

February 24, 2013

The spirit of Competition

Many love it, some couldn't care less about it and some just wish it never existed. The truth of the matter is that we all need it in some form or another. We need to be a competitor, be it in sports, business or in everyday life. Competition excites us, motivates us, frustrates us and challenges us. Yet when competition begins to engulf us without balance for our involvement in competition, we tend to lose ourselves and could never find out who we really are.

I am amazed at how much emphasis is placed on winning, not only by society in general but particularly by parents. In sports, for example, many parents feel that perhaps one day their child may be the next Joe Montana, Babe Ruth or Lionel Messi. They become so obsessed that they will argue with the coaches as to why their child is not having more play time and become angered when things don't go their way. To them, everything is about winning and their child often would never realize that there is so much to learn from not winning, such as good sportsmanship, humility, and thoughtfulness for improving themselves.

Karate has become a world sport and similar to other sports has set the stage for how this special art is to be taught in the dojo. Yet, instructors should produce winners of life and not only winners of tournaments.

In the business world

Dojo competitions in the business world may better prepare instructors to keep their doors open.

They may spend more time training while learning new strategies of teaching and improvement of techniques.

They may actively pursue and attend workshops conducted by their organization, successful business owners or motivational speakers. Instructors need to improve on their marketing skills in order to keep current students excited and motivated while encouraging new students to enroll in their program.

In the dojo

Motivating students to compete in fundamentals not only makes training fun but push each student to try harder. The results are rewarding for both the sensei and the student. The success of the students boost their confidence and help them find the warrior spirit within themselves. Competition in reaching goals such as the next belt level also keeps students on their toes. Colored pencils representing each month are used in the TKFI record book to keep students from becoming complacent or lazy. Examiners can accurately see how active a student is in pursuing their goals when using this method.

Balance

Most of you would agree that competition can be a positive tool (vehicle) for us, yet without limits, can be destructive.

No matter in what area of our existence, **balance** is the key in competition involvement. Too much can cause stress, mental and physical injury, lack of social enjoyment and guilt. Competition can also be a financial burden. When holding the correct balance, competition can be a healthy necessity that leads to success, increased self-esteem, joy, and a healthy life.

It is important that each sensei and student find this balance within himself/herself and then share this experience with other students.

You must let go of your ego and allow the true budo spirit to be the guiding light in your life and in your dojo.