

Sports

Tae kwon do trio trains for upcoming nationals

By Capi Lynn
Of the Emerald

Some compete for mental fitness, some focus on the cardiovascular aspect, some participate solely for competition, and others use it for self-defense purposes.

For whatever reason, tae kwon do requires dedication, time and experience to compete in this 2,000-year-old Korean martial art, said Gordon Graaff, Oregon's tae kwon do club sports coach.

"It takes probably five to six years to become one of the top-flight competitors," Graaff said. "You need that much time to compete in many different tournaments to gain learning experience and develop your timing."

There is a certain "awareness" a tae kwon do competitor picks up from experience, Graaff said.

To compete at a national level, tae kwon do competitors would need to practice six days a week for two to three hours a day to become competent, Graaff said.

"To do it the way you should do it, if you have the time and resources, you would probably want to spar five days a week, 30 minutes each time," Graaff said.

Three Oregon tae kwon do team members, all products of the Choi Tae Kwon Do School in Portland, are presently training for the upcoming 11th National Collegiate Tae Kwon Do Championships Oct. 25. The tournament, attracting about 600 competitors nationwide, will be held in the University of California at Berkeley's Harmon Gymnasium.

Because of their school schedules, however, the national-bound competitors are sparring only three days a week.

Tony Kim, Bill Melvin and Dean Osaki, all black-belt competitors, will be making the trip to the tournament.

Kim, a bantamweight (118-127 pounds), has been competing for six

years.

"I consider (tae kwon do) a sport, I don't think of it as an actual martial art," said Kim, a first-degree black belt (black belts are categorized in nine degrees, the first representing beginning). "I became a tae kwon do competitor because I like one-on-one competitive sports."

Kim represented the Oregon team in the national competition last year in Dayton, Ohio.

"Even though you become a black belt, you still learn there are higher horizons," said Kim, who is coached by Willy Pieter, last year's tae kwon do instructor.

Since then, Graaff has taken over the tae kwon do physical education classes offered through the University as well as the club sports team.

Melvin, a second-degree black belt lightweight (140-154 pounds), has competed for eight years and considers tae kwon do primarily a mental sport.

"Everyone has physical potential," Melvin said. "In black belt, pretty soon everyone has the same techniques and after that it's strategy and self-control."

"To me, it's now mental, and it's the physical part that allows me to be mental," Melvin said.

Osaki has been involved in tae kwon do for seven years and presently competes in the featherweight division (127-140 pounds).

Osaki, also a second-degree black belt, participates in tae kwon do strictly for competition.

"It depends on the person," Osaki said. "People compete for different reasons."

Tae kwon do, a Korean term meaning "fist foot way," differs from karate and judo in application because sparring is full-contact. Kicks and punches are applied on impact, and the result in a more fluid style.

Competitors may kick as hard as they can to the body and head and may punch as hard as they can to the body. Punching to the head is not allowed.

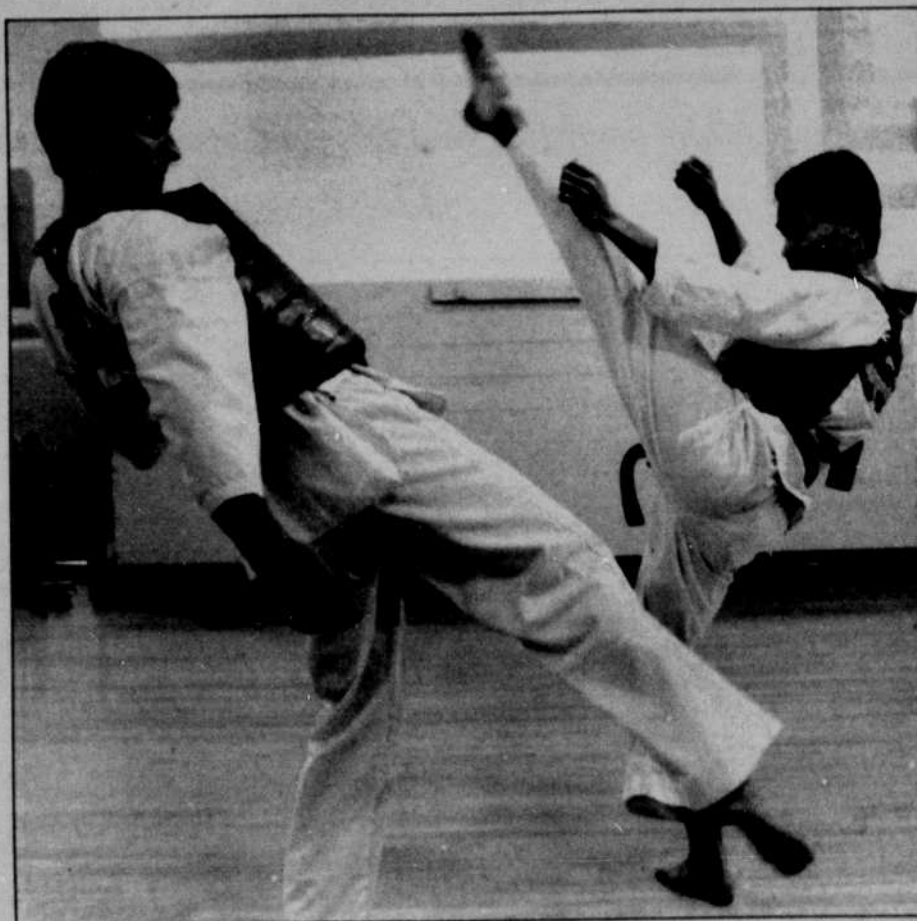


Photo by Derrel Hewitt

Bill Melvin (left) and Dean Osaki practice tae kwon do kicking techniques during a sparring workout.

"It's not a stop-and-go type of action," Osaki said. "It's like boxing, it's fluid."

The sport consists of approximately 75 percent kicks and 25 percent hand techniques or punching.

"There are probably 15 to 20 different kicks and applications or styles of kicks," Graaff, a 12-year tae kwon do competitor himself, said.

Competitors wear a Hogo (a chest protector) about an inch thick that covers the main trunk of the body.

"It doesn't stop the power of the blow completely, but it certainly reduces

some of the impact," Graaff said.

Participants fight three, three-minute rounds during which a knock-out rule and other rules similar to boxing apply.

The competition involves continuous action with points scored as action occurs. One point is given for each "solid technique" inflicted. Ten-counts and standing eight-counts also are in effect.

Tae kwon do, a growing sport, will be an exhibition event in the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, Korea. At least 40 countries or more will be involved, Graaff said.

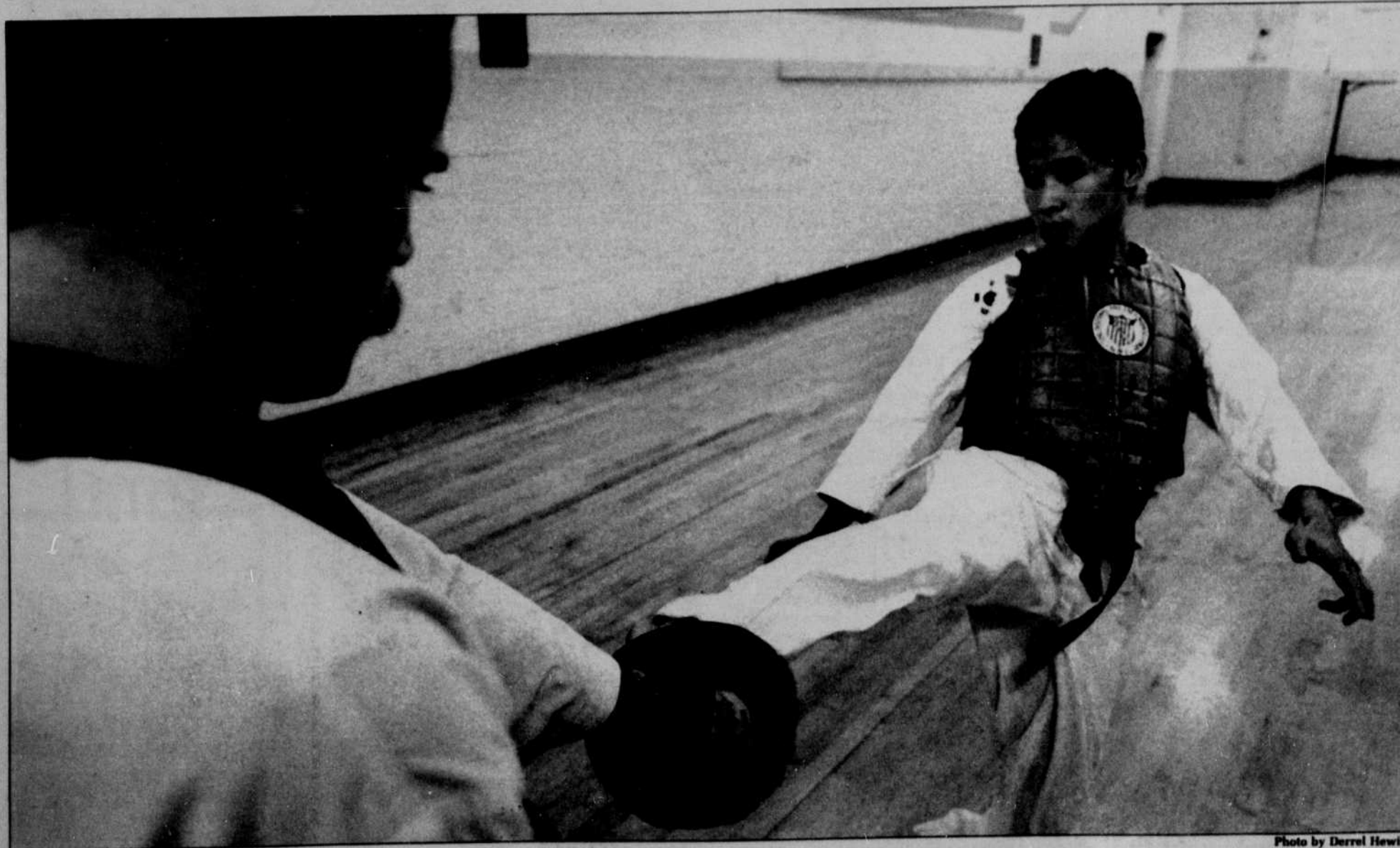


Photo by Derrel Hewitt

Dean Osaki (right) drives a kick to the focus pad held by coach Gordon Graaff (left). The pad is used to work individually on kicking techniques.