the world within the Taekwondo community which is apparent when travelling and taking the time to visit some clubs around the world. (Note to self: always take your Dobok when travelling!)

Whenever I travel within New Zealand, I visit a local club and connect with like-minded people.

This makes the hobby a special one in my opinion.

In conclusion, Taekwondo to me is a sport, a mental training, and a community. I have learnt this from Mrs Pamela Colee and will forever carry this in my heart.

And the history of the Nelson ITF Taekwondo Club is a story of perseverance, dedication, and community building.

From its humble beginnings to its present-day success, the club has played a significant role in promoting Taekwondo in the beautiful region of Nelson, leaving a lasting impact on its members and the broader community.

When looking to the future I envision the club to keep growing and impacting a large number of people's lives in a positive way. My vision for the club is to host more workshops, tournaments, gradings and camps in the future.

I would also like to host special workshops that include the broader community such as:

- Self-defence for women
- Self-defence at schools