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GM Taejoon Le

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**This month we present the latest installment of the article that has been familiarizing us with the weekly activities held at the Hwa Rang Do European Center, located in Luxembourg, where GM Taejoon Lee is teaching his classes in recent years.**

# Marco Mattiucci

## e Luxembourg



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### ***Starting with Gibon Kwonbop:***

Gibon Kwonbops are performed in the beginning during the First & Second Classes of the week. This is also an illustration from a small segment of class on how Grandmaster Lee teaches the students about self-empowerment, about life through the Martial Art of Hwa Rang Do®. What he teaches transcends the mat, transforming the individual to not only better face the challenges of life, but to overcome, prevail, and thrive.

After warming up to get the blood circulating to lubricate the muscles and the joints, the class lines up for the line-drill. Everyone waits anxiously as Grandmaster Lee sets them in the proper stances, preparing them to execute the first kick/punch combinations (Gibon Kwonbop), as prescribed by each rank. The goal is to complete the length of the Dojang floor, executing the Gibon Kwonbop by continuously chaining them in a line as quickly as possible without falling down as though you are actually attacking an opponent.

Then, when you reach the end, gasping for breath you must do core exercises; first, sit-ups and then knuckle pushups on the hard wood floor only touching the first two large knuckles. Once finished, you have to get back to the line where you started, all the way at the other side of the Dojang floor by doing deep squats, exploding into the air with aerial kicks to only repeat it all over again.



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Grandmaster Lee (Kuksanim) is poised with an eye of an eagle over all the students ready to spot any mistakes. It is quite impressive to know that he has complete command and control of the class and that he sees all things no matter how large the class may be, even people who are watching on the sidelines. The entire class is in motion and from what seems like chaos with thousands of parts moving all at once, Kuksanim swoops down at one of the students, identifying even the most minute errors. "Stop! Your foot position is incorrect. You change the angle of the kicking leg by the pivoting of your standing foot. Don't forget it!"

Then another, like an eagle to its prey, "I've told you many times to always look before you spin. You cannot hit what you cannot see. How many times must I tell you before you fix it?" The student stands frozen, like a deer seeing headlights. Kuksanim replies for him, "Once! It should only take once. Hurry, keep the line moving! Fix it as you go. No movement backwards, only forwards and such is with life."

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What feels like a never-ending barrage of constant, explosive movements comes to a screeching halt as Kusanim commands, "GIMAJASAE!" Everyone instantly squats down into a deep horse stance with their arms stretched out in front of them. "Deep squats, ready go!" The entire class, "Hana (1), dur (2), sett (3), nett (4),... yul (10)."

"Hold!" As he drops even lower, only inches off the ground, Kusanim, "Deeper, lower, come down as low as me." The class is in agony as their legs begin to shake uncontrollably with expressions of extreme pain, sweat streaming down their faces.

Some of the students look as though they are ready to give up. Kusanim, "No, don't put your hands on your legs. Mind over matter. Don't focus on the pain; you're much stronger than that. Don't worry; I promise you, you will not die. Smile, only smiling, no frowning." As the students desperately try to change their agonizing expressions, they make some amusing facial gestures, causing everyone to burst into laughter. "Hold, a little longer. The more you think about when it will end, the harder it will become. Just relax and breathe, don't fight the pain, move into it." The students are ready to collapse and which seemed like an eternity, was only a few minutes. "Come back!" Everyone lets out a big Kiap (Power Yell) and stands up to ready position....

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### ***“Conquering Fear” Conclusion of Class:***

This is only a quarter of the class. As the class continues, the students learn countless new moves, correct and rectify old techniques, pushed beyond what they thought was possible, breaking through their self-imposed limits, riding an emotional roller-coaster of highs and lows, nothing wasted, every second used to it's fullest potential, thinking that they have all hit the wall, they are inspired to push through as the class ends in a crescendo, coming to a calm state of meditation in a tranquil bliss, Kuksanim speaks:

“I am not here to please you and make you feel good. That's what a prostitute does. You pay them to make you feel good. And, I am not a prostitute. I am a teacher, I am here to teach you, to teach you the truth about yourself by stripping away layer by layer the lies you, others, society have built to hide, to protect, to survive. And, when you discover the truth about yourself, it will hurt, it will frighten you, and every part of your being will want to run, to hide, find ways to rid the pain. All of you have a choice, to run and hide in your self-delusions of grandeur enslaved by fear for a momentary consolation, or to stand-tall and face the deepest, darkest demons within you, slaying that dragon once and for all. How will you do it you ask? By courage, by becoming fearless and that is what I will attempt to teach you and help you to free yourselves from the bondage of fear. Fear is your enemy, it is irrational, it is ruthless, it is powerful, it is merciless, it is evil.

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Conquering your fears should ultimately be the most important task in your life and in so doing you become free, free not to do whatever you want, but free to do what is right. The only way to overcome your fears is by embracing the worst outcome, the greatest consequences. Fear controls you through the threats of his minions, pain and suffering. Therefore, in order to defeat the enemy, you must render his threats harmless. That which you are afraid, is the very thing that you must do. You cannot ignore it, you cannot deny it, whatever weaknesses you possess is the very thing that your enemy will seek to use to destroy you.

Our greatest fear is death and our greatest weakness is the desire for immortality and the fulfillment of happiness in life. I have told you countless times that I am not here to train you to be an athlete, to win trophies and medals only enhancing your delusions; I am here to train you to be a "Warrior", a "Hwarang"! And, as a Hwarang one must be fearless in battle, unafraid to die. For some of you, your greatest fear is life, and your greatest desire is to abandon it. However, this is not an act of courage, but an act of cowardice. As a Hwarang one must only die through the sacrifice of one's life in order to save others. And, the only way that there's value in self-sacrifice is that one must have love for life. It will be my job to seek that weakness and help you to fortify it, strengthen it, not by protecting it, but by setting it free.

What has been done for all of your lives cannot be undone in a moment. It will take time and you will succeed as long as you take each step forward, never quitting, then you will arrive at your destination, and you will succeed. Only failure is in quitting! But know this, everything, especially your irrational mind will try to stop you, and that is called doubt. Doubt is the belief that you will fail no matter what; faith is the belief in hope no matter what. Doubt will do everything in its power to sabotage, to force you toward self-destruction, taking comfort in familiarity of misery, repeating the same cycle of negative programming, proving that doubt was always right, that you will only fail and there's no hope. Doubt is selfish and only strives to fulfill itself. Hope is selfless and only strives to please God.

It is my hope that through the training in Hwa Rang Do that you will be able to keep in check your fears, diminish your doubts; strengthen your faith, regaining hope, and some sense of calmness and peace within you to hear God calling you. That, yes you are His children, that you are made in His image, that He has never left you, and with His help that you may completely conquer fear and gain victory over evil!"

Kuksanim – Grandmaster Taejoon Lee

The loud sound of two claps wakes the students from deep thought.

"Come to your knees, hand in proper position. Repeat, Hwa Rang Do Mengsae!"

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### *The class in unison sounds off:*

SA GUN E CHOONG – Loyalty to one's King and Country  
SA CHIN E HYO – Loyalty to one's parents and teachers  
KYO WOO E SHIN – Trust and brotherhood among friends  
IM JEON MU TWAE – Courage never to retreat in the face of the enemy  
SAL SENG YOO TECH – Justice never to take a life without a cause

IN – Humanity  
EUI - Justice  
YAE - Courtesy  
JI - Wisdom  
SHIN - Trust  
SUN - Goodness  
DUK – Virtue  
CHOONG – Loyalty  
YONG – Courage

The class ends as it had begun, with a deep formal bow to Kuksanim, and his father, the Founder of Hwa Rang Do, Dr. Joo Bang Lee. With this the class ends and as well as the week-long training, until next week, and after that, and after that...



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