

SENSEI'S BLOGS:

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The News Cameras Were Not Rolling

The news cameras were not rolling. The photographers were not to be seen. The journalists wrote no glowing accounts... no jubilant, cheering crowds. No politicians to praise the effort or bask in reflected glory. This young persons' epic solo journey came to an end in front of forty family, colleagues and friends.

Were there seemingly insurmountable barriers? Was there personal risk and danger? Did the task require great fortitude and perseverance? Did many question whether success was even achievable? Did the young person rise up to reach for a long cherished dream? Yes to all.

This journey was not one of months... it lasted seven and a half years. The final hour was the most taxing and difficult.

At the end the young person addressed those present. This in itself was a challenge because he can speak only in a handful of broken words. Looking into the eyes of each person he nodded and said "Mum... thanks". "Dad". "Jess" "Jan". His voice broke. But he went on. "Amy, Geoff, Jo, Bruce". "Thanks". People with Down syndrome can be difficult to understand at times but we all understood him. There was not a dry eye that afternoon.

His dream did not involve the colour pink. The colour of his dream was black. A black cotton belt. That belt sat in a drawer in my office for six years and every few months he would ask to see it. That simple act would sustain him over the coming months as he trained. And train he did. In the heat and in the cold. When he was tired and when he was injured. At the end of class I would nod to confirm his effort and sometimes he would say "Soon... me... black belt. Same as you Sensei." And I would reply "Yes, Alex... soon".

And then his day arrived. Alex had studied and trained in one of the world's most demanding Koryu (traditional) martial systems – the *Shinto Muso Ryu*. Wielding in turn a sword and a four foot staff he had mastered a long and complex series of movements, all performed to Japanese commands. It can be fast and physical and there is little room for error. Alex was tested... and he passed. His dream was realised. That simple black belt was his.



So where did we find Alex that evening? Was he basking in his success with friends and admirers? Relaxing now he had accomplished his goal?

No. Alex was in the Dojo again that night, black belt out of sight beneath his hakama. Somewhere deep inside he had discovered that journeys do not end.





Effort does not stop. This is not something Alex can tell you. He can only show you.

At the nights end we sat beside each other and I asked him why he had come. His reply... "Help you... help people. Black belts... help people." "Same as you now Sensei."

I said "Yes, Alex. Same as me."

David Dangerfield

