

FIGHTER PUTS BACK INTO QUALIFYING BID

A BLACK belt karate expert, who has competed at international level for more than 25 years, was clocked as he rolled over in bed.

Karl Horsburgh is currently training hard to win a place at this year's world championships in Romania, but popped his back as he turned over to switch off his alarm clock.

Horsburgh, a 39-year-old fifth dan, from Hayley Green, Halesowen, is now full of praise for the surgeon who saved his fighting career without even having to operate.

He said: "It was unbelievable. One day I was as fit as a fiddle and the next I couldn't move my shoulders four inches to the left or right.

"I had rolled over in bed to turn off the alarm and something just went pop. I knew straight away something had gone very badly wrong."

It happened just days before Horsburgh was due to take part in the selection trials for the European Team Championships – something he was expected to qualify for with ease.

Gutted

"I was absolutely gutted. I knew I could have done well in the championships and there I was, in absolute agony and fearing that my karate career could be over," he said.

"I went down the path of physio and painkillers and nothing seemed to be working until someone gave me the name of a back specialist they said would be able to help."

It was then that Horsburgh met with consultant spinal surgeon Mushtaqe Ishaque at BMI Priory Hospital in Birmingham. He said three discs had evidence of degenerative disc disease.

"I thought he was bound to suggest an operation," Horsburgh said. "But he assured me he could sort out

Karate

my back with nothing more than a series of injections. It was amazing, within days I was doing light training and in next to no time I was ready to compete again."

Just weeks later, he picked up four silver medals in the English Championships before going on to achieve a gold and two bronze medals in the Irish Championships.

Mr Ishaque said: "Degenerative disc disease is extremely common. In this case Karl had had symptoms for four months before he underwent an injection.

"When the discs herniate they are often associated with an area of inflammation. This inflammation can cause the nerve to become red hot, swollen and tender.

"The role of the injection is to reduce the inflammation in and around the nerve root."

Horsburgh, who runs Smethwick Shukokai Club in Bearwood, is now 'putting his back into' qualifying for the world championships where he will compete in the veterans aged 35 to 40 years category.

"I thought my competition days were a thing of the past but Mr Ishaque really did give my karate career a new lease of life," he said.



The alarm bells ring – karate ace Karl Horsburgh and the offending bedside clock