

Sports

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Fighting Griffin trio shines in New York

Agnew leads club with dynamite effort

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

Joanne Agnew would have been well-advised to bring along an extra suitcase on her recent trip to Batavia, New York.

That's because the 23-year-old Campbellville resident enjoyed quite a tidy hardware haul during her latest sojourn to the season-ending International Federation of Martial Arts Championships.

Standing out among an accomplished trio of Fighting Griffins, Agnew stole the show during both the weekend-opening banquet and tournament.

She kicked things off by being named Competitor of the Year in the women's 18-34 Q-Belt (under black belt) division at the banquet — a distinction honouring her umpteen first-place showings over the past year.

From there, Agnew proved just why she's among North America's most gifted martial artists in her division with a commanding tournament performance.

She prevailed in mixed weapons, won both open and traditional women's forms and took second in women's sparring. These collective efforts earned her Grand Champion status — not just within her own division, but among all male and female q-belt competitors.

"It was just incredible. Nothing close to this has ever happened to me before," said Agnew.

So what does she credit all this success to?

"Lots and lots of practice — and having a great Sensei," she stressed.

Agnew's mentors will certainly attest to her dedication.

Fighting Griffin instructor and fellow competitor Tammy Hogarth quips that the championship-laden brown belt is "in the dojo 24/7."

Added Sensei Scott Hogarth, "She's definitely one of my most serious students, and to bring it all together like she did in the crunch is the sign of a really good competitor. She rocked the world down there."

Tammy Hogarth enjoyed her usual strong showing in New York.

The 36-year-old was first in her women's 18-and-up black belt division in self defense, forms and weapons at the banquet.

She followed that up with another triumph in self defense at the tournament and secured second-place honours in traditional weapons, open forms and traditional forms.

Rounding out the Fighting Griffins' prosperous trip was 16-year-old Caitlin Honey, a

green belt who took third in both open and traditional forms plus a fourth in self defense in the 15-17 intermediate ladies q-belt class at the tournament.

The trio's successes follow fellow club member Melaine Rego's recent provincial championship victory in open forms.

She upstaged 22 opponents in the 18-34 women's black belt division to reign supreme.

These efforts indicate a changing trend within the martial arts realm, which not that long ago was dominated by men.

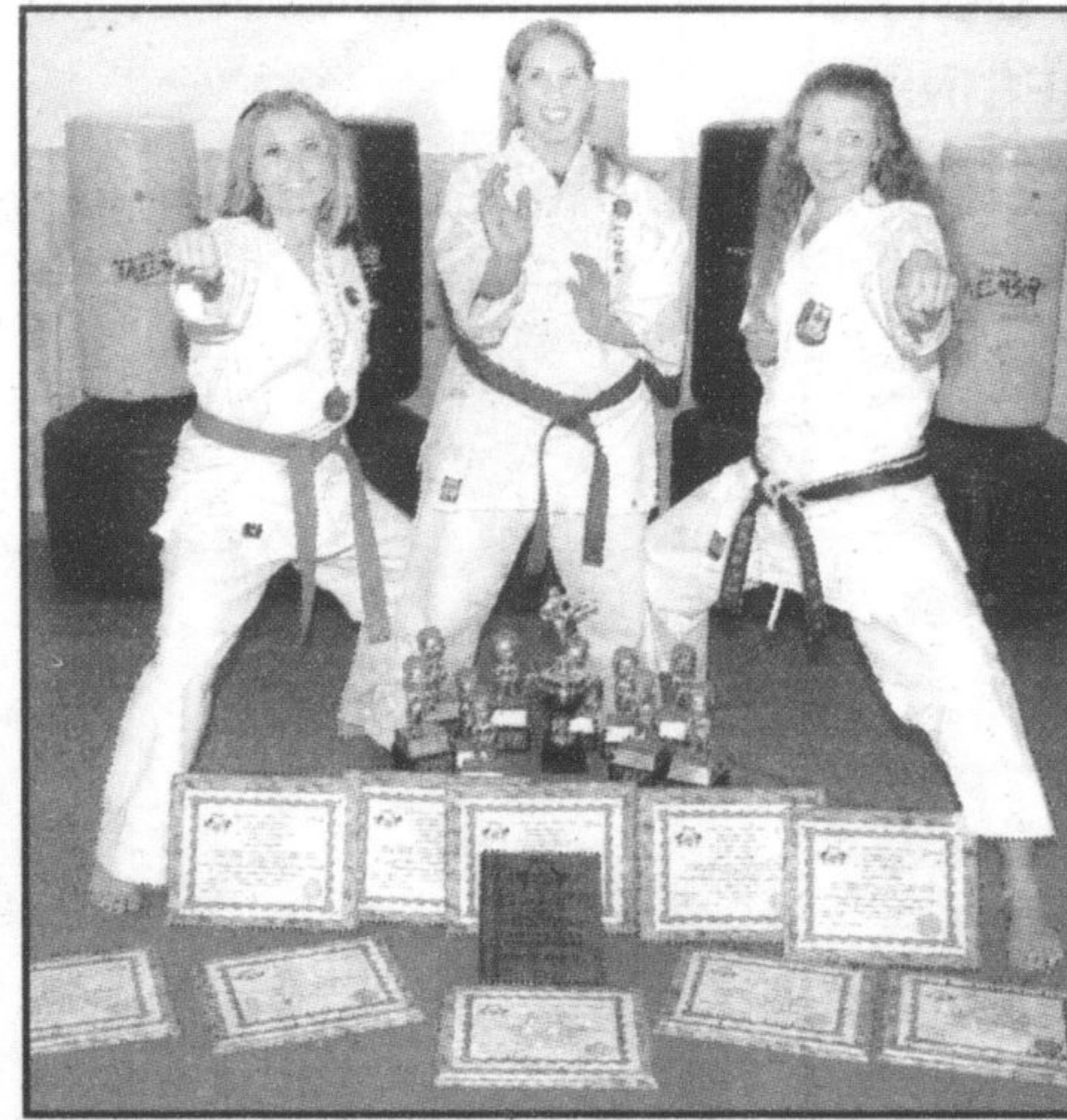
Now many clubs — like Fighting Griffins — have more women, many of whom are grabbing the lion's share of hardware as well.

"It used to be that you have the odd woman at most clubs, but now the club's about 70 per cent female. To have all women go (to championships) this year is certainly unique for me, but it's a sign of the times," remarked Sensei Hogarth.



Joanne Agnew shows off the form that met with plenty of success in New York. Inset, she and fellow Fighting Griffins Caitlin Honey (left) and Tammy Hogarth (right) display their hardware haul.

Photos by GRAHAM PAINE





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