

AMERICAN BLACK BELT ACADEMY CHALLENGE

Challengers Kristine Labhart, Gina DeBelle and Bruce Adams



Left Photo Back Row (Left to right): Kenny Cummings, Sal Zangari, Gina DeBelle, Bruce Adams, Kristine Labhart, Mike Celona, Steven Rosenthal.
Left Photo Front Row: Catherine Cummings and Lisa Markawicz

Master Instructor, Sal Zangari (Master Z) invited PhillyFIT Magazine to participate in a Black Belt Challenge at the American Black Belt Academy. Kristine Labhart, Gina DeBelle and Bruce Adams accepted the invitation with a little apprehension but enough interest to gain the confidence to meet Master Z head on.

When the PhillyFIT challengers arrived, the group was kindly greeted and immediately given official uniforms to wear. After changing into their new gear, they met the other instructors and students who were participating in the class. Everyone was extremely polite and respectful, to both the newcomers and to each other. In time it was obvious that this exemplary behavior was fostered at least partially by Master Z and the American Black Belt Academy.

To begin we bowed in and started to learn punches, kicks, and blocks using a martial arts style called Tang Soo Do. Tang Soo Do uses primarily kicks and punches, but also incorporates a variety of joint locks, throws, and sweeps. For our purposes we focused mainly on the punches, kicks, and blocks.

Master Z took us through the moves step by step. He was very patient and would not allow us to give up on ourselves. His approach was very down to earth yet he never lost command of the room. There were also no egos in the room. Regardless of the color belt that was being worn, everyone was very helpful and respectful towards each other. Master Z said, "The color of the belt does not matter, it's the color of the heart that matters." It is obvious that this motto has been fully embraced at the American Black Belt Academy.

Next we paired up with black belts

from the Academy and conducted kicking drills on the pad. We followed this with the Black Belt Physical Stamina Test. This test is comprised of eight minutes of jumping rope with 1,000 reps as your goal, one minute of push ups with 60 reps as your goal, and one minute of sit ups with 60 reps as your goal. Bruce went first on the jump rope and made it look easy by completing 1,057 reps in eight minutes. Kristine & Gina also fared well by each completing approximately 850+ reps on the jump rope. All three challengers either completed or came close to their goals in the push up and sit up tests.

After the grueling physical stamina test, we were given a short break and then returned to do kicking drills on the heavy bag. Some of the Academy's students joined us for this. Boy do they make it look easy! Finally we put on boxing gloves and were once again paired up with black belt students to spar for three rounds. This was our opportunity to pull everything we learned together and put it into action. We finished off with an incredible leg stretch with the assistance of the instructors and students. Finally it was time to bow out.

The American Black Belt Academy, the Leader in Self-Defense and Physical Fitness, has been providing the community with quality martial arts instruction since it first opened in South Philadelphia in 1994. The focus is on striving to achieve excellence in technique as well as

balance in character.

Studies have shown that Martial Arts are beneficial to men and women of all ages. Children develop confidence, self-esteem, and discipline. Not only that, but they learn how to become goal-oriented, creating a desire to excel in whatever they do. These are characteristics in which martial arts instill, characteristics that will carry into their adult lives. Adults have found that Martial Arts are an effective means to lose weight, get in shape, and relieve stress. Also, martial arts are one of the few physical activities in which parent and child can participate together, developing a stronger bond, and providing a chance for parents to spend the ever-important "quality time" with their children.

Classes are taught by certified black belt instructors, who care about their students, and conduct themselves accordingly. They help students to learn and to improve themselves through positive support and encouragement, not through intimidation! This type of program can without a doubt help an individual grow spiritually, mentally, and physically!!!!

For more information: American BLACK BELT Academy

614 2nd St. Pike Southampton, PA
215-396-9420

1816 S. 11th St. Philadelphia, PA
215-462-8671

www.americanblackbeltacademy.net