

# Tae Kwon Do Students Earn First-Degree Black Belts

Photo and article by Melany Warga

It took perseverance for three students of Milan Tae Kwon Do to demonstrate their skills and knowledge of the martial art to instructors and earn their first-degree black belts in April, following testing in Plymouth, MI.



Three Milan Tae Kwon Do students earn black belts. From left to right - Master Dykes, Daniela Page Sander, Amanda Carson and David Clark.

The faces of Amanda Carson, 16, Daniela Page Sander, 13, and David Clark, 12, light up when asked how it feels to have achieved a black belt.

“Amazing”, says Amanda. “There’s no words to describe it. We reached one of our top life goals. That’s something we’ve all been striving for, for a very, very, long time. The stuff we went through, it’s just amazing to learn we’ve achieved this, we’re past this part, and now a whole new chapter of our life has started”.

The students began their journeys wearing a white belt, individually worked their way through all the color belts, eventually leading to the black belt pre-test, called a black belt review board.

“It tests them mentally, physically, emotionally. Every aspect it tests”, says Ashley Dykes of Milan Tae Kwon Do.

The Review Board was held on March 30, 2012 at Milan Tae Kwon Do in Milan, MI. It was closed off to the public. The students tested in front of Master Robert Christian

Dykes of Milan Tae Kwon Do and his instructors, Master Russell Gale and Master Tanya Panizzo, both of Midwest Tae Kwon Do. The test lasted about five hours.

“Excruciating”, is how Amanda recounts the Review Board to be.

“It was the most memorable day of my life, that’s for sure”, stated Daniela in regard to the pre-test.

While recalling some of the challenges he had to overcome while trying to achieve the black belt, David said, “I really had to just believe in myself so I could never give up”.

After passing their pre-tests, the students moved on to the black belt test. Testing was on April 14, 2012 at Midwest Tae Kwon Do in Plymouth, MI, where the students again tested in front of Master Dykes, Master Gale and Master Panizzo. Families of the students were permitted to attend.

“They were able to show their families what they have learned to this point”, added Ashley Dykes.

To help the students prepare for the Review Board, Master Dykes trained with them on weekends. The students also physically trained during their personal time.

In addition to passing the black belt test, the students were required to participate in at least two tournaments, two demonstrations and complete two community services. They were also required to submit a portfolio, a one-page biography, and write a one page essay titled “What A Black Belt Would Mean To Me”.

Amanda has been training with Milan Tae Kwon Do for four and a half years and is their only female adult black belt. Daniela has been training with Milan Tae Kwon Do on and off for nine years and is their only female junior black belt. David has been training with Milan Tae Kwon Do for three years and is a junior black belt.

Their black belts are certified by the Kukkiwon, which is the World Taekwondo Headquarters located in Seoul, South Korea. Having this certification means their black belts will always be recognized in all taekwondo schools and associations around the world.