

Norwalk Kendo Dojo Supports Team USA

The World Kendo Championships, the biggest event in the kendo world, takes place this year in Taipei, Taiwan, on December 8 through 10. Held every three years, this will be the thirteenth in the series (13WKC).

Kendo, the art of Japanese fencing, is one of the most traditional of the Japanese martial arts. A full contact art in which two contestants do battle in protective armor, kendo emphasizes discipline, physical intensity, and strong spirit. World Championship training takes this to a whole new level. Because 12 of the 16 U.S. national team members are from Southern California, team training was conducted here, at Norwalk Dojo. The Dojo is especially proud that one of its members, Sumi Domen, is on the women's team going to Taiwan.

Norwalk Dojo has a long history of involvement at the national level. Takeshi Yamaguchi sensei, head advisor, was Team USA coach for 8WKC in Toronto in 1991, and manager for 9WKC in Paris. Mike Yoshimura sensei was a member of the men's team for 8WKC in Toronto, where he received a fighting spirit award in team competition, 10WKC in Kyoto, 11WKC in Santa Clara, and 12WKC in Scotland, where the men's team took third place. Steve Yoshimura sensei was also on the men's team for 12WKC. He also won a second place medal in the men's goodwill division at 9WKC in Paris. Until 10WKC there was no official women's division, so Jean Kodama sensei competed in the women's goodwill division at 5WKC in Brazil in 1982, 6WKC in Paris, where she won first place, and 9WKC in Paris. She was a member of the women's team for 11WKC in Santa Clara, where the women's team took third place, and Team USA coach and manager for 12WKC in Scotland.

Domen Sumi began kendo at Norwalk Dojo at the age of 7. The



13WKC Team USA. Front, left to right: Mitsuyo Sakae (women's co-captain), Mika Hagiwara, Emi Anderson, Sumi Domen, Kaori Kikunaga, Shannon Mikuni, and Adriene Aono. Back: Yuji Onitsuka (men's coach), Attila Nemeti (trainer), Jason Brown, Marvin Kuwabata, Chris Yang (men's captain), Brandon Harada, Fumihide Itokazu, Sandy Maruyama, Simon Yoo, Masashi Shikai (manager), and Naomi Nishimoto (women's coach). Photo by Kohjiro Kinno.

following is an excerpt from her Team USA booklet entry, written by team co-captain Mitsuyo Sakae:

"The youngest of three siblings, Sumi regularly visited Norwalk Dojo to play with her childhood friend, Yuli. When Yuli joined kendo, it didn't take Sumi long to follow. Sumi endured through the years, believing hard work will always pay off in the end. It



Sumi Domen. Photo by Kohjiro Kinno.

is because of her great work ethic that she was able to become the youngest member of Team USA.

"Sumi thanks Mike and Steve Yoshimura sensei, Kodama sensei, and Yamaguchi sensei for their constant support. If it were not for their support, she would not have even tried out for the national team. These instructors are the source of her confidence and will to continue kendo. Kendo has become such a huge influence in her life, she finds it difficult to imagine life without it."

It would be difficult to imagine Norwalk Dojo without Sumi. Her mother, Megumi, was Dojo president for five years, and continues to help lead the parents in supporting the Dojo. Indeed, it is the dedication of all the parents that makes the Dojo strong.

A large contingent from Norwalk Dojo will be traveling to Taiwan to cheer on Sumi and Team USA. Those of us who remain behind will be with them in spirit. Good luck, Sumi!



Norwalk Dojo members at Team USA send off party. 3rd from right back row: Hayao Shishino, SEJSCC president.

Norwalk Kendo Dojo practices Mondays from 7 to 8:30pm and Fridays from 7:30 to 10pm. For information see the dojo website at <http://www.eanet.com/norwalk/>