

# Kata tonic

**Zoe Campbell** was born and raised in Nottingham. She took up karate at the age of 8. She is the current ladies world karate champion, having won numerous medals along the way. She obtained a first class biochemistry degree at Birmingham University before becoming a postgraduate student at Leicester-Warwick Medical School. She works as a house officer at Walsgrave Hospital, Coventry

## Why karate?

I was a really hyperactive child. I had done lots of other things such as gymnastics and ice skating, but mum couldn't find enough for me to do, so at the age of eight I started karate training four to five times a week. However, I didn't stop doing my other sports such as netball and athletics, which I played at national level while growing up. I also enjoyed football, which I continued at university.

## What's your current training programme?

I train twice a day when I'm coming up to a major competition, probably six days a week. My morning session (before work) lasts 45 minutes, where I practise my karate. My evening session lasts one and a half to two hours, and is predominantly fitness training. Once a week I coach karate at Warwick University.

## Is karate aggressive and dangerous?

No, it's all about skill rather than force. The aim is not to cause damage. In fact, you get disqualified for hitting or kicking too hard. My tactics include wearing out my opponents.

## Why medicine?

I always knew I wanted to do medicine right from being eight years of age. It's not really something I can explain; I just knew that's what I wanted.

## Don't your twin passions clash?

It was never a question of me giving up karate to study, or the other way round. Obviously, when I was at university finding time was difficult and I had to juggle things, but it's really important to have an outside interest.



It helped me study and gave me the determination to get through my exams, so the two have always complemented each other.

Students rehearse karate in routines called katas

## Do you party?

Because a lot of my social time is spent training, my social life was and is different from other people's. You just need to work out what's most important to you, and going out drinking every night of the week isn't. However, having social time with your peers is important as well. It's about finding the right balance really, and I think I got it right by spending one or two nights a week doing something socially.

## Did your lifestyle change when you became a house officer?

Being employed is completely different from being a student. When you're a student your time is more flexible. You can choose when to study during the day, and if you want

to miss an hour of clinical work you can. However, when you're employed, you have to be more flexible with your sport. Also, work can be stressful, especially when you first become a house officer, so you feel more tired. You don't necessarily feel like training after a long hard day at the hospital, so you have to push yourself more.

## What suggestions have you for people struggling with non-work commitments?

Distractions from work and study are good for your motivation. You have to be organised to fit things in. If something is important, you need to make time for it even if it's demanding, rather than giving up. I used to get up at 5 am to train and study.

## What have been your proudest moments and biggest achievements?

My best karate achievement was winning the world championships in 2003. It felt strange in a way. People think I'm mad when I say this, but it was difficult to win something I had always strived for. It was a really happy moment, but also a bit of a sad and lost moment because I thought, "Well, what do I do now?"

In medicine, my biggest achievement was passing my finals because I'd re-sat my A levels, done a degree, and then done medicine, so knowing that I'd passed was just the best day of my whole life... and my mum's.


## What are your medical plans?

I definitely want to be a physician. I really enjoyed renal medicine and geriatrics, so maybe one of those. I will be doing a foundation senior house officer rotation job after my house jobs, and then I plan to apply for a general medical rotation.

## And what about the karate?

This year I've got the biannual world championships in Chicago in October and the European championships in Poland in December. I've never won gold at the Europeans, so I really want to do the double—win the world and the European championships, and then maybe retire. After that I'd like to find something different that excites me. I miss team sports, so maybe I'll take one of them up again.

## Are you enjoying medicine?

I love it. I wouldn't consider doing any other job... except maybe being an astronaut. 

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