

The four of us – Sir, Robert, Elena and Jennifer - set off to Belgium in Master Nardizzi's Merc from Elena's place in Docklands around midnight... 40 minutes later we were still in Docklands (stuck at the Blackwall Tunnel due to maintenance work). Just when all four of us were about to give up and go to the nearest pub and forget Belgium the lights went green and we were finally let through. Master Speedy put his foot down and delivered us to Folkestone in half the time we expected to get there.

So we made it to the Euro tunnel. Had a bit of relaxing time, snoozed and started boarding. All well except... Master Nardizzi turned out to be Mrs Nardizzi as he by mistake took his wife's passport! Since we did not have time to go and buy a wig to disguise Master Nardizzi's true identity we just had to convince a quite relaxed French passport control man that he was indeed Master Nardizzi. Thankfully, he let us through. Imagine – a man without any ID with two Eastern Europeans and a Filipino in his car trying to cross the border! Only the Frenchman will let you through!

Finally we are on the train all relaxed (except for claustrophobic Elena being winded up by Master N who was drawing a vivid picture of the tunnel being flooded, water getting into the car and us drowning). Anyway, after a very short and easy journey (by the way Elena did not pass out and nobody drowned!) we were in France. It was a straightforward journey from France to Belgium with Robert and Jen snoozing at the back and Elena acting as a poking device for Sir, so he would not fall asleep. We seemed to be on time and we planned to check in our hotel before arriving to the hall for training. (Well that's what we thought until we knew about the road signs in Belgium)

Equipped with only useless Google map, it took us as long to find the venue in Brussels as it did to drive from London to Brussels. We did not have time to check in and showed up at the hall an hour late (luckily, they did not start yet). But too exhausted and hungry we could not enjoy the first day as none of us could stay focused enough to pay attention and hear and do everything that Masters said.

In fact, Elena & Jennifer skipped the second part and went to the hotel to sleep, but were woken up and briefed by perked up Sir and Robert (who were stoic enough to attend the whole day) on what was said at the seminar (despite Elena's and Jen's hopes that they would not be disturbed... sigh... as upon arrival to the hotel the pair of us just went separate ways and headed to our room without telling the other pair our room numbers). We tossed up for who were getting double bed and who were getting two single beds and when the girls let the boys have two single beds the worry look on Robert's and Sir's faces suddenly turned into excitement (men!)...

Finally showered and rested a bit, then we went out to the town of Vilvoorde for dinner. Found a nice cosy Egyptian restaurant and enjoyed the rest of our first evening in Belgium.

Second day was much more enjoyable. Elena, tired of sitting on her bottom for too long, tried to participate in as much demonstration as possible getting herself in all kinds of trouble, like "Master Marano: Show a low block. Elena: (performs) Master: What are you blocking? Elena: Groin (damn! he is going to pick on it) or lower abdomen. Master (with south-american accent): Why do you block groin? (I knew it!) You don't have groin! Elena (with russian accent): I don't have balls but I so do have groin!" Or "Elena: Master Ellis, what do you do when you are trapped at the wall? Master Ellis: (shows) Oh ok everybody go to the wall and try. See what you have started now!?" Jennifer hiding in the back enjoyed other people's embarrassments.

That was the day we had a banquet, where we showed up at 2 hours late (!!! We blamed Belgians who were useless in giving directions!!!!) We drove around for 2 hours with low petrol from city to city (which actually we think was the same city). Worried about the car breaking in the middle of nowhere, our priority was to find a petrol station and fill up. We found one and not long after that eventually reached our destination and guess what – it was only 5 minutes drive from our hotel... if only we had not ask for directions! Lucky us, there was still plenty of food so we stuffed ourselves, had few drinks, relaxed, chatted to people.

Before midnight (so none of us turned into pumpkin) we went back to our hotel. Played card games till 3 am... Jennifer was very lucky playing poker for the first time – she won thousands of pounds (should give credit to Elena - good instruction!). Lucky for Elena, we played for "paper" money... Yet Jennifer has been chasing Elena and trying to collect her winnings since our return. Elena is shopping for money printing machine now!

On that final night Robert poisoned Elena with cheap hotel wine, which caused her to throw up the whole night while Jennifer snoring next to her (well to be fair Elena said she did not need to be looked after). Luckily, Elena recovered before 10 am next morning and even managed to make it to the last training session.

Sunday afternoon all of us set off home to London. But our bad driving experience did not end there, we were lost (AGAIN) and Master Nardizzi was already in need of tranquilizers after 4 hours of attempting to leave Brussels. Anxious by the thought of not getting out of Brussels or Belgium for that matter, we stopped at the petrol station and BOUGHT A MAP (aren't we smart or what?). With Robert and Jennifer snoozing (yet again!) at the back Master N and Elena successfully navigated their way out of Brussels on time for their train. But we were delayed by a nice spaghetti feast in France and missed our train, though managed to barge our way in on to the next train. Luckily, we found Master Nardizzi's driving license in the car (English officer did not want to let us in even with the driving license) and were let back into England.

Back to London, back to work and stress. We had a nice break and lots of fun. It was not of course just a fun adventure, don't get us wrong – we DID learn a lot of TKD technical stuff.. even though we did not mention it in our report. THAT we leave for the class.

And finally, here is some evidence that we have actually been to the IIC and were not just hanging around Belgium for fun.

Elena blocking her "non-existing groin":



Master Nardizzi in training (a rare snapshot):



Robert (he is the one with the hair but not with the pony tail) paying attention to the Master's speech:



The Banquet:



No photos of Jennifer training (as I said she was hiding in the back) but we witness she was there and here are we all on the photo taken at the end of the seminar:

