TOM SCOTT
MAKING KARATE HISTORY

TOKYO 2020 IS THE BUDOKAN READY?

Para-Karate Athlete DEMYTRYK DEL RIO

RYOKI ABE WKF WORLD KATA CHAMPION INTERVIEW

SPECIAL! 2019 LIMA PAN AM GAMES

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ROAD TO TOKYO 2020

MONTREAL SANTIAGO DE CHILE TOKYO
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I know I’m of a dying breed, carrying this emotional investment in the Olympic and Pan American Games but the passion and excitement of the caliber of such events is simple…incomparable.

I think that the best way to describe being at the Games is that it’s like going to see a new Rocky movie for the first time. You’ve seen the old ones so many times that you have this idea of what they are and know what you want out of the new one. You want it to meet every one of those benchmarks but at the same time you want to be surprised.

The special atmosphere and pressure surrounding the Games has prompted applied sport psychology practitioners to recommend that preparation for the Olympics be fine-tuned for this specific type of event. However, no matter what the level of preparation is, unpredictable events and incidents always occur (as we experienced in Lima), and the Team Staff, Coaches and athletes should be ready to respond to situations and challenges in ways they had not foreseen.

In the sport literature, the Games have often been emphasized as a very stressful event. Increased media attention, restricted freedom to move, boredom in the Village, stressed coaches and managers, being members of multi-sport national teams, selections, etc., all adds to the pressure. The athletes live in the Village, where only athletes, coaches, and officials with credentials are allowed to access. Everything is under the microscope.

This issue mainly focuses on the 2019 Lima Pan American Games. We bring you a “pictorial memoir” with some of the best moments of the USA Team. We hope you enjoy as much as the USA KARATE team enjoyed represented the United States of America in Lima, Peru.

Jose M. Fraguas
Editor-in-Chief
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One Step at a Time

I didn’t start karate because of the competition world and I actually didn’t know anything about it until I was sixteen. We went to nationals and my Sensei told me about the Elite division. He said it would be a good idea to enter and see where I’m standing. I was going to see what I have to work on in order to make the US Jr. Team the following year. To everyone’s surprise, I made the team that year and that’s kind of where it all started.

I think karate can be defined in many ways. To some it’s a sport, to some it’s an art and to others it’s a way of life. I don’t think there is any “right” definition. It’s just what you choose to see it as. To me it’s a mix of all three. It’s a sport because of its competitive side. It’s an art because it’s very technical and beautiful. And it’s a way of life because it really dictates the way I live mine.

Every aspect of practice is important. Weather it’s working on new techniques, improving current ones, strength and conditioning or visualization; they’re all important parts that come together to create the whole product. The focus shifts depending on what we believe we need to work on most at the moment. My understanding of karate is still developing as I continue to grow as a fighter. It’s always evolving because karate is always changing and so am I. I try take away as much as possible from each competition. Then I go back to the dojo and work on those things to prepare for the next one.

I just really love karate. Being passionate and truly loving what you do is important. Not everyone gets that kind of opportunity. Surrounding yourself with supportive and loving people is also vital and I’m lucky to have the best people behind me. My sensei, who’s taught me everything I know about karate; My parents who have supported me and pushed me to follow my dreams; My brother who’s my number one fan; And my close friends who always check in and who are genuinely curious about my karate career. Having those people with me and seeing that they want to see me succeed keeps me motivated.

Every athlete wants to see their sport in the Olympics. Having karate part of the 2020 Olympic Games gives all of us a shot at competing at the highest level possible. The recent news about Paris 2024 was not what the world of karate was expecting but if there is any possibility to change the IOC decision, we are going to do it. The sport of karate deserves to be at the Olympic Games.

I do hope that karate is something I will be able to do for the rest of my life. But wherever I end up, I hope I can spread positivity and love. I want to use whatever tools I have to encourage young athletes worldwide to be themselves and continue pursuing their passion. USANKF
Chikara no kyojaku tai no shinshaku waza no kankyu

Do not forget: (1) strength and weakness of power; (2) contraction and expansion of body; and (3) slowness and speed of techniques

You must always remember these things are not only for karate techniques but also for everyday life. On the surface, this principle appears to refer only to karate techniques, but Master Funakoshi is teaching us more than that. To see how, let us look closely at each point.

Strength and weakness of power. Trying to make tension at all times is not natural. Master Funakoshi is telling us that power takes many forms. It does not only exist in muscular tension. Relaxation is very important to conserve energy. It is from relaxation that tension becomes powerful. In karate it is impossible to stay tense and perform techniques properly. Life is the same way. We must learn to understand the natural rhythm and timing that is in Nature. Then we will see all the different forms that power can take. We must always strive for balance.

Expansion and contraction of the body. The body must breathe, in and out, and we must realize that expansion and contraction are natural. One is not “better” than the other. In this aspect of executing a karate technique, here we have yet another example of opposites being two sides of the same thing. Similarly, in life, human beings must be flexible, especially in relationships. Always thinking, “I’m right, you are wrong” does not make for good communication. We need to be able to admit our faults and realize that being right or wrong is not nearly as important as being a good person. Sometimes we should exert ourselves, other times we should recede. The important thing is to maintain that inner sense of balance, so that we know which action is appropriate in a given situation.

Slowness and speed of the technique. This involves understanding the importance of a strong foundation, timing and proper attitude. We have talked about all of these things before. With a low stance we create a strong foundation. In controlling the speed of a technique, we are aware of timing—or more simply, we are “aware.” The appropriate speed of a movement—that is, proper timing—can only be understood when we are clear-minded and aware. In life, when we clearly observe situations, then our resulting action is usually appropriate to that particular situation.

Master Funakoshi was very concerned with showing us that life must have balance—hard/soft, positive/negative, fast/slow. It is very important to stop thinking only about the physical techniques and think about developing your mind at the same time. This is called shingi-ittai, mind and body together. That is the essence of budo. USANKF
Two New Rules, More Exciting Matches

The 2019 competition season is about to end with the Junior World Championship in Santiago, Chile and the last senior premier league in Madrid. Competitors can recover from these high intensity competitions for a few weeks and enjoy some family and down time prior to starting another four months of intense Series A and Premier League competitions on different continents. The beginning of April is when the first phase of qualification ends and we will know the top-ranked athletes per continent who have qualified for the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

Countries without any qualified athletes in the eight Olympic categories can nominate one athlete per category to the Olympic qualifications in Paris in early May. This competition will end the final qualification for this historic karate event, and it might be historic in the truest sense of the word because we don't know if we ever will have a chance to be an Olympic sport or not.

I have had the privilege of attending most of 2019 premier league events and watched the high intensity of these competitions among top competitors. Their performance required incredible dedication, sacrifice, and talent. At the same time, I have been observing performance fatigue. Most of the matches finished with low scores and were characterized by cautious tactics and not much risk. This is not the way we would like our sport performance to be, especially when we claim to be more superior and exciting than other combat sports.

For that reason, two new rules have been in place since first part of September to encourage competitors to fight as well as to split after any clinch. It took competitors a little time to get used to this command from referees. We observed that some competitors simply stopped fighting, thinking incorrectly that the commands were to stop the match. It only took a few times for opponents to take advantage of that confusion and score, but now competitors and referees are getting used to the new commands.

These two commands are: Tzukete – engage to fight- and Wakarate – break from a clinch. Referees are recommended to wait a few seconds after either of these commands prior to considering any warning or penalty. I have been practicing and instructing these new rules over the past few weeks and have also observed that occasionally there is some confusion about Wakarate. It's crucial for referees to know the distinction between an intentional grab and the need for a Wakarate call; it's important to be able to tell the difference between an attempted take down after grabbing a kicking leg and the need for a Wakarate call; and, finally, we have to ensure a fair match by not using Wakarate in less than 15 seconds remaining of the match—this will hopefully avoid any potential for manipulating the new rules.

These recommendations have been considered by WKF rule commission to encourage competitors to be more active on the Tatami and to prevent boring matches that can result in unwanted warnings or penalties. Our knowledge of the proper usage of these new rules recommendations is the key if we are to successfully achieve these objectives.

This is a critical time for our sport now, one of selecting the Olympic team. We have to take this timing into consideration as well as we accurately apply the rules. All coaches and athletes train to turn any number different situations to their favor. Sometimes that involves tactics that manipulate the rules to an athlete’s advantage. Therefore, it is crucial that we focus and observe all actions on the Tatami, be comfortable with rules, and apply them in ways that ensure fair, safe, and exciting matches. We must show the world that our sport is a dynamic and enthusiastic combat sport as we shine in Tokyo.
Well, one thing is for sure…I’ll never be asked to be a shoe model. I look down at my feet and I think I’ve broken all my toes, at least once, many multiple times. My hands and fingers are not much better. I’m sure many of you can say the exact same thing. It’s just karate. I spent so many years as a fighter and as you know, when you go in hard, it happens. And in the middle of matches. And at tournaments. Broken or jammed fingers, toes, or worse. We’ve all seen it. Do you keep going? In the moment? I guess it depends – on how bad it is, and your personality.

“I want to keep going, coach. I’m fine.”

I’ve heard that more times than I can remember. Warriors that wanted to keep fighting, and it did not matter that they just had their nose smashed from a hook kick to the face. Sometimes we have to make them stop, for their own safety. But their spirits are amazing. Warrior spirit.

“Sorry Sensei, my child (without disabilities) can’t come to karate today, he has a slight cold and I think I’ll keep him home for the rest of the week.”

What?? Why? That makes no sense to me.

I’ve had this conversation a lot lately with my staff and athletes at my dojo in Illinois. We largely serve para karate athletes, mixed in with some typical kids. And I’m “old school”, as they say. The way I was raised by my mother and father was that you show up, no matter how you feel, you go to school you go to work, you do your job and live up to your responsibilities. You never let your team down.

“Figure it out…Dig deep…walk it off…take a breath…you’re fine…are you crying? Come over here, I’ll give you something to cry about…”

These are the words I remember from my childhood. Even now they make me smile. You didn’t stay home because you had a cold or a slight fever. You went to school unless you were dying. Seriously. When my brothers and I had disagreements, my old man would throw us boxing gloves and tell us to “work it out” in the backyard. We did. And we got stronger each time.

I see my para athletes struggle with each step they take. Each breath they breathe. But they show up. They never quit. It’s truly inspiring to see. Warrior spirit. They have it.

One young man I teach privately, recently underwent brain surgery. He was having multiple seizures a day. The doctors felt that if they took part of his brain out it would reduce the number of seizures. They performed the surgery and he was back training shortly thereafter. Warrior spirit.

I read the article Sasha Gerritson wrote about Demytrk DelRio and how he fought to get back into karate after his terrible accident. Warrior spirit. I read the story about our USA para karate team member Sabahudin Tricic and how he came back to karate after he lost his eyes in the crossfire of the war going on in his county. Warrior spirit.

I watched (on TV) the Pan Am games held in Lima last month, and in addition to our amazing Team USA, I also had the chance to watch the para Tae Kwon Do team folks do both kata and kumite. It was great. It is my dream to have Para Karate in the Pan Am Games someday, but that’s a different article, I suppose. These athletes were strong, vibrant and determined. They kept going. Warrior spirits, for sure.

I’m hoping the tides will turn again and one day, soon, the call I would get would be:

“Sensei, I just wanted you to know that my child is a little off their game today, maybe sick or whatever, but I’m sending them to karate because I realize that we have a tournament coming up and I don’t want them to miss anything or let their team down. I read those articles in the USA Karate Magazine and I was inspired to hear those stories. I want my kid to be like that. Oss.” USANKF
In less than 300 days Karate will make its debut in the Olympics, first time ever! After several attempts, and 50 years since the first World Championships in Tokyo our sport will be at the big stage. Karate has been through different processes in the last half century, a lot of frustrations and deceptions over the years, but finally the dream has come true and impossible to be better, because our first time will be at the Karate Famous Mecca, the famous and legendary Budokan in Tokyo.

For the rest of the world, karate is still a new sport and in Tokyo 2020, we’ll have the most difficult Kumite and Kata test that karate has ever faced. We will be under the microscope with many doubts and many questions to answer. But what we saw in Tokyo a few weeks ago already showed that the country, the people, the Organizing Committee, the Japan Karate Federation and the World are ready for this “challenge”.

Tokyo ran two events in one, the Karate Premier League K1 September 6th – 8th and the “Ready Steady Tokyo-Karate” Test Event on Monday, September 9th.

Both events ran extremely well. We saw how they added to these two events the Japanese World-Famous Trademark ”Perfection.”

And although “perfection” doesn’t exist, they tried very hard to show that we can be close to it. Probably the only mistake is to think that - eventually - things can’t work. But at the same time, the most important thing is to be able to fix details immediately.

The venue, “The Budokan” was used for the last time before they will start remodeling the building, and will be closed until our debut August 7th 2020. The expectations are high, and so far we could see that there is a great team working behind the scenes, they move like one unit and their goals are clear and in 2020, they will show the best karate event ever.

The country is 100 % involved, and what we loved in this two last events was the spectators support. They were cheering for all the delegations and athletes showing knowledge of our discipline and respect. The energy, the atmosphere there was amazing, I believe that was just one little piece of what we will see. And yes…The Budokan is ready and waiting!
USA KARATE

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Tom Scott, is one of the icons of the sport karate, not only in the U.S., but around the world. He made history during the last Pan American Games in Lima, Peru by medalling in three consecutives Games.

USA KARATE Magazine caught up with him on the way back to Dallas after getting a new Gold Medal, to talk about his experience in Lima, past and current training and the 2020 final goal, the Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan.
You made history in the last Pan American Games in Lima, Peru by winning three medals in three consecutive Games. How do you feel about it?

Each Games event is so special. Representing Team USA at karate specific tournaments is great, however, being a part of the Team USA with all sports together in an official event is such a great honor. Of course we always try to medal whenever we travel, I am very happy and thankful to have had such fun experiences at the Pan American Games. Each of my Games experiences has been such a launching pad for me. I am always so inspired following the Pan American Games. This event has always been key in building up my confidence to go and take on the rest of the world. I am excited to continue that pattern this year.

How much pressure did you have – considering what was at stake?

I feel like Sensei Burns and I did a great job keeping my mind away from distractions such as Olympic qualification, or what it would mean to win or lose at these Games. I stayed very focused on my opponents, my strategies and tactics, and being thankful to even participate in such a high level event. I like to think that this is a part of my secret; nothing is at stake if I am solely focused on kicking and punching and having fun. Besides, Games events are so exciting and stimulating, it is pretty hard to have a bad time. They are just too fun.

How was your preparation for the Lima Games 2019? Did you change or modify anything for the Games or did you keep doing what you were doing until then?

Our 2019 competition and travel calendar is packed. With a calendar like this, every day of the year has a purpose. The entire year was planned from the beginning after taking a look at the WKF schedule of events. My strength and conditioning coach Chris Stratis does a great job- helping plan out the year. Lima 2019 was definitely one of our peak events where we planned to have a top performance. My whole team behind me did a great job making sure I was at my best for those Games.

What can you tell us about the atmosphere within the USA Team in the Athlete Village?

The athlete village is one of a kind. For two weeks, that place is the coolest athlete retreat on earth. There is a huge cafeteria open 5am-3am. Athletes from various sports and countries are jogging around early in the morning. Everywhere you look there are athletes preparing, celebrating, and enjoying the experience. Meeting other sports, trading pins, and taking advantage of the athlete amenities is enough
to fill your schedule. There was a sauna, Team USA offered chiropractic and athletic massage services, it was great. I would really say that where Karate1 Premier Leagues and other tournaments might feel like work, the Pan American Games always feels more like a celebration of athleticism. It’s a great reminder for me that I love doing what I do.

USA Karate Kumite Head Coach, Mr. Burns, is your long time teacher. How does this affect your coach-athlete relationship during international competitions and specifically in the last Pan Am Games?

His impact on my performance is just as clear as his impact on the whole of USA Karate. In the past three Pan American Games spanning 8 years, Sensei Burns had limited access credentials in 2011, he was Team Leader in 2015, and Head Coach in 2019. I silvered in 2011 to contribute to a two medal total for USA Karate. In 2015 I took Gold after losing my last pool match and regrouping for a close final finish. The team took 3 medals that year. This year, with Sensei in my chair I was very comfortable and never doubted myself through the whole event. USA Karate took 7 medals to win the overall. I know Brian Irr and I would both attribute much of our success at these games from Sensei Burns’ influence not only all year but in the chair last week. Of course, with a team that unites suddenly from all across the country, Coach Burns is not going to have the same impact on every athlete that he has had for Brian and I. But he does create an atmosphere of fearlessness and confidence for any team once on site, and for us it started months ago. Sensei Burns knows not only how to strategize a win in the ring, but he also knows how to bring a team together over months of camps, communication, year-long themes and dang good pep talks.
How important is it to have the “right” Coach seated on the chair in an elite competition? And why?

After 10 years of competing internationally, I have experienced every type of coaching scenario. 10 years ago I was competing in the Premier Leagues by myself with no coaches available. I used to think that to have a coach in my chair was just a nice bonus but not a necessity. Nowadays my experiences have shown me otherwise. Having someone who knows you on every level and can sense how you’re feeling without even asking is powerful. Sensei Burns knows me very well and in some cases better than I know myself. I feel great when he is around because he knows I respond well to hearing “the facts.” To motivate athletes, he is good at finding and explaining the reasons why they really can win. I would say having him around is crucial and can significantly impact my performance. Watch out when we show up to the ring together.

In Karate, like in any other sport, sometimes you win and sometimes you lose... what is your mindset in victory and what is your mindset when you don’t get the result you are expecting?

With 10 to 12 international competitions a year, we have to be able to turn around quickly after wins and losses. The name of the game is consistency right now over a lot of matches. I need to replicate the habits that we find are leading to success and brush off any mistakes and losses. I only struggle with loses when my mind is far from my core values. For me my “Why” or the reason I compete is because God enjoys me in my element. As He does with each of us. It is that simple. When I am enjoying what I do, I feel I am unstoppable and I feel anything is possible that day. If I get stuck or caught up on a loss or my own pity party then sometimes it takes my team at home to realign me on my Why. My Why has nothing to do with winning or losing and everything to do with being the best I can be and feeling it in my bones.
Are you still teaching during the qualification process for Tokyo 2020 or are you focusing only on only training and competing?

Teaching at the Academy of Classical Karate in Plano is good for me. Even if I have the chance to become an Olympian, I will not give up teaching my classes. Teaching gives me perspective and allows me to share my journey with others. My kiddos also keep me humble. If I come home and tell my youngest students that I won gold at a major event they will usually tell me “that’s great Senpai. now what game are we going to play today?” I am lucky to have these types of checks and balances that keep me grounded. For me, I couldn’t pause my role as a teacher in an effort to become an Olympian. Being generous with my time is powerful in two directions. I get energy from the time I invest in others. Especially in times when I might not feel like it.

How influential do you consider your “support system” (spouse, parents, friends, etc.) in the success you are achieving in your athletic career?

I am naturally very inclusive with my support system. People always ask me to clarify when I say “We took gold.” But anything I accomplish at this point is attained through several people’s aligned efforts. There is no way I could do this all on my own. But even more than that, I wouldn’t want to do this without everyone who is in this with me. I have had so much time to contemplate my journey, and I really do value my time with every member of my support team more than the actual accomplishments themselves. I think even some of the greatest achievements would feel pretty meaningless if you have no one to share them with. Gratitude is a key to victory for me, and I am so thankful for my wife Morgan, my Sensei, my parents, family, friends and my dojo.

After the Pan Am Games, we are heading into the final sprint of the 2020 Olympics qualification process. How are you planning this final sprint to Tokyo?

I am planning to wake up every day in prayer with a smile. I plan on slowing things down and enjoying every moment. This is going to be so fun. This final sprint will be more mental than anything else. Mental focus in the moment, mental toughness after stressors, mental versatility and adaptability in moments of change or surprise will all be required over the next year. I wrote in my training journal earlier this year that “I hope this Olympic run will require everything I can possibly give… Because that is the only way it will be worth anything to me.”
had the pleasure of meeting Demytryk Del Rio this July at Nationals, where he competed (and took the bronze medal) in the Elite Para Karate team trials, as part of the Blind/Visually Impaired division. His Sensei, well-known 6th Dan Goju Ryu Uchiage Kai Sensei Eugene Tibon, shared a little bit of Demytryk’s powerful story with me. I was so moved by his journey that I felt it was important to share with a larger audience through this article.

Along with words from Sensei Tibon, we also have quotes gathered by Demytryk’s mother, Felicia, who assisted in getting his (Demytryk’s) answers together.

Demytryk is 28 years old, a first degree black, practicing karate Goju Ryu karate for 23 years in Stockton, California. Before his tragic accident, he did not have any apparent physical or cognitive disabilities or challenges. He began karate at age 3, after watching his Aunt Eliza train at Sensei Tibon’s dojo. She was his motivation and mentor and he was highly encouraged to succeed by his family, Sensei and Mrs. Tibon, martial arts legends and movies.
In Demytryk’s own words: “I was really inspired by Karate Kid though because it is the same martial arts style that we practice at Sensei Tibon’s dojo. I loved karate and some of my milestones I remember are winning 1st in the Junior Olympics and Pan American in Florida.”

About Sensei Tibon, Demytryk offered these words: “My Sensei has always been a big part of my life and he was my mentor. I valued his opinions and advice. He taught me to be the best person I can be. I remember him teaching us in class three words: respect, discipline, and loyalty. He said to respect others and who you are, to be disciplined and to stay focused on achievements, and to be loyal to the people who support you.”

One of the founding fathers of the USA National Karate-do Federation, Sensei Eugene Tibon Jr., also from Stockton, California, is what I affectionately refer to as a “lifer”, in that he has dedicated his entire life to karate. In addition to running his dojos in California, he is the current Western United States President for Goju Ryu Uchiage Kai International. Additionally, he has held and continues to work in major leadership roles in the USANKF and other organizations.

“I was introduced to martial arts when I was about 11 years old from my father, Gene D. Tibon Sr., who is also a martial artist in Goju Ryu, Escrima, Boxing, and good old fashion street fighting. Along with my brother Darren, sisters Leslie, Regina, Jackie, and cousins, we all learned from my father. So, you can say I have had 53 years of exposure and training in the martial arts including the years with my Father. My grandfather and great-grandfather were also involved in the martial arts. The family's whole heritage is martial arts based, so it was born in to me to be a martial artist.”

With a master teacher like Sensei Tibon, and a supportive family, it would seem like Demytryk was on a great path towards success.

And then things changed in his world forever. I asked him/his mother to share whatever they felt comfortable telling our broader audience, regarding his accident. Here is his powerful and life-changing story.

“First, I would like to explain that I did not have a good relationship with my biological father. He was not a part of my childhood as he was in and out of jail and also had a drug problem. My Grandpa Pete and Uncle Pete were the men in my life who I looked up to
as father figures. My biological father, also named Demytryk, reached out when I was around 16 years old. He showed up on my porch with my two half-brothers. I did not want to see or talk to him but when he introduced me to my brothers I decided to stay in touch with him. I wanted to be close to my two younger brothers. On the day of my injury, my biological father invited me to bowling and at first and I did not want to go. I ended up going to spend time with my family. I went and enjoyed my time with my brothers and cousins. After bowling, he invited me to his house for karaoke. I asked to invite a couple of my friends. He said yes and we all hung out in the backyard listening to music and having a couple of drinks. He started to make jokes with me and my friends which eventually then turned into anger, being aggressive towards me, and assaulting me to which I defended myself. My two friends broke it up, but then when we went to leave my father threw a brick at my face and cracked my two front teeth. He attacked me again physically. As he threw a push, I blocked it, but was not aware he had scissors in one of his hands. The scissors were good in length and although I block his punch, I was unable to block the scissors. That is when he stabbed me. The scissors had went in my head three inches. I felt tingling and blood coming down and saw he ran away from the scene. I tried to walk away, but my friend grabbed me to stay down and not to get up. That is when I felt weak and blacked out. I was told the scissors were still in my head. My friend removed the scissors and the doctors said that that had played a role in saving my life.”

At this point I always have to stop and take a deep breath.

Sensei Tibon recalls: “I had just finished a rank testing exam and I got a call that one of my black belts, Demytryk, at the time an employee/instructor teaching my junior karate program, had suffered a life threatening injury that an object penetrated into the left side to the center of his brain, which took his eye sight in one eye, mobility to the right side of his body, and memory away from him. He was outside of the dojo when the accident occurred and they called me to let me know what was going on. He was being medivac by helicopter to a hospital out of town with a brain surgeon, who was on call was waiting for his arrival to save his life.”

Sensei Tibon continued: “Demytryk spent several month’s in the ICU. I recall one specific time while visiting him, I was holding his hand and talking to him while he was still in a coma. I told him to do Sanchin Kata (a Goju Ryu Kata meaning mind, body, and spirit in his mind), and to see himself healing. It was at that time when the Doctors said he’s had not response of any kind with them poking him with needles to see if his body would react to the pain, but no response. So, as I spoke to him, I asked him if you can hear me move your foot or squeeze my hand, after a few seconds Demytryk moved his foot with a twitch, which blew the doctors away. That meant he was not fully paralyzed.”

“As Demytryk awoke and started his rehabilitation with various doctors and Specialist, I had him come into my Dojo in order to work with him (along with a physical therapis). We pushed him to his fullest physical limits to try to get his muscles and neurological memory back into his body. We worked almost every day on a stationary bike, then taped his hands to the peddles the stationary bike upside down while he hands peddled one mile and graduated to 5 miles after many weeks of physical training. We work balance drills, and agility drills, and flexibility drills to help him try to regain his range of motion on his right arm and right leg. I had him doing balance exercise by walking down the tatami mat lines forward, backward, sideway to help him regain his equilibrium. Watching him “come back to life” was incredible.”

Demytryk remembers these times as well. In his own words: “Before my accident and after it, my Sensei supported me in karate and outside of karate. He watched me
graduate from high school and also supported me in college. I commuted to Sacramento to attend College and Sensei worked around my schedule so I can still teach karate to the kids.

Every year my Sensei had all his students write 10 goals for the New Year and 10 achievements we accomplished from the previous year. This always stuck with me, which has helped me achieve goals throughout my recovery. When I was released from the hospital, I set goals for myself, even if they were just little steps towards recovery. My first year, I wanted to speak again. I then learned to be independent in self-care. I had so many things I wanted to accomplish, but I knew I wasn’t going to get there if I didn’t have a plan.

After wiping the tears from my eyes, I asked Demytryk if there was anything else he would like to say. He had one more important person to thank. A man that many of us know and love and are very grateful to. That person is Dr. Mark Blaine Kingsbury.

“Dr. Mark Blaine Kingsburg, a man I had never met prior to my injury, heard my story from Sensei Mary Crawford. They reached out to Sensei Tibon to schedule a visit to meet with me. When we first met, my mom explained my injury. He asked if I could walk at that time, but I could only take a couple of steps. Dr. Blaine was able to wake up the nerves and muscles that were sleeping and calmed the overly reactive nerves. After the first trial treatment, I was able to take 10 steps. He told mom “I can get your son to walk, run, and become independent.” The other doctors all said I would be lucky to walk again within five years. So, from there he tested my brain waves to see which areas I needed development in. The test helped determine what areas of my brain were damaged in order to remap my emotions, physical movements, reading, and speech. Each of these areas were treated in stages. After each treatment, I would become physically and emotionally drained for a day or two. My muscles started spasming which was a good sign my nerves and muscles were communicating. These treatments helped me to regain movements, read again and helped me with my cognitive understanding. I am not 100%, but I feel strong and confident by each goal I have been able to accomplish thus far. I am partially blind on my right side, my muscles are still stiff, my fingers and toes I can barely wiggle. However, and I am proud to say I worked my up to read several novels again reading in a 7th grade reading level. It does take me a little longer than others to problem solve, but I put my mind to it until I can understand and solve problems. My mom took me to see Dr. Blaine three times a week so I can get these treatments even though it was a two hour commute each time. These treatments played a huge part in speeding up my recovery. Thank you, Dr. Blaine.”

In conclusion, it is clear to me that Demytryk has the spirit of a great warrior. He will never give up and we can all learn from his amazing journey.

As a final thought Demytryk said: “Today, I want to show others that although my injury was impacted by negative events, my journey to recovery has had many positive outcomes. I want others to be inspired and know that with hard work, determination, and dedication, they can also beat the odds. Look at this year at Nationals with me winning 3rd place this year in Elite Para Karate Kata.”

USANKF
If you meet Ryoki Abe – one of the greatest Kata Champions of all time - on the street, you will see a normal-looking man with a quiet, pleasant personality. If you meet him in the dojo, you will see an exceptionally skilled, highly focused, passionate, master of karate. If you meet him in competition, you will see one of the most fierce and powerful karate champions of modern times.

From his quiet beginnings in Miyagi Province, Japan, he began training karate at about ten years of age. The Martial Arts movies had just come to Japan, and started a wildfire of interest in the martial arts. He went to high school and college, eventually becoming a chiropractor. He even opened a chiropractic business next to his karate dojo. During the time he was in school, however, he spent every spare moment training karate. When people around him went to movies, parties, or on vacation, Abe spent time in the dojo. Abe always focused on two things: his dreams and goals about what he wanted to accomplish in karate; and his dedicated training to accomplish his goals. These two things, more than anything else, have made his championship dreams come true.

Sensei Abe has a special feeling for the study of kata. In his opinion, it is the true test the quality of a person’s karate training. A student cannot cheat with kata. If their training is poor, their kata will be poor. If, however, the training is focused, constant, and fueled by passion, then their kata technique can be extraordinary. As a child, Abe dreamed of becoming a kata champion. He trained like a champion and worked his way up from small, local tournaments to the most highly-respected competitions in the world.
Q: When did you start training karate?

A: When I was about ten years old, I started becoming interested in karate. At about that time, Bruce Lee movies, and other kinds of karate films, were becoming very popular with everybody in Japan. Like everyone else, I saw those movies, and wanted to do the things I saw Bruce Lee doing. The more I thought about it, and the more time I spent training, the more inspired I became. That was when I started to dream about winning tournaments. I knew that if I trained hard, harder than anybody else, I could be a champion. Later, when I did start winning, I wanted to be the best champion and win more competitions than anybody else ever had. I wanted to set a record that nobody could beat.

Q: What do you think of the idea of karate becoming part of the Olympics?

A: I am very interested in this. I am sure it is going to inspire karate students all over the world to train hard and dream of becoming an Olympic champion. I had this dream for myself also. I know that if karate was part of the Olympics, it would get more respect from people and organizations, especially here in Japan. I believe that karate as Olympic sport it will receive more respect than any other type of karate competition. I have won almost every top competition and I wanted very much to compete in the Olympics but it was not the right time.

Q: What is the future of karate?

A: Most karate today has a “sport” focus that emphasizes rigorous competition. This is fine for most students in the 10 to 30 age group, and for exceptional students younger and older than that. However, not everybody can compete this way. Karate needs to be for everybody – for people of all ages. Many of the students in my dojo are over 40. I always recommend that, as part of their training, my students learn taiso, which is a form of exercise that focuses on controlled movements and breathing, similar to tai chi. I believe that it is very important to give every person a chance to be involved in and benefit from karate.

Q: What can you tell us about the Bunkai in kata training?

A: People tend to look at kata simply as a pure physical exercise and a formalize method of training karate-do techniques but there is more to it than meet the eye. It is true that kata is a recollection of techniques standardized by the old masters but behind the physical movements there are important principles governing the
techniques. These principles and fighting concepts become visible to the student after analyzing and research the possible applications of each movement. In the beginning, the bunkai is quite simple; just a common sense application of the movement found in the form, but after a deeper study, the karate-ka should know how to use the principle behind that particular movement to take the application into a higher level of functionality. The bunkai becomes more ‘formless’ and the use of the technique less ‘rigid’ or ‘classical.’ The real knowledge of bunkai and oyo bunkai is something that not everybody has and it has to be developed through many years of diligent study and training. In the more advanced forms of application the technique exemplifies the original principle but the ways that concept can be used are limitless. Only when you reach this level of understanding is when you can truly affirm that you know that particular kata.

Q: What has karate meant to you?

A: Karate has always been, and will always continue to be, a very important part of my life. It has helped me learn many important lessons. I have learned that if you work hard in life, the rewards you receive will have value. If you receive rewards, but haven’t worked hard for them, they will have no value. Don’t worry about winning and don’t expect to lose, just work hard. The greatest reward you receive is not the winning; it is the trying, itself – it is the value that will be seen in you by others because of the person you are. One of the most important things people should remember about karate is to always keep training. A powerful lesson I did learn early is from Nanakorobi Yaoki, “Seven times fall down, eight times get up.” That is the essence of karate – hang on and don’t give up!
There are the moments in the history of the Games we all cherish. These moments often transcend the event themselves and become part of the history of the sport. For the most part, we have a sense of what we could see take place, every so often we all get a chance to witness history unfold in front of our eyes.

One of the most common reasons as to why people love sports is because of the way that sports can lift us and the way that they can make us feel on top of the world, albeit sometimes only for a moment. These are the types of moments we all wait for.

In the 2019 Pan American Games held in Lima, Peru, the U.S. Karate Team would win not one, not two, not three, but four Gold medals. The treasure chest of medals included four gold, two silver, and one bronze medal. The members of the team – under leadership of Coach Brody Burns and Coach B. Maile Chinen - included Tom Scott, Brian Irr, Sakura Kokumai, Ariel Torres, Shannon Nishi-Patton, Cirrus Lingl, Kamram Madani, Cheryl Murphy and Ashley Hill.

This is a “pictorial memoir” of one of the most important moments in the history of USA KARATE and the men and women whom made it possible.
USA KARATE MAKES HISTORY
LIMA, PERU

By Jose M. Fraguas • Photos: Jose M. Fraguas

USA KARATE 2019 PAN AMERICAN GAMES TEAM: From left to right: Cirrus Lingl, Jose M. Fraguas (Team Manager), Coach B. Maile Chinen, Ashley Hill, Ariel Torres, Kam Madani, Shannon Nishi-Patton, Tom Scott, Sakura Kokumai, Coach Brody Burns, Doctor Jessica Bartley, Cheryl Murphy, Brian Irr, and Elizabeth Sottile (Team Leader).
1. CIRRUS LINGL (+68 Kg. Bronze Medal)
2. SAKURA KOKUMAI (Kata. Gold Medal)
3. ARIEL TORRES (Kata. Silver Medal)
4. SHANNON NISHI-PATTON (-50 Kg. Gold Medal)
1. KAMRAM MADANI (-84 Kg. Silver Medal)
2. BRIAN IRR (+84 Kg. Gold Medal)
3. TOM SCOTT (-75 Kg. Gold Medal)
What a fun event! In my 20-plus years of karate, the Pan American Games are by far my favorite competition that I have had the privilege of participating in. This time around, we flew into Lima with not only the entire USA Karate Team but USA teams from other sports as well. Upon arrival, each athlete was provided with their own “swag bag” of Team USA apparel. The 24/7 access to the all you can eat dining hall... competitions aired live on ESPN... winning the total medal count... marching out during closing ceremonies... from start to finish, the Games are just full of so much excitement. It’s so cool to meet athletes from other sports who are at the top of their game and hearing about their struggles and successes. It’s also so encouraging to see how excited these same athletes get when they learn that you are a “karate” athlete so they want to learn more about your sport.

Everything for me was going as planned until Friday morning, the day before I competed. I became ill overnight and was almost unable to compete in the tournament at all. I wasn’t able to train the day before I competed, or even warm up with my teammates to prepare on my day of competition.
As I sat alone, confined to my room, I reflected back on my circumstances leading up to my prior Pan Am Games experience in Toronto 2015.

Three months prior to Toronto 2015, I suffered a back injury which completely prevented me from training for 2 full months. After spending those two months in physical therapy I had only 1 month left until my first Pan Am Games. On top of that, the three opponents that I drew in my pool in Toronto 2015, had all beaten me previously that year. Despite the deck being stacked against me, I ended up with a bronze medal finish in Toronto 2015: my first ever Pan American medal as an adult. I remember thinking, “God, this doesn’t make any sense at all. I trained less than ever to face opponents that I’ve never beaten, yet they didn’t beat me here. There’s no way that I could have done this without you. Thank you for making your presence so obvious.”

Now this year in Lima, I once again faced the challenge of the Pan American Games with the deck stacked against me. And once again, I wasn’t about to let my unfavorable circumstances hold me back mentally. On the day before my competition, I watched from my room in excitement as my teammates competed on live television. When I went to sleep that night, I still didn’t know if I was going to be able to compete the next day or not. Despite the very real possibility of not being able to compete, I remained completely at peace because of what I did know: God is always in control and I can trust him, even when things don’t go the way I want them to.

Thankfully, I was able to compete and the effects of my illness did not have a noticeable negative impact on my performance. My perceived physical disadvantage ultimately fueled my mental determination rather than drain me. The competition went on and I felt great during the preliminary matches. My finals match was against Canada; an opponent who beat me just 2 months prior at the Montreal Series A tournament. Before the match I strategized with my coach and we came up with a game plan so that I did not make the same mistakes that I did the last time I faced this opponent. I ended up winning the finals with a score of 5-0: my widest point spread of the day.

I’m thankful to have been a part of this team at this prestigious event and I’m thankful for the peace that I have in knowing that God still loves me even if things don’t turn out the way I want them to. I am excited and looking forward to seeing what He has in store for the future. **USANKF**
Imagine getting off the plane in another country and there are people there just for you. To guide you to special line for you to go through customs. YOU, meaning the Pan American athletes coming to represent their country in various sports. This was the start of the overwhelming feeling that all the work and sacrifice was worth it! Yes, I am to, some considered a veteran, you’ve been to Pan American Games before, you’ve even medaled, but every time it’s a reminder of the big picture.

After being transported to the Athlete’s Village, we get off the bus and everyone, EVERYONE, was there to ensure all the athletes had to do was focus on performing at their best. From checking-in to providing us room, board, training, and medical support. “Anything we can do” was all I heard and all who were there, whether it was US support or the Lima volunteers, were proud to help in order for us to perform at our absolute best.

They were not playing around when the updates came in before we left for Lima that the dorms were “chilly”. Those who know me, know “chilly” meant freezing. I came prepared, so I thought. I brought a blanket and regretted not bringing a space heater. In replace of the space heater, I commandeered another blanket from one of the empty rooms, wore an abundance of layers and was nice and toasty.
Team building was happening all through the week. We were able to receive our USA gear together. The girls had movie night and we didn’t stop laughing for 9 days straight. I think I came back with a six-pack. The boys got to experience the game room and as a team we went on various outings to enjoy the city. A couple of athletes even made a video and from that video the head coach learned a new dance and showed off every day.

Now, the Heads-Up Games we played, more like competed against was the real testament to who we were as competitors and coaches. From Tiger (from Winnie the Pooh) instead of Tiger (the animal) to trying to rhyme Moose with Goose but the answer was Elk. Let us not forget the Wakanda for Ever debacle (don’t take my card). The boys killed it in the Game but one in particular (of royalty) couldn’t stop getting the correct answer. To the point where he asked, “how long does this last?” This reminded me of my first Pan American Game, where we had Ping Pong and Pictionary competitions. The coaches even joined in. The word was tree and one of the coaches really tried to climb a “tree”. This is where the true experience of the Games resides.

There was a section in the dorms for each country represented. In the USA section there was a TV room a snack room and an area for the medics. I found myself in the snack room most of the time. I noticed the most snacks eaten, PB&J. I could only imagine with the amount of sports represented and the amount the athletes going in and out of that room, the amount of PB&J’s were made in the course of those two weeks.

The cafeteria was filled with athletes from all sports, all Pan American countries and the big picture became even more clear. We all sat together, didn’t matter what country or sport, we were connected by the Games. Athletes walked into the cafeteria while wearing their medals and everyone clapped to congratulate them. We all knew what each one of those athletes went through to get on that podium and were proud for them.

As the draws came out, the more real it became it became as to where we were and what we were about to accomplish. The coaches alongside our team leader and supporting staff, handled the logistics to make sure competition days ran smoothly and fought to ensure the system was fair. Our supporting staff was incredible. Sports psychologist made sure our minds were ready while our sports trainer jumped right in to make sure we were physically ready to perform while joining in on our various team building activities. Our Special Agent was ready and willing to protect us from anyone and anything. We were
The day of competition came, and we were ready!! The stage was set, and the competition began. As each athlete prepared, we had each other’s back and supported each other to the fullest. If someone wasn’t warming someone up, they in the stands cheering them on. One after the other medal after medal we were representing and killing it!!! Seven medals out of nine, no matter the outcome it was all worth it.

As it came to the end, we participated in the closing ceremonies and what a grand presentation. We danced our way in, watched a tremendous show and danced our way out!!!

This was honestly one of the best trips I’ve been on despite my own outcome. I hope for every athlete on their competition journey can experience the Pan American Games. There is truly nothing else like it!!! USANKF
With the exception of the Olympics, the Pan American Games are the highest and most professional stage we, as karate athletes, can compete on. With the atmosphere of the Olympic spirit, and cohesive team feel through the inclusion of multiple sports, the Pan American Games are very special. What made the competition most special for me was the work it took to get there. The qualification process started close to two years before the event, with the US Nationals. As it’s well known, athletes must qualify in the top 6 spots at Nationals to be eligible to compete at the US Team Trials, which occur close to 6 months after. At the Team Trials you must place within the top 2 in order to make the US National team. A whole 12 months later, the two selected athletes would compete at the North American Cup. This event consisted of 6 athletes, 2 from each country in North America, and only the gold medalist of the event would qualify for the Games. The games took place a whole 8 months after the North American Cup. Fortunately for me, I placed first at each of the three events, and went on to get a silver medal at the games. After the competition had finished reflecting on how everything had come together was what made the event so special. All athletes know that being consistent over such a long period of time is very difficult.
Dodging injuries, sustaining adequate training, dealing with life and countering the effects of burnout are just some of the challenges that take place. Despite winning a silver medal, reflecting upon how I matured over the course of the process is what I was most happy about.

After being transported to the Athlete’s Village, we get off the bus and everyone, EVERYONE, was there to ensure all the athletes had to do was focus on performing at their best. From checking-in to providing us room, board, training, and medical support. “Anything we can do” was all I heard and all who were there, whether it was US support or the Lima volunteers, were proud to help in order for us to perform at our absolute best.

As I said before, the Pan American Games were amazing! The experience was unlike any competition before. I was treated as a special piece that made the team USA puzzle complete. What separates it most from other events were the amount of formalities. People working the event would be directing almost everything you did besides the actual fights. Because the event is such a spectacle, it is run professionally and celebrated the athletes. As we all walked on stage, there were personal introductions over the loudspeaker, and cameras would follow you after matches capturing special moments. I loved it! Though there is one downside. As everyone knows, the current karate schedule is extremely demanding. Having so many competitions close together forces you have a short memory, seeing you immediately have to focus on what’s next. In addition, everyone’s eyes are on the Olympics. This dilutes the effects of having success at other major competitions, such as the Pan American Games. Nonetheless, it was an amazing experience, and I hope I am able to compete at the next one!

On a personal level, I felt very lucky and appreciated the event for what it was. I really enjoyed my teammates and all of the support I felt from them and the coaching staff. Especially my “bro,” and roommate Tom Scott, I cherished the advice he had from previous games, and how he helped me out the whole day of competition with my warm ups and positive vibes. I went into the event with one goal, to be better as a person at the end of the day than when it started. I achieved this goal by competing as the best version of myself. This allowed me to enjoy the ups and downs the competition had to offer. I am a firm believer in the USOPC’s slogan of “a team, behind a team”. The large team supporting me is what I think made the largest impact in helping me perform as the best version of myself. As a result, I achieved my goals both on and off the tatami. USANKF
Having the opportunity to compete in the 2019 Pan Am Games is definitely an experience that was like no other and one that I won’t be forgetting anytime soon. First of all, the team atmosphere that surrounded us at all times was astounding. Everybody that I met, whether they were USOPC staff members or athletes, they all wanted the same thing, and that was for everyone to win the gold medal. The feeling that hit me when we first walked into the competition arena, gave me so many chills. It was surreal to understand that this tournament is one of the biggest stages that Karate could be on, minus the Olympic Games themselves. Being in the arena with camera crews all around, packed with spectators from the floor to the ceiling and with special passes to even enter the arena made it such a unique, bone-chilling experience. And then on top of that, being able to perform what I dedicate so much of my life to on that big stage with all eyes on me, it really was a privilege. Seeing the support
from my family, friends and teammates at home who took the time to watch the competition and reach out to me to wish me luck and congratulate me, reminded me of who it is that helps me get to that point and how I wouldn’t be able to do it without their support. I am so grateful to have a team like that standing behind me at home, especially when I am away.

The Athlete’s Village was definitely such a cool and exciting to experience. We got to see members from every other country and from many of the other sports that were still there competing. Having the other members of the karate team always there too made the experience so much more enjoyable from staying in the rooms, to eating meals together, to just hanging out around the village. We also got to go watch part of the Fencing competition one of the days during the week, which was interesting because I did not know much about Fencing beforehand. I got to learn a little bit about how the sport works and talk to some of the members of the USA Team too. Two of the days, the karate team also went into Miraflores neighborhood and we got to see part of that area of town as well. We rode bikes around in the streets, looked around at one of the street markets, saw the ocean and some ruins, as well as we were able to eat a little bit of food outside of the Village.

I know that my experience at my first Pan American Games was one that is definitely going to be tough to beat. However, I also cannot wait to hopefully give myself the chance to compete at the Games again in four years and make the experience even more memorable than this time around. USANKF
Looking back at the Pan American Games, all I can say is: "What an experience!" This was the first Pan American Games I have ever attended. Many people seemed to be surprised to hear that, but it's true. Kata was not part of the Pan Am Games for a very long time, and I just didn't have the chance or the opportunity to compete in it because Kumite was the only division. So when I heard that Kata was back in, I was excited and also knew that I wanted to compete and of course, win.

Going into this competition was challenging because of the intense schedule. With our season starting from January, non-stop all the way through December, I knew I had to manage my time and energy well so that I could peak at the Pan American Games. Even before the Games, I had already competed in eight international events. When I stared at the calendar, I was overwhelmed, but mind was already set for my ultimate goal, which was to qualify for the Olympics and win a medal, so the schedule didn't seem to bother me this time. This tournament was not the direct...
It wasn’t until I finished competing, that I started to process how big this event was. When I look back at the tournament, everything just seemed to be a blur. During my performance, all I could hear was myself breathing and the sound of my “gi”. My focus and energy was on my performance, not my opponent, or the crowd, or anything that was making noise around me.

That’s when I knew I was in “my zone”. This win was important to me because it was after a loss in finals, at the Pan American Championships earlier this year. After that competition, I focused on brushing up my technique but also tried to just focus on just being myself. The back to back Premier League events helped a lot during this process because I was able to work on what I needed to work on, mentally and physically, in a short time span.

It felt like I got to experience a piece of the Olympics. When I walked through the closing ceremony, all I could think about was Tokyo Olympics... and that just gave me the chills. There are still four events left this year and five more next year until they announce the first phase of athletes for Tokyo 2020. The Pan American Games was an unforgettable experience, but now I’m focused on the next. The ultimate goal is Tokyo 2020 and this win is only going to give me motivation and inspiration to keep pushing forward. Less than a year left, this is last sprint, and I’m excited for what’s to come next.
My mind, body and spirit is full on the tatami fighting my heart out for my country, team, family, and myself. The opportunity to be apart of the Pan American Games Team was such an honor and thrill. I have been apart of this karate journey for so long and in many different capacities and would not trade it for the world. Over the years, my love for the art, the game, the competition, and the constant pursuit of being the best version of myself has remained steadfast. The process of what it means to be successful has defined me and molded me though the years. Winning is and will always be my number one motivator in life. However, through time, experience and age I believe I have truly learned to appreciate the journey just as much. Spending time with my teammates, coaches, and support group was priceless in Peru. I am a simple athlete with a simple pre game ritual. I like to be laughing as intensely and as frequently as possible- I thrive off of good vibes and good times and my team came through clutch for me. I am so grateful to have a group, a team, a family that gets me and supports me through thick and thin. Thank you EVERYONE :)}
I am supposed to write about my overall experience in Lima, Peru, but all that comes to mind is how grateful I am. This was my second opportunity to be apart of the Pan American Games Team. Not many people are able to figure out nor live their passions and being able to do this, makes me truly fortunate. I am grateful to have found karate and found my purpose as I live out my passion on a daily basis. As we all know, success in life does not come without sacrifice and support. Therefore, first and foremost, thank you to my mom and dad who let me believe I was a ninja and the next Bruce Lee/ Van Damme in the making. Thank you for always encouraging me to follow my heart, wanting me to always dream bigger, and most importantly teaching me the work ethic it takes to obtain my goals. No matter whether I won or lost, I came home to your staunch support and love. Thank you for loving me, teaching me, and challenging me to be my absolute best while instilling in me values and character traits I hope to pass on to my students and future children. Mom and dad you guys are in a league of your own, the way y’all love, the way y’all teach, and the way y’all live has always been an inspiration to me. Thank you for setting the standard. I cannot say thank you enough... I hope to one day be as amazing as you two! I love you guys!

To my big brother Chad, you always told me I am tough because you always kicked my butt and picked me. You are right, it really made me tougher and I am forever grateful! You have been on this journey of life with me every step of the way. I love you Chad and thank you for being my best friend and number one supporter!

To my amazing husband, Kenny Patton, thank you for always being there for me and being the most supportive and loving husband ever. Coming out of retirement was always going to be a hard feat but merely impossible without your understanding and support. I love you to the moon and back and cannot wait to grow old wrinkly together!

To my karate family… This list goes on and on and on, but to name a few who have been there from the very beginning: Sensei John Limcaco, Eimi, and Maile thank you for always being there for me in karate, but most importantly, in life. I am honored to have represented all of you and will continue to represent you to the best of my abilities. To my kiddos, munchkins, parents and the rest of the Karate family thank you for being apart of
this journey with me and the unwavering support. I love you all… To my friends and family- your phone calls, texts, messages overall support has meant the world to me. I never fight alone. Thank you for being apart of my shield of armor.

Success does not happen over night. It takes years and years of sacrifice, passion, and work. I have never done it alone and I never fight alone. WE DID IT!!! To my teammates, coaches, and staff, thank you for everything. Peru was epic and was one for the books. Special shout out to my big sis Maile who started the Pan Am Games Dream for me when I was 14 years old- only to coach me to the podium twenty years later- ILY. CHEERS TO THIS MAGNIFICENT THING WE CALL LIFE! USANKF
ASHLEY HILL

Photos: Jose M. Fraguas
ARIEL TORRES

Photos: Jose M. Fraguas
It is difficult to describe the overall experience of the Pan American Games and the feelings I have about it when so few karate athletes know the impact of a Games level event. This is my third Pan Am Games and by far the most rewarding in terms of overall success. The Pan Am Games is a true Team USA supported event in which the athletes are combined with Team USA athletes from all sports from basketball to gymnastics and everything in between. It is the experience everyone first pictures in their head the first time they make the USA National Team and dream of representing the USA at international competition.

My first Pan Am Games was in 2011 in Guadalajara, Mexico, then 2015 in Toronto, Canada and now 2019 in Lima, Peru. Coaching in Lima was amazing, challenging, frustrating and gratifying. It literally was the gamut of feelings and I wouldn’t change it for anything. So few people know the challenges we faced as a TEAM in Lima, but each and every time we rose above the challenge, fought our opponent as a Team and conquered. Our amazing success in Lima 2019 is the result of everyone on the Team doing their jobs at an elite level, from Nicole our Athletic Trainer to our organizational Staff [Elizabeth Sottlie and Jose Fraguas] all the way up to our CEO, Mr. Phil Hampel. Everyone played a role in our success.
From the moment we took flight from Houston to Lima, the USA Karate Team was fighting. Early in our flight 3 of the 6 bathrooms on the plane stopped working, then halfway through the flight the remaining 3 bathrooms stopped working and they contemplated diverting our flight to Panama. But we “toughed it out” and promised the flight crew we would not make a mess if we stayed on path. Once we landed in Lima, we were bussed to the Athlete Village on the outskirts of Lima by police escort. It was amazing to see the people of Lima standing on the street waving at the Pan Am Games busses as they travelled down specially designated lanes. The Athlete Village was a secure compound with 6 large apartment buildings. Dinning hall, recreation halls and meeting spaces for all the athletes to gather and hang out. It was a place with an atmosphere like no place else.

As competition grew closer the athletes continued to look great in practice. We were on a very tight training schedule with only one hour on the mats and an hour travel time. We had to warm-up, train and cool down in 60 minutes. For Kata athletes, this is almost impossible but they did an amazing job working with the schedule. Our Athletic Trainer Nicole worked quickly and efficiently to keep the athletes stretched out and any aches and pains to a minimum. She pampered and prepared the athletes for competition.

The night before kata competition was to start Coach Chinen and I attended what was suppose to be a simple Coaches Briefing on the flow of the event but it turned into an amazing challenge that lead to the involvement of the USOPC legal team, Athlete Ombudsman office and our CEO. The whole story is worth an article in itself, but suffice to say we brought the full weight of the USOPC to bear and were victorious in our fight before the matches even started. Few people know just how effective our CEO Phil Hampel and Team Leader Elizabeth Sottile were in fighting for our US athletes before the competition even started.

Coach Chinen did a great job keeping the kata athletes primed and in the right mindset as they competed round after round to make it into Finals. I will not soon forget the amazing victories and hard fought battles of our athletes, my fellow coach, and our admin staff. This was definitely one for the history books and I was proud as a National Coach and as an American to witness our Team’s success first hand. **USANKF**
The Pan American Games (PAG), an event which occurs once every four years in the year before the Summer Olympic Games was held in Lima, Peru this past August. I was honored to be a part and travel with the amazing powerhouse team consisting of Sakura Kokumai (kata), Shannon Nishi-Patton (-50 kg), Ashley Hill (-61 kg), Cheryl Murphy (-68 kg), Cirrus Lingl (+68 kg), Ariel Torres (kata), Tom Scott (-75 kg), Kamran Madani (-84 kg), and Brian Irr (+84 kg). Each of these athletes have made the PAG Team through a qualification process. For karate, only eight athletes per individual category from all nations of the Americas are able to compete amongst each other to represent their country.

From the beginning to end, to on and off the tatami, the battles were fought. When the other countries thought it was impossible, Team USA showed up! The passion, hunger, determination and will to succeed was unstoppable. Outstanding performances from the Team left the packed venue and Peruvian crowd cheering for our athletes. Unlike other events, we all...
traveled together from the U.S. to Peru, trained, ate and lived together for nine days. We started and finished the Games together and each member played a huge role in the overall success of the team.

This event has always been one of my favorite! The opening and closing ceremonies, Athlete’s Village, competing along side other Olympians, the professionalism, competition, crowd, and the experience in itself is unexplainable. Regardless of the different sports there, we were all there in same uniform as one nation, representing the USA. The like-minded individuals all gathered in one place, to be the best of the best in their respective sports, and to have fun is purely captivating. Back in the days we did not have events such as the KL, Series A, World Combat Games, etc. and the World Championships, PKF Championships and PAG was our “BIG” events. I remember coming home from the 1999 PAG in Winnipeg, Canada full of excitement and stories to tell Shannon Nishi-Patton all about the competition and experience. Fast forward 20 years later, and to see that “little girl” compete at the Games and bring home the Gold is one that is unforgettable. She, along with her teammates, have numerous titles and achievements under their belt and this Pan Am Games was just one of them. Every athlete’s commitment to this journey comes with a lot of sacrifices, determination, and balance...but most importantly, to see them all having fun and enjoying this wild ride to be the best version of themselves is what matters!

Once again, CONGRATULATIONS to the athletes and their village - their families, Sensei/Coaches, dojos, USA Karate Staff, and supporters. You are all a part of their success and their why. Grateful and blessed to be a part of this journey and to witness the team bring home 4 Golds, 2 Silvers, and 1 Bronze and ranking #1 overall. MAHALO and “stay humble...stay hungry”. USANKF
FULL COVERAGE
ROAD TO TOKYO 2020!

MONTREAL SERIES A
SANTIAGO CHILE SERIES A
TOKYO PREMIER LEAGUE

Photos Courtesy Kphotos.net

Photos Courtesy Kphotos.net
1, 2 & 4. Shannon Nishi – Patton delivering an Ura Mawashi Geri, scoring on her opponent and applying a perfect Ushiro Geri to stop her opponent’s attack. 3. Kamran Madani delivers a Chudan Roundhouse. 5. Coach Dustin Baldis commenting with Shannon Nishi-Patton one of the matches.
1 & 3. Brandi Robinson launching two attacks on her Canadian opponent. 2. Shannon Nishi-Patton “reaching out” with a Chudan Gyaku Tsuki.
4, 5 & 6. Brian Irr focused on his opponent and delivering two decisive attacks.
1 & 4. Brian Irr attacking his opponent with an Ura Mawashi Geri and applying one of his “trademarks”… Kakato Geri from the ground!
2. Elisa Au launching an attack during her first match. 3 & 5. Ashley Hill attacking her opponent with two Jodan kicks.
1 & 3. Jessica Kwong performing her kata. 2, 4, 5 & 6. Sakura Kokumai during her first two rounds of competition.
1-4. Cheryl Murphy during two of her matches.
1 & 2. Brian Hilliard checking his opponent and delivering a precise Jodan Tsuki. 3, 4 & 5. Brian Rumruf showing control during his first match.
1 & 2. Maya Wasowicz delivering two attacks during her matches. 3 & 4. Tom Scott checking his opponent and scoring with a Chudan Roundhouse kick to the midsection.
1. Brandi Robinson scoring with a Jodan Gyaku Tsuki. 2. Tom Scott "exchanges' kicks with his opponent. 3, 4 & 5. Brian Irri showing his aggressive fighting style!
1-5 Tom Scott showing the decisiveness and accuracy in his movement that led him to victory.
1, 2 & 3. Ariel Torres during his performance in the second round. 4. Joseph Martinez doing kata Anan Dai.
1 & 2. Joseph Martinez during his second round kata. 3. Taishi Tozaki performed very well during the Series A in Santiago.

Photos Courtesy of KPhotos.net
1. Taishi Tozaki performing with intensity his first round kata. 2. Ben Harrison scoring a Chudan Tsuki. 3. Brian Irwin showing intensity!
1. Brian Irr reaching out for the point! 2, 3, 4 & 5. Brandi Robinson during one of her matches. 6. Elisa Au attacking her opponent.
1. Akemi Tsutsui performing her first round kata. 2, 3 & 4. Sakura Kokumai performing kata “Kururunfa”.
1, 3 & 4. Tom Scott scoring the points that led him to victory. 2. Manny Tavares scores a perfect Jodan Tsuki.
1. Manny Tavares attacking his opponent and scoring with a Chudan Tsuki. 2, 4 & 5. Tom Scott during two of the initial matches.
3. Elisa Au defending an attack with an impeccable distance judgment.
Tokyo, Japan

1 & 4. Ashley Hill in action during her match. 2. Jessica Kwong performing in her first kata round. 3 & 5. Ariel Torres performing kata “Suparimpei” and “Anan Dai”.

The Official Magazine of USA Karate
1. Ariel Torres announcing his first round kata. 2 & 3. Ashley Hill studying her opponent and throwing a Jodan Tsuki.

Photos Courtesy of KPhotos.net
Tokyo, Japan

1, Cheryl Murphy ready for her first match in Tokyo. 2 & 3. Ariel Torres in action. 4. Maya Wasowicz controlling her opponent.
1. Ashley Hill throwing a high kick. 2. Cheryl Murphy... waiting for the kill! 3. Maya Wasowicz during her first round match. 4. Shannon Nishi-Patton, ready to counter her opponent’s attack.
1, 3, 4 & 5. Shannon Nishi-Patton in action during her first match. 2. Brian Rumrups scoring with a Chudan Tsuki.
1. Brian Ramrup clashing with his opponent! 2. Brandi Robinson waiting to enter in action… 3, 4 & 5. Tom Scott in action during his second round. 6. Elisa Au controlling the distance…
1. Elisa Au scoring a Jodan Tsuki. 2. Tom Scott...ready to go! 3. Kamram Madani throwing a Jodan kick. 4 & 5. Gakuji Tozaki performing his kata during the first round.
1. Kamram Madani scoring with a Jodan Tsuki. 2. Brian Rumruep waiting for his opponent… 3 & 5. Brian Irr getting ready for his match and scoring on his opponent. 4. Cheryl Murphy timing his counter….
1 & 2. Brian Irr gives one and takes one! 3. Maya Wasovicz’s punch…a little short…
JEWISH KARATEKAS
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*TEAM TRAINING CAMP PRIOR TBD
Respect: Where Sportsmanship Begins

Athletes, coaches, and parents agree: good sportsmanship begins with respect. And maybe you’ve heard the old saying that respect is a two-way street. That sounds pretty good at first; but if you stop to think about it, that metaphor doesn’t begin to capture the reality. If you want to be a good sport, then respect has to move in a lot more than two directions.

For one, respect has to include your opponent. It can express itself in obvious ways, like complimenting an opponent for their efforts during a match. That’s a positive thing to do; but the things you don’t do might be every bit as meaningful. For example: competition can get intense, and sometimes there are official calls you might disagree with. If you respond to those calls in ways that might invite penalties, you’re showing disrespect for your opponent and the match itself.

Of course, it’s also important to respect your parents and coaches. That’s easy when you agree with their decisions. It’s less easy when the coach decides to take you out of a competition. If you react negatively, you’re not only showing disrespect to your coach – you’re helping to create a negative atmosphere that can erode morale.

RESPECT IS

**T**
**O**
**P**
**S**

- **Teammates**: Praise positive contributions... don’t blame or shame
- **Opponents**: Be gracious when you win... and when you lose
- **Parents/Coaches**: Show respect always... even when you disagree
- **Self**: When you respect others, you respect yourself

Think of respect as an intersection - an ongoing exchange of respect given and respect earned. Respect for teammates, opponents, parents and coaches, ...and yourself.

It can be challenging to teach young athletes how to practice good sportsmanship at times, but TrueSport is built around hands-on activities and other innovative learning techniques. For example, we know that big concepts like ‘respect’ can be hard to wrap your head around. But if you bring it down to the level of everyday personal relationships, it’s easier to understand and to put into action. Use the word **TOPS** - **Teammates, Opponents, Parents/Coaches, and Self** to help your athletes remember that Respect has to include all of them!

This series of TrueTalk features is inspired by the values and principles of TrueSport – an initiative powered by USADA, the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency.

We Value Champions.
**We Champion Values.**

Want to learn more? Visit TrueSport.org
LAUNCH, LOCATION & GOVERNANCE

The U.S. Center for SafeSport is a national nonprofit organization providing education, resources and training to promote respect and prevent abuse in sport. The Center is located in Denver, Colorado, and opened in March 2017.

The Center is governed by a nine-member board of directors, which includes subject-matter experts in the areas of abuse prevention and investigation, ethics compliance and sport administration.

MISSION, PURPOSE & VISION

To cultivate and steward a culture of dignity and respect in sport.

Purpose

Enable every athlete to thrive by fostering a national sport culture of respect and safety, on and off the field of play.

Vision

Every athlete is safe, supported and strengthened through sport.

- **Safe.** Athletes are protected from emotional, physical and sexual abuse.
- **Supported.** Athletes enjoy welcome, respectful environments, and diversity is actively embraced.
- **Strengthened.** Athletes use the skills they’ve learned in sport to contribute to the well-being of their communities.
SERVICES

Education and Outreach Office
The Center's Education and Outreach Office will administer prevention programming, raise issue awareness, and provide resources and training to promote respect and prevent misconduct, such as bullying, hazing, harassment and abuse. The Center will:

• Provide education materials, including talking points, fact sheets, brochures and training materials
• Centralize best practices, provide self-evaluation tools and offer specialized resources
• Offer sport organizations easy access to educational opportunities for their coaches, staff, volunteers, parents and athletes

Response and Resolution Office
The Center's Response and Resolution Office will investigate and resolve alleged policy violations for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movements' 47 member National Governing Bodies, including the USA National Karate-do Federation.

• As a member organization of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee, the USANKF has agreed to adhere to the Center's policies and procedures, including the SafeSport Code, which identifies prohibited conduct and serves as the benchmark by which the Center determines whether or not a policy violation has occurred. These policies and procedures also outline:
  - Center jurisdiction and authority
  - Sanctioning guidelines
  - Reporting and confidentiality
  - Resolution procedures, including investigation and arbitration
• Aggregate data from Center investigations will be used to identify trends and patterns across sport, strengthening national prevention efforts.
JURISDICTION & AUTHORITY

The Center has jurisdiction over Covered Individuals. These are persons:
- Within the governance or disciplinary jurisdiction of the USANKF
- The USANKF or the USOC authorizes, approves or appoints to a position of authority over athletes or who will have frequent contact with athletes
- Identified by the USANKF as being within the Center’s jurisdiction

The Center will have the exclusive authority to investigate and resolve alleged SafeSport Code violations involving sexual misconduct. The USANKF will retain the authority to investigate and resolve alleged SafeSport Code violations that are non-sexual in nature. Although, at the USANKF’s request, the Center may exercise the discretionary authority to take on cases of this nature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exclusive Authority</th>
<th>Discretionary Authority</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All forms of sexual misconduct.</td>
<td>Other policy violations, including physical misconduct, emotional misconduct, bullying, hazing and harassment.</td>
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REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR SAFESPORT CODE VIOLATIONS

All individuals, regardless of membership with the USANKF, are encouraged to report suspected violations of the SafeSport Code. Covered Individuals who are over the age of 18 are required to report suspected SafeSport Code violations related to or accompanying sexual misconduct. Covered Individuals who fail to report SafeSport Code violations may be subject to disciplinary action.

How to Report

Individuals should report suspected SafeSport Code violations directly to the Center.

Reporting to the Center:
- **Online:** https://uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern/
- **Phone:** (720) 524-5640

Confidentiality

Although the Center cannot guarantee confidentiality, it will, to the greatest extent possible, maintain the privacy of all individuals involved in the investigation and resolution of alleged SafeSport Code violations.

Anonymous Reporting

Anonymous reporting is permitted.

Legally Mandated Reporting

Reporting alleged criminal conduct to the USANKF or the Center will not satisfy any individual mandatory reporting requirements under state or federal law. Visit https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/ to view state-by-state mandatory reporting laws to determine your reporting obligations and options.
THE INVESTIGATION & RESOLUTION PROCESS

In response to an alleged SafeSport Code violation, the Center may:
• Initiate an informal resolution
• Conduct a full investigation
• Conclude the alleged violation is out of scope and refer the matter to the USANKF or the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee

Informal Resolution
The Center may conduct an informal inquiry to collect preliminary facts to determine if the matter should be resolved informally, investigated further or not investigated at this time.

Full Investigation
At the start of a full investigation, the Center will provide notice to both involved parties. Each will be given the opportunity to present supporting evidence and provide contact information for potential witnesses.

Investigator’s Report
After reviewing the evidence in the case and interviewing relevant witnesses, an investigator will prepare a written report detailing:
• The facts of the case based on the available evidence
• Whether or not, based on a preponderance of the evidence, the investigator believes a violation of the SafeSport Code has occurred
• Recommended sanctions, if any

Director’s Decision
The Center’s director of investigations will issue a decision based on the available evidence. If the director determines the individual in question has violated the SafeSport Code, he or she may seek arbitration.
SANCTIONS

The disciplinary process is designed to protect all USANKF athletes, members and participants from future misconduct. With this in mind, all recommended sanctions will be reasonable and proportionate to the violation committed and will emphasize education to ensure that minor misconduct does not escalate into a major violation.

Imposing Sanctions

In response to the Center’s determination that a SafeSport Code violation has occurred, the USANKF will impose any sanctions recommended by the Center. Potential sanctions include, among others, any combination of the following:

- Warning
- Loss of privileges
- Education
- Probation
- Eligibility or participation restrictions

In determining appropriate sanctions, the Center will consider a range of factors, including but not limited to:

- The seriousness of the violation
- The ages of the individuals involved
- Whether or not the alleged policy violator poses an ongoing threat to the safety of others

Implementation Across the Olympic and Paralympic Movement

Participation restrictions imposed by a USOC-member NGB will be upheld across the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement.

Visit www.uscenterforsafesport.org to learn more or to view the Center’s policies and procedures to determine your responsibilities under the SafeSport Code. The Center’s policies and procedures are subject to change. Should the policies and procedures vary from the information contained herein, the policies and procedures will govern. Visit safesport.usankf.org to review the USANKF Participant Safety Handbook and Minor Athlete and Officials Abuse Prevention Policy.
Some changes have recently occurred as part of the SafeSport initiatives which we partner with the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee and the U.S. Center for SafeSport to develop. As a result of these changes some changes have been implemented in our SafeSport Program. Latest Information on the program, the Safe Sport Code and Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies can be found on our website at SafeSport.usankf.org and the U.S. Center for SafeSport website at uscenterforsafesport.org

Highlights of our SafeSport Program

1. The following individuals are covered under U.S. Center for SafeSport’s Disciplinary Jurisdiction (the most current list of participants can be found at SafeSport.usankf.org):
   - Board of Directors
   - Staff (employee, contractor or volunteer)
   - Interns
   - Contractors with access to athletes
   - Operational and Governance Committee Members
   - Volunteer Event Staff
   - Event and National Team Medical Staff and Trainers
   - Photographers and Videographers with access to competition floor
   - Senior and Junior National Team Athletes over 18 yrs of age
   - Coach members
   - Official members
   - Athletes over 18 yrs of age
   - Volunteers over 18 yrs of age
   - Chaperones

2. SafeSport Training is required annually. Policies around training can be found in the USA-NKF Minor Athletes and Officials Abuse Prevention Policy and Participant Safety Handbook. Training is available at no charge to participants 18 years of age and older. Individuals under 18 years of age can take the course with a signed approval from their parents. The SafeSport Training is available at uscenterforsafesport.org and the course consists of the following topics:
   1. Mandatory Reporting
   2. Sexual Misconduct Awareness Education
   3. Emotional and Physical Misconduct
To obtain the code to create a login and have the results connected to USA Karate you can login to your membership account at usakaratemembership.com or contact the national office at natoffice@usankf.org. The course is also available to individuals not affiliated with the NGB for a small fee at AthleteSafety.org.

Training and resources for minor members have been developed. Youth toolkit is available on the resources page of the safesport.org website and training resources that are age specific for minors will be available soon at athletesafety.org.

3. Background checks will be completed every 2 years with our vendor NCSI rechecking annually.

The cost of the background screening is approximately $30 depending on your state. To complete the background check, you will simply need to do the following:
1. Visit www.ncsisafe.com and click on Background Screening Self Registration
2. Enter Self Registration Number 26244495
3. Enter Your Information as Requested

4. We have updated the Participant Safety Handbook which defines the SafeSport Policies for USA Karate. You should review these policies. The Handbook includes:
   - Training and Education
   - Criminal Background Check Policy
   - Athlete Protection Policy
   - Physical Contact with Athletes Policy
   - Electronic and Social Media Policy
   - Travel Policy
   - Reporting Policy
   - Disciplinary Rules and Procedures

5. We have added the USA-NKF Minor Athletes and Officials Abuse Prevention Policies in compliance with the requirements from the U.S. Center for SafeSport’s Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy to cover both our minor athletes and minor regional officials. You should review these policies. The Policy includes:
   - Training and Education Policy
   - One on One Interactions Policy
   - Massages and Rubdown/Athletic Training Modalities Policy
   - Locker Rooms and Changing Areas Policy
   - Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy
   - Local Travel Policy
   - Team Travel Policy
6. Training and resources for parents have been developed. Parent toolkit is available on the resources page of the safesport.org website and training resources are available at athletesafety.org

7. Reporting
   If you know of or suspect a violation of any of the SafeSport Policies or Procedures you are required to report the incident. Reports can be made at:

   Sexual Misconduct involving a minor:
   • U.S. Center for SafeSport – uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern/ or 720-531-0340
   • USA Karate Ethics website usakarateethics.com or 844-598-1865
   • You should also report Sexual misconduct involving a minor to local law enforcement

   All other violations:
   • USA Karate Ethics website usakarateethics.com or 844-598-1865
   Report directly to the CEO or Ethics Committee Chairperson
   • CEO Contact Phil Hampel – phampel@usankf.org 719-309-6030
   • Ethics Committee Chairperson Contact Chris Hodgin – chodgin@usankf.org

   USA Karate is concerned about the safety of all our members and has worked diligently to comply with the standards established by the U.S. Center for SafeSport, United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee and federal law. If you have questions on the policies please contact me. If you believe there is a violation to the policies or you have a concern please report that concern. Ways to make a report including anonymous reports can be found at SafeSport.usankf.org