

Local martial arts school hosts first regional tournament

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

The 1st Defense Martial Arts School in Essex hosted its first regional tournament Oct. 14, drawing more than 100 competitors from across southwest Ontario.

Martial arts enthusiasts of all ranks and ages packed into the Essex District High School gym to participate in one-on-one sparring matches and solo demonstrations.

The tournament featured light contact competitions in three fighting styles, Tae Kwan Do, Hap Ki Do and Isshin Ryu.

It was an opportunity for both beginners and black belts to apply their skills in a safe fighting environment, said tournament director Joe Cammalleri.

Cammalleri, a fourth-degree black belt, has been involved in martial arts for almost 20 years. He opened

1st Defense with his wife Donna and partner Ron Bondy in July 2005.

The local school is hoping to make the tournament into an annual event.

"We enjoy the art and love teaching kids and watching their skills develop," Cammalleri said.

The tournament featured 36 divisions, with winners of each taking home a trophy and all participants receiving a "fighting spirit" medal.

Cammalleri recruited instructors from other schools to help with the judging.

Philip Hollohan, a LaSalle Tae Kwan Do instructor with more than 30 years of experience, said martial arts tournaments develop relationships between schools and help to grow the sport.

Cammalleri is a former student of Hollohan's, who was named the Tae Kwan

Do National Champion of Canada from 1975 to 1981.

"Even though it's their first time doing a tournament, that doesn't take away from the fact that there is years of experience here," Hollohan said. "It's about getting people to come out and getting support from other schools."

Hollohan said there are approximately 500,000 martial arts students in Canada. It's a number he'd like to see increase.

"Everything in martial arts is self-energizing," he said. "It's built on hard work by teachers and word of mouth."

1st Defense, now located on Talbot Street behind Labonte Music, currently offers beginner to adult classes for nearly 80 students.

Cammalleri said students are first taught Tae Kwan Do and then graduate to the more advanced Hap Ki Do

style.

The school began four years ago as a small class run out of the Essex District High School gym.

Since then, the number of students has grown to accommodate people from ages five to fifty, Donna said.

She said the school isn't financially lucrative, but the pay-off comes with seeing kids with self-esteem barriers overcome them through participation in the sport.

Anthony Thachuk, right, extends a front kick towards Joshua Erdmann during 1st Defense Martial Arts School's Regional Tournament at Essex District High School Oct. 14. More than 100 competitors from seven martial arts schools in southwest Ontario turned out to participate.



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Matthews representing Canada in World Amateur Golf Championship

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Essex native Laura Matthews considers Team Canada's chances to be as good as anyone's in the 2006 Women's World Amateur Golf Championship taking place in South Africa Oct. 18-21.

Matthews told reporters during a media conference call Oct. 16 that she feels her game is "coming along well" and that Team Canada can do as well or better than its second place finish at the 2004 competition in Puerto Rico.

"We came really close a couple of years ago," Matthews said. "It would mean a lot to win."

Matthews is joined by teammates Mary Ann Lapointe of Georgetown, Ont., and Kira Meixner of Delta, B.C.

Players from more than 50 countries will be competing on two courses in the city of Stellenbosch.

Team Canada coach Dean Spriddle said the

team arrived on Oct. 13 and so far conditions have been "ideal." The courses are different - one is tree-lined and the other is more opened up," Spriddle explained.



LAURA MATTHEWS

Lapointe said she hasn't played a course in Canada similar to it, but "it's still the same as any course you play."

"You've always got to play steady and consistent and let the birdies fall

when they fall," Lapointe said.

Spriddle told reporters he has very simple advice for the team.

"My advice is for them to play their own game," Spriddle said. "We have certain goals and we certainly believe the team we have here is the best possible team we could put together."

Matthews, the 2005 Canadian Women's Amateur Champion and head coach of Oklahoma State University women's golf team, said she was excited and honoured to represent Canada.

Meixner, the team's youngest player, said she will be looking to Matthews and Lapointe for guidance with her game.

"I like to be really prepared," Meixner said. "Playing with people better than you will improve your game."

Since the event began in 1964, Canada has finished in second place three times.

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