

The following is a report by Master Cooley of the 2013 U.S. Nationals in Chicago, IL

The 2013 U.S. National Taekwondo Championships were held July 3 – 8 at McCormick’s Place in Chicago, IL. This year boasted the highest number of participants in well over a decade with over 4,000 athletes competing! KTA was represented by both veteran competitors and first year competitors throughout the six-day competition. Competition was organized and structured such that some athletes competed on multiple days in different events, so this report will go in chronological order and may list the same competitor on more than one day.

On Wednesday, July 3rd, Noah Desserich and Clayton Allen competed in poomsae competition. This marked the first year that poomsae competition was conducted using a modified version of the official standards in which competitors performed one at a time (unlike in the past several years in which bracketed poomsae was conducted for nearly all participants not vying for an official team spot). Both Noah and Clayton advanced from their preliminary round to their final round. Neither medaled, but they did very well placing near the top of their respective divisions. Clayton also competed in sparring winning his first match and losing his second match.

Two more KTA competitors along with Mr. Tom Gaber joined in on Thursday, July 4th for day two – Maddox Simons and Rushil Patibandla. Maddox competed in both poomsae and sparring. He also advanced into his final round in poomsae. In sparring, Maddox met a very challenging opponent and did not advance.

Both Noah and Clayton competed in their board breaking divisions and showed great energy, focus, and determination when performing their breaking routines, but it was not enough to place in the top four so they did not medal this year.

Rushil did very well competing in an extremely competitive division of seventeen other teen age black belts. His board breaking routine had excellent elements including hand and foot techniques as well as speed, power, and agility components. Despite missing one of his breaks, I was proud that he won favor of the judges and earned a Bronze Medal!

For Noah, Clayton, and Maddox this was their first time competing at Nationals and I was proud of how they did based on their experience level. I believe all three of them have a bright future with continued training and participation at tournaments over the next year. This was also Rushil’s first Nationals experience. However, he is a 3rd Dan and has trained nearly a decade having competed numerous times at local and regional tournaments which gave him the experience he needed to reach the podium.



I am proud of Rushil not only for his performance, but more for his excellent attitude which is always very positive and respectful. In addition, Tom Gaber was ever present and a big help working and coordinating with Rushil and the other athletes to ensure a great competition experience for everyone.

On Friday, July 5th, KTA did not have any competitors on the floor. However, this is when our senior team started assembling to join me for competition over the next few days. Brenda Barber, Kristi George, Beni Kipp, Brent Mundy, Adam Vargo, Jeremy Raymer, and Master Cottee all arrived.

On Saturday, July 6th all but Jeremy competed in their respective individual poomsae categories. We had all qualified earlier this year to compete in the world class divisions which are the divisions used to select the National Poomsae Team. Thus competition was extremely competitive. Results are as follows:

Brenda Barber – 7th Place

Kristi George – 2nd Place

Beni Kipp – 6th Place

Brent Mundy – lost in preliminary round

Adam Vargo – lost in preliminary round

Master Cottee – 8th Place

Master Cooley – 1st Place

Brent, Kristi, and I have all competed before at this level. For the others, it was their first time. Anyone placing in the top eight is considered a finalist. Several made the finals this year in their first year of competition which is quite impressive. It is important to note that all divisions are competitive, but the age divisions in which Adam and Brent are competing are considered by many to be the most difficult based on the sheer athleticism and flexibility of competitors in these age groups.

The next day, Sunday, July 7th was poomsae competition for pair and team divisions. Kristi and I competed in pairs and took second place. I competed with Master Turgeon and Master Southwick and our team took third place. Kristi competed and took second place in her team division. In the past we had done better in these divisions; however despite many years of international experience we continue to be challenged in part due to the change in the age brackets in these divisions. Most of the athletes in these divisions are fifteen to twenty years younger than we are and are able to present better.



By the end of the poomsae competition, I ended up securing a spot on the 2013 National Poomsae Team which will compete in Bali, Indonesia later this fall. In addition, Kristi and I are alternates in 2nd Pair Division and Kristi's team are alternates for Women's 2nd Team. Alternates are called up to represent in the event that the first place finishers are unable to go. At this time, we are confident that those who won will be going to Bali. Unfortunately, even after a Silver Medal performance at last year's World Poomsae Championship, Kristi was unable to secure a spot on the team this year.

Also, on Sunday, July 7th, sparring competition for Ultra Divisions (ages 33+) was contested. After her 6th place finish in individual poomsae competition, Beni Kipp was fired up and ready for sparring! Beni did an excellent job winning two matches handily to win GOLD! Great coaching by Mr. Raymer!!

Monday, July 8th was the final day of Nationals in which the highest level sparring competitors competed. Jeremy was among twenty six other middle weight contenders. He drew a bye in the first round and then faced another very seasoned athlete who has been on the National Team in the past. Unfortunately he lost the match. His opponent continued to advance through the bracket and win the division.

Being successful in Taekwondo competition takes dedication and skill. It also takes some luck. I believe had draws and/or judging been different, that results may have been better for Jeremy and Kristi. However, we all accept the subjectivity of sport taekwondo and move forward striving to continually improve.

KTA still sets the trend and is the leader in results at Nationals in Indiana and throughout the Midwest. I am very proud of our entire team that went to Chicago and I am confident they will all be working hard for success in the 2013 fall tournament season!

