

MARTIN STAMPER

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Martin Stamper is a former British Taekwondo athlete who competed at the London 2012 Olympic Games, reaching the semi-finals. The 34-year-old was a bronze medallist at the 2011 Taekwondo World Championships and won gold at various international events. After competing at the highest level, in 2016 he progressed from athlete to Team GB coach where he now works with current women's world champion Jade Jones.

Can you tell us about you started your Taekwondo journey?

"I started when I was six, just kind of a bored hyperactive kid who wanted to do something and didn't know what it was, so I started Taekwondo. I got selected from Great Britain when I was 13 to go to the European and World Championships before working with my coach Steven Jennings who is now one of my colleagues.

"He had a club in Liverpool called 'Liverpool Elite' so I was with him from a young age, probably when I was around 13 and that's when I started taking it seriously and knew I wanted to do it for my job and make a career out of it. When I left school, I did a college course and I trained around that as well as working nights at Asda so that I could train every day."

What was it like to compete at a home Olympics (London 2012) and represent your country?

"It was amazing. For quite a few years after, I didn't really have too good memories because my goal was to win and I did genuinely think I would come away with gold or even a medal so it was hard to take (not winning a medal). with Covid we don't know what's happening in the future.



"Looking back now it still hurts me to this day but it was an amazing experience and that atmosphere at a home games, especially now. It will be hard to ever replicate that atmosphere for someone from Great Britain.

We were in the ExCeL (arena), I think there was around 6000 people and I'd guess all but around 10 were supporting any Great Britain fighter.

"When I walked out, there was just shivers with the flags and people shouting and cheering. The best atmosphere you can imagine."

How did you make your way in to coaching?

"I've always coached. Steven Jennings who I mentioned earlier who was my coach for most of my career, he's a very smart guy tactical thinker and I kind of followed his ways, how he thinks, and I was really in to the tactical part of the game. I really enjoyed watching coaching kids, sitting in the seats and seeing athletes do well.

"I was coaching any time he (Steven Jennings) when away, so when I was 14 or 15 I would take over the club.

After the Olympics I started doing seminars up and down the country and even a few abroad. Whilst I was still competing, I then took a role with the development team (14-19-year-olds) for Team

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How do you prepare for an Olympic games?

“It’s not been a normal year. We’ve just come back from our first tournament in Sofia in Bulgaria. By now we probably would’ve had three tournaments and a training camp. It varies on what the athlete needs. We would’ve fought a few more times and with the lockdown restrictions starting to relax a little bit, for my guys the plan is we’ve got the Cuban team coming over next week so we’ll get a good challenge with them. “Then we’ll go back to the Europeans which is back in Bulgaria, so we’ll be competing again. Then I think it’s around 11 weeks until the Olympics after that and in that block, we’ll have two camps and one more competition.”

What was the reaction when the 2020 Olympics got delayed?

“It was kind of a good thing it (the Olympics) got delayed after a certain point because it was just hanging on and athletes were getting worried that they weren’t getting the right type of training so there was a point where we were like ‘just hurry up and say it’ so we can plan for what’s next.

“I feel like this team is going to feel the value of the effort they put it over lockdown. A lot of them were training in living rooms, in garages, wherever they could at home. The commitment they showed there didn’t set them back too much. Some of them have managed to improve which is amazing to this that they didn’t have any facilities, any coach, any training partner for nine or 10 weeks.”

How important is it that the 2020 Olympics go ahead?

Our funding has been cut for the first time already and we haven’t even had the chance to see if we’re going to beat our medal target. Every cycle you get an allocation of funding and a medal target and generally if the sport is performing well, you get more funding. It’s already had an impact so it’s crucial that they go ahead so the guys can perform. Just in GB Taekwondo we have maybe 30 staff, and that’s off the top of my head. You’ve got all these guys who are here to help the athletes perform to the best of their ability. It’s a lot of people’s livelihood’s depending on this. The whole point of the funding

from the lottery and from UK Sport is so we have a massive show with the Olympics that inspires millions of people and that people watch and want to get in to sport and want to be active and want to try and make a career in sport so it’s massive that it happens for this country, especially because of how much we put into sport.

