

# The T.K.D. Flash

A Publication of the Association of Academies of Martial Arts

Volume XV, Number 4. The Flash is published by the Academy of Martial Arts, Inc. Your letters, contributions and articles are welcome. Offices at 752 Lake Shore Road, Grafton WI 53024. E-Mail: [fmvh@execpc.com](mailto:fmvh@execpc.com). Check out our website <http://geocities.com/amatkd/>.

**Don Lubner, a true ally of the Academy of Martial Arts, among whose great gifts to us was the dedication of Third Dan Mary Lubner, and the pleasure of knowing and working with his Chodan sons Andrew and Charles, Sigrid, Gup 8, and Erich, Gup 5, passed away on March 15. We knew Don not only as a friend and supporter of the martial arts, but also as an attorney (at which he was quite able), a teacher of law (he was a professor at M.A.T.C.), and a friend. His wife Mary and his family have our sympathies on the loss of a man whose life was well led.**

Mr. VH taught a class for Black Belts at the Academy of Martial Arts, West Bend, hosted by Mr. Paul DuKatz, on February 28 and March 15. The next in the series will be continued on April 4.

On March 9 the Special Needs Academy held a test at Grafton for three students, Mr. Drew Dondero at the corner, Mr. Luke Mattias and Mr. VH presiding.

On March 8 2003 USTF Nationals were held at Jacksonville FL. Mr. Jeremy Kempka led a huge contingent of students from his North Carolina Schools, and Mr. Paul Schneider led a contingent of our Wisconsin students. The results: We produced twenty-three--yes, you read it correctly--National Champions. Sixty-nine Association students medalled. The list to be congratulated is so large it takes a special page in the Flash to accomplish it.

On March 10 Mr. VH was pleased to preside, along with Mr. Paul Metz, at the first ever test held at the Manitowoc School. Mr. Paul Schneider assisted. A single student tested. The young man presented as an extremely able and athletic mature martial artist, and, indeed, he ranked at Black Belt in Kenpo; he is now "on his way" in TaeKwon-Do.

On May 24 there will be a testing in Charlotte.

A test was held in Huntersville on March 22.

**A continuation of the series of M.A.T.A. officiating seminars was held in West Bend on March 29 taught by Mr. Paul Metz.**

Looking for some great photos of the action at U.S.T.F. Nationals? Try <http://www.geocities.com/amatkd/>.

The Association of Academies of Martial Arts has had good fortune in recruitment and growth this year. This success has proven due, above all, to the loyalty, discernment, and leadership of Mr. VH's most senior students, those who have taken the initiative to found schools, such as Jeremy Kempka, Paul DuKatz, Henry Goddard, and others, those who have continued to maintain schools dedicated to an I.T.F. standard, such as Jackie Karpinsky, John Butitta, Kevin McDaniel and others, and those mature martial artists in other systems, some more closely related than others, who have sought to bring into their students' lives the benefits of our relationships and learning, such as Tony Henderson, Stacy Keys, Paul Metz and others. The list is long and keeps growing, but each should know that their wisdom has set them in the direction of much good for themselves and, as they had always hoped, for others.

**On April 5 Mr. VH will conduct a seminar in Neenah WI hosted by Dr. John Butitta. Anyone in need of a "refresher" is invited.**

Mr. VH will be in Japan April 19 through 27.

Five day summer TaeKwon-Do camp, Boone, NC. Questions? Call Mr. Jeremy Kempka 704-563-6800.

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**The Association is most pleased to announce the addition of a most valuable and meaningful relationship. Mr. Ben DeLeon is U.S. JuJitsu National Team Coach, 2002-2004, a Seventh Dan Chang Moo Kwan, Third Dan USJA Judo, Fifth Dan USMA Judo, Sixth Dan U.S. JuJitsu, Sixth Dan Sung Ja Do, and, frankly, that's the tip of the iceberg. Mr. VH has noted he has been a faithful attendee at recent workouts for Black Belts where his skills, focus, attention, and desire to better himself and his students have stood out. Mr. DeLeon and Mr. VH recently met over the future of TaeKwon-Do in his school at Walworth, Wisconsin. Mr. DeLeon and his school will join the Association with the goal not of seeking rank for the Master (who has earned plenty of that through the years) but of seeking education for his students. Mr. VH was honored to be considered in this light by a seasoned professional whose head's on straight and whose selflessness in leading his students on the right path has stood out in Wisconsin martial arts circles for over a quarter century. Welcome, Master DeLeon, and welcome, Walworth.**

A test was held in West Bend on March 22. A total of 19 students from the vibrant and ever-growing, ever-improving Academy of Martial Arts of West Bend tested successfully under a board consisting of Mr. Paul Metz, Mr. Dwight Drescher, and Mr. VH. A total of six tested to Decided grades, and the tests of Yuping Sayaovang and Ashley Hughes were specially recognized. The "Outstanding Test" award was given to Kathy Schilling.

On April 13 there will be a Gup test at the American Martial Arts Center in Middleton. There will be a short seminar on stepsparring basics held immediately prior. Questions? Contact Mr. VH.

Students of the Academy of Martial Arts, Grafton, gave a demonstration March 21 at the Woodview Elementary School led by Dr. Rick Bauman. Participating were: Anya Magestro, Nick Moralez, Roc Bauman, Stephanie Brudnak, Mr. Luke Mattias, Tony Mattias, Zackary Todd, Daniel Hanley, Hasan AbuLughod, Zeki AbuLughod, Amirah AbuLughod, and Harley Pals.

A JuJitsu seminar was taught by Master Ben DeLeon at the American Martial Arts Center, Middleton, on March 25. The reviews: enjoyable and "amazing."

[Mr. VH recently wrote a letter to a number of M.A.T.A. members to encourage adoption of a tournament format which would include I.T.F.-style continuous free-sparring. To set the context, he provided copies of the U.S.T.F. Tournament Rules to a number of seminar participants and, in a few cases, a videotape of international competition. While M.A.T.A. is still considering a number of formats, some of the commentary may be of interest to our readers. Warts and all, here it is:]

Dear Fellow Martial Artist

The booklet enclosed is my personal gift to you. Even though it cost me eight bucks (I get a discount), there is no charge, and the reason I'm doing this is because of my concern for the sorry state of martial arts tournaments in Wisconsin. I may also distribute to a selected few of you some tapes of actual competition under the rules contained here, and I think a viewing of such competition will be a convincer.

I'm not doing this to get anybody to join my association or the U.S.T.F. We can use groups' rules without joining them. (Of course, we're happy to have joiners, but my focus here is really on improving competition in this State.) And I think we can adopt some of these rules (which are really I.T.F. rules) to our great benefit.

I'm also not saying that this is the only way to run tournaments. We have no consistency (or little consistency) now, but it doesn't hurt too badly to say to a student: "The format in this tournament is XYZ, so remember to avoid (or do) QRS." However, I would strongly recommend we

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consider adding at least some tournaments in this format and would frankly prefer that ALL tournaments work under this format because it works far better than what we do now.

Let's start with what's shown here (which are actually national and international competition rules and thus "loaded" with detail and some heavy-duty requirements) and bring it "down to the ground" for Wisconsin. Here's what "went wrong" in Wisconsin and how this fixes it:

1) Wisconsin generally has used a "point-stop" format. Because the "point-stop" format is acknowledged to be a crashing bore, some of the schools have adopted a type of continuous free-sparring called the "Olympic" rules (often called "head kicking" or "chicken fighting,") and, from the last Olympic games, also proving to be a bore. Neither one is the way to go. ITF-USTF free sparring is a specific continuous "light contact" format with a strong safety emphasis not utterly sacrificing realism and it is that format I would request you consider.

2) Point-stop has so many flaws it's hard to enumerate them in a short letter. We all know that our protestations to "good form" for points notwithstanding, there is not universal agreement on what good form really is and we can all legitimately differ on some points. But when we disagree under our current formats we do so out in the open. The match is stopped when someone calls a point. The referee calls for the judges to judge. The judges put up flags (so parents and coaches can argue with each point

against their fighter). The flags are tallied and if there is enough agreement a point goes to the fighter. The match restarts. A typical final score is 4 to 2, or 3 to 2. Therefore each point is critical to ultimate outcome and the stakes for a poor call are high, something the coaches and parents also know.

3) Under my proposed format there are also corner judges and a referee, but the corner judges keep a running total for each fighter as they see it. After adjustments for "negative points" (more on that later), each judge simply adds the point totals he has at the end of the match to declare his single "vote". (Typically, one judge might have 15 points for one fighter, 10 for the other, so the scores are more numerous and each individual point less critical. But it doesn't matter if one other has 2 for one fighter and 1 for the other in this format.) The Center Referee then advises the scorekeeper who he would vote for to break a tie if one were to occur, and the scorekeeper writes it down. The Center Ref then collects the scoring slips from the corner judges (no more than four maximum). The scorekeeper adds these slips up (not the point totals, the final votes shown on the slips based on those totals), casts the Center Referee's ballot only if there is a tie, and a majority controls. There is no announcement as to the scores of individual judges and the match is not stopped for scoring at any time. (Won't work, you say? That's exactly how we score professional boxing matches, except we break them into additional units called "rounds.")

4) Point-stop punishes counter fighting, strategic fighting,

and does not reward balance or stamina. My proposed format requires good balance because being off-balance may permit multiple points by the other fighter. It rewards conditioning because it is continuous.

5) Olympic style is a full-power, full contact format. I have testified as an expert witness in a law case where an Olympic-style fighter broke the facial bones of an opponent and could have caused loss of eyesight. People can be killed in this format. It's a damned bad idea. Moreover, it looks ridiculous because it does not allow points for a punch to the head and the result is a radical bending backward in the stance (why not, there's nothing to lose?) which looks almost as odd as the extensive body armor required.

6) Dangerousness is a key issue.

Some experienced point-stop referees confuse I.T.F. continuous format with Olympic format, others without I.T.F. format experience wonder if they'll be "overwhelmed" by the heightened constant activity of a continuous format and thus safety be compromised. Some don't like "hands to head" but everybody also acknowledges that without hand to head scoring guards drop radically (sometimes setting up even more dangerous unimpeded head contact with the feet), postures become odd, and total scoring drops.

For those of you who have it, you'll notice on the videotape that at the highest level of competition, Black Belts on an international level, almost all of the competitors including the Americans and the ladies actually feel safe sparring without headgear! While

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I'm NOT lobbying against headgear, what this tells you is that these ITF competitors have confidence that the rules will be enforced. And, as is also evident from the videotape, the rules on light contact are enforced. Most matches involve plenty of hitting of the "tag" variety, but in the limited instance of real use of force, the overzealous competitor risks losing by rule. People want to win and therefore are more inclined to regulate their own conduct. (One can be disqualified in more extreme case, but the center ref also has two other tools, the "minus point" for a "serious" infraction, and the "warning" --three equal a minus point-- to wake people up.)

The KEY function of the Center Ref, as in boxing, is safety, not scoring or esthetics. While there is some match administration function (keeping people in bounds, making sure they are properly padded, etc.) the Center Refs basically make sure contact is appropriate and make the adverse call in the instances when it is not.

O.K. says the skeptic: "But I've been to a 'light-contact' tournament, and it got hot and heavy." Of course. If the only way to get the gratification of a point is to have some reluctant corner judge to yell out "point!" the tendency is to escalate until they do. But if you believe you are being credited by corner judges during the course of the match, albeit silently, you risk negative points or disqualification if you go "over the line", and, finally, if you can't commit as thoroughly balance-wise because of an ongoing concern for counter-attacks, you'll be more prone to keep it in line.

(The other mechanism we

know is at work is that commitment to a heavier blow by an aggressor is likely to be answered with one or two blows by a counter puncher who is relying on speed rather than mass, and every blow rates a point, so the "quality" issue favors lighter contact.)

7) I have recently been to W.T.A. tournaments in Wisconsin and they use a similar format. Everybody has a good time and I've never had an injury in my rings. I'm sure their schools would be willing to consider our circuit if we had our act down on format.

8) Forms competition in the I.T.F. format is head-to-head, bracketed. This works extremely well where the forms are all of a "traditional" variety and eliminates the math because each vote is right or left. No "running three" and calling back up for score, etc. This will not be practical for us as long as the forms of some schools cover two football fields. However, if we ever do get to reasonable traditional forms competition, it can work quite well and certainly better than the current format.

9) The format for I.T.F. breaking competition is designed for professionals and near professionals. Obviously, this is least relevant to our concerns here in Wisconsin. However, I do have some thoughts on breaking competition, first of all, that it's a good thing but many tournaments have dropped it because it's expensive to buy wood.

[Typically, tournaments have opted instead for "weapons" competition, which really is just a sub-type of forms competition. In the opinion of a few curmudgeons weapons are quite often the last refuge of the less talented instructors

who've "topped out" on their ability to teach and need the additional "profit center" of weapons sales. In fact, however, there are a few very excellent traditional weapons teachers and competitors, but they are few. Too common are people who do a lot of "twirly" stuff.]

Anyway, the desire to avoid killing whole forests leads to a more limited number of boards and more emphasis on "style" points (quality of the break, not just the fact of the break). This is a good thing given event logistics. We all admit that there are material differences created by the consistencies of both holders and wood.

I would suggest that there are now more objective measures of power provided through graded reusable plastic boards, fixed holders, etc., and I would be please to do some research on the subject and come up with suggestions in a tournament context. I think it may require the investment of some time and money on my part, but I'd like to see breaking make a comeback and minds open to the possibilities.

The bottom line: I think we should open our minds to reasonable change, and I believe the death of "point-stop" is one such change likely to make our tournaments better. I realize that the season is upon us, and we're late to train referees and judges for this format, but I think it must be seriously considered in future. I'm certified as a "Class A" referee and would be willing to train. I would also consider bringing in a national figure (if that's a deal) certified for training.

I appreciate your time and attention.

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