



## Strength and Honour for Hogan's HIT Squad

After a minor padlock disaster for Master Hogan and a search for Sam Brown who claimed to be at one of five Chanel's outlets in the departure lounge of Gatwick Airport, we shortly met up with the rest of Team Hogan (Mr John Vernazza and Mr Connor McCormack); we embarked on our journey to the allegedly beautiful Naples. All was well and we arrived safely to the airport. However, reality struck when it occurred to us that actually we were staying in a litter infested, stray dog ridden area full of raging lunatics in bashed up motor vehicles. After a long and tiring day travelling, we were delighted to see that our 'four star hotel' had a restaurant meaning we wouldn't have to venture into the unknown downtown of Napoli. Little did we know it would take one and a half hours to even be seen by a waiter and that we would be sneaking bread from the neighbouring table whilst one man singlehandedly ran the bar, restaurant and reception.

Thursday had arrived, following a wild night in the hotel bar that to our English dismay shut at a measly 10pm, and it was time to be weighed in. Thankfully, Connor McCormack made his weight (after a rigorous 'beasting' from Pete Yip in the early hours of the morning), as did the rest of the team. Following instruction from Master H, we carried out a reconnaissance patrol of the area, locating a pizzeria and not much else. We made our way into the city centre of Naples and fulfilled our first port of call, the pub, shortly followed by a trip to the 'gelato shop', as ordered by our very own Italian tour guide, Mr John Vernazza. Luckily, we found an American Grill serving t-bone steaks bigger than you could imagine where we dined most nights.

**Competition day 1:** John received a bye through to the finals of the Senior Patterns. Luke Yip and Connor McCormack put their mean faces on and prepared to fight in the Junior Heavyweight Division of the European Championships. Luke fought brilliantly against a Dutch boy in the first round, frightening two of his rivals from England and putting him through to the next round against Josh Harris from England. Next up was Connor who was paired up with one of the biggest boys in the category from Moldova. Connor put up an excellent fight,



brushing off hits and pushing forwards with several jump punches to the head, rightfully earning himself a place in the semi finals. Luke entered the ring for his semi final fight against Josh who was using his reach as an advantage, meaning Luke had to be clever by avoiding his long legs and coming in with the punches. Unfortunately, Luke took a blow to the body and was knocked down, with only seconds remaining the crowd shouted frantically, resulting in Luke pulling himself up and winning. Luke and I were through to the finals which took place on Sunday. In the mean time, Connor was up against an Italian who is the current world champion. He put all of his effort into the fight but the Italian was quick on his toes and powerful with his shots, resulting in Connor finishing in third place and bringing home a well deserved bronze.

**Competition day 2:** John was psyched up from the previous day's events and entered the ring with a positive mindset. This all paid off as he fought superbly against a man much taller than himself from Bosnia. The man's face was a picture he was as he could not even get near John who was dominating in the ring. John's powerful shots clearly knocked Mr Radevic's confidence and so John won the fight by a considerable amount of points, meaning he was through to the final.

**Competition day 3:** the finals had eventually arrived! John performed well but just lost the patterns final to the same Spanish man he was set to fight in the sparring final, giving him a silver medal. Luke and I both had Italians in the final and my name was called first. I entered the ring determined to become the European Champion and was delighted to see that unlike usual, I wasn't up against a tall, scary power machine. I gave my all and even managed a turning kick to the Italian's head but, to my disappointment, my opponent pulled out of the fight after 104 seconds of the first round. I received gold in the Junior Female Hyper-weight Sparring, making me European Champion (obviously all thanks to my coach, Sam 'The Oracle' Brown). It was now Luke's turn to forget about his injuries and put up a good fight, which he did. The Italian world champion was just as quick, making it hard for Luke to score points. This resulted in Luke getting a very well earned silver medal. John also received a silver medal in his division as he held his ground and gave it his all in the ring, taking a few hits from the Spaniard somehow resulting in a cut in his ear that required stitches!



I was later surprised by Master Hogan who had secretly entered me for the junior power. Competing against two other girls from England, I broke with both a knife hand and a sidekick, winning me the gold medal.

Hogan's team of four competitors returned to England with: two gold, three silver and one bronze medal. Everyone put enormous amounts of hard work into their sparring and the last night was spent celebrating accordingly. Thank you to Samuel Brown for providing us all with wise comments throughout our fights, coaching us all to a medal and of course to Master Hogan, for all of his support and knowledge throughout the trip.

## Medal Table

<b>ITF European Taekwon-do Championships 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2011 Naples, Italy</b>			
<b>Competitor</b>	<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Sparring</b>	<b>Power</b>
Jessica Ransley	-	Gold	Gold
John Vernazza	Silver	Silver	-
Connor Mc Cormack	-	Bronze	-
Luke Yip	-	Silver	-

Written By Jessica Ransley (2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2011)

([www.Sydenhamtkd.com](http://www.Sydenhamtkd.com))