

The Hwa Rang Do® Legacy

World Hwa Rang Do® Association Newsletter

"Empowering the World, One Person at a Time"

花郎道

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TO LEAD OR NOT TO LEAD

by

Grandmaster Taejoon Lee



There are many attributes which define a good leader and among the very top is assertiveness. The ability to take action without having to be told to do so. However, this can lead to great misfortune and much suffering. Before one can make the proper choices to take action and be assertive, they must first possess ownership with the understanding of the consequences. When they make the wrong choices and act upon them without having incurred any of the negative consequences, suffering for them, then they will continue to make decisions carelessly which will make all of their choices frivolous, bringing harm not only to the individual but more so to others who choose to follow them.

Many people in position of authority attempt to motivate and teach assertiveness by telling their child, student, and/or employee to just try everything without worrying about the consequences of failing or quitting in the hope that they will learn to be unafraid to take action and be assertive. However, the reality is that by trying many things they will also be faced with many obstacles, failures, and disappointments, which can have the opposite result of reluctance and apathy. Knowing this, if one chooses to protect them from the negative experiences where they do not incur any pain and suffering from the negative consequences of their ill actions, then all you are doing is setting them up for a greater fall when they are out of your domain and enter the real world.

Furthermore, If the option to give up or quit is readily available without consequences then the individual will surely take it as it is our human nature to seek the easier, less resistant path, resulting in them only learning how to quit. As they continue to abandon, quit, or give up whenever things become too difficult, although they are being praised for their efforts by their care giver and do not endure any immediate negative repercussions, they will inevitably begin to doubt and question their self-worth as the realization that they seem to fail, incapable of finishing at anything they start begin to set in.

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www.allmartialarts.com



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Therefore, the original attempt to encourage and motivate the person to be unafraid of taking action and be assertive by telling them to try everything and don't worry about failing or losing, has the inverse effect of self-doubt and low self-worth.

This would be the normal or rational result, however most often our internal mechanism of self-preservation and survival twist and turn the negative outcomes to blame and externalize the problem, rejecting the idea that the "self", the individual is at fault, leading to self-entitlement and in severe cases psychosis of self-delusion and disconnect with reality. Praising and encouraging someone only for their efforts and not the outcome never allows the individual to experience the nature of responsibility and accountability which are the pillars of leadership. Hence, this is the greater more severe atrocity not only to the individual but more so to our society, our community, by producing incompetent self-entitled, self-centered, narcissistic leaders.

On the other hand, if we restrict and prevent our subordinates whom we oversee from attempting any task or action, in the fear of them failing or making mistakes which is inevitable as unexperienced novices that they are, ultimately ending up with you to clean up the mess, then we as their leaders or guardians have failed them as they can only learn by doing. Undoubtedly, this type of upbringing will create a fearful person reluctant to attempt or try anything new, always seeking to remain in their comfort zone.

Recently, I told one of our senior instructors to take charge and his reply was one of reluctance with such choice of words as "it's difficult" and "it's complicated". Taking charge, leadership is always difficult and complicated; in fact, "life" whether you choose to do much or nothing at all is difficult and complicated and bad things happen to good people all the time. Thus, when I asked him to take charge, what I was asking him to do is to do more, suffer more, struggle more, and sacrifice more. So, in truth he was right, I was asking him to face more difficulties and solve greater complications. Why would any reasonable person accept such an offer? No, a reasonable, rational, common person would never accept an invitation to greater suffering and hardship. Only a person with unreasonable aspirations, irrational convictions, uncommon valor accepts the consequences of leadership. Then, the true task of a person is to seek and possess strong aspi-

rations founded on truth; learn the nature and meaning of what it is to be convicted; and then to have survived extreme tests of resilience and courage to wield uncommon valor so that they may lead.

Then he continued and asked, "But, what if my decision causes my subordinates more harm and brings about greater suffering?" That is a risk that we all face when we make decisions which not only affect the individual but the group. Therefore, one must take their leadership seriously, making sure that he/she is well informed and have sought out all available options to arrive at the best outcome, fortifying their confidence that it is the right path before taking any course of action. However, no matter how meticulously a decision is made, it is impossible to be 100% right all the time. There is always a risk that you have made the wrong choice, and this is the price of leadership. It is not only taking ownership of things done well, but more importantly owning the blame and being accountable for things gone bad, taking up the sufferings of the negative consequences relieving some, if not all of the potential pain to others. Who would do such a thing? Only a noble, virtuous, selfless, true leader!

"Let not anyone pacify his conscience by the delusion that he can do no harm if he takes no part, and forms no opinion. Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing. He is not a good man who, without a protest, allows wrong to be committed in his name, and with the means which he helps to supply, because he will not trouble himself to use his mind on the subject."

John Stuart Mill

This is why it would be easy for a person who did not care about others and immune to the consequences to lead and make decisions as long as it fulfills their end goal. This Machiavellian "the end justifies the means" type of leadership is prevalent within our society with no end in sight as money begets more money, power begets more power, egoism over altruism, godhood over godliness prevails, mutating our society to a sociopathic, psychotic culture.

For any decent ordinary person, it would be difficult to not be concerned about the welfare of others and be so convicted to their own self-righteousness that they can easily, effortlessly provide the answers to difficult problems and lead others to follow their decisions without hesitation and

some level of doubt. Thus, this is the problem of the world as most who are elected, chosen, or self-ordained to lead are either psychopaths or they are being sociopathic who thrive in positions of leadership with the singlemindedness of achieving their goal, their end, their agenda regardless of others, doing whatever it takes with a sense of invincibility, immunity, and indemnity, lacking any wisdom emboldened with populism. Rightly so, with an upbringing of heightened self-esteem, obsessive materialism, elevated victimhood progressively increasing with each generation we are now in the zenith of narcissistic superficial virtue signaling society. This is a direct result of the secular enlightened post-modernism which puts man at the center and above all things, separated from God, substituting any sense of objective morality with subjective feelings that has caused an emergence of a schizophrenic society.

It is like the forging of iron. As the stone age gave way to the bronze age and the bronze age gave way to the iron age, each progression growing in strength as greater technologies and energy was required to yield and forge a product of superior power and strength so must a true leader be made. "Leaders are not born, they are made." Although this may be true yet debatable, what raw material are you using, of stone, bronze, or iron?

It is the struggles, hardships, and challenges of life that if it does not kill us and we are able to survive is what determines whether we are of stone, bronze, or iron which then can be forged in the hands of a proper wielder emboldened with wisdom, strength, and most of all virtue who can produce the most magnificent sword of power, a leader. However, with the advancements in technology from the use of stronger, more resilient materials, creating improved tools and mechanisms which increased the comforts of living, resulting in the enhancement of the delusions of power has inversely affected human beings by increasing their arrogance and pride, yet decreasing their fortitude, tenacity, and humility. Thus, human beings we have started from iron and have now regressed to be of stone if not lesser.

The forging of even the strongest sword of iron is only the first minor step compared to the creation of a moral, just swordsman as "absolute power corrupts absolutely."

A sword has no morals, only it's wielder. Thus, power without virtue, knowledge without humility, sharpness without restraint, warrior without compassion fall victim to the ways of darkness and evil. Only God as the ultimate smith through fire can hammer out virtue from power, humility from knowledge, restraint from sharpness, compassion from a warrior as man by its fallenness can not cleanse itself of its impurities and temptations.

In truth, whatever decisions we make for ourselves or for others either directly or indirectly affects all of us, all of humanity. It is through our choices that we create the future into existence, and it is this power of choice that is the greatest gift and power of humankind that must be cultivated and cherished. Thus, we can never give up or forsake this God-given power, relying on the virtue and merit of others. In essence we are all leaders as we must be accountable for our own lives and lead ourselves with self-governance by seeking knowledge and wisdom, breaking the shackles of materialism and pleasure-seeking endeavors which only distracts and diverts our understanding of the Truth killing our very soul; then, by seeking the higher pursuit of strengthening our spiritu-

al self can we ever be truly free from the bondage of pain and suffering.

Freedom is the ultimate aim and aspiration of human existence, consciously or unconsciously. It is not the juvenile sense of freedom to do whatever we want as that is not true freedom, it is an illusion of delusional minds as the reality is quite the contrary. Although we may do whatever we want, we are not free from its consequences. Therefore, the real human desire is to be free from consequences, to escape pain and suffering. However, that is impossible as it is antithetical to natural laws bound by the presuppositions of cause and effect for atheists but also for believers in a just God. The maturity of human beings come to fruition when they are able to understand that everything has a price, that in fact nothing is for free. In the end, no matter who or what you choose to follow, whether you decide to take charge or submit to others, you will be individually judged by the choices you've made. In this earthly realm there is no scenario, no construct that frees us from the consequences of our choices. Hence, we are never free from consequences, we only have the freedom to choose.

The ultimate aim, pursuit, and mission of Hwa Rang Do® is to empower our students by overcoming and liberating them from their fears so that they may see and think clearly to realize and be humbled by the truth – that they are responsible and accountable for everything they choose to do in their lives and each one of them will have to answer for them. It is to relentlessly strive for the impossible goal of perfection, for godliness, no matter how difficult, no matter how severe, knowing fully and humbled by the wisdom that we will never achieve the end goal, but by our struggles and hardships without blame or regret that we may honor the miraculous gift of life, the blessing from God. Then, to finally realize that all that we have worked, struggled, and suffered to build, strengthen, and better ourselves was so that we may live and die for others serving the Will of God and not the will of man. This is the highest path, this is the Hwarang Way....

Hwarang Forever and Godspeed!



WHRDA 2022 SUMMER EVENT INFO



The annual global WHRDA Digital Event information details are now posted online and registration is open!

As mentioned in previous announcements, we will once again be postponing a global in-person gathering this year, however, our connections through training and competition should not be missed! These essential experiences are always an enhancement to our growth, and also important to maintaining our bonds of camaraderie with our fellow practitioners from around the world.

DIGITAL TOURNAMNET

The digital tournament which was initiated last year was a tremendous success for all involved. Practicing and pushing one's skills for a video recorded performance allows one to go deep into the refinement of the form or techniques. Taking the time to get the performance right is also a benefit of doing things via video vs the one-chance-opportunity of an in-person tournament. There were many people who elevated their skills via this method, so it is definitely worth repeating!

For the Digital Tournament, there will be 4 Event Divisions:

- **Open Hand Forms** – Tae Soo Do® and Hwa Rang Do® Open Hand Forms (2 minute time limit)* Or: Gibon Kwonbop (Basics) - For TSD Little Tigers Only (Ages 3-7)
- Must perform all 4 basics one time on each side
- **Weapon Forms** - Tae Soo Do® and

Hwa Rang Do® Weapon Forms (2 minute time limit)

- **Self Defense** – Five of your best self-defense techniques performed all together without any video editing.
- It must be self-defense with empty hand counters against only one attacker. The techniques can be against any type of empty hand/foot/grab attack or against an opponent with weapons (all blade weapons must be dull and cannot be with any live blades).
- Time limit - 3 minutes
- **Shibum (Demonstration)** – Each of the Divisions can be performed by one person or a team up to 8 members
- Time Limit – 3 minutes
- Music is optional for this Shibum division only
- Video Submissions with music – you have 2 options for submission

- Must Submit two videos – one without music and another with the music playing in the background
- Must submit two videos – one without music and another with the music added in post-production (edited into the video afterwards)

Registration: All registration will be done online via your account @ HWRANGDO.ORG

*If you do **not** have an account setup yet, please go here for instructions (one time process only): <https://hwarangdo.org/new-account-setup-steps>*

- Fees: One Division \$25 each additional \$15
 - Registration Deadline: **Midnight Friday, May 27, 2022**
 - **Video Submission Deadline: Midnight Wednesday, June 1, 2022**
- Winners and Awards:** The Winners will be announced on **Sunday July 10, 2022** during our Annual Awards and Celebration!

- The Winners will be chosen by Kuksanim as he will personally review and critique each submission. Digital Certificates will be awarded for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners in each divisions.

For information, requirements, expectations, details, and registration links please go to:

English = <https://hwarangdo.org/whrda-2022-digital-championships>

Italian = <https://hwarangdo.org/it/whrda-2022-digital-championships>

ANNUAL SEMINARS

Training with our head Grandmasters, Dojoonim & Kuksanim, has always been an exceptional experience whether we are in-person or online. It is important that we maintain our connection to the source of our martial art, so there will be two days of training included this year. Sessions available are:

Saturday, July 9, 2022

Kuksanim – Handwork: Hwa Rang Do Hand Striking Applications to Fighting & Self Defense

In this Session Kuksanim will teach how to properly train the Hwa Rang Do

hand-movements to effectively apply them in Yongtoogi Sparring as well as practical self-defense applications. It is a unique opportunity to understand the true concepts, principles, and power of HRD's Um (Soft Circular) movements.

- Open to all students of all ranks.
- Times:
- EU - 16:00 ~ 17:30
- USA Los Angeles – 7:00am ~ 8:30am
- USA Midwest – 9:00am ~ 10:30am

Dojoonim – Proper Breathing Exercises for Health and Vitality

In this Session Dojoonim will teach proper breathing exercises to maximize one's health and vitality.

- Open to all students and we encourage your family and friends to join in as no experience is necessary as well as being beneficial to everyone, especially the elderly.
- Times:
- EU - 18:00 ~ 19:30
- USA Los Angeles – 9:00am ~ 10:30am
- USA Midwest – 11:00am ~ 12:30pm

Sunday, July 10, 2022

Kuksanim – Kicking: How to Develop Proper Power & Speed for Effective Application

In this Session Kuksanim will teach how to properly train the Hwa Rang Do kicking arsenal to make it more effective in applications for both sparring and self-defense as well as reviewing in detail the proper form, techniques, and delivery of each kick.

- Open to all students of all ranks.
- Times:
- EU - 16:00 ~ 17:30
- USA Los Angeles – 7:00am ~ 8:30am
- USA Midwest – 9:00am ~ 10:30am

Dojoonim - Hwa Rang Do Forms for Longevity

It is inevitable that we will all grow old no matter how fit you are today. In this Session Dojoonim will show how to practice the HRD forms as a way of maintaining health and show how to practice Hwa Rang Do no matter how old you are or

whatever physical limitations one may have. Hwa Rang Do is for life and it is a way of life as movement, flow, and being active is what preserves and continues life. On the contrary, stagnation, idleness, and inactivity only invites death and decay.

- Open to all students and we encourage your family and friends to join in as no experience is necessary as well as being beneficial to everyone, especially the elderly.
- Times:
- EU - 18:00 ~ 19:30
- USA Los Angeles – 9:00am ~ 10:30am
- USA Midwest – 11:00am ~ 12:30pm

Fees:

- **Both Full Days:** \$200
- **One Day:** \$120 for both sessions of 1 day
- **Individual Sessions:** \$70 per session
- Registration Deadline = **Thursday July 7th @ midnight!**

For information, requirements, expectations, details, and registration links please go to:

English = <https://hwarangdo.org/whrda-2022-annual-seminars>

Italian = <https://hwarangdo.org/it/whrda-2022-annual-seminars>

ANNUAL AWARDS & TOURNAMENT WINNERS CEREMONY

DATE: Sunday, July 10, 2022

- Times:
- EU - 19:30 ~ 20:30
- USA Los Angeles – 10:30am ~ 11:30am
- USA Midwest – 12:30pm ~ 1:30pm

SCHEDULE:

Annual Awards
Tournament Winners

All event participants will receive link to the Award Ceremony

Best wishes in your training for the tournament and we look forward to seeing you soon at the seminar training!

Hwarang Forever!

Adapt and Persevere!

By SSBN Marco Mattiuchi



In order for a warrior to not only survive, but ultimately win on the battlefield, he/she requires many diverse special attributes and resources. The obvious necessary items would be weapons, food, water, materials, training, motivation, etc. However, I truly believe that none of the mentioned resources are more important than the capability to adapt and recommence when faced with formidable obstacles and challenges.

Knowing the relevant actual situation of the battlefield is essential as the opposing forces always try to impose their rhythms (time) and their positions (space) against your will and determination. Therefore, the battlefield is a continuously changing environment from every aspect, which means the faster you adapt, the better the odds of surviving and hopefully winning.

The process of a correct adaptation determines the success of the mission, but without the fortitude to push onward one cannot prevail. Being adaptable, scalable, and flexible is not enough if you're not able to go on with the activities that embodies your core-mission.

Our approach to real and normal life is not far from what I have just explained. We're Hwarang! We are warriors! So, it is not surprising that our way to live has many points in common with living and surviving in a battlefield. You cannot even imagine how many times I had to adapt and restart in my Hwa Rang Do path. I made many mistakes, I misunderstood many points and I'm still trying to improve,

partially aware of my countless limitations (I'm sure there are some limitations of mine that I cannot see), always encouraged and supported by my patient Grand Masters Kuk Sa Nim Taejoon Lee and Do Joo Nim Joo Bang Lee.

Moreover, my body has been changing in the last 20 years and it does not matter how good you are, making mistakes or receiving injuries are inevitable and the frequency increases as one gets older unless you change your method of practice in unison with your aging body otherwise you cannot continue. I have listened to many people saying: *"I'm getting older, I cannot practice anymore!"* And, I understand and sympathize with their point very well, I know how hard it is, but nevertheless that idea is just another excuse to quit. The real problem is our ego, which leads us to have unrealistic expectations, thinking that we can do the same things in our older years as in our youth. We need to let go of our ego and not live in the past, but fulfill our convictions as our Dojoonim always says, "Warriors do not retire, they die."

What is the best way to adapt and persevere? Honestly, I don't have a golden rule for that and as I have said the only thing I know for sure is that it is not easy, but what in life worth pursuing is ever easy? I always followed Kuksanim Taejoon Lee's suggestions which are fundamentally based on three concepts: will, purpose, and spirit. First of all, you have to make sure you want it; second, you need to have clear in your mind why you want it and how badly; third, you should clearly seek for the spiritual path as only a truly challenging, extremely difficult experience can offer. In all that, the will is trainable, purpose is something that you can elaborate and think in depth, but to me understanding the spiritual path is a God's gift. Abandoning yourself, with patience and humility, to God's will is a key-point to me to overcome suffering, to embrace changes, and to recommit to our convictions. This is not a passive action, on the contrary, it is a very active posture that requires energy and focus but mainly the awareness of being just a part of something bigger than you, useful but not indispensable, just a means.

Recently I had a very bad COVID attack and feeling almost the impossibility to breath I got scared. It was impossible to avoid thinking about my mortality, the end. As soon as these negative thoughts entered my mind, a voice from my spiritu-

al core deep inside told me: *"you're a warrior, a Hwarang, so be ready to fight, and no matter what happens never worry as you're in God's loving hands."* After that I began breathing very, very slowly, in the same way I do during deep meditations, and despite the immense effort that I took to continue breathing, despite the fear of death, I became calm. It was when I freed myself from self-centeredness, reaffirmed who I was as a Hwarang, and surrendered to God that I gained the inner solitude to embrace death and focus on living that gave me the strength to overcome, the true power of serenity.

I'm still recovering from that attack and have many difficulties with my body, so practicing martial techniques is very difficult for me now, but that means nothing to me. I have experienced so many situations in the past where I really had to restart my training from zero I am used to it and I'm doing that again now. I thank God for this new opportunity, and I thank Him for humbling me again, even if I'm not able to perform a single HRD form without getting tired or feeling pain I'm sure that I'm walking on a great spiritual path. I'm sure I will get in shape again very soon and I will do it with joy, enthusiasm, and gratitude.

P.S.: After I have submitted this article, I was contacted by Kuksanim to test for my 5th Dan. It is an incredible opportunity, one I have been waiting all of my life, but the first thought that flashed across my mind for a brief moment was, "Why now, why does it have to be when my body is in so much pain, why couldn't it have been when I was healthy?" But then, I remembered that I was on a spiritual path and the timing was perfect! The providence of God is truly amazing, and I am here to accept whatever He wills to the best of my ability until my last breath. Thank you, Lord!

Hwarang forever and God Bless!

The Mystery of Hwa Rang Do

By Daniel J. LaFave

When we are young life is new to us and can be both fascinating and terrifying. It takes time to accumulate experience and develop our understanding of the world that surrounds us, and even as adults we can count ourselves fortunate to have a clear perception of the world, and nature as well as a balanced and healthy character that is able to thrive even under trying circumstances.

I'm sure we can all agree without too much debate that the past two, going on three years have filled our minds to the maximum with negative messaging and exacerbated the vertiginous, chaotic state we find our world today. Even for adults who have somewhat of a callus or buffer to all the turmoil built up, it has been a trying time, like no other we ourselves have known. But what about the children?

We are a lot like plants when we are young, given the right soil, sun, nourishment, and fresh air we grow and thrive, expressing and magnifying all the beauty that lay hidden within us. Under the wrong conditions, the unique being that we have the potential to become, withers and dies, and we ourselves turn into a poisonous, invasive weed that serves to corrupt the garden of life.

It is with this image in mind that I would like to introduce you to the *Soen Saunoi-Sandgren*, the Hwa Rang Do Minneapolis Academy Featured Student Highlight.



When Soen's Parents Emily and Sebastian first moved to their South Minneapolis home, they came across the Hwa Rang Do Academy one evening while out for a walk. Both said they had an intuitive perception that this would be something Soen who at that time was only three years old, would be interested in. Unfortunately, he was too young to join the Little Tigers program, but they were told with confident assurance by Master Dylan Sirny to return him to the school when he was of age, almost as though he was expecting them, but that they had arrived a bit too early. (Master Sirny has always been known to have a "sense" about certain things)

As time passed the Saunoi-Sandgrens got busy with life in their new neighborhood and forgot about martial arts training. As Soen began his schooling at Hale Elementary during his Kindergarten year, his parents noticed a radical shift in his behavior. The loving child they knew so well, while in this new environment began to take on the characteristics of a caged animal. Soen began to withdraw and regress, he refused to listen to teachers but instead would simply shutdown and retreat from the outer world.

While relaying this account to me, both of Soen's parents while happy with how far he has progressed, seemed to still bear a pang of sadness in their hearts at the memory of his earlier life. They recounted a vivid memory of picking him up from a former afterschool program in which they had to create a special corner for him to sit and wait alone instead of interacting with the other children. At that time Soen had an inflexible attitude that caused him to systematically avoid group interaction, be fearful of new activities and an oversensitivity to noise. His interactions with others his age was unpredictable, he would go from playing and having fun to sudden, and violent outbursts.

Soen started in the Hwa Rang Do Minneapolis, Tomorrow's Leading Knights after school program when he was in first grade. Sebastian and Emily's intuitive perception had come to fruition, and his journey had finally begun. From what I am told it was not an easy transition, there were many issues to work on and changes to be made. What stuck out in their minds was that the TLK staff NEVER gave up on him, if something did not work, they tried something new in a near endless evolution of progress that stands as a testament to the inexhaustible creativity of the former TLK coordinator Chad Schrandt and Kris-

tina Van Overbeke. Slowly, over time, like metal under the influence of a white-hot furnace, Soen began to change.

From his parent's perspective, it was as though Soen was being shepherded through this dark time not only by the TLK staff but most importantly by Master Sirny and his unrelenting belief in Soen, that inside of him their lived something greater.

As a student he learned good comportment, how to be enthusiastic, he was excited by the training and began to absorb the Hwa Rang Do® principles and live by them. The structure, meditation, discipline, and comradery of the training process took hold, and Soen began to live up to his true potential. All of his former behaviors and norms began to fade into what seemed like a distant past as he walked into a brighter future.

As this pinnacle was being reached something drastic and unexpected took place, *The Worldwide Covid-19 Pandemic*. As we all remember, life as we knew it came to a grinding halt, all that we thought we knew, or where we thought we were going, for a time vanished, and our world became shrouded in a blanket of fear on an inescapable global scale. The psychological effect this exerted was massive, on all ages young and old. Many became lost, many lost their way, and many gave up and were lost all together: A wound in our hearts perhaps only God the Most High can heal.

The whole world had to pivot and began to function online, the Minneapolis Academy was no exception, and the task of online classes was dutifully captained by Instructor Logan Carlson. The online training was for Soen a silver lining in a gray and cloudy world, but by August of 2020 his motivation had faltered, he became depressed, and his parents could hardly move him from the couch where he spent most of his day in a saddened slump. After so much effort and growth Soen had regressed into his shell again, buffeted by the fear, and uncertainty of the outer world.

I had returned to Hwa Rang Do® Minneapolis in the summer of 2020, and this is when Soen and I had first met. I was warned about his behavior by the other staff members but told that although he was far better than when he started, he still had the propensity for unpredictable outbursts, and needed to be watched out for.

For my first year back, I was Soen's Instructor, he struck me as a somewhat sad, highly intelligent, and seemingly cold individual who needed constant prompting to keep him engaged. He had one friend only that I saw him interact with and avoided all others.

During one of our summer camps the following year (2021), he had an outburst that amounted to him attacking another child without provocation. I brought him into the office and instead of reprimanding him, I told him some stories about myself when I was younger and the trouble I use to cause. He broke down in tears, telling me he didn't know why he did the things he did, that he was evil, and he wished he had never been born. I told him the nearest thing I could about the truth, we all have this conflict within ourselves, some more than others and that he indeed had goodness within him as well. While interviewing his parents, they attested that this was a reoccurring theme in their dialogue with him.

During any period of free time at the summer camps Soen could be found doing one thing, training. We watched him pour every free moment into his Tae Soo Do® material, while other children played games Soen practiced, asked questions, and continuously improved his skills.

Something inside of him activated and he became a "boy on a mission". This desire for growth was aided also by Soen's neighborhood friend and fellow student Alex Kimball. Alex is a few years older than Soen and had received his Black belt in Tae Soo Do® the previous year. According to Saunoi-Sandgrens Alex has played the role as a friend, training partner and mentor for Soen, helping to inspire and motivate him both inside and outside of the Dojang.

I don't exactly recall how or when the changes that are so visible now took place, but at some point the light inside him just turned on, brighter than ever. In our discourse together his parents have stated that they finally have the son that they knew before the pandemic back. Soen has transformed and in many ways become an exemplar of the power of Hwa Rang Do®, after a long-fought struggle he is now excelling in many areas that he struggled with before. I remember first meeting him, he was gray, sad and for the most part wore a perpetual frown. While interviewing him for this article I was *really* awakened to acknowledge the difference, he's bright, smiling and his whole character displays an undertone of happiness. He is kind to others, he helps children younger than himself, he's friendly and interacts with everyone, he listens well, in class he

is always training hard and striving to grow.

The mystery inherent in Hwa Rang Do® is difficult in some ways to apprehend, its not the kicks and punches, take downs, and techniques that make Hwa Rang Do® what it is. You can find many similar movements in other styles. It is the essence of the heart that is brought forward through the vehicle of the training process, the "*Who, that we become*" is also the "*Why, we become it*".

A brotherhood and sisterhood, a thousand hands reaching out to uplift one another from the shadows of darkness into the light of Love. The Way of the Warrior and the Path of the Heart.

Hwarang forever and God Bless!

MUSA CHALLENGE 2022 - MINNEAPOLIS ACADEMY

By Kristina VanOverbeke



After a three year hiatus, the Hwa Rang Do® Minneapolis Academy was excited to once again host their annual MUSA Challenge Interschool Tournament. With over 80 competitors from the Minneapolis Academy and Wisconsin clubs combined, the event was a full day of action-packed excitement and meaningful experience for all involved.

The last MUSA Tournament to occur in Minneapolis was held at the Field Middle School in the spring of 2019. The following year in 2020 the tournament was can-

celed for obvious reasons, and could not be held again until this year. One big change this time around was the location; since it would not be held at a local school as it had in past years, it would for the first time in many years be held at the Minneapolis Academy itself. Though not as audience oriented in design, with the extra space acquired by the Academy in late 2020, the school now had adequate square footage to fit all the competitors as well as spectators. All parents, family, and supporters were incredibly cooperative with each other in alternating the seating surrounding the events on the mat, and a livestream tv was set up in the game room/ impromptu "cafeteria" where everyone could watch the events from afar while waiting for their participants' turn. This livestream was also available via zoom link, so others who could not attend in person were able to witness the events from outside of the dojang.

The tournament kicked off on Saturday morning, April 30th, with an opening bow-in with all participants and some words of encouragement from the Academy's Headmaster. In his opening remarks, Mas-

ter Sirny spoke of the philosophy of the tournament, also called the MUSA Challenge, it's meaning, and why it's an important endeavor for all of the students. The purpose of the day is to face fear, challenge oneself, and test their skills against their peers. With excitement in the air and butterflies in their stomachs, the students all stepped up to face their individual challenges.

The 5 separate events of the tournament (Weapon Form, Open Hand Form, Grappling, Sparring, and Weapon Fighting) took place in three rings and were judged by instructors and teachers ranging from Master Sirny as a 5th degree Hwa Rang Do Black Sash all the way to our Hwa Rang Do® Junior TGT students. For those of you unfamiliar with the various aspects of training, "Forms" are the memorized choreography that students perform on their own, either Open Hand Form (no weapon) or Weapon Form (with their weapon). These are meant to showcase the more artistic side of the martial art skills and students are ranked based on the judges scores of their performance.

Sparring, Grappling, and Weapon Fighting are all matches, meaning students face an opponent in the ring and try to beat them by points (or by submission for certain levels of sparring and grappling). For weapon fighting, the kids use foam swords to earn points by making contact with their opponent at specific points on the body, akin to a sparring match with a sword.



The first events of the day were the two types of Forms for the Junior, Teen, and Adult students, and Tiger Basics for our youngest students (generally aged from 4 to 7). We even had two intermediate Tiger students, Ari Orson and Zachary Belair, who'd learned the Jang Bang Form, though it's not generally learned within the Tiger student curriculum. Nevertheless, they wanted to compete with the Juniors, so they stepped up to participate in both their Tiger Basics and the Weapon Forms. We applaud their courage and determination! After each division completed their performances, the judges tallied the scores and presented the medals to the winners before moving on to the subsequent divisions and events.

Two competitors tied for the highest total score in a Form with an incredible 25.5 out of 30 possible points, each earning 1st place in their respective divisions: 3rd grader Addie Ferris with her Open Hand Form in the Tae Soo Do® (TSD) Junior Girls Intermediate division, and 7th grader Oskari Lehto with his Ssangjyel Bong Form in the Hwa Rang Do® (HRD) Junior division, who bested 7th grader Benjamin Glover by a sheer .3 points in an extremely close competition. The two boys switched places in the second Forms event, with Benjamin taking Gold and Oskari a mere .4 points behind, earning the Silver medal. This was actually a tremendously close competition amongst the top four, as there was only a .6 point difference between first and fourth place, all of them earning over 24 out of 30 possible points each. 6th grader Vivian Ferris took the bronze medal, and 6th grader Alex

Kimball came in fourth, each .1 point behind their respective opponents. Another very close finish happened in the TSD Junior Beginner Girls division of 9-11 year olds. First place went to 5th grader Juniper Magner, second place to 3rd grader Vera Orson, and 3rd place 5th grader Claire Benson, all of whom had .6 points difference between them. Lastly, it was great to see two of our adult Assistant Instructors, William Kingsley and Aaron Godin place 1st in their Weapon Form and Open Hand Division, respectively. Fantastic job everyone!

After finishing out the Forms divisions, the matching components were kicked off with Grappling. Our most popular event of the day, a whopping 76 out of 82 participants stepped into the rings to compete in this challenge. Divisions involving the Little Tigers, Beginners, and some Intermediate students adhered to the rules of Position Grappling, meaning the winner was determined by points earned only through positions against their opponent. Those who were advanced enough in their skills to compete with the Submission Grappling rules, could also attempt to win using joint locks and chokes. There were many exciting matches and the students fought their way back and forth to gain advantageous positioning for minutes at a time, proving to test the endurance and determination of the competitors. One close battle in Tae Soo Do® Advanced junior boys division had 5th grader Braxton Glover down 4-5 against his opponent. With seconds to go, he got a control position, the center referee was counting "1-2-", and right before she could get to "3", the time keeper yelled "TIME", ending the match. A meager 1 second from victory, this unfortunately put Braxton out in the first round, proving that every second truly counts in the ring. The winner of the division, 4th grader Soren Moen, achieved two submissions throughout the event, an armbar in his first match and a rear choke in the championship round. Another noteworthy match saw two junior intermediate boys battling it out for a full 5 minutes in the submission championship round: 5th grader Sawyer Williams held his own against 7th grader Alejandro Sesma, who towers over him by roughly a foot as one of the tallest junior boys at the school. Both boys had just achieved armbar submissions against their previous opponents, and despite Alejandro's unyielding submission attempts and control positions, Sawyer refused to be submitted and the boys ran out the clock. The enthusiastic crowd was truly impressed with their efforts, strength, and sheer grit. The match

ended with a mere 2 point difference with Alejandro emerging victorious.



Once again in the adult divisions, our instructors proved themselves, as the lead youth Instructor Daniel LaFave ended his Adult Submission Grappling division in 1st place, followed by Assistant Instructor Nick Frugé in second and Aaron Godin in third. Well done, gentlemen!

Next up was Sparring, the stand-up fighting most closely resembling a fight you may encounter in the streets, but still done with control and full body padded armor. As with the other categories, the rules of play are more advanced with age and rank, and again showcase both "point" and "submission" paths to winning the match. Two of the youngest participants of the day, 5 year old twins Abraham and Emmylou Parrish, traveled to the tournament from Wisconsin with their parents Matthew and Sarah. Matthew is a member of the Eau Claire club and has been involved in Hwa Rang Do for many years, even spending a couple of years learning at the Academy here in Minneapolis. While the twins have not been in the rings in a tournament before and have rarely had a chance to match up against anyone but each other, they enthusiastically gave their all as they tried to stay upright in armor that probably weighed as much as them. A fun experience for both the kids and audience alike! On the other end of the experience spectrum were the HRD Juniors performing Yongtoogi, a level of sparring reserved for only those who've received their Black Belts, and the only version to allow submissions. While there were no submissions that day, many attempts were made, and one truly memorable 540 jump spin kick was landed solidly to an opponent's head. While it landed with a bit too much force to be qualified, it will certainly not be forgotten.

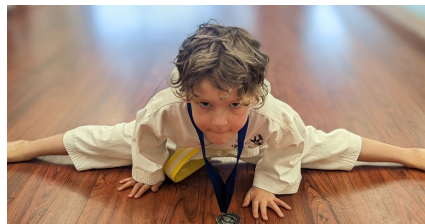
The day finished with the final event of Weapon Fighting; for our youth, this meant a series of sword battles. The winner was determined by points within the 2 minute time limit, but a total score of 3 points ended the match. The winners truly earned their gold medals, as every 1st place winner in the youth divisions had a perfect 3 point score in every single sword fighting match that led to their victory, this included: Lena Buley, Ari Orson, Faye Ebnet, Sawyer Williams, Steven Nache, Nora Thul, and Orion Sirny. It was also noted by the crowd the rapid speed in which Orion Sirny, victor of the HRD Junior division, was able to strike his opponents with a focused barrage of attacks to all possible point scoring areas; head, wrist, sides, and legs with spirited kiaps!

Overall, the day was an enormous success as it not only gave students the opportunity to test their skills in the ring, but also to overcome their fears and compete with their peers. With multiple events to participate in, the Academy was very pleased with the outcomes of the day, and especially proud to see so many champions; a total of 71 out of the 82 participants medaled, meaning nearly 87% of the competitors earned a Gold, Silver, or Bronze medal in at least one event. Master Sirny was also proud to see that his Minneapolis

leadership group, the Teuk Gong Team (TGT) students, earned a combined 53 medals throughout the event. In addition, the Grand Champions were all TGT members, with the exception of the Tiger Champion who is too young to be considered for the elite team. Competitors were only eligible to be Grand Champions if they competed in all possible events, and from there they were scored based on the number of each medal they earned throughout the day.

Congratulations to everyone on a fantastic MUSA Challenge! The Academy heard from many parents how much everyone gained from this experience, in a truly unique school where students learn life lessons that are often not taught anywhere else. The courage to overcome the nerves that were felt heavily in the morning brought forth excitement and pride as the students proved to themselves how well they could do if they just chose commitment and let determination prevail over the fear of giving up. These important lessons inspire the growth that is necessary for all people to become the best versions of themselves, examples to others, and leaders in their communities. It is what Hwa Rang Do strives to impart in all of its students, that win or lose, your spirit must be strong and no matter what happens, the

world keeps moving. One must meet the challenges of the day with back straight and eyes straight, and face whatever comes.



The Minneapolis Academy is grateful to everyone who participated in this important event. It was such a joy witnessing the students feel the intensity of their accomplishments as all of their peers cheered them on. The school is proud of all of the competitors, not only for their performances, but the for the support they give each other on a daily basis, spanning across all age groups. You all are truly Tomorrow's Leading Knights and the future of Hwa Rang Do!

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