



# Mother to Master

One woman's journey into martial arts

*"I don't know what happened exactly but something inside me changed and it wasn't any kind of feeling of violence, it was just like everything slowed down, it was like everything was happening in slow motion and I've never had that experience before in my life and so I guess it was what was explained to me as being in the zone, which is like the optimal performance experience where everything seems to slow down and come together."*

Meet Emma Lynds, owner of Elements Academy located in Vancouver, British Columbia, mother of two and holds a 3rd degree Black Belt in Hapkido. Chikara Magazine recently had the opportunity to talk with this inspiring woman about her journey from mother to master.

## What made you decide to train Hapkido?

After I had my first son I really wanted him to get involved in Martial Arts, so I was looking for a school that would support a 4 year old. I was at the park and watched these guys come out of training. It was obvious to me that they were training traditional Korean Martial Arts which is what I had been connected to when I first started training as a Taekwondo student. I noticed one of the boys was young, so after approaching the group they invited my son to try a class. The environment was a family style class, youth and adult mixed together. I initially went to support my son but after doing my first class, I was totally hooked. It had traditional Korean teachings and I really felt connected to the Korean culture. It also had this other element of self defense with this unique application of redirecting force and applying skill like joint locks and pressure points and a lot of striking which I learned from traditional Taekwondo. I also felt really connected to their learning approach which was technical and challenging.

## Can you talk about your experience fighting in Thailand?

I had been teaching and training martial arts for a number of years. I wasn't sure I had been truly tested and I wasn't sure how formidable I was, so after going for a training trip to Thailand and Korea I came back feeling like I wanted to test myself, I wanted to see what I was made of, so I started working with this coach/trainer and told him what I wanted to accomplish. Initially he thought I was crazy because he knew what I was up against. After training with him for a little while he was like "okay you have that fighter instinct, it's in you and I think we can go there." So, we trained for almost a year to get ready for that fight. Training with him was brutal, he was quite rough with me and so the sparring application was grueling, I took a lot of hits and slowly started to learn a lot about myself through that process, about how much it takes to be a fighter which is different from being a traditional martial artist. I think there is a big distinction between the two, maybe a different mentality. So, when I went to Thailand, I trained there preparing for my fight while keeping in mind my strategy for how I was going to win in the ring. When I got in the ring and the bell rang, it was a real surreal experience, I was surrounded by cheering, yelling and the traditional Thai music. I was a foreign fighter in a foreign land and it was quite surreal in that way. I got punched in the mouth pretty early in the fight and then everything sort of turned on, I don't know what happened exactly but something inside me changed and it wasn't any kind of feeling of violence, it was just like everything slowed down, it was like everything was happening in slow motion and I've never had that experience





**Left:** Emma's fight in Thailand.  
**Right:** Emma with BJJ legend Royce Gracie.  
**Lower:** Emma in her studio, Elements Academy of Martial Arts.



before in my life and so I guess it was what was explained to me as being in the zone, which is like the optimal performance experience where everything seems to slow down and come together. The experience is really unusual, but I did have that experience in the ring. I got a TKO in the first round which is excellent. I used my hands a lot because I was really nervous about trading kicks with someone who was Thai and had years of leg training. As soon as I got out of the ring I was like “oh my gosh, I really want to do that again.” Originally, I had the idea that I was going to test myself just once and see how I would do, in the sense of format, but as soon as I got out of the ring I was like “that was awesome, I want to do it again.”

#### Will you fight in the ring again?

Yes, I will fight in the ring again for sure. But definitely, getting in the ring is a true test which I absolutely loved and would not hesitate to do it again. It does take a lot of preparation and a lot of focus.

#### Does having a background in Hapkido give you an advantage in the ring?

In the ring it's hard to translate the Hapkido however, the movement, the redirection, circling and foot work really helps. Having been in the sparring environment for a number of years and being used to contact in general is where I found it helps a lot, especially in the clinch; I got tied up a few times and I was able to pivot and turn my body quickly. In Hapkido we do a lot of hip throw type motion so that really helped me in terms of takedowns from the clinch position.

#### What do you tell women who are timid about trying a martial art class?

I try to make the women's class really approachable and I really focus of fun, form and function. I have small class sizes so I really try and individualize what I'm trying to deliver with the women. From experience, I'm able to make connections with people quite quickly. I'm really trying make people feel comfortable and safe so they will try something new. Women find out quickly that they are supported and encouraged and they are using something that is effective. So not only are they getting a great conditioning workout, but over time they are going to absorb techniques and strategies to deal with adversarial situations. I also don't take myself too seriously. Even though

I'm rooted in that traditional system, I really try and make a connection on an equal level. We're all students trying to better ourselves, so I really try and be there for them. I think women like to be in that supportive environment.

#### As a single mother how do you balance family with training and running a martial arts club?

I do have a really good place. I'm definitely working from the hours of 7am to midnight everyday. I do try to get some down time but the lines are kind of blurred and I'm actually thankful of that because, as I mentioned before, I'm doing what I love and most people don't get that in their lifetime. I'm passionate about what I do and I'm passionate about the foot fist style and the pursuit of martial arts in general, so it makes it really easy for me and when I wake up in the morning I'm super excited for each day and what I get to do. Raising my children in conjunction with running a business and following your passion can be tricky at times, but they always know where I am, they are involved in that life and I see my club as a community and a family place. They are old enough now, 16 and almost 13 and can do things on their own and I think they support me which I'm really grateful for and I'm really lucky that my friends and

family, especially my children, support me 100% with what I do and they see how it's benefiting us as a family, helping to foster maturity and growth as people entering the real world.

#### What is your favourite submission?

I always like the sleeve choke which I can utilize from pretty much any position except underneath mount, obviously. It's a great move because it's super slick and they don't see it coming. Once you slide it in and you got your grips on, its really tough to get out of. So sleeve chokes are one of my go to moves. The other one is when I'm in an open guard, I'm on my back, your opponent posts one leg and you feed your leg underneath theirs, then you just wrap it around their hip and the heel just kind of pops right into your arm. That's one of my favourite moves and it's worked tons. It catches people off guard for sure. So that's what I've been studying up and working on. Really this is the year for sweeps and leg locks.

For more information about Emma and her Martial Art studio, Elements Academy visit: [www.elementsacademy.com](http://www.elementsacademy.com)