

SEIZAN®

Newsletter of the American Amateur Karate Federation

March, 2012

Volume 3, Issue 1

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AAKF: State of the Organization

From the AAKF Executive Board, January, 2012

2011 was a fantastic year of growth and progress for AAKF, thanks in a large part to the increased cooperation and involvements from our members. We are pleased to report to you that the status of our organization is strong financially and technically, as we steadily progress into a sound and well-run entity.

Three national seminar/mini-camps were conducted in 2011 at minimal costs to our organization by AAKF's technical committee members, Senseis Fusaro, Tabassi, Tong, Shimoji, Cheah, Kageyama, Kannani, and Vance. The year started with a National Seminar in Minneapolis, hosted by Sensei Robert Fusaro. It was a well-attended seminar that lasted two and a half days that focused on *enbu* and *kumite*. The second training camp, held at the South Atlantic region in conjunction with the National

Championship, had close to 100 attendees and structured toward attendees from *kyu* level to *dan* level practitioners, competing and non-competing athletes, and novice to more experienced competition judges. We had our fall AAKF National Seminar in November that was hosted by the newly re-structured North-Atlantic region. The day and a half seminar drew athlete members from all over the East Coast, Midwest, and Southern regions.

AAKF celebrated its 50th National Championship that was held in Atlanta, GA in June, the best attended championship in recent AAKF history. This event also marked AAKF's inaugural National Youth Championship. With such talented youth gathered from around the USA at this event, our future is bright, active and promising.

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AAKF Member Spotlight: Amy Sperling, St. Paul, MN.

Amy Sperling was introduced to Karate while attending college in St. Paul, MN in 1983. She chose karate for a physical education requirement and as alternative to the trendy lycra-clad aerobics. Amy is still training 29 years later!

The formal training of traditional Japanese karate appeals to Amy's appreciation of the classical arts. Starting at age 5, she has studied piano for 20 years and violin for 10 years. This passion for technical excellence and precision dominates her training. Amy learned at an early age that in any true art form, there has to be a great understanding of technique whether it is music, art or karate.

Her training in college started with Sensei Joel Ertl. After college, she moved to Texas

where she trained with Sensei Alex Tong for 3 years. Upon returning to MN she received her *shodan* and trained with Sensei Robert Fusaro, receiving her *yondan* from Sensei Nishiyama in 2007. In 2011, Amy was named a Senior Member of the AAKF North Central Region Technical Committee.

Amy has competed successfully nationally and internationally from 1993 to 2003, garnering honors including AAKF and Pan American women *kata* champion. Retired from the circuit, Amy is focusing on becoming a good competition judge. She feels that there is a great need for qualified women judges nationally AND internationally. Amy considers herself fortunate to have trained with some of the best *karateka* in the world. In her mind, the medals were good, but the experiences were better!



Elimination round, women's kata, 2001 Pan American Championship, in which Amy Sperling took first place.



Perspectives: Desde Tejas a Chile* 2011



Santiago, Chile, November 2011

By John Bell



John Bell, shu-shin at 2012 Pan American Championship



Brad Webb (SW region, far right) coaching the Mid-Atlantic athletes (from left; Bryan Hays, Soolmaz Abooli, Priscilla Tipeni)



US team members listening intently to Coach Brad Webb's insights (from left, Priscilla Tipeni/Mid-Atlantic; Taichiro Kajijima/Western; Laurie Elliott/N. Central; Soolmaz Abooli and Bryan Hays/Mid Atlantic, Sasa Panic/S. Atlantic, Marcus Wenner/Southwestern region)

I've always been fascinated with international competition and the 2011 Pan Am Championship was no exception. While most people in the U.S. were celebrating Thanksgiving last November, 14 Americans flew down to Santiago, Chile for the XVI Pan American Traditional Karate Championship. As you would expect, this was no simple undertaking; seven competitors, one coach, three judges and three team supporters arrived in Chile at 9 separate times over a 5 day period.

By the time I arrived, Brad Webb (team coach) already had the team training hard for competition. The women's kata team (Laurie Elliot, Soolmaz Abooli and Priscilla Tipeni) had to put in their finishing touches in what little time available to ensure proper synchronization, and made final adjustments to their *bunkai*. The same challenge was presented to Bryan Hays and Marcus Wenner regarding *enbu*. It wasn't until the afternoon before eliminations that the entire team trained together. While this sounded daunting, the team's energy was very

positive, and coaching was focused and enthusiastic. As Brad Webb worked with one group, Richard Kageyama offered suggestions to others while Sensei Tabassi observed nearby. Sasa Panic and Taichiro Kajima worked mainly on their own *kata* until it was time for *kumite* drills. At this point the team's spirit swelled as they pushed each other through the reps.

All too soon, however, it was time to get to the business of the competition. As it turned out, there were actually three tournaments; a junior tournament, adult tournament and the Pan Am Championship. The morning was occupied with the junior tournament, with Pan Am eliminations in early afternoon. The next day had a similar schedule with the adult tournament in the morning and Pan Am competitions in the afternoon. The U.S. team did not attend the junior tournament; however I had the opportunity to judge during the adult tournament.

**From Texas to Chile*

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AAKF: State of the Organization Continued

Our athletes have garnered honors and awards in 2011 international competitions. In June, AAKF athletes Soolmaz Abooli and Sasa Panic, and our judges Senseis Fusaro and Tabassi represented the AAKF at the World Cup in Gdansk, Poland. US athletes (Soolmaz Abooli, Laurie Elliott, Priscilla Tipeni, Bryan Hays, Taichiro Kajijima, Sasa Panic, Marcus Wenner), and coaches/judges (Mahmoud Tabassi, Richard Kageyama, Brad Webb, John Bell) also made indelible contributions to the competitive spirit and intensity of the Pan American Championship held in Chile. Our athletes won or medaled in practically all events. Results of the Pan Am Championship are attached.

The current reserve of AAKF stands at approximately \$38,500, a figure that is much improved for an organization that was bankrupt only two years prior. AAKF is proud that, for the first time in the organization's history, it was in the financially sound position to contribute to a portion of our US Team's traveling costs to Pan American Championship. As we continue to grow, we hope to be in a financial position to cover the entire costs of the US team to attend

international events. In this regard, the Board of Directors (BOD) has also passed a resolution for USA National Team members who are selected and compete at international competition(s) to attend all AAKF National seminars and camps for FREE in the year of their selection!

By year's end, the AAKF Board of Directors elected the following members as officers and Executive Board members for the 2012-13 terms: Robert Fusaro, Chairman of Technical Committee; Alex Tong, President; Toru Shimoji, Vice President; Albert Cheah, Secretary; Mahmoud Tabassi, Treasurer; Richard Kageyama, Executive Director.

On the membership front, we welcome new clubs and new members who have joined the AAKF in 2011! Total 2011 individual membership was 831 with 55 clubs registered. With a projected annual growth rate of 10%, we can double our membership in seven years. We urge you to register your club and individual members as soon as possible.

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Perspectives: Desde Tejas a Chile Continued

As eliminations got underway, three rings ran simultaneously with a U.S. judge present in each ring.

At the conclusion of the first day's eliminations, I was asked to judge at the adult tournament the next morning. This of course, was a polite way of telling me to be there, which I could not avoid. Given that I was the junior-most U.S. judge, it was reasonable (I thought) to assume I would not center-judge any events including the adult tournament. However, that quickly proved to be an inaccurate assumption, as I was told to rotate in as *shu-shin* (referee) with the 1st *kumite* group. Truth be told, this scared the daylight out of me. I quickly realized that if you want to be a judge at national or international competitions, you had to step up to the plate. The first match was rough with my misuse of Japanese terminology, but fortunately I made it without negatively impacting the competitors.

Shortly after I arrived at the competition site, I ran into Vassil Peytchev from Madison, WI. He flew in overnight to watch the tournament, and also did some judging at the

adult tournament. I believe Vassil truly understands the meaning of "trial by fire" after his judging experience.

The finals arrived and the U.S. was represented in seven events. For over six hours the team competed nonstop. Once completed, each U.S. team member had medalled in at least one event! The US team garnered 2 gold medals, 3 silvers and 2 bronzes. The tournament ended shortly before midnight and the team was tired and hungry. Our victory dinner was held at a very special restaurant near our hotel...Pizza Hut.

Other than Brad Webb, Marcus Wenner, Laurie Elliott (and her husband) having to leave early, our last day in Santiago was nearly perfect. It was a sunny, warm spring day – the remaining team members went to an outdoor market to eat, buy gifts and relaxed, while Sasa Panic and Taichiro Kajima visited a nearby vineyard and enjoyed Chilean wine. Time flew by, and all too soon we were heading for the airport to resume our separate, mundane lives once more.

AAKF: State of the Organization Continued

A copy of the individual and club registration form is on the AAKF website, <http://www.aakf.org/site/membership/forms>. Please make sure that all registrations are received prior to March 31, 2012; those received after March 31, 2012 will be charged as a new membership. All individual members must be a member of a current AAKF registered club.

Looking into the future, we are working to create permanent membership cards through an online infrastructure. Through such a system, Club Directors will be able to access the website, register, and renew club and individual members online with only a few clicks. Meanwhile, registration will continue by the old fashioned way until the online system is up and running. Our next AAKF National Seminar is scheduled on April 27 to 29 in Bloechel Stadium in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. A flyer for this is on <http://www.aakf.org/site/events/>. Our next AAKF National Championship and summer camp is scheduled in June, to be hosted by

the Western region in sunny Southern California. Information regarding the Championship and the summer camp will be available shortly on our website. As a side note, the AAKF BOD welcomes the affiliation of a recently formed Eligible Style Organization (ESO), *Seizan-kai* US (SKUS). *Seizan-kai* US is an inclusive US national style organization and its members are eligible for ranking and other qualification certifications by SKUS.

As you can see, your BOD is hard at work on a daily basis and on your behalf to improve and grow our organization. Of course, sustaining this level of effort and commitment will not be possible without your help and involvement. Please get involved as much as you can -- your efforts have proven to directly impact the overall health and progress of our organization, as we strive to take AAKF to the next level of technical and competitive excellence. Stay tuned for more great news in the near future!



John Bell lives in Dallas, TX. John started Shotokan training with Sensei Leon Sills. He has been an AAKF member for over 20 years, and currently holds ITKF kata class A and kumite class B judges qualifications. John teaches at the University of Texas at Dallas Karate Club.



US team members and Senseis (from left) John Bell (Southwestern), Richard Kageyama (Western), Mahmoud Tabassi (Mid-Atlantic), Brad Webb (Southwestern region).



As of 2011, AAKF has 831 individual members and 55 registered clubs!

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2011 Pan American Championship Results

Event	Position	Athlete and Region
Women's Individual Kata	2nd Place	Soolmaz Abooli Mid-Atlantic Region
Women's Kogo	2nd Place	Soolmaz Abooli Mid-Atlantic Region
Men's Individual Kata	3rd Place	Taichiro Kajima Western Region
Men's Fukugo	1st Place	Sasa Panic South Atlantic Region
Women's Team Kata	3rd Place	Soolmaz Abooli* Laurie Elliot** Priscilla Tipeni*
Man/Woman Enbu	2nd Place	Bryan Hays* Soolmaz Abooli*
Man/Man Enbu	1st Place	Marcus Wenner*** Bryan Hays*

*Mid-Atlantic Region, ** North Central Region, ***Southwestern Region



The victorious women's kata team, 3rd place



Bryan Hays and Marcus Wenner, Man-Man Enbu, 1st place



Sasa Panic, Taichiro Kajima, Fukugo, 1st and 2nd place

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.aakf.org

*Become a fan of the American Amateur Karate Federation on **Facebook** and receive notices when the website is updated.*

Photographs published courtesy of:
John Bell (Southwestern Region) and Vassil Peytchev (Great Lakes Region)



US team athletes and judges, 2011 Pan American Championship.