GKK Members; On Karate Having Been Accepted as an Olympic Sport

fron a GKK Forum Discussion Thread

Jeffrey Sullens
While many old senseis did not approve of sport karate, others spent a great deal of time promoting the idea. Yamaguchi Sensei introduced jiyu kumite to Goju, which led to sport karate for the Goju Kai. Nakayama Sensei of the Japan Karate Association (Shotokan) convinced Funakoshi Sensei that sport karate would be good for the future growth of the art. Jigoro Kano, founder of judo, believed the Olympics and budo shared many of the same ideals.

I hope that karate will fare better than judo and tae kwon do. While both have produced some great players, the art has suffered. Many of the dojo and dojang only teach what is useful to win. Kicks in tae kwon do score more points than hand techniques, and in Judo the preferred win is a throw that lands the opponent flat on their back, scoring ippon.

I believe good karate will offer budo, jutsu and sport to the students. People come to a dojo for many reasons and we should have something to offer each of them. Sport karate may be what they are looking for. If we teach a well rounded program based on high effort and quality, then sport karate can exist side by side with the rest of our training.

Think about it; our own GKK Competition Team has done great, winning many medals. I would love to see one of our members in the Olympics.

Zak Zaklad
Making our do a sport is not necessarily a good thing. Many of the old masters resisted the competition aspect of their do because competition puts focus on winning, and often takes the focus away from character development. The big worry is that competition leads to, like Vince Lombardi's famous quote, "only teach what is useful to win".

In the education arena, I went to a university where everything was graded on a curve. You were in competition with everyone. You grew to hate your fellow students and the learning experience itself, even if you were successful. Character went down the tubes; only winning mattered.

I know we're not into that extreme at the GKK. The GKK is a wide umbrella, welcoming dojos which focus on sport and those which focus on character building.

Shawn Michael Kidwell
It would be both good and bad for karate to become an Olympic sport. It would be good because the number of people involved in karate would drastically increase, and many people not involved in karate would gain a new respect for the arts. However, just like taekwondo, many would begin practicing only sport and changing their styles to become official "Olympic Styles".

I personally have had many upsetting times at tournaments; biased judges, referees unfamiliar with other styles and other personal challenges. Yet, I have learned much from competition. We live in an era where you cannot test your abilities in the street without fear of incarceration. It is better to test your abilities against a trained competitor in the ring, than the unexpecting drunkard in a bar.

Kevin Forsythe
It's nice to see that sport karate is receiving increased Olympic recognition. For those interested in sport karate, this provides a tremendous opportunity for additional competition and recognition. Hopefully, within a few years, karate will be included in the Olympics.

However, always bear in mind, sport karate is a tool which can be used in karate-do, but should never be the goal of karate-do.

For those interested in sport karate, I strongly urge you to contact Sensei Mark Cramer. He has years of valuable experience in sport karate and has also worked extensively with Mr. Roger Jarrett, president of the USANKF which is the Olympic NGB for karate

Editor's Note: The GKK National Sport Karate-do Competition Team, under the direction of Mr. Mark Cramer, meets every Tuesday and Saturday at the Smith Road Elementary School in Bedford, Michigan.

Contact Mr. Cramer at:

Bedford GKK
Mark Kramer

Smith Road Elementary- 1135 Smith Rd.
Temperance, MI 49267
419-475-1499
colette.cramer@gte.net This e-mail address is being protected from spam bots, you need JavaScript enabled to view it