The origin of Kuk Sool Won

Kuk sool won is a martial art which originated in Korea and was founded by Kuk Sa Nim who founded in in 1958. Even though the martial art has only been around for 61 years its story started thousands of years ago in a small kingdom called Paekche which was located on the western coat of the Korean peninsula along the yellow sea. The founder of this kingdom was king On- Cho who was the son of Chung-mong who was the founder of the Koguryo kingdom. In 11 BC, 300 warriors came from the small nation of Paekche to siege the capital of Kwangju. However, the king On-Cho refuse to respond to his enemies and decided to hold them off until they retreated. He used the swiftest horsemen and they defeated more warriors. The enemy sent more men, but they were still unable to defeat the Paekche warriors. It was King On-Cho ‘s leadership and martial art genius that secured the establishment of Paekche so that it could grow and develop for centuries to come.

Around 369 AD Paekche with King Kun-cho-go as the leader had managed to obtain military superiority with its neighbour Koguro. The nations victories kept coming when they attacked the capital with 30,000 troupes. Even the most powerful kingdoms were failing to win against their troupes. However, because of the destruction of the libraries at this time not much survives of the records survived so this is where the first problem appears when looking for ancient Korean martial art writing and the history of it. However, one off the things that they could not eliminate was Korea’s oral history but even the oral history came close to elimination after the time of these large battles. Fortunately, for those who study Kuk sool won today the founder was in the right place at the right time to inherit much of Koreas ancient martial art techniques which they used to win and take over kingdoms. The secret techniques have been passed down generation through oral tradition and secret writings.

Therefore, there is no real way to say whether we still practice martial arts the same way we did as much of the modern day kuk sool has been attributed to learning from or outright copying the Chinese or Japanese arts. This is because in modern history it is shown that Korea had the post powerful martial arts and warriors throughout history. So, the reason some of it comes from these other martial arts is because there are many examples of China and Japan borrowing Koreas martial art knowledge. An example of this is when the Chinese were aided by Korea when they designed armour for them. As history moved on the Paekche armour became known as Chinese armour. There is proof of this so who is to say that the same didn’t happen with Koreas martial arts moves. No one knows for sure every detail of the stories or how Kuk Sool Won really came about but what we can be sure on is that Koreans continued to pass down with the greatest respect their own hard work and effective skills. The loyalty to the teacher and secret teachings are still practiced in modern day kuk sool and that helps us to connect us directly to the pass of kuk sool won.

In my experience with kuk sool, it is clear that loyalty is still a very important quality to have. You must stay loyal to your kuk sool school and you can’t train or compete with another team. Also, to succeed in kuk sool you must have commitment. I go 3 times a week totalling in three and a half hours per week. As well as that, it is recommended that you train outside of class as well. These traits are what still links us to the Korean martial arts which was around thousand of years ago.

Furthermore, everyone’s story in kuk sool is different and you can’t compare them. For me, it all started back in 2016 when I was 10 years old. At first, I started, and I found it fascinating how they count in Korean, say all the kicks in Korean and kihup (the loud noise made whenever they kicked or punched.) I stayed on and did my first test for my yellow striped belt, then I later tested for my yellow belt. By this time, I was starting to learn about the culture and even how to say some words and numbers in Korean. Because I made a lot of progress quickly, I didn’t have to test for half belts like everyone else but instead I went from yellow to blue to red to brown in a short space of time. Later, after around 2 years I promoted to DBN which is a black stripe. In order to get your black belt, you must get 8 black stripes onto your belt but your first and last test must be done in front of the grandmaster. This was nerve racking for me as I really want to pass which I did end up doing. After around 3 years of doing kuk sool I have gained 4 stripes and am testing for my black belt in late November. During my time, I have been to six tournaments in which three have been European and three have been UK. In total I have managed to get ten golds, six silver, two bronze and two copper. Since knowing martial arts, I feel safer and I feel that I could protect myself if I ever needed to. Living in todays world it is important that we are safe, and I think that this is a good way of insuring that. During my journey of kuk sool I feel as if not only have I become fitter, but I have become more confident and over all happier.

This then leads me on to the subject of can hobbies help us with our mental health. From a study, it shows that people who don’t participate in a team sport or activity are twice as likely to experience depression over a 12-month period. This is because being around people can release stress and help get your minds off things that may be worrying you. I also believe that this is because being around people who care about you and need you to help them succeed can make you feel appreciated and needed which helps which is often a result or cause of bad mental health. Studies also show that hobbies can help your mental health as they: improve physical health, help you sleep better, increase energy levels, positive moods, increase in social networks and boosted self esteem and confidence. I think that these are essential things that you need in order to live a happy life.

However, some people would disagree and say that distracting yourself doesn’t resolve the problem and it will always be there. But, distracting yourself is a positive thing for you to do because it clears your mind and can then help you to decide what is the best thing to happen in that particular situation. It isn’t healthy to always be worrying and over thinking things so therefore hobbies are helpful for your mental health.

To link this back to kuk sool won, in the martial arts not only is it kicking and punching but there is also meditation which is used before tests and sometimes tournaments. The whole point is to clear your mind and help you to forget what has been happening and just focus on what is happening at that moment in time. Finally, I believe that it helps with your confidence as everyone is so supportive and after a while you get used to demonstrating in front of large crowds of people. Having people around you who you know support what you do and want to see you succeed gives you the energy you need because you don’t want to disappoint them but make them proud. This gives you another reason to wake up every day and it gives you motivation to work hard.

In conclusion, the history of kuk sool won helped formed one of the most important things in my life and in others as well. Sports like these help with mental health and give people another reason to wake up in the morning and it gives them motivation to do well each day of their lives.

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Sources:

* Kuk sool won tournament book issue 12 and 13
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* [www.kuksoolwon-newmarket.co.uk](http://www.kuksoolwon-newmarket.co.uk)