

TKFI World Championship and Gashuku 2013

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Championship:

It is the most awaited event of the year. Members of the TKFI and karatekas from around the world - New Zealand, USA, Italy, Brazil- have travelled this year to Spain during the month of July for participating in the World Championship of Karate-do.

The tournament was held in Lleida during the weekend of 6th and 7th July 2013 hosted by Shihan Joan Gombau, responsible of the TKFI Spain. Styles ranging from Shito-ryu to Shotokan could be witnessed during the tournament.

The first day of the championship, participants were challenged by the heat wave hitting the sports pavilion where a small fan at the far end corner was supposedly meant to refresh more than 300 living souls. However, the draining heat did not stop karatekas from achieving their goals. All Karatekas gave their best on the mat demonstrating the real spirit of what a modern warrior is.

Soke Del Saito reminded participants that during the tournament, aspects such as, respect and humility were given an utmost importance, as these are the essence of what traditional Karate-do is. More than the technique bowing to our respected seniors, referees and opponents before and after each performance was crucial to demonstrate the good practice of Budo.

The second day of the tournament was starred by the families, this concept gave a 360° twist to everyone's imagination. This relatively brand new thrilling concept captivated all our senses. Each team, formed by three karatekas with a considerable age gap between themselves, performed their katas of choice on the mat. Reinforcing bonding and fun whilst practicing karate-do, family kata is indeed the best way to connect mind, body and spirit with our beloved ones.

Gashuku:

The Gashuku, meaning camp in Japanese, is held every single year by the TKFI in different parts of the world. This time, Gashuku 2013 took place for three days after a one-day break post-tournament in one of the vine chambers of the Hotel Nastasi in Lleida.

The first day of the Gashuku, the Shihan-kai's introduced themselves to everyone and explained how Karate-do has been their way to live a life full of commitments, joys and lessons.

The first half of the day was marked by the practice of combined techniques that each group performed among their team members.

Members of the TKFI USA, TKFI Spain, TKFI Italy and few members of Dojo Zaragoza were mixed and divided into four groups lead by a Shihan in each team. The aim was to deliver the teachings of Soke through the Shihankai to their members. The aim was to symbolize what in real life occurs with Karate-do, when each Dojo is in their correspondent country away from the direct presence of our Soke.

As a director of the TKFI, Soke Del Saito, aims to spread the teachings of Saito-ha Shito-ryu through the Shihan-kai as they hold the responsibility to transmit the knowledge and educate pupils with the philosophy of Karate-do.

The second half of the day was dedicated to make small changes made in one part of Pinan-Sandan and lastly, after this, karatekas who weren't going through grading were dismissed to have a bonding time together in the relaxing spa centre of the Hotel Nastasi.

The second day of the Gashuku began with focusing on ones posture, stance, aim of the tsuki and many other details by taking the first set of movements from every Pinan. Ranging from Rensoku waza to Pinan-Godan, every member found in these basic steps something or the other to be improved.

However, this day was marked by a deeper reason, the realization of what Japanese culture is in essence. Taking into account that many members of the Gashuku come from various points of the world in where cultures and customs are indeed different and unique in their on way. Some members unconsciously forgot the basic behaviour etiquette that needs to present at all times in our attitude regardless of whether it is displayed in front of Soke or in the street to a stranger.

Giving an utmost respect to our elders is crucially important in order to be a good Karateka. This point was sweetly reminded by the Shihan-kai when they realised that some members were focusing more on technique rather than the true essence of what Karate-do is: respect, humility, kindness and harmony between each other.

Soke Del Saito in between every exercise shared with us words of wisdom. In many occasions, he reminded us that the connection between upper body and hip is the key to strike a good tsuki or geri with kime. Lack of connection between hara, legs and arms resulted into a break of a harmonious movement.

Extending his words to a deeper level, Soke Del Saito shared his thoughts about how Karate-do and life are two aspects interconnected between them. The way of the empty hand is based on morals and principles that are applied among dojo members, which also can be present in our manners towards our friends, family or even strangers.

The remaining part of the day was given for students to practice one kata of their choice and the ones grading performed their correspondent kata in presence of all participants. Soke Del Saito, whose humor knows no boundaries, explained how Karaoke –way of the empty orchestra- is metaphorically similar to Karate-do. An empty orchestra needs to be filled with a tune, melody and rhythm. We all realised that one unique kata performed by three different martial artists was given by each individual a special personalized touch, like one particular song sung by an opera or a pop singer.

Last and final day of Gashuku 2013, Soke Del Saito along with the Shihan-kai demonstrated us how one simple section of a kata can be applicable in many ways in different situations of danger. Besides working on polishing the basic techniques, Soke also paid attention to each individual for personalised correction.

Moreover, participants experienced how fun it can be to compete among team members in different ways. This too, can help each martial artist to develop skills, which later can be applied for tournaments or in real life situations. Soke extended his knowledge to everyone about history in particular, how Judo and Aikido converged from the roots of Karate-do. Founders of Judo and Aikido discovered different techniques of self-defense and throws that already were utilized in ancient times by karatekas for later amplifying them into their own martial art.

Overall, this Gashuku has been a blessing, a very precious immaterial gift given to all participants by Soke and the Shihan-kai in return of just one thing. The nature of Karate-do teaches us to care and

share with others therefore, this gift was asked to extend it to others who were absent in this reunion. Lessons, knowledge and a bunch of unforgettable experiences is what will remain in our hearts from this Gashuku. As Soke said, individuals practicing Karate-do come from particular backgrounds, with different interests, religious believes and abilities but deep down what unites each one of us is Karate-do. The way of the empty hand is the only aspect that everyone unanimously agrees to stand united for.