

Taekwondo: Local woman earns medal in international event

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U.S. Poomsae National Team members MaryBeth Mitchell (from left), Kristi George of Indianapolis and Sara LaVan pose for a photo in Tunja, Colombia, site of the 7th World Poomsae Championships. The trio placed sixth in the team forms competition. The four-day event drew hundreds of athletes from nearly 60 countries. George, 49, an Indianapolis neurologist, won an individual silver medal at the international event, held Dec. 6-9, 2012. (Photo provided by Kristi George)

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Written by

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It took more than two decades of training, flying tens of thousands of miles to taekwondo competitions and seminars around the world and countless practice hours at home.

But now, third-degree taekwondo black belt Kristi George, 49, Indianapolis, is a world medalist again.

The Northeastside neurologist won a silver medal Dec. 7 at the World Poomsae Championships in Tunja, Columbia, which drew hundreds of forms athletes from nearly 60 countries.

Her third trip to worlds, George medaled in the individual 2nd master division of 14 athletes (up to age 59), finishing second to Korea — where taekwondo is the country’s national [sport](#) — and ahead of Iran. Her medal is among six won by the U.S. National Poomsae Team and the only one by a Midwest athlete.

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Kristi George, a neurologist on Indianapolis's Northeastside, won a silver medal last weekend during the 7th World Poomsae Championships in Tunja, Columbia, which drew hundreds of athletes from nearly 60 countries. George was the only U.S. athlete from the Midwest to win a medal. This event was George's third trip to worlds, where she placed fifth last year. She is three-time U.S. Poomsae team member; a former world collegiate sparring medalist (1990); and former U.S. national sparring champion (1989-90). George trains at Korea Taekwondo Academy in Indianapolis. / Provided by Korea Taekwondo Academy

“There was no way I was taking fifth again,” George said, referring to last year’s finish in Vladivostok, Russia. “I totally just focused on my own performance. I intentionally did not watch the others in my divisions so I could just show up and perform.”

“Poomsae” means form in Korean, a series of standardized kicks and punches to demonstrate balance, power and precision. Resembling shadow boxing with grace and military precision, athletes compete on a padded 12-foot-by-12-foot stage in front of five judges. Scores are based on the mastery of the forms.

George, a three-time U.S. poomsae team member, placed fourth in the semifinals (Jitae, Koryo forms), then jumped to second place in the finals (Shipjin, Taebaek).

The former world collegiate sparring medalist (1990) and former U.S. national sparring champion (1989-90) also placed sixth in the three-woman team forms.

Her instructor, Garth Cooley of Korea Taekwondo Academy of Indianapolis, also

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competed and finished 12th in individual competition. The event was the seventh trip to worlds for Cooley, a world sparring medalist and former four-time national sparring team member.

George and Cooley were Indiana's only athletes to compete in Tunja.

In the overall medal count, the 26-member U.S. team finished third to Korea (12) and Iran (10), the best U.S. showing since the championships started in 2006.

"This was the best U.S. team we've ever had. ... We figured out the things we needed to focus on and be competitive with the rest of the world. For the U.S., we've always been playing catchup. But we took a huge step this time," George said.

The U.S. also won a medal for "most improved country."

George agreed with that assessment. "Everyone from the other countries was saying how much better (the U.S. team) looked," she said.

The four-day event, held Dec. 6-9, was sponsored by the World Taekwondo Federation, the martial art's world governing body. Next year's championships will be hosted by Bali, Indonesia.

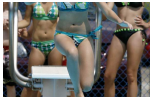
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