

From Reluctant Return to Dojo To a busy family run dojo:

The Karate Journey of Sensei Damian:

Sensei Damian's journey in the world of Shotokan Karate is a testament to the enduring power of passion, the importance of mentorship, and the strength of family. His story began at the tender age of eight under the tutelage of Sensei Bob Chadwick. However, a club relocation brought an abrupt end to his early training. Little did he know, fate had a reunion in store.

Years later, in 2008, a chance encounter at a local swimming pool at Total Fitness in Bolton, reignited the flame. While accompanying his son Marcus, Damian bumped into Sensei Jason Netherton. Persuaded by a keen-to-train Marcus, Damian reluctantly stepped back onto the dojo floor.

This return proved to be transformative. Training under the watchful eye of Sensei Jason, alongside an impressive team of instructors including Sensei George Best, Sensei John Marsh, Sensei Ronnie Christopher, Sensei Elwyn Hall, and the late Sensei Randy Williams, Damian rediscovered his love for traditional Shotokan. He progressed steadily through his Kyu grades, dedicating himself to training and entering competitions, even securing 3rd place in Kumite and 2nd in Kata.

The year 2010 marked a significant milestone as he earned his Shodan, awarded by Sensei George Best. This achievement was just the beginning. Recognizing the ever-evolving landscape of karate, Damian partnered with Sensei Jason to establish Ippon Karate Academy. They opened their first dojo at Damian's old school, St. Peter and St. Paul's, quickly followed by a second at St Bede Primary Academy. With over 60 dedicated students, the academy's growing reputation led to the opening of a third club at the Ellesmere Social Club to meet the increasing demand.

In 2013, Damian successfully passed his 2nd Dan under Sensei Jason Netherton, Sensei John Marsh and the UKGB, a testament to his continued dedication and skill. This achievement was further amplified by seeing over 15 of his own students achieve their Shodan (1st Dan), a source of immense pride.

A pivotal moment arrived in 2015 following Sensei Jason's meeting with legendary instructor Sensei Junior Lefevre. This encounter led to the affiliation of the UKGB with Champions International Karate Association (CIKA), led by Sensei Junior Lefevre. Upon Sensei Jason's return from a visit to the Hombu Dojo in Liege, Belgium, he appointed Sensei Damian as the Club Secretary of both Ippon Karate Academy and CIKA England. This prestigious role presented a significant challenge, which Damian gratefully accepted.

Supported by his partner Dawn and his father, Sensei Bill, Damian nurtured his clubs, fostering a strong sense of community and encouraging students to excel. His students

consistently competed at both Regional and National levels, bringing home medals in both Kata and Kumite.

In 2017, Guided by Sensei Junior Lefevre and the growing strength of his club under CIKA England, Damian successfully passed his Sandan (3rd Dan) and completed the EKF coaching course in Leicester. Most Recently in 2025, he successfully pass his 4th Dan Under the Guidance of Sensei Junior Lefevre and constant help from Sensei Jason.

The culmination of years of dedication and hard work came in March 2025 when Damian, with the unwavering support of his family, made the courageous decision to open his own dojo and Bolton Family Karate was born, with its first club at Highfield Hall filling up within just two weeks. This success led to the opening of a second venue at Connections Methodist Church, providing members with four nights of training per week and, importantly, allowing families to enjoy their weekends together.

Sensei Damian's story is an inspiring example of how a passion rekindled can lead to extraordinary achievements. From a reluctant returnee to a respected Sensei and dojo owner, his journey highlights the transformative power of Karate, the importance of mentorship, and the enduring strength of family. He continues to inspire his students and community through his dedication to the art of Shotokan Karate