

KO'S MARTIAL ARTS ACADEMY

SPORTS

Mastering Taekwondo

Martial arts school oldest in city; tourney set for Saturday

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The oldest Taekwondo school in Columbus, Ko's Martial Arts, is hosting its bi-annual Taekwondo tournament that includes nearly 300 students starting at 11 a.m. Saturday at Northside Middle School.

Seventy-six-year-old Grand Master Yun Sam Ko started the school in 1976 after another master who owned a school in the city reached out to him. Sam Ko traveled to Peoria, Illinois, from Korea, and there weren't many masters from Korea living in the United States at the time.

The owner who led the martial arts school on Washington street in Columbus was looking for someone he could trust to look after his students and immediately reached out to Sam Ko once he heard there was a Korean master in the area. Sam Ko accepted the honor and has since relocated to Taylor Road.

"It wasn't a selling of the business," said Sam Ko's son, Master Soon Ko, who has been passed down the honor of heading Ko's Martial Arts. "It was a handshake, the honor, take care of my students. At that time, the school wasn't very big, so my father took over the school at that time, and he's built it to this ... The students are what makes you. That's how my father was taught, and that's how I teach."

Ko's Martial Arts has expanded to about 240 students in Columbus and also has Seymour and Greenwood locations. The school has put together an official Ko's Martial Arts team of 15 students that will be competing



GREG JONES | FOR THE REPUBLIC

Rhea Jain practices her kick Nov. 2 at Ko's Martial Arts Academy in Columbus. Ko's is conducting a Taekwondo tournament Saturday at Northside Middle School.

at Saturday's tournament. All 15 students were hand picked, with about half coming from the Columbus area and the other half being from the Greenwood location.

"Talent alone will not get you on the team," Soon Ko said. "You have to show that you are an outstanding student outside of class, at school, at home, give back to the school, assisting and helping with class and helping the youth."

Ninety percent of the participants in Saturday's tournament will be from one of the three Ko's Martial Arts locations, and the remaining competitors will be from other schools around the area.

The four categories included in the tournament are forms, sparring, breaking technique and weapons, with ages ranging from 5-and-under to 46-and-over.

Fourteen-year-old Douglas

The ultimate test

WHAT: Ko's Martial Arts Taekwondo tournament

WHEN: 11 a.m. Saturday

WHERE: Northside Middle School

AGE DIVISIONS: 5-and-under to 46-and-over

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: An estimated 300 competitors

Turner has competed in the tournaments with Ko's Martial Arts for six years now, and his favorite category to compete in is sparring. He has competed in a number of different tournaments with the school but said his favorite ones are state and nationals.

"Those are the ones that I was really nervous with, but I felt like I wanted to do my best," Turner said. "I wanted to show nationwide how good I was."

Forty-nine-year-old student Jeff Allender has been with Ko's Martial Arts for about nine years now, and he was the driving force that encouraged the school to participate in so many competitions. Most of the tournaments are open to students of all levels.

The Ko's Martial Arts teams started about four years ago and competes in about six tournaments a year. It won gold at a competition in Ohio last year and also went to the U.S. Nationals in Virginia, where Allender won a gold medal in sparring.

"If you've not tried it, and you like competitive sports and just a good workout, you have to try it," Allender said. "It's unlike anything else."



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Soon Ko, Master of Ko's Martial Arts on requirements to make Ko's Martial Arts team