



APPENDIX 2.2

NORMA FOSTER'S STORY

Beginnings

Norma Foster was seventeen years old when she started training in karate in Aberdeen, Scotland in 1969. Norma noticed that men were talking enthusiastically about karate and thought "I'd like to try that!" The men decided that they weren't going to let Norma train in karate. Norma's reaction was to want to do it even more. The men told her that karate training was too hard and that she would have to do push-ups. Norma replied "I've been doing push-ups since I was seven!" Next, the men told her that she might get hit. Norma told them, "I've been hit before and it wasn't nice but I coped." The men didn't give up trying to dissuade Norma. They told her that she would start crying when she got hit. Norma made a deal with the men. She said that if she cried she would quit and if she didn't cry they would have to let her continue.

Norma's First Goal

Norma set goals for herself when she started her training. You might think her first goal was to get a yellow or green belt in karate but it wasn't. Her first goal was to be accepted by the instructor as a valid student. For the first six months that Norma trained, she was condescended to and patronized by the instructor. He didn't take her seriously. Norma thought if she passed her first fight test it might change her instructor's mind. She worked hard to pass the first test but she was late showing up to the test. All her classmates had left. The test instructor was only in the city for one day so Norma talked him into letting her take the fight test. She passed! Norma hoped her instructor and classmates would take her seriously now but, because they didn't see her take the test, they still didn't accept her.

A New Instructor

Norma passed her next test but her karate club merged with another club and now she would have a new instructor. This instructor said, "there's no women training in my club!" Norma replied, "I've been training now for nine months and I have a rank in this sport and I want to continue and train here." "Impossible!" said the instructor. "Why not?" said Norma. The instructor told her that there were no changing rooms. Norma asked if there was a bathroom. "Of course," answered the instructor. "Well, I'll change in the bathroom then," was Norma's reply.

A New Goal

Norma had battled for the chance to participate but she was still not treated the same as the men in her class. Her instructor would walk along the line of



students and correct every single student. But he didn't say a word to Norma. She was ignored. Norma's new goal was to make the instructor correct her just like he did for the men. Norma persevered and passed the next test and now she got her first coloured belt. Karate ranks its athletes with coloured belts (white, yellow, orange, green, blue, purple, brown and black). Now Norma had a yellow belt and her instructor started to correct her. This inspired Norma and her next goal was to be so good that the instructor would stop correcting her!

Karate's First Female Referee

Norma continued to train in karate and went to work in Japan in 1989. Norma had a new goal. She wanted to become a karate referee! No woman had ever become a referee and the karate world was shocked. Once again, Norma was told that her dream was not possible, women cannot referee men. Norma was surprised that she still had to battle against barriers to participate in her sport. Norma worked hard and became the first female referee in karate. By 1990, Norma was the only woman refereeing at world-level karate sporting events.

Conclusion

Norma fought for the right to participate in karate. She stood up for herself against the people who discriminated against her. Not many girls and women train in karate and there are eleven female referees who are qualified to referee at world-level sporting events. Norma overcame and knocked down many barriers in the world of karate. Norma would have preferred not to have had to face these barriers and challenges but says "I will fight when I see something that does not make sense or seems wrong. Someone has to do it."

Norma's advice for young women who would like to become involved in sports is to "believe in yourself".