

# Tae Kwon Do club sends two to worlds

by Mark Spector

Like many of the clubs at the U of A, the Tae Kwon Do club exists in anonymity on this campus of 25,000. Lost in a sea of not only other sports clubs, but of other martial arts groups.

For instance, most people don't know that this club held the Canadian National Tae Kwon Do championships at the U of A last May.

And almost nobody knows that this club sent two of its members to Seoul Korea for the world Tai Kwon Do championships last week.

There is much to learn about this art, and if you are like myself, it will all be new.

Like karate, this art uses a system of belts which a competitor earns as they increase their proficiency level. The first belt is yellow, the last one is black. There are nine degrees of black belt.

Unlike karate, Tae Kwon Do stresses the use of feet. Their theory is that by defending yourself with your legs your opponent is kept at a further distance than when you use your hands. But distance does not form the only basis for this style of defence.

Tae Kwon Do comes from Korea where it has been practised for many generations. In the old days, Korean farmers were forced to make extremely long journeys to find water. When it came down to self defence they figured that their legs were the strongest appendage therefore the best in self defence.

The U of A club practices a style of Tae Kwon Do called "tournament style" fighting. It is basically noncontact.

"We're trying to implement a self defence style," says Glen Polson, vice president of the club.

"We're not training people to go out on to the streets and beat people up."

No, Tae Kwon Do is not an aggressive sport. Like many aspects of oriental society, one is to become more humble as one's skills increase.

But anybody who wishes to learn the art of self-defence would be wise to enroll in the club.

Unlike ancient Tai Chi, Tae Kwon Do is mainly physical, not mental. "A person who spends three months with us will see definite

signs of advancement," claims Polson. "Whereas with the "mental" arts you must spend years in training. Plus this is much more adaptable to the uncontrolled environments often associated with self-defence."

The club's top instructor is master D.K Chun. He has attained a seventh degree black belt. That makes him the one of the highest ranked masters in western Canada.

Chun started the club at the U of A in 1973. A membership of 16 has swelled over 12 years to over one hundred. As times have changed, people have become more interested in learning how to defend themselves. Especially women.

The club's success culminated in May of this year when they held the Canadian Tae Kwon Do championships here on campus.

Tournament format for this sport is much like boxing: there is three rounds of three minute length; one point is awarded for a kick or punch that scores, but you cannot punch to the face, only kick.

From that tournament 16 Canadians won the right to travel to Seoul Korea for the world championships.

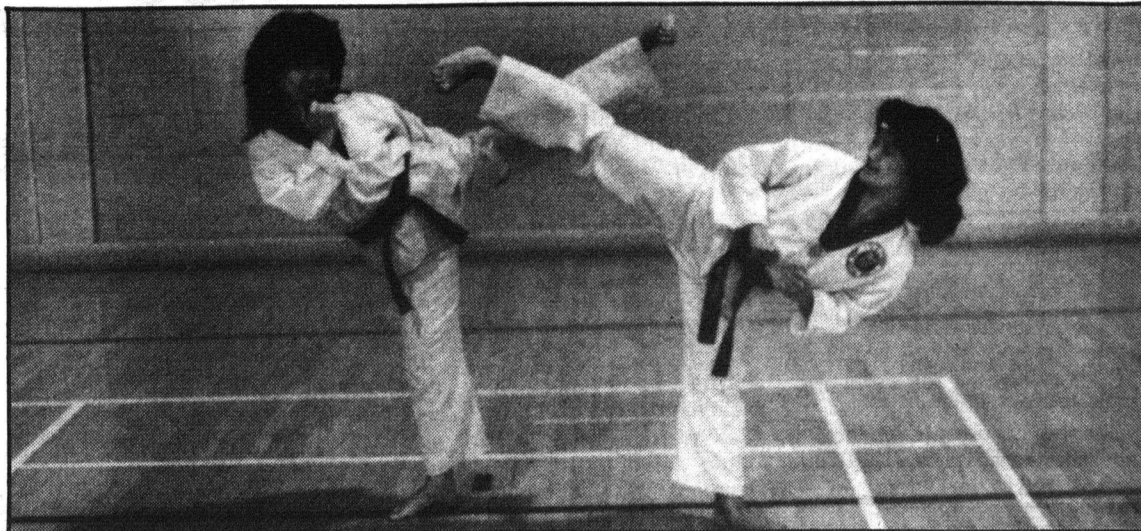
Two out of that 16 were U of A students Agnes Tsen (second degree black), and Linda Kwan (first degree black). Unfortunately, neither competitor fared well in Korea.

Over 100 countries participated in the seventh World Tae Kwon Do championships, but for Tsen and Kwan, it was little more than nine minutes in the limelight.

Both women lost in their opening bouts in Seoul. Kwan lost to the eventual winner of her weight class, while Tsen was defeated in a very close match by one half of a point. A punch by Tsen which landed on the face of her opponent probably cost her the decision.

But the fact that neither fighter was successful is minor. Their presence at such a high level of event speaks extremely well for the U of A, Edmonton, and the honorable master D.K. Chun.

And it proves once more, that on this and every other Canadian campus the highest quality of sport is not necessarily found at the same venues as cheerleaders and Guba the bear.



Agnes Tsen (left) spars with fellow Canadian champ Lisa Kwan

Photo Alex Miller

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