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USA Taekwondo's New Martial Arts Commission

by Scott Shaw



United States of America Taekwondo (USAT),

the National Governing Body for the Olympic sport of taekwondo, recently announced the formation of the new Martial Arts Commission (MAC) in order to aid in the ongoing development of the organization. Composed of high-ranking taekwondo masters and pioneers, the MAC was formed to honor the ancient traditions of taekwondo, develop all aspects of taekwondo within the organization, and to enhance the USAT's relationships with the international taekwondo community. The USAT named lifelong taekwondo practitioners Joon Pyo Choi and Hong Kong Kim as MAC co-chairmen.

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THE LOFTY GOALS OF THE MARTIAL ARTS COMMISSION



"When Korean masters first immigrated to this country in the 1950s and 1960s, Martial Arts Commission (MAC) Co-chairman Joon Pyo Choi explains, "they came to teach taekwondo as a dynamic means to forge human character, especially for children in order to make them strong and wise. They hoped their new country would embrace the virtues of the art, and they did.

"We are so proud that the USA has achieved prominence in Olympic taekwondo competition. The goal of this Martial Arts Commission is to make taekwondo stronger than ever as a healthy activity to nurture character development in our youth, as a vehicle for our athletes to excel on the Olympic stage, and as a common ground to build international relationships in the era of diversity."



States Martial Arts Commission Co-Chairman Hong Kong Kim, "The integration of taekwondo into mainstream American culture has spanned more than five decades and faced many challenges. Now is the time to reconcile the differences of the past and work together in the new millennium to preserve the history of taekwondo in the United States for the benefit of our children. We want to build bridges within the national and international taekwondo communities that make it easier than ever for all to participate and contribute to our taekwondo initiative."

It is important to note that the USAT Martial Arts Commission accepts TKD practitioners who have been – or are – certified by other organizations not linked to the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF), USAT's parent organization in Seoul, Korea. In fact, the USAT has made a conscious effort to bring members from other organizations into its fold, for the purpose of becoming a stronger federation.

"We are inviting all taekwondo practitioners into the organization," says MAC public-relations representative David Lee. "We have no problem with those people who were not trained in the same techniques utilized by the WTF. It is all about sharing ideas in order to come up with better ideas.

I see this organization as growing by a compromise of ideas."

Choi explains that, though smaller TKD organizations may have benefits to offer its students, they cannot provide the taekwondo practitioner with the lineage to the ongoing historical development of the art.

"A private organization doesn't have continuance if the leader dies," he says. "But, when a person joins a national governing organization like the USAT, then, even if the teacher passes away or retires from the martial arts, the organization will continue. From this, all students and teachers will be recorded into taekwondo history.

Choi continues, "In order to connect with the motherland of taekwondo, and

to all the other countries throughout the world that operate under the World Taekwondo Federation and participate in the Olympic games, one needs to connect with the USAT."

With this as a framework, the USAT Martial Arts Commission has set about on a mission to bring practitioners, teachers, school owners and masters of taekwondo together.

One Curriculum

The plan of the USAT's MAC is to develop one primary curriculum. In order to achieve this, they offer practitioners from non-WTF systems the ability to present their martial art heritage, demonstrate their techniques, and then perform two WTF forms at a promotion seminar.

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to bring as many taekwondo masters as possible into the organization.

"It is for this reason that we believe it's essential that all taekwondo teachers become part of this organization," Choi says. "In this way, they can keep the spirit of taekwondo moving forward in the United States."

Choi believes that most of these people have devoted their lives to the development, evolution and training of taekwondo. Therefore, by joining the USAT, they can become essential elements in helping to shape the future of taekwondo in the U.S.

"Most of these people are over fifty years old," Choi adds. "They have studied the martial arts for over forty years. They are the pioneers of taekwondo. By bringing them into the USAT, we can obviously learn from their virtues."

Under One Umbrella

The MAC has experienced phenomenal growth since its recent inception in February 2007.

"It took only about six to eight weeks to recruit ninety-seven grandmasters into our commission," says Choi. "The first criteria that we used to recruit these instructors and grandmasters

was to reach out to 8th- and 9th-dan taekwondo masters who were not already members of the USAT."

To achieve these rapid growth numbers, the MAC extended invitations to practitioners who did not initially feel that they wanted to be part of the USAT, members of various other taekwondo organizations, and to those practitioners who either moved away from their parent organization or whose original Korean instructor had either passed away or retired from teaching due to age. This rapid influx of advanced taekwondo practitioners assures a refined degree of guidance to take the MAC into the future.

TAEKWONDO AND THE GLOBAL "MIRACLE"

"Taekwondo has created a miracle across the globe," USAT Martial Arts Commission Co-Chairman Joon Pyo Choi exclaims. "It has spread through one hundred and eighty-nine countries in only fifty years. It has witnessed seventy-million practitioners taking part in taekwondo training."

The reason this has occurred is not only that taekwondo is an Olympic sport, but it's also due to the content and curriculum of taekwondo.

According to Choi, the benefits are:

- 1 It provides taekwondo practitioners with health and fitness.
- 2 It trains them in the skills of self-defense.
- 3 It allows them to build up self-confidence through self-defense training.
- 4 It's a beautiful art form. It allows practitioners to express themselves as artists.
- 5 It teaches practitioners the philosophy of life—how to make the right decisions when facing tough challenges.
- 6 It offers practitioners the ability to ultimately understand who they truly are and their relationship with nature and the universe, ultimately leading to spiritual enlightenment.

