World Karate Federation Championships, Tokyo, Japan

On November 13 - 16, I had the privilege of attending the 2008 World Karate Federation Championships in Japan. The tournament was held at the Nippon Budokan, a building built in 1964 to house the Judo competitions for that year's Summer Olympics. The building itself contains 3 halls, the largest holding 14,000 people. For most Westerners the Budokan is synonymous with large scale-rock concerts which still go on to this day. But from November 13th to the 16th it was filled with the best karate-do competitors from around the world.

On November 13 - 16, I had the privilege of attending the 2008 World Karate Federation Championships in Japan. The tournament was held at the Nippon Budokan, a building built in 1964 to house the Judo competitions for that year's Summer Olympics. The building itself contains 3 halls, the largest holding 14,000 people. For most Westerners the Budokan is synonymous with large scale-rock concerts which still go on to this day. But from November 13th to the 16th it was filled with the best karate-do competitors from around the world.

The first 2 days of competition was kata (team and individual) as well as team kumite. The remaining 2 days consisted of the finest individual kumite competitors from almost 30 countries. The tournament itself did not go off without a glitch or two. A few minor re-scheduling of events, nothing compared to what we are used to in North America but events started on time and the 12 hour days moved along very smoothly.

The vendor tents out front of the hall were jammed with both spectators and competitors buying up souvenirs from the event as well as high end uniforms and kumite gear from the likes of Adidas, Hirota and others. The Japan Karate Federation also had a tent with a large variety of books, DVDs and clothing for sale. Patience was required dealing with the crowds both inside and out as well as out and about in the city.

The competition itself was spectacular. Particular interest to me was the individual kata competition. There were a few surprises, but in the Men's finals it was Luca Valdesi of Italy against Antonio Diaz of Venezuela with Valdesi winning 3-2. Female kata was an upset with Nguyen of Vietnam over Battaglia of Italy 4-1. Two Canadians from Ontario placed in individual kumite with a silver and bronze and George Kataka of the US took the gold medal in his kumite division.

It was a wonderful week for me in Tokyo. The city itself is very large, very crowded but very clean and well maintained. The food was out of this world as I dined on sushi every day and hung out in an Irish pub during the evening with a largely American and Canadian patronage. In 2010 the World Championships will be held in Belgrade Serbia and with any luck and good fortune I will in attendance there as well.