

## What does it mean to be a Black Belt to me?

My name is Aarav Kular and I have been a Junior Black Belt for South Eastern School of Martial Arts for 1128 days since the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020, where I successfully achieved my Junior Black belt after unfortunately failing my grading the first time 7 months prior. I officially became a SESMA member 3396 days ago, on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2014, this is the day where my outlook and general perspective of life completely changed.

Ever since I first enrolled into Martial arts in 2014, I have always had the dream of holding my very own black belt in my hands. I used to watch other Junior and Senior black belts in my classes when I was younger and I would aspire to be like them when I was their age and successfully achieve a black belt. I remember the feeling of determination and a feeling of burning inside of me when I used to do my lower down gradings, and I would feel this because I knew that each grading I passed I would be a belt closer to grading for my black belt, and I knew that each grading I passed I had to keep self-improving myself, facing my new fears in taekwondo and further pursue my training regularly. I even came back from India a week early to do my Purple belt grading that is how dedicated I was and still am. I realized this was the mindset I had to live by to keep flourishing through the more difficult gradings.

1413 days after I joined SESMA, I was victorious in been awarded my second brown belt, it was at this point I realized how close I was to being able to grade for the belt that I had dreamed for since I was 5 years old. Furthermore, I required two mock gradings before being eligible to grade for my Junior black belt; I attained my two mock gradings in April 2019 and December 2019 which would be four months before I was supposedly going to grade for my black belt.

Moreover, the date arrived for my Junior Black belt grading in April 2020, and I can still remember that distinctive feeling of pure nervousness to this day which I felt three and a half years

ago; there were no words to describe the amount of emotions I had before the grading. Unfortunately, on that day in April 2019 I failed my Junior black belt; I can still precisely recall everyone being called up to be awarded with their Junior Black belt, and I knew that my name would never be called as it was getting closer to the end of the grading. I remember feeling pure sadness and disappointment in myself, I went home that day and cried for a ridiculous amount of time because I felt pure guilt in myself.

A few days later, I realized that failure is not the end for me, it's a learning point and something that occurs which I can take experience from. Heavy heartedly, I pursued my karate training and refined the mistakes that costed me my Junior black belt. On 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020 was the day that I had a second chance to prove why I deserved my Junior Black belt. I don't think I had ever felt so much pure anger in my life other than that day. Fortunately, I was awarded my Junior black belt that day which is a date I will never forget.

On that day, I realized that being a Black belt isn't just about having the actual belt and being able to call yourself one, it is about gaining respect, humility, integrity and discipline. I also learned that a black belt is not just about fighting; it is about using one's skills responsibly and ethically and understanding the gravity of the power one holds. The 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020, was the day my outlook and perspective of life changed forever.

To conclude, I am now four days away from my Senior black belt grading, and I am still feeling the same nerves that I felt days prior to my first Junior Black belt, but I will not let this repeat on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2023, I will do everything in my will power to achieve my Senior Black belt, even if it requires me feeling the same anger as I did on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020. Thank you.