

Can-Tai Kungfu comes back from U.S. with medals

The weekend of July 26 saw students from the Can-Tai Kungfu Club Bolton participate the 2013 USKSF Kungfu Championship in Baltimore.

This prestigious tournament was a two-day event, attracting competitors from all over the United States, South America and Europe. The international event brought athletes of the highest calibre to test their skills in the areas of hand forms, weapons form, sparring and two-man fighting sets.

Steve George, head instructor of Can-Tai, has been supporting this tournament for the last 10 years.

"This tournament gives those students who really enjoy competition an opportunity to compete against some of the best martial artists in the world," he said. "To be invited to this prestigious traditional Chinese martial arts tournament is extremely exciting."

The tournament was held at the beautiful Hunt Valley Resort in Huntsville, Maryland, just outside of Baltimore. The Can-Kungfu team took on the 750-kilometre adventure and drove to Baltimore stopping at sites of interest along the way.

"The drive is very long, but the view of the mountains through Pennsylvania are to die for," George said.

The entire team arrived in Baltimore by Friday night and were able to get some swimming and relaxation in before the competition. The tournament started Saturday morning with the opening ceremonies, master demonstrations and a wonderful Chinese drumming performance.

Once completed, the tournament began, with two-man fighting sets, children and adult divisions. This tournament is famous for its Lei Tai (full-contact fighting) which also began its elimination rounds. This type of fighting is was done on a raised platform, from which the fighters could fall or be pushed off.

"I love the way they (the fighters) did not hold back on the takedowns," said Ashley Harding, one of Can-Tai's competitors.

The kungfu competition and Lei Tai fights went on into late Saturday evening, only to break for the master demonstration just after 7 p.m. The performances included the demonstration of various styles of Shaolin Kungfu, Tai Chi and Wushu from masters from all over world.

All of the competitors from the Can-Tai team competed Sunday.

"It was nice to have the students on Sunday," George said. "It allowed them to take in and see many of the different divisions that occurred on Saturday."

The tournament only allows certified judges to take part in the event. George is the team coach, as well as a certified judge.

"I was judging most of Saturday, so I was very happy when I found out the students would compete Sunday," he said. "It allowed me to see and cheer on, support, and show pride in my students' achievements."

Sunday morning came, and the Can-Tai team was up early for some last minute practice and encouraging words from their coach.

The divisions began with advanced youth long weapons forms ages 15-17, where Kieran Dee, a junior instructor at Can-Tai, and Kieran McLean, the more experienced competitor, performed very well. McLean received a Bronze medal for his performance.

"Being my first time down here (at this tournament), winning was not my primary goal," he said. "I wanted the experience of competing with elite martial artists and be inspired by other athletes."

The Can-Tai team members were very happy as Harding received a bronze medal for her Fan form in the advanced youth girls weapons division. Harding, though very proud of her accomplishment, thought that "winning a medal was wonderful, but getting to know the other competitors and becoming friends with people who inspire me was more valuable."

Dee faced very tough competition in the advanced youth hand form. However, was still able to place fourth in a division of just under 20 competitors.

"I was a little disappointed in my performance, but this tournament has motivated me to train harder and focus myself for next year," he said.

Can-Tai Kungfu was represented very well and came back to Bolton with medals to be proud of. But the experience, bonding with their classmates as well as making new friends made the competition much more meaningful and rewarding.