

Medals, medals, medals ... in and out of Season

With the LSE Karate Club having had a stellar year, achieving numerous tournament successes, we knew that when embarking on the new season we would have big shoes to fill entering for the first time the prestigious Essex Cup 2005 (an invitational tournament amongst numerous karate associations from greater London and Essex).

First into the fray was the youngest member of the team, Haymon Sinapuis competing in the Individual Kata 10th to 8th kyu event. The saying goes that every cloud has a silver lining, but in Haymon's case it was gold. Despite Haymon's lack of experience it was clear that confidence gleamed in his eyes. The sheer precision of his techniques, the determination of spirit and his loud shouts resulted in one win after another, and soon Haymon found himself in the finals. The young karate student did not bend under the pressure of the spectator's eyes. He advanced through his kata and after a strong start he drew with his opponent, who watched Haymon with unease. Haymon remained undeterred and when the second and decisive round started he shone. This time his stances were more stable and he was clearly sharper. The judges raised their marks. Our yellow belt was baptised champion!

Raveena carried the women's flag of LSEKC very high. She was the only lady entrant from LSEKC and she made sure of 100% success. The otherwise smiley Raveena has recently discovered her long hidden and repressed talent for high kicks. This discovery could not have been more timely, for Raveena kept going back to give a kick and later went back to collect two bronze medals one in fighting and the other in kata.

Another rising star in the club is the brown belt, Sam, whose quick feet and heavy kicks left a few of his opponents both confused and beaten. The LSEKCian medal-shopping spree gained momentum when Yunis Abasov jumped in and began mixing it, true to character. Yunis dominated his field with a string of strong punches and kicks which ushered a speedy entry into the event final. Yunis demonstrated his excellent balance and skill keeping his opponent at bay and dodging an array of punches. However, the final pitted him against a member of the British Karate Squad. Good manners demanded that Yunis rest his case here, contenting himself with a silver in the Male Individual Kumite 17-20 year olds category.

Sensei Dario gave a masterclass in technique, speed and power throughout his matches. He stormed his way to the finals, with various powerful combinations. In the semi-finals of the tournament the match began and the central referee gave the beginning signal of "hajime!" (begin). Dario's opponent made a quick move to the front to see our sensei's reaction... and in the blink of an eye he was down on the floor! Dario's round kick to his opponent's stomach, accompanied with a loud shout, had cut his opponents' breath. All the judges immediately raised their flags indicating Dario's ippon (full point)! Dario effortlessly advanced onwards to the final of the Senior Individual Kumite. The final had begun and his final opponent did not realise what had happened before he found himself swept to the floor where Dario "nailed" him down with a reverse punch! Dario's ippon was undisputed. Unfortunately for his opponent, the match was not over. A miniscule movement from Dario resulted in a tiny reaction from his opponent and suddenly it was deja-vu! Dario's opponent was floored again!!! Four times Dario floored his opponent and finally with a loud kiai

(shout) and a perfectly executed reverse punch demanded shamelessly his final ippon! The gold medal was his!

Sensei Dario almost did a repeat in the kata. He pushed all the way to the finals where he met a member of the British squad. And again in a closely contested rematch Sensei Dario settled for a silver with a difference of 0.1 marks.

While Dario, Yunis and Sam had advanced to the quarter finals of Male Team Kumite, Sensei Joshua having won the Bronze medal in Senior's Male Individual Kumite, led a team comprised of three hardened black belts: himself, Nigel and Samu. In the earlier rounds they were always one step ahead of their opponents but it was in the semi-finals that the competition really heated up. Our team faced Chelmsford, last years finalists. After a hard fought contest and the injury of Samu, the team progressed heroically to the final. In a demonstration of guts, determination, and tactics, the LSE team stole the show.

First in was Nigel. He began steadily, weighing up his opponent. Then came the perfect moment for Nigel! With a sudden move of his front leg, he landed it with perfect control to his opponent's temple. Immediately the judges raised their flags and the crowd applauded his flawless footwork. With the first battle won it was time for Joshua to get in.

The shaved head black belt got in with his distinct kiai. Almost immediately he lashed his front hand to his opponent's unguarded temple taking the point. While the opponent's punch began travelling, he was surprised to feel Joshua's punch on his stomach instantly cutting his breath! He went down before completing the attack. When he got up again he knew that his team had lost the gold medal. LSE Karate Club were the champions for the Essex Trophy 2005!

With the spirit high on success the senior's Team Kata comprised of Dario, Josua and Nigel secured Silver medals in this category.

The 15 medals (6 gold, 6 silver and three bronze) are evidence that LSEKC is teeming with bristling talent both seasoned and fresh. Our trainers, Sensei's Dario and Joshua have made the name LSEKC a synonym for our opponents' discomfort and despair far and wide. Working closely with Xi Zhao as the club's efficient organizing secretary, they ensure that the medal-machine of LSEKC still delivers the punches and kicks on time. Let's toast to their hard work.

(991 words)