

SPORTS

TAEKWON-DO

Friendly City Taekwondo won 26 medals at the Lee Sukhi International ITF Open Friendship Tournament

By **Greg Colgan**, Sentinel-Review

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Friendly City Taekwondo competed at the Lee Sukhi International ITF Open Friendship Tournament in Stoney Creek, Ont. two weekends ago that had about 300 competitors. The club won 26 medals, including four gold medals. Front row from left: Dylan Bauman, Riley Bauman, William Young, Aiden Wright and Keith Schoenfeld. Middle row from left: Jeremy Vassallo, Jacob Bodera, Cole Shearer, Hunter Bauman, Jessica Bodera and Carly Green. Back row from left: Don Edmiston, Mike Kowalek, Jeremy Bauman, Corwin Butyn, Noah Young and Jolene Byl. GREG COLGAN/QMI Agency/Sentinel-Review

There's a reason why you practice.

At the time, it can seem monotonous and boring, but when you need all your skill when it matters, you're glad you did countless hours of training.

For the Friendly City Taekwondo club, that practice helped when they competed at the Lee Sukhi International ITF Open Friendship Tournament in Stoney Creek, Ont., two weekends ago that had about 300 competitors. The club won 26 medals, including four golds.

Head instructor Don Edmiston said once his students get their first taste of a tournament, they only want more.

"I have kids who come to me after a tournament asking to go to another one tomorrow," he said. "It's a sense of achievement and it builds confidence to win a medal. It's an awesome feeling for them."

Although a tournament with hundreds of people can be nerve racking the first time, ultimately it serves as self-assurance in the future.

"The tournament is huge for building confidence because when you come to class you get to know your routine," Edmiston said, "but once you go into a ring to do your pattern in front of five judges, it's pretty scary the first few times."

As well as getting nerves out of the way, it can show there's always room for growth, regardless of your skill.

"In a tournament, it's a whole new world and they may be the best at their school, but they might go up against someone else who's better," assistant instructor Mike Kowalek, a first-degree black belt, said. "It shows them there's always room for improvement. You always want to get better."

For Kowalek, he said his second match in sparring was one of the best he's had.

"I was against another black belt who had greater speed than me. It was eye opening. The way he sparred was very precise," he said. "In my weight division, which is lightweight, a lot of guys are taller than me so you expect them to use their height advantage, but he focused on speed and skill."

"I hope everyone that goes to a tournament gets to learn like that. You're never going to be perfect, but you want to get as close as you can get."

With 26 medals brought back to Woodstock, the tournament is a validation of success, but Edmiston said seeing the accomplishments of his students showed the talent is high at Friendly City.

"I had a lot of first-timers at this tournament, and they all did well. I had some yellow belts and they got medals with more than 40 kids in their division," Edmiston said. "I couldn't believe how well they all did. It's awesome. I was proud of everybody."

"I had a sixth-degree black belt come up to me and say how good they were at patterns," he added. "When that happens, that's why I do this, it's great pride for me to take my students to a tournament against students whose instructors are world champions and our school wins. It's terrific."

WHAT THEY WON

Noah Young - First in patterns, third in sparring

Mike Kowalek - First in patterns, second in sparring

Keith Miller - Second in sparring

Corwin Butyn - Second in patterns, third in sparring

Cole Shearer - Second in sparring, third in patterns

Carly Green - Second in sparring, third in patterns

Jeremy Vassallo - Third in sparring

Dylan Bauman - First in sparring, second in patterns

Hunter Bauman - Second in patterns

Riley Bauman - Third in sparring, third in patterns

Jeremy Bauman - Second in sparring, third in patterns

Jacob Boderia - Second in sparring, second in patterns

Jessica Boderia - Second in sparring, second in patterns

Aiden Wright - Second in patterns

Jolene Byl - First in sparring, second in patterns