

John v Thom Round 9 ... Martial arts

Everybody's kung fu fighting ... well, John and Thom are this week as they go head to head in a martial arts dancing contest. Read about – and listen to – their previous challenges at www.bridlingtontoday.co.uk by clicking on the John v Thom link.

Karate kids

A NEW Year and a new set of challenges for John v Thom, with both making a New Year's resolution to win the most challenges in 2007.

They have returned after a short break over the holiday period, and after indulging in too many mince pies and chocolates and too much booze over Christmas, the first challenge on their return was ideal to help them burn off those extra pounds.

They took up an offer from nine-year-old Thomas Papworth to join his chums at the Xtreme Martial Arts class at the Personal Power gym in Bessingby.

Don't worry, the Free Press lads weren't getting to grips with each other and chucking one another to the floor, or bashing each other about the head.

Instead, they had to learn and perform a choreographed routine made up of

CHALLENGE 9: Martial arts
MENTOR: Nine-year-old Thomas Papworth and his XMA class
VENUE: Personal Power, Bessingby Way
RESULT: Thom, by a whisker
JOHN V THOM SCORE: 5-4 to Thom

martial arts moves, such as kicks, punches and weaves, all in time to The Eye Of The Tiger, the music from the Rocky films.

And once it was learnt, they had to perform the whole thing alone, in front of the children who taught them and a group of parents.

Lead instructor Chris Reen said: "They learnt martial arts moves, put into a demonstration form. Everything they



John and Thom with the XMA class and lead instructor Chris Reen.

learnt is what is taught in martial arts and it was a mixture of basic and advanced stuff.

"It is great for the kids because it teaches them fitness, discipline and self-defence, as well as about personal development and life skills, and boosts their confidence."

The students, aged between seven and 15, are all training to be instructors so they took it in turns to teach John and Thom the routine bit by bit.

Then, after they had done their performances, Thomas, a pupil at

Burlington Junior School, had to pick a winner, with a little help from his mum Annette and some of his class-mates.

He wanted to call it a draw but there are no draws in John v Thom.

So, by the narrowest of margins, the verdict went to Thom, who chalked up his fifth win in a row and took the overall lead in the contest for the first time.

Mr Reen said: "John kept his guard a bit too low at times, whereas Thom was louder on his shouts, but they both remembered the whole routine and there were a lot of moves there."

PERSONAL Power runs a range of classes covering martial arts and self-defence and has more than 200 students enrolled.

Courses are run for men, women and children, aged from four upwards, and the routine John and Thom learnt is one the youngsters perform when promoting the club at events such as Sewerby Gala and fun days.

"I thought they were awesome to learn all that in 50 minutes."

"The trouble is, whenever Rocky is on TV, they will be doing the routine they've learnt today when they hear the music."

Rocky on Tommy ... 'I don't feel like dancing'



JUST call me Bruce Lee! Or Jackie Chan! Heck, I could even be Steven Seagal with a performance like this.

I had never realised I could be so maneuverable. After some stiff early stages I was soon punching straight, weaving low and fighting like the best of them.

If I had brought my nunchuks and spinning death stars with me, John might still be recovering now.

For all my bravado, though, I was still being put to shame by the 20 or so kids for whom the class is designed.

The whole thing was terrific fun, even if both John and I did have to overcome the embarrassment of performing our routines to a room full of smirking people.

Eventually, it probably wasn't my ninja skills that won the day for me, and I'm more the flabby modern Rocky than the sleek original.

But, once again, my sparkling natural showmanship was enough to see John slink to the sidelines, as I came away with a fifth consecutive victory.

With The Eye Of The Tiger playing in the background, I felt a lot like Rocky dancing at the top of the steps in Philadelphia.

Things are looking good for me in the John v Thom series all of a sudden.

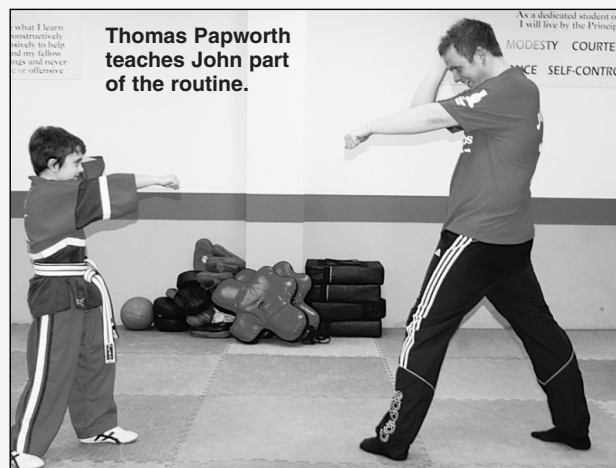
After dropping 4-0 behind in the early challenges, I have stabbed, painted and roundhouse kicked my way into a 5-4 lead.

Suddenly, John "Graceful In Defeat" Edwards has been replaced by an updated version, with added hissy fits and indignant huffs.

I think now he understands how I was feeling early on.

I'm not saying this winning streak is going to last forever but I'm certainly going to enjoy it while it does.

Now, where was I? Oh yes ... "I've got the eye of the tiger ..."



Thomas Papworth teaches John part of the routine.

SO Thom won because he made more noise when he was doing his punches and kicks.

Anyone who has heard him in the office will tell you how he makes more noise than he needs to.

But boy, did I give him a good run for his money.

The challenge was a mix between dancing and fighting.

I hate dancing, even after a lot of pints, and I'm basically just a gentle giant, so fighting is not in my nature.

Add in the fact that it was our most energetic task to date and you are more likely to find Thom in a barber's shop than me in a gym, and it involved performing in front of an audience, another of my pet hates, and you can see it wasn't exactly styled to suit me.

But anyone who watched me saw that I gave it 100% effort and really got into the spirit of things. And I have to admit, it was fun. Or as much fun as a gym can be.

The young students were a credit to themselves and the class and the way they taught us was fantastic.

They were still at school, but they weren't afraid to tell us to buck our ideas up, gave us encouragement when needed and it was high-fives all round when we got something right.

The kids have boundless energy and looked like they could have carried on for hours, but they haven't seen years of alcohol and late-night kebabs take their toll.

After 15 minutes I'm pretty sure my face was as red as my T-shirt but I wasn't going to give up.

Rocky never gave up and he was a winner.

I mastered the routine, spinning kicks and all, and put the comments from the spectators about how I would be feeling the effects the next morning to the back of my mind.

By the end of it, never mind dancing to the Rocky theme tune, I felt like I had gone 12 rounds with the man himself.

For days, muscles I didn't even know I had were aching.

No pain, no gain, they say.

But I had gone through the pain and had nothing to show for it.

But I'll draw on that and it will make me even more determined to end my losing streak next time.



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