

# Profile - Master Ung Kim Lan

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Those who have not been to a World Championships may not know Master Lan. In competition circles his reputation is well known and he continues to be one of the top coaches in the world. A friend to General Choi Hong Hi and his partner on many seminars, Master Lan has a long Taekwon-Do career. He was hand-picked by Master Trần Triều Quân (ITF President) to teach at the forthcoming "Do" seminars.

## When did you start training and what do you remember?

I started Taekwon-Do in 1965, in Vietnam. My first instructors were Master Dang Huy Duc (9th dan) and Master Khue. They both live in America now. In those days there were only eight colored belt ranks rather than the ten we have now. I trained every day except Sundays; early every morning at 6:30am before going to school. I completed my first grading after two years, in 1967, and gained my 1st dan in 1972. I don't remember much about my 1st dan grading, except that it was conducted by a committee of five Korean Masters.

## Can you tell us about when you become a Master?

General Choi awarded me my 7th dan in Toronto, Canada, in 1996. He announced it during a banquet after an International Instructors' Seminar. It was the beginning of a new chapter in my life. I had to learn things more precisely, and I met a lot more people. I felt I took on a lot more responsibility. I have to be more careful about what I say or do. I'm no more a child, I'm a little bit older and wiser, but despite my best efforts I still make mistakes.

## What are your most memorable moments in Taekwon-Do?

The most beautiful and remarkable moments are still the seminars with General Choi. Nor can I forget the joy I felt last year, during the World Championships in Germany, when one of our National Team members, the only girl so far without a medal, won 3rd place in power breaking on the very last day of competition.

## What do you enjoy most about teaching Taekwon-Do?



Master Lan teaching students at his gym.

I am really happy when I see that my students succeed in Taekwon-Do and in their private lives. Many started training with me as children and keep loyal to me as adults, too. This would make any trainer happy.

## What can you tell us about your meetings with General Choi Hong Hi?

I first remember meeting General Choi in Vietnam, but that was only for a brief moment. I met him again when I completed my 2nd dan in Germany in 1974. This was the first opportunity to talk with him. I got to know him well and it was an honor for me to be his partner for many seminars. He really took time to correct me especially, as during this time I was not familiar with the new system of sine wave. I will always be grateful for that. I do miss his strong and inspiring presence.



Seminar with General Choi in Cologne 1995



Recent photo of Master Lan performing a side piercing kick



Master Lan's first Taekwon-Do club in Germany 1972 (Budokan Düsseldorf)



Full contact kick boxing 1974



1973 as a student

### What do you like about Taekwon-Do competition?

I competed myself in sparring and tul and those remain my favorite disciplines. However now I also start to learn and enjoy breaking technique, mostly with Andrew Niven (former National Coach of New Zealand).

### You have an impressive record as a coach. Have you held any national or international titles for yourself?

Free sparring:

- International Champion of Germany, 1974, 1976 (WTF)
- International Champion of Holland, 1974 (WTF)
- German Champion and Vice European Champion in Kickboxing, full contact, 1977 (WAKO)
- German Champion in semi contact, 1982, 1987 (International Budo Federation, IBF)
- European Champion in semi contact, 1982, 1984, 1985 (IBF)
- International Champion in Kickboxing, 1985 (WAKO)



Master Lan coaching European Champion Krycia Lopez.

Tul and Kata:

- German and International German Champion, 1983, 1984
- World Champion in Free Style Kata, 1984, 1986 and European Champion 1987



### How did you end up as the German National Coach?

I came to Germany in 1969 to study. In 1975 I successfully finished my Mechanical Engineering studies. In the early days it was very hard in Germany, as there were very few good Taekwon-Do schools. Mostly I trained on my own, teaching myself. Then in 1992 I coached the German ITF team for the first time. The world championships were in North Korea. It was an amazing start, and one of my most memorable moments coaching was that our female team – although competing for the first time – made it all the way to the finals. They finished in 2nd to North Korea. I have many other wonderful and unforgettable memories at World and European Championships. I enjoyed making a lot of new friendships and had wonderful experiences in many countries all over the world.

Master Lan teaching at a recent seminar in Germany.

### Do you have a favorite athlete in Sparring or Tul?

My favorite competitor is the one who happens to be in front of me in the ring – each one of them – participating in a World or European Championship: he or she is one of the best in his or her country. Or else they wouldn't be there.



### What do you think of the New Zealand Taekwon-Do Team?

To be honest, I noticed the National Team of New Zealand first in 2003, during the World Championships in Poland and then in 2004 at the Junior World Championship in Italy, due to their successes. Since the World Championships in Poland in 2003, I regularly visit the ITFNZ website. I think you've made good progress, in such a short time, with not so many members. I'm learning a lot from your website. It's the best one there is.

In power test and special technique you already have many good people. Only in sparring and tul, especially in senior team and female, there are things to improve.

I think your team is very well organized and fostered. They are disciplined, familiar and friendly. What you need is a little bit of luck and more experience – but that's just a matter of time.

### Do you have any tips for up and coming New Zealand athletes who wish to be World Champion?

I should give you some advice? You have many good trainers and talented people. Carry on like this and be patient. Believe in yourselves and you'll be strong. Success in martial arts doesn't come only through the techniques (training) and tactics. Moreover, it has to do with your heart. You only have to want with all your heart and you'll succeed.

Keep on learning Taekwon-Do and enjoy your training. Try to contact other Taekwon-Do people, communicate with each other and exchange ideas. Develop your willingness to help and be friendly. Taekwon-Do is not only a martial way to fight an opponent or to participate in competitions. It is an art to fight yourselves (when necessary) and also a way to live, provided with clearness, strength and understanding. The more you practice Taekwon-Do, the better you'll discover what Taekwon-Do means, especially what "Do" (Way of Life) means. There are many roads we can take in life. Some are good, some are bad. But we have to search and find only the right ones. Taekwon-Do is a martial art. Therefore we experience both victories and defeats. Victories are great but defeats are also good. They help a good Taekwon-Do student to discover his or her mistakes and to correct them for the next challenge. I also lost, many times, especially against myself. But I always tried to stand upright again, find out what I did wrong and correct it. It's no shame when we lose. Only if you fight you can get defeated. If you don't fight, you have lost already. When I have to fight, there is just one thought in my mind: It's me who's going to win, not my opponent. He should give up first, not me.

But I don't want to get too philosophical, because every person has his or her particular way of thinking.

I just wanted to tell you why somebody like me keeps practicing Taekwon-Do for such a long time still enjoys it tremendously.

Taekwon and lots of Do.

*Photographs courtesy of Master Ung Kim Lan.*



Photos from the Senior World Championships in Dortmund, Germany, 2005.

Top: female team patterns.

Bottom: female -58kg free sparring final, Krycia Lopez vs Julia Cross.



Master Lan with the hugely successful German female team at the World Championships in Dortmund, 2005.