

# SPORTS

## TAEKWON-DO

### Two students from Friendly City Taekwon-Do in Woodstock became first-degree black belts

By [Greg Colgan](#), Sentinel-Review

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Jacob Haig, centre, and Nikolas Kolovos, right, stand with Friendly City Taekwon-Do head instructor Don Edmiston, left, after they became the latest students to earn their black belt. For both students, it's been a long journey to achieve the distinction of a first-degree black belt, that allows greater responsibility and expectations. GREG COLGAN/QMI Agency/Sentinel-Review

When you earn a black belt in taekwondo, most people think it's the peak of the martial art, but it's only the beginning.

Two students at Friendly City Taekwon-Do, Jacob Haig and Nikolas Kolovos, are about to find that out after earning their first-degree black belt, but their head instructor thinks they're more than capable.

"When you get your black belt, people don't automatically respect you," Friendly City Taekwon-Do head instructor Don Edmiston said. "You have to earn it by showing them there's a reason you have it by keeping other students motivated and help them by guiding them down the right path."

The testing took four hours, but not before both had to endure 40 minutes of physical conditioning beforehand. It's something that takes years to achieve, both Jacob and Nikolas said.

"It took a long time," Jacob said. "First you go through the belt levels and that takes many years."

To pass, you have to survive between four to six hours of physical and mental testing ranging from sparring, patterns and kicking drills to citing the meaning of each belt to demonstrating a general knowledge of the sport, Edmiston said.

Once they found out they both secured their belts, each had the same emotion.

“Relief,” both said in unison.

“It was instant relief,” Nikolas added.

For Jacob and Nikolas, it’s a journey that began long ago.

Jacob, 14, and a Grade 9 student at Huron Park, first enrolled in taekwondo when he was seven after his mom asked if he wanted to be involved in any sports.

“I remember as a little kid I was always fascinated with martial arts movies,” he said. “She signed me up for it and throughout the years I’ve never thought of leaving.”

Nikolas, 15, and a Grade 10 student at Huron Park, first joined when he was six and, after he grabbed a hold of the sport, he’s never let go.

Now with the extra weight of having a black belt – two of the almost 20 Edmiston has trained through his school – Jacob and Nikolas can anticipate more expectations.

“There’s more responsibilities,” Nikolas said. “You’re looked up to in a leadership role in the class, and people rely on you to lead the class and be responsible for other training. You have to be more out there and help the young ones.”

Edmiston has taught both for most of their time in martial arts.

“It’s a pretty proud moment,” he said of the two earning their belts. “A lot of people don’t understand that when you get your first-degree black belt ... that’s when taekwondo really starts.

“It means you’ve got your fundamentals and now it’s making everything more perfect,” he added.

With a black belt going up to a ninth-degree, neither intend to stop anytime soon.

“I see myself taking this a long way in life because I’m not done yet,” Jacob said. “There’s still a long way to go and it’s useful to have the rest of my life.”

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