

Fourth time's a Charm

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Bare hands snapping wooden planks in half, people hurling their bodies through the air towards their opponent and shouts of “hi-yah” filling the air. No, this isn’t a scene from the ‘Karate Kid’. Rather a typical day at taekwondo practice for sophomore Connor Robb.

Taekwondo, the art of the feet and hands, has been how Robb has spent his free time for the past eight years. With no interest in any other sports, taekwondo seemed like an interesting alternative. Once he started taking classes at *San-Mai Martial Arts* located in Millard, Neb., his mind was set on constantly improving and eventually reaching black belt status.

“The techniques were easy to pick up,” Robb said. “It took a long time to get good at them though. The hardest part was probably getting used to the intensity and duration of the testing process and practices.”

This past year, Robb finally acquired skunk belt status, the level at which he could then attempt the black belt test. The exam was roughly three and a half hours long and consisted of five different parts: floor drills, demonstrating the sequences of moves,

sparring, board breaking and a 30 minute run. Overall, Robb had to show perfection on everything he had learned so far.

The day had finally come for Robb to put his knowledge to the test. Unfortunately, his first go-around with the exam resulted in a failing score. It was the same story with both his second and third attempts, too. He couldn't prove to his instructors that he had mastered all that he had learned or that he had what it took to be a black belt. However, Robb wasn't giving up; his own internal motivation and support of his fellow classmates, including sophomore Garrett Zaporowski, pushed him to give it another try.

"Being a black belt is a lot more than just knowing the techniques," Zaporowski said. "The fourth time he [Robb] took the test we knew he had every aspect that a black belt should have. He never gave up because failing and giving up is more of a loss than failing and continuing to try."

Success, Robb had finally done it. He proved mastery in everything he had learned up to that point. Robb had finally passed the black belt exam with flying colors and was awarded with a certificate and, most importantly, black belt status. Another one of Robb's taekwondo classmates, sophomore Michelle Zhang, was elated when Robb had finally overcome the challenges of the test.

"I've been doing taekwondo with Connor for about eight years now," Zhang said. "I've seen him increase his flexibility and work extremely hard over the past few years. I honestly didn't think he was going to be able to get his black belt, but when I found out I was so happy and proud of him."

Never letting anything discourage him and with an unmatched work ethic, Robb was bound for success, even if it took four tries to reach it. You know what they say, 'fourth' time's a charm.