

## **SOKE'S CORNER**

January 2014

Early Spring kicks off the tournament season and TKFI students are eager to participate at various levels of competition. From the grass roots level or inter-club events, students can also look forward in trying their skills at the local, State, Regional, National and World levels.

Competition can be wholesome, enjoyable and a great way to test one's skills against one another. Our organization makes every effort to participate at events that require proper techniques, control and great sportsmanship. Strict rules, judging and coaching practices are also part of the tournament requirements.

Students are taught to prepare adequately for each event in order that they may fair well and have a positive experience, win or lose.

Of course everything must come with proper balance; and that is to set aside time to practice while still making sure that other responsibilities are taken care of. Too often athletes are so in tune to winning that they seem to be too busy and tired to fulfill their other duties and studies. Homework slips, chores are not accomplished satisfactorily, and attitudes becomes less than positive. Partially, coaches and parents are living their personal dreams and ambitions through their athletes or children and winning becomes an obsession to them. Athletes also find it convenient to slack off on their other commitments and responsibilities because competition becomes an easy excuse and is waved in everyone's face.

In the early years of one's sports participation, coaches should be reminded to take this fertile opportunity to teach their athletes not only about the sport but also about community service and responsibility. Instead of only trying to have car washes and such to raise money for their own cause, they should take their athletes to parks and have a team clean-up day. Or how about a field trip to the banks of the river to discard fishing line, bottles, cans and trash. Not only does these activities build upon the team spirit, but simultaneously promotes pride and care for the community which they live in.

No one likes to lose. But in reality someone has to lose in order to have a winner. Good coaches will teach you that the times you lose will make winning all that more enjoyable. The important thing is to have courage to endure pain and suffering, to be willing to make sacrifices, and to prepare to be victorious no matter what the outcome. To forget or ignore your responsibilities is like cheating and that is worse than being a loser.

Amateur competition should be enjoyable. It is not a life and death situation. A good attitude is that if you cannot defeat your opponent, make him become the next champion.

Karate should be an activity that should last a lifetime and not only when one can find enjoyment in competition. To me, a dojo that is successful in maintaining a good senior adult population as well as a vibrant youth program, has the understanding and practice of a healthy balance of competition and budo practice.

Those that don't find competition attractive for whatever reason(s), either will learn to have the courage to compete or actively participate on the sidelines as a coach, volunteer or spectator in support for those that do compete.

It is also important to know when to stop competing. Releasing oneself from the ego and countless trophies and medals will teach you about your true character, especially when all the accolades and high-

light is upon another champion. Are you able to use your experiences and talents in helping others fight through their difficulties in order to be successful not only in the tournament arena but in life as well. Will you be able to free yourself from the public's eye and become heroes in your students hearts. Kenzo Mabuni Soke appreciated competition but also held the same reservations as I do about making it a priority. His main focus was to preserve Karate-do as it should be so that everyone can be winners in life. In every person's way, be it great or small, they can overcome their weaknesses while providing strength for others.

Enjoy this season and learn how to win over yourself.