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Wood River High School senior Evan Telford practices a kick. Photo courtesy of Evan Telford

MARTIAL ARTS BLACK BELT EVAN TELFORD

Always Finish What You Start

BY JONATHAN KANE

Wood River High School senior Evan Telford, carrying a 4.0 grade point average and a member of National Honor Society, is devoting his life to fitness and peak human performance.

Mainly, this is showcased through Evan's devotion to 11 years to martial arts, but can also be seen in his love of skiing and lacrosse. At Wood River, Evan is also a member of the Dixie Band and the Jazz Band, playing tenor saxophone.

"I've been active my whole life," Evan said. "A few years ago I really started getting serious about it."

Today, he is a 3rd-degree black belt in the Korean martial art Soo Bahk Do under the tutelage of Oliver Whitcomb.

A remark made while in a pre-test for a 2nd-degree black belt encouraged him. The instructor told him he had to go 'Rocky Balboa' if he wanted to take it to the next level.

"I had no idea who that was," Evan said with a laugh. "So I went back home and watched 'Rocky' for the first time. It was the coolest thing ever and very motivating. This was three years ago and ever since that's how I've been."

In four years Evan will be able to test for a 4th-degree black belt, with an 8 level being the highest. He began his training in first grade.

"I absolutely hated soccer and my mom felt I needed something to do," he said. "I was six and a friend was doing it so I went to a class and it just clicked."

"It's been amazing training with Oliver. He is the most intimidating person I've ever met, but his influence has been unbelievable. It's funny because he's made so many people cry – including little kids. Countless times he left me bawling in the car after class, but I'm proud that I never quit and kept coming back. He has told me that once you get your first black belt, that's when it gets serious."

Evan's favorite story happened when he was 5 years old.

"Oliver really clocked me in the side of the head around the time of my first black belt. He did it in front of the entire class and I was totally humiliated. It was intentional – to trigger my emotions. He said it was a commitment test and a lot of people would have been done, but I'm thankful he hit me that night."

Evan said that because of this, he feels he can "deal with a lot of things in life."

"I've learned so much and it's so practical. It's the one thing you can do in life that makes everything better – like stretching, breathing, focusing, discipline and meditation. Also, always finish what you start. That could be anything – homework or school. Stick with it and get the job done and don't flake out. It's a blessing if you can do it."

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Editor's Note: Anyone who would like to recommend a Blaine County School District student for The Weekly Sun's "Student Spotlight" feature should contact Jonathan Kane at jkjonkane@gmail.com.

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