

Hefty hardware haul for top Jiu-Jitsu clan

By **STEVE LeBLANC**

The Champion

Milton's first family of Jiu-Jitsu wrapped up another award-winning season recently in Hull, Quebec.

Darlene and Daniel Kelsh — daughter and grandson of patriarch Bob Kranstz — both secured top honours at the newly-established Canadian Martial Arts Games.

But while each were in the spotlight during the national showcase, scheduled to run every two years, they stood out in very different capacities.

Twelve-year-old Daniel shone in actual competition — striking gold in the 11 to 14-year-old boys division of Sport Jiu-Jitsu.

Daniel dominates competition

The Milton School of Jiu-Jitsu competitor decisively downed his two opponents en route to the title.

Said mother Darlene, "He was a convincing winner, alright."

The preteen brown belt dominated his two matches on the strength of a well-versed attack that included lots of impressive ground work — with takedowns and pins that really showcased his superior skill and speed.

"Daniel was a little smaller than the other guys, but he's very quick and physically strong," added his mother.

Meanwhile, Darlene brought home hardware as well, although it wasn't earned in combat — at least not directly.

Now retired from competition, the former world champion — who's taken on more work as an instructor over the past couple of years — was recognized for

her dedication to the sport with an outstanding achievement award from the nation's governing body of Jiu-Jitsu.

She was just one of two to receive the special service award within her individual martial art form.

Moved by award

"This honour makes me realize how important all the other ones have been," said the fifth-degree black-belt. "I've never really stopped to add them all up, but I did some reflecting after this one and came away feeling pretty good about what I've accomplished."

As well she should.

Over the past decade the local instructor has done just about everything possible in competition as well as earn a place in both the World and Canadian Jiu-Jitsu Halls of Fame.

But looking back now on a career cut short by knee and other injuries, Darlene does question if she sacrificed a little too much for her love of competitive Jiu-Jitsu.

"There's nothing like it (thrill of victory) in day-to-day life, but sometimes I wonder if it was all worth it," she said.

"As much as there are rules and everything, it's still fighting and it's still dangerous."

The Kelsh's recent award-winning weekend comes on the heels of a 7th Dan (equivalent of a seventh-degree blackbelt) being bestowed upon Kranstz early last month at the World Kobudo Federation's International Convention and Competition in Vienna, Austria.

There, Milton's Joe Taglieri struck silver in men's open Sport Jiu-Jitsu. While scheduled to go to the Canadian Martial Arts Games, he was unable to compete due to injury.



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Darlene (left) and Daniel Kelsh show off the hardware they brought home from the recent Canadian Martial Arts Games in Hull, Quebec.

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