

On To Greater Glory: Intermediates

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Having achieved some skill and knowledge in the martial arts, the intermediate student may assert his/her independence by challenging the practices or philosophies of the dojo. This makes the intermediate an annoyance in a well-established school. Either the challenger will have to adjust to the status quo or the status quo will subtly adjust by adopting some of the intermediate's ideas. Usually, it is some of each.

Every once in a while, either the dojo or the student is too stubborn to adjust. To avoid friction, the student simply leaves. In extreme cases, he/she is asked to leave, i.e. is kicked out. Of those who are dismissed, most find another school to find fault with. A small percentage of them, however, go on to greater glory.

If He Who Is Sure Of Himself (but has not achieved the rank or experience to be recognized as such) cannot find an adequate second school, he will often start teaching. Perhaps he will begin with a few friends. Perhaps he will acquire early success in applying his independent way of doing things. Often, however, that success is more a function of beginners accepting the method than it is the method itself.

Ivan Intermediate has left Joe's Established School of Ju-jutsu to found Ivan's Advanced Academy of Innovative Martial Arts. His academy is in his converted garage and his students are his girlfriend's brother and an old friend from high school who never wanted to lay out the cash to join a dojo. Soon each brings in a buddy and Ivan's *deshi* (disciples) have doubled. Ivan is excited because his insistence that one should always charge an attack has been readily accepted (where it was rejected at Joe's Established School), and proven by four young men to work: they are successful at jamming each other's techniques and converting them to counter techniques.

Then Ivan's girlfriend, two of *her* girlfriends and one of their twelve-year-old sons want to join. Ivan sees the chance to once again double his enrollment. But none of the new students want to rush a 25-year-old football player. Rather than admit his innovative theory has rather limited application, he tells them they must train harder and be tougher.

The tougher guys don't like mixing it up with smaller women and a 12-year-old boy, so two of them quit. Two of the women don't like being pushed to train harder. It isn't fun anymore, so they quit. Ivan's enrollment has been sliced in half. Of course, this is not his fault or the fault of his innovations or the result of his being unprepared to take on a leadership role. He just hasn't found the right students, or so he says to himself. Only a year before, he just hadn't found the right teacher. What he really hadn't found, in this writer's humble opinion, is the patience and stick-to-it-iveness to train until he was ready for greater glory.