



INSTRUCTORS COURSE 2012 BENALMADENA - SPAIN



Again the Senior Instructors of the BUTF headed out to Spain for their annual instructors course. The instructors look forward to this course as much as they fear it. No matter how much they protest that they can't do the things that they could 20 years ago, Grandmaster Choy takes no prisoners with the exacting standards that he expects from his instructors when running them through their patterns and sparring syllabus.

Day One -

Day 1 was as usual the early start with matching flights leaving Luton and Gatwick around 7am to arrive in Malaga around 10.30am Spanish time. Grandmaster Choy and Miss Au were waiting at Malaga with provisions in hand to refresh the instructors before Mr Sheehan and Mr Austin were despatched to collect the Mercedes Hire Van. As in previous years there was disappointment again when they returned with a Fiat Van safe in the knowledge that the hire company had used the 'or equivalent' clause to full effect. After the usual game of Jenga when all luggage was duly loaded into the van we set off for a short sight seeing mission. The mission was to see a character building which appeared to have been made entirely out of stalactites and stalagmites and was inhabited by (allegedly) 'The Mad Englishman'. Oddly, the owner was neither mad nor an Englishman but an American 'Chino-cologist (so the guide said) who had a taste for avant garde architecture. The place was wonderful and there was hardly a nook or cranny where there wasn't something amazing to discover.

Onward to our lovely Hotel Polynesia that had everything that we needed for the next few days. It was a shame though that some of the things we needed were closed as it was not high season yet. However, what we had was great and the only things missing were not the things that would help training anyway (please ask your instructor why Mr Whitley is known as the C.E.O if you need to understand this further). On route was a lovely seafront bar where Grandmaster Choy had arranged a lunch for us overlooking the beach. The phrase of the day was portion size. They were MASSIVE! Accepted was the fact that it was 12 hours since our last meal but the chef must have thought it was 12 days. Fully fed it was time to take our luggage to our rooms and settle in to the hotel.

Once settled in .. it was time to eat again with the first Welcome Evening hosted by Grandmaster Choy. The management had arranged for us to have the table by the window so we could watch the sunset whilst we considered whether there was any appetite left to attack the buffet. After an early start, an early night was scheduled mainly down to a) being tired and b) there being a rubbish band on in the bar that drove everyone (not just us) back to their rooms.

Day Two -

Day two is down to serious business with training in the morning followed by the AGM. In training we ran through the coloured belt syllabus with Grandmaster Choy hosting a workshop on the nuances of each movement where their interpretation could differ. Reading directly from the encyclopaedia Grandmaster Choy clarified the points raised so that every instructor could teach each



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move correctly and judge it correctly as an Umpire and Examiner. The moves have to be true to the source reference material which is why this is such an important part of the instructor course. We don't know of any other organisation who do this which is why the BUTF is feared for it's pattern performances.

Following this session was a refresher course on the self-defence moves and Bal-Matsogi. These tend to be much over-looked parts of the syllabus which is why it was so important to refresh on these. There are some small changes in these so please talk to your instructor to understand more.

Once the wrists were sore from the release techniques and the ankles feeling the stamping on the marble floor then it was time to move on to the Tul session. All senior black belt patterns were taught and revised all the way up to Tong-Il, the 24th pattern. Even though these patterns are the ones the instructors train in themselves, it's still a great session to run through and be coached in the more advanced moves. Despite everything else, the instructors are still students of Taekwon Do themselves so being coached and trained is at the heart of what we love about this art. Especially when we are taught by Grandmaster Choy whose knowledge of Taekwon Do is second to none in the UK. What a great training session though!

After a long and hard training session a short break was convened before the start of the AGM. Allowing just enough time for a shower and a sandwich the formal proceedings were initiated. Most of the agenda was around the current operation of the organisation however most notably the topic of our Anniversary in 2013 was raised. In 2013 it was proposed that there will be some special celebratory events of which a calendar will be commissioned. In the calendar will be the senior instructors performing certain techniques along with all of the notable dates (such as gradings, tournaments and seminars etc.) and will serve as not only your daily organiser for 2013 but also as a memento of the year. p.s. if you need to know which anniversary this is then READ YOUR 10TH KUP SYLLABUS AND WORK IT OUT!

Following the AGM the formal dinner commenced on our table overlooking the coast as the sunset. Many stories were exchanged of the good times past along with some friendly banter between the instructors. There is always a good amount of respectful leg pulling and joking between the instructors and this was evident throughout the meal. The buffet as before was delightful with far too much food on offer. Once the meal was finished and all the stories of past endeavours covered it was time to show Benalmadena how to party BUTF style! Grandmaster Choy and Miss Au declined the opportunity to see the senior instructors hit the town and party so they'll never know what they missed. Clothes changed. Taxi ordered and dancing shoes polished off we all set. Even then things were not as simple as it could have been. There were two taxis leaving at the same time .. so each taxi driver was bribed to race the other taxi to see which taxi would get to the bars first. Competitive to the last!

So, ready for a good night on the town the senior instructors walked from the taxi rank into the marina area. All excited and ready to party we had to fend off the touts who were trying to lure us into the bars. I say lure ..



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It was off-season. The bars were dead. There was hardly anyone around. There was only one bar that appeared to be open that had two of the tamest stag and hen nights going on than anyone has ever seen. There was one tout who was insistent that we HAD to go to his bar. However we resisted all temptation. Especially as Mr Whitley (who is a dab-hand at tout management being CEO of course) established that the bar in question wanted fifty euros for a bottle of fizzy nonsense pretending to be champagne whilst slightly chubby young ladies removed their clothes for the audience. Given that billing it was hardly surprising that we took up a table the other side of the marina and just enjoyed the fact that we could sit outside by the expensive yachts until midnight in March.

Our own Greek-Cypriot Mr Joannou found a kebab shop around 2am (as if we hadn't eaten enough already) and was joined in the late night taste sensation by Mr Whitley. One strange thing though. If it really was such a taste sensation then why did Mr Whitley wake up the next morning with the kebab on the pillow next to him?

Day Three -

This day started by piling all the instructors into the van and driving them up to the hills for the Calendar Photoshoot. Sadly ladies .. they all remained clothed. On the journey up to the hills we saw a temple that we headed for thinking that it would be a great backdrop to the shots. There were large stone dragons alongside it that (from a distance) looked ideal for what we wanted. It wasn't until we pulled up into the car-park that we established that in order to get the shots that we wanted using the dragons we would in fact have to jump all over a Chinese restaurant. Guessing that the management probably wouldn't approve it was back into the van and off up into the hills.

An hour's drive later and we found a disused quarry. Perfect! So after a short scoping exercise some locations were selected and the stretching started. When you think about your training, think about the nice surface you train on. Then think about how much more difficult it would be perched on top of a rock covered in pine needles. Then think about how you land from your flying kicks when the land is full of sticks, stones and olive pips. That's exactly what we had to work with and it's not as easy as it seems!

Suffice to say that once the sun was going down and the light was fading that the exercise was finished for the day. Enough pine needles had been extracted from enough feet and we'd watched Mr Rigg bounce across more than enough rough surfaces for one day so it was back into the van and back to the hotel.

With a few hours to spare the instructors chose to do whatever they wanted for the rest of the afternoon. Half the instructors ventured back in the van to find some of the villages and charms of the local area. Some of the instructors chose some R&R in the spa. However .. not everything went to plan.

Benalmadena stretches along one very long seafront road with lots of side roads to the residential areas and hotel delivery roads all along its length. There are two main routes out at either end and



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one small winding road half way down that you need to take you to all the scenic places. The problem is though .. without a SatNav or a map you have absolutely no chance of finding any of them. So our intrepid van-monsters drove up and down the seafront until settling in to the local Burger King for a diet coke absolutely unable to find their way out of town. Three hours later they returned to the hotel with a collective look of dejected disappointment amongst them. Parking the van was another matter. You had to press the garage access button and drive into the car park in a very special way. This 'challenge' involved opening the van door, getting out of the van, pressing the button, running back to the van, screeching the tyres to get into the car park, closing the van door and parking all in a matter of 7 seconds otherwise the garage door would close and not let you in or out again. Possibly the most urgent garage door in the world.

For those who chose the leisurely option there was a spa with hydro-therapy pool, sauna, steam rooms, hot showers and ice-showers for you to use. In order to use the facilities though you needed to wear a hotel issue swimming hat. Possibly the most unflattering item of clothing ever issued since the bin-bag. Lounging casually in the jacuzzi Mr Sheehan was sitting hoping that no-one would see him with the bright blue bin-bag on his head. For the first hour he was lucky. Then three faces appeared at the window staring in. Grandmaster Choy, Miss Au and Master Sangha. It didn't take long for those three faces to explode in a chaos of laughter watching one of their instructors bobbing around in the spa looking like flotsam. It should also be noted that at exactly the time that Grandmaster Choy and the others wandered by Mr Whitley had to mysteriously disappear to 'make a phone call' .. hmmm ..

The evening was spent swapping stories of the day followed by watching the house band in the hotel bar (having decided that a trip to the town to find nightlife would probably only deliver moths). The house band were fair enough however it did seem that the singer had been chosen because of her legs rather than her voice. She would have made it to bootcamp but never the judges houses. The keyboard player was even more disturbing. We were sure that they finished the set early because he was electronically tagged and had to go home because of a curfew. However that did not dampen the instructors spirits so a good night was had with more leg pulling and good humour.

Day Four -

Another early start as we headed off to the airport. And for some it was an especially early start. The previous evening we had all put our clocks forward due to the change to British summer time. However their iPhones then changed again making them 1 hour ahead of everyone else. Three instructors were waiting outside the restaurant an hour before it opened for breakfast because their smart-phones were smarter than they were. So in the space of the weekend we put our clocks forward when we arrived in Spain, put them back when we were in Spain and then put them back again when we arrived back in the UK. All very confusing!

Final goodbyes were said at the airport to Grandmaster Choy and Miss Au and then between the Gatwick and Luton flights. Still great friends all the instructors set off for home after a very tiring 4 days.



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Normal life has its challenges and priorities and all instructors feel divided between attending the events and running their own lives. However once we are all together in Spain doing Taekwon Do and enjoying each others company those divisions soon disappear. When we sit back and look at the pictures afterwards we all agree what a great event these sessions are. Long and hard as they are, they are a great investment for the future of the BUTF. Thank you to Grandmaster Choy and Miss Au who arrange the events and thank you to all the instructor who make it such a great event to attend.