

THE DRAGONFIRE



**HOT News
from the Studio**

sdssportsmouth@aol.com

www.sdssportsmouth.com

603-828-6848

**601 Islington Street
Portsmouth, NH
03801**



Portsmouth, September 2026

DON'T MISS OUT! DUAL NUNCHAKU FORM!



There's still time to sign up. The list is in the front room (on the window). This seminar has been rescheduled from its original date in January. It's probably your last chance to learn this awesome form taught by our very own Black Belt student Joshua Scoggins. Josh, for many years, has studied in various forms of martial arts, and obviously-most lately-in our system. This should be a fun afternoon!

DATE: Saturday, September 12th

TIME: 12:00 to 2:00pm

WHERE: Portsmouth Studio

COST: \$75/person Additional family members \$10 off

Did you know???

The Shuang Jie Gun (pronounced "schwong jyeesh gwaun", and meaning two-sectioned stick) have been traced back to Okinawa, a Japanese territory sound of mainland Japan.

-Con't. from page 1

Though there is no clear answer as to who created the weapon and where it first appeared, the most credible theory lies in its similarity to the Okinawan horse bit or *muge* (moo-ghay).



(The muge pictured here were made by www.seaholme.net in England to the size and specifications of those used by Matayoshi Shinpo Sensei.)

Some believe the immigrants from China may have brought the weapon with them, as the word 'nunchaku' is not of Japanese or Okinawan origin, but Chinese (*nng-chat-kun*).

A popular citation for this idea comes from a military book called *Wujing Zongyao*, from the 1040s, in which a description for a weapon that sounds like our modern-day nunchaku is provided. Other theories as to the origin of this weapon include – a flail used to thresh crops, trade with the Philippines who used a similar weapon, and a warning clapper carried by night watchmen.

No matter how nunchaku came to be, it has become an iconic martial arts weapon, thanks in no small part to Bruce Lee's expertise and showcasing of it in some of his most popular films. As a result of the rise in popularity, many martial arts styles have incorporated this weapon, Kobudo, Karate, Hapkido, Eskrima, Tae Kwon Do, to name but a few. In Kung Fu, nunchaku are most often associated with southern China schools.

****Our thanks to Josh for providing some history into the weapon.****

Other things to know: The seminar is an introductory one, designed to understand the weapon's mechanics, as well as provide a few basic combinations and exercises to guide the students in mastering the weapon with both hands. Don't be afraid of a few small bumps in the process. They happen. That's why we use the *foam*-covered weapons!

There's no minimum belt rank to participate. Interested in learning? Get your name on the list and order your weapons asap!

Places to order: www.martialartsmart.com or www.centurymartialarts.com - or any other martial arts website.

September Birthdays...

Jacob H. Sept. 1

Locke B. Sept. 10



BACK TO SCHOOL REMINDERS:

Drivers: Slow Down! Lots of kids out & about.

Kids: Look both ways before crossing the street or approaching/leaving a school bus stop.

Everyone: Chill. Getting back into the routine takes a little time after being on a more relaxed summer schedule. Things will sort themselves out.



Black Belt: Behind the Curtain

There's always been this mythical and near-mystical idea of what a Black Belt is. In American culture, that probably started with the Bruce Lee era of movies and television shows and ballooned from there.

But what is a Black Belt, really? To be extremely obvious, it's a piece of black-colored cloth one ties around their waist to depict a martial arts rank.

Yeah, OK. But seriously. It's more than that. Correct? When one has a Black Belt, it means the person who earned it is a super-talented, almost deadly martial artist. Right?

Well, not really. Earning a Black Belt is a journey. For some, a very long journey in time, commitment, and dedication to skill building. For others, maybe less of a time thing because of inherent talents, but still a journey requiring commitment and dedication.

Each journey is uniquely individual.

That seems an obvious statement. But it often gets forgotten. Preconceived notions of minimal standards, expectations of performance, and a whole host of other thoughts get in the way of a simple truth. A Black Belt is the culmination of an individual's journey to be the best they can be, based on their specific, individual circumstances.

People in general have this inherent need to compare themselves to others. Good or bad, it's a fact of life. Perhaps it's part of a thought process that figures if "so-and-so" can get a Black Belt, then obviously anyone can, and since I'm better, it only seems right I don't have to work as hard as I've been working.

Hard to say. But instructors everywhere have seen the results of such a mindset, even if the above description isn't *exactly* correct.

And it's both disturbing and sad. Disturbing because someone with that mindset, who is very talented, fails to reach their full potential. Sad for the same reason, but also because it demonstrates a lack of understanding behind the individual mental, emotional, and physical commitment of a true martial artist.

This might be a good time to observe that students often have a limited perspective of the overall path to a Black Belt. Instructors, by contrast, assuming they've been at it for a goodly number of years, have seen all levels of talent, commitment, and skills – or lack thereof. Knowing when an individual can be pushed to a higher and higher level *because* of talents and skills, versus understanding when too much pushing results in total discouragement and withdrawal from the journey is.... tricky.

Those students who have the physical capability to hit the low stances are pushed to get lower. To hold those stances, and to move out of them with strength and grace. Some students simply can't do that. Be it age, physical limitations, or some other reason, to expect that student to perform at the same level as the one who has the capacity to do so is unrealistic.

That doesn't mean the instructor won't continue to encourage the student to get better. But reality must be accepted. There are other aspects that can be focused on, such as tempo, hand positions, power, etc. Strong stances can be achieved at any level, adapted to a person's capability. All will assist the student to become a better martial artist than they were before. But do they reach the same standards as someone else?

That depends on how you define "standards". Which goes back to that individually unique path of each person's journey.

As instructors, we've seen where someone starts from. We've seen the progress, the setbacks, and the mental and physical struggles. We've seen both the large and small successes of each student, as well as the frustrations that threaten to shut down continued efforts. We often know the backstories that aren't shared with other students. We watch the determination conquer the hidden, and sometimes not-so-hidden fears. We judge readiness for advancement based on all these combined factors.

Does that mean some will look awesomely, fantastically, unbelievably phenomenal when they test for their next rank, be that Black Belt or something else?

Yes.

Does it mean that some will *not* look spectacularly awesome, etc. when they test?

Also yes. (*But they **will** when compared only to themselves!*)

And the big question: Does it mean one person is more deserving than the other?

No.

Can't get more basic than that.

CALENDAR UPDATES:

STUDIO BELT ADVANCEMENTS	STUDIO CLOSURES	SPECIAL EVENTS
October 10 December 12 February 13	September 4-7 (<i>Labor Day</i>) September 19 November 26-29 (<i>Thanksgiving</i>) December 24-27 (<i>Christmas</i>) January 1	October 23 Spooky Friday (4:30-5:30pm) November 7 Black Belt/Black Sash Testing w/ GM DeMasco

September dates of note:

September 7 th	Labor Day
September 11 th	Patriot Day (<i>Day of Service and Remembrance</i>) Rosh Hashanah
September 13 th	Grandparents Day
September 20 th	Yom Kippur
September 22 nd	First Day of Autumn

Potential is a spark; belief is the flame. — Anonymous

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