

The Hunter Valley Bash

By Peter Cutland

The Hunter Valley Bash was a 2 day training camp and the first in what we hope will be an annual training event. Held on the 14th and 15th of November, it was organized by Gary James of North Shore Martial Arts and held at Mt View High School in Cessnock. Students were a mix from Gary's classes, Walt Missingham's classes in Sydney and local students from Dragon Den Defences in Cessnock. We even had Michael from John Suttle's school in Queensland travel down on his own to participate.

After checking in to our accommodation we all gathered at Mt View High for a light supper and an official welcome from Gary, as well as from Leea and Lerryn Allsop from Dragon Den Defences who were hosting the camp and looking after catering for the weekend.

A restless night's sleep was quickly forgotten when we started at 8am with a boot camp. Pushups, situps and a short jog had a few people wondering what we were in for this weekend.

Filipino weapons was up next and Gary took us through a variety of techniques that catered for all the participants skill levels at a pace that allowed everyone time to absorb what they were shown.

Morning tea quickly came and passed and it was time for the beep test. It was amusing to watch everyone wear themselves out running back and forth across the basketball court. Knowing Brad Casey was up next with Thai Boxing, I decided to sit it out and save myself for the Thai work.

Brad never fails to disappoint when it comes to intensity in training and he took us through an hour and a half of Thai boxing drills and techniques that left a few people with bruised shins. Along with the drills, Brad gave us an informative talk on the history of Thai boxing and Krabi Krabong.

After lunch the next session was Krabi Krabong and I think we all could appreciate how fortunate we were to be given a small glimpse of an art that is rarely taught. The highlight for a lot of the students was getting to wield a real sword and feel the difference it makes compared to training with Kali sticks.

The last session saw Gary teaching us his blend of JKD and Silat entries and hand techniques.

A quick shower at our accommodation and we were back at the school for a BBQ. After this we made our way to Little's Winery for some wine tasting and relaxation.

Sunday morning started with some pad drills to warm up and some killer shoulder exercises and conditioning drills.

We spent the morning looking at self defence applications and entries followed up by some Capoeira. It was great to see Christian doing a display of some of the powerful kicks that Capoeira has to offer.

Lunchtime passed and I think we were all starting to feel the effects of a solid training weekend. We were all moving slower but we all continued to work our way through the close range combat and grappling Gary was demonstrating.

The training finished with locking and escapes which Gary gave students the opportunity to come up with locks and be shown how to counter and escape them.

At the end of the day there was a small presentation where we all receive certificates for participating and the raffle prizes were given away.

Overall the camp was a great success. It gave us the chance to get together with other schools and share our love for martial arts, make new friends, catch up with old friends and learn a lot of new things along the way.

I would like to thank Gary for all the time and effort he put in to making the camp educational, enjoyable and affordable for all of those who attended. It's hard to put together an event like this and keep so many people happy. I don't think anyone went home disappointed. I know all who attended from Walt's classes are still talking about how good it was. Also, thank you for allowing me to help with the organizing and allowing me to help with demonstrations.

I would also like to thank Leea and Lerryn Allsop from Dragon Den Defences and their students, for the fantastic effort they put in to all the catering, making sure there was always food available at every break. Thank you to Mr Conroy Deputy Principal of Mt View High School for providing the venue and to Mayor Alison Davey for taking the time to come and present the certificates and close the event.