

Why I Train at Phoenix Gym;

By Ben Hanson

For many people the thought of getting in the ring with another human being, often with the intention of taking your head off, would scare them senseless. But not me. Believe it or not it calms me.

Many people see boxing, kickboxing or combat sports in general as a violent pursuit. For those in the know, this couldn't be further from the truth. Let me explain.

I was born with a few hurdles, you could say, laid out before me. By 10 years of age my kidneys were ineffective and I spent some two years on dialysis, much of this time feeling very sick and sorry for myself. To add injury to insult I was born with fingers and toes missing (I'm not much to look at either for that matter).

After my transplant (thanks Mum!!) I took up martial arts training. I'm not sure where the passion came from, I suppose because I had been bullied through nearly every day of my early schooling and well into my high school career I fought off bullies and kids who didn't understand this weird (read different) looking classmate. During these formative years I suppose I got used to the feeling of fear. I was smaller than the other kids, different, and would often be intimidated physically and psychologically by larger or older school yard colleagues!!

Martial arts training from my early teens taught me a kind of confidence, gave me some comradery with my martial brothers and sisters and helped develop the usual virtues to one degree or another that most martial arts clubs and schools promote.

By the time I was 30 years old I knew that something was missing. Sure I had learnt a lot in my martial training, I had competed on a limited basis and I could throw some cool jumping, spinning kicks and that movie-type stuff. I hadn't really tested myself though, not really! This is when I came upon Phoenix Gym here in Canberra some eight years ago. Straight away I knew I was onto something special. Any ego I brought with me was soon destroyed in a puddle of sweat beneath my heaving torso from the first 10 minutes of the warm-up!!

Over the weeks and months (and Years) that followed my physical, mental and spiritual character was stripped bare and brought sharply into focus at the same time. Real virtues such as never quitting, finding ways to win and to survive (especially when you are a very average almost forty year old taking a beating in the ring or on the mats from a 25 year old elite athlete) became very important in both my training, and more importantly in my everyday life. I learnt discipline beyond what I thought I was capable of. I achieved levels of fitness, toughness and personal well-being beyond anything I or my medical professionals had ever imagined.

And this is why I train at Phoenix Gym. I continue to face hurdles from all aspects of my life, professional, family life, health and more. Training at Phoenix is more than just kicking and punching, grappling and building big muscles. It is about giving you the strength to meet all challenges in the right

ways. Sometimes head on, sometimes more tactically, but always with a smile on your face knowing that you are growing as a human being.

So this brings me back to the idea of jumping in the ring, testing yourself physically, emotionally and spiritually. Nothing that happens in the ring can compare to what life can throw at you. At least in the ring, you know the rules, you know where you stand with your training partners and you learn very quickly to rely on your own fitness, intelligence and strength of will.

I would strongly recommend this type of training for all peoples from all ages and walks of life!!

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