

ITC Singapore Delegation Received Warmly at ITF-Japan National Color Belt Championships and Training Sessions with Various Clubs

- Hapkido Demonstrations Awe Instructors and Students Alike

A delegation led by Sabum Daniel Sng was received warmly in Japan during their first official visit there from 28 July through 5 August, coinciding with the 2005 ITF-Japan National Color Belts Championship for juniors and seniors, where Sir was Guest of Honor. Sir and Mr. Kenneth Kuah were invited by ITF-Japan to attend this event, exchange ideas and training techniques, as well as to give self-defense demonstrations in Hapkido.



Sir making the first of many speeches at the Opening Ceremony of the National Championship.

During this visit, Sir was requested by Master Chew of ITF Malaysia to personally deliver invitations to both ITF-Japan and ITF-Korea (Republic of Korea; i.e. South Korea) to participate in the upcoming 2005 ITF Malaysia Championships, scheduled for 19 through 21 December 2005. The invitations were duly presented to Mr. Lee Jong Mok, one of the founding members of ITF-Japan. Mr. Lee currently makes monthly trips to Korea to conduct seminars and induction programs, assisting in the building of ITF-Korea and disseminating ITF style Taekwon-Do in South Korea.



Sir and the ITF-Japan Board surrounded by the participants of the Junior Competition. The ITF-Japan Board members are (in centre); Mr. Takagi (IV dan), Mr. Pak (IV dan), Sir, Mr. Nakasone (IV dan), Mr. Lee (VI dan), and Mr. Okazawa (IV dan).

Sir conveyed the news that INO's of several neighboring countries in Asia have already committed to participating in the competition that attracted over 600 participants last year, including Singapore, and that both he and Master Chew hopes to further enhance friendly

ties in the region through the event. This was received with enthusiasm and agreement by the

ITF-Japan Board Members. Participation by ITF-Japan in the said event will no doubt raise the standards of the entire competition, as Japan is home to many Gold medallists from the 2004 Junior and Senior World Championships.



Sir surrounded by the participants of the senior participants. Note Jules Takagishi (front row) donning her bronze medal she won in her first-ever sparring competition in the women's middle-heavy weight category.

Traveling with Sir were Messrs Kenneth Kuah (II dan in both Taekwon-Do and Hapkido), Kelvin Goh (II dan, Taekwon-Do), and Ms. Kendra Er (II dan Hapkido and 1st Gup Taekwon-Do). Mr. Kenneth Kuah was instrumental in the several Hapkido demonstrations and instructions Sir was asked to give, and Ms. Kendra Er was also assisting in these sessions. She also participated in the Championships in the Tuls for blue & red belts category, adding an international flare to the otherwise domestic competition. Mr. Kelvin Goh also participated in the Championships but as an umpire, working all day and overseeing both Tuls (patterns) and Matsogi (sparring) competitions for children and adults. While this was Mr. Goh's first attempt at umpiring internationally, he has already established himself as a fair and firm umpire respected by both competitors and fellow officials.



Mr. Kelvin Goh and Mr. Okazawa

Perhaps this trip was one of the most “Taekwon-Do and Hapkido packed” trips Sir has ever made. He and the delegation have attended 8 training sessions/classes and one competition at 7 dojangs/venues and 1 arena in the 7 days they were in Japan (not including the two half-days they spent on planes)! The sessions varied from private Hapkido lessons in a hotel room to overseeing a large Taekwon-Do class of university students in a spacious and modern facility as well as an amazingly efficient training session in one of the smallest dojangs (only slightly bigger than Sir's office) one could aspire to have. (The walls were full of holes where punches and kicks

have left their mark despite the mats pinned to the walls.)

But no matter where the delegation went, they were received warmly, in the true nature of Taekwon-Do – as brothers and sisters sharing the same passion, love, and aspirations.



Sir and the ITF-Japan Board members (from left): Mr. Okazawa, Mr. Takagi, Mr. Nakasone, and Mr. Lee after the Competition.

Such senior instructors of ITF-Japan as Mr. Lee Jong Mok (V dan), Mr. Koji Takagi (IV dan and All Japan Champion in middle weight sparring, special techniques, and tuls), and Mr. Hajime Okazawa (IV dan and All Japan Champion in heavy weight sparring) as well as all their students were very appreciative of Sir's generosity in sharing his knowledge, experience, and passion for the arts and teaching. So much that some have sworn to start saving and training to come visit ITC for

Their next holiday! It may not be long before Taekwon-Do training tours become a regular feature of the training year for ITF-Japan enthusiasts and fans of Sabum Sng's methods.

"Mr. Sng's patterns remind me of General Choi's patterns," said Mr. Lee during a private session when he practiced his Vth dan Tuls under Sir's guidance.

"I think it is the most genuine rendition of the Tuls I have seen, as the founder intended it," he added. (note: Master Choi Jung Hwa has yet to hold a seminar in Japan)



Sir and Mr. Lee Jong Mok

During the Taekwon-Do class held at a university club

where Mr. Lee teaches free of charge, a Q&A session was held where students were allowed to ask any questions of Sir.

Sir's answer to the first question took everyone's breath away in awe and respect.

"What does Taekwon-Do mean to you, Sir?" a boy asked.

"Taekwon-Do is my life." Sir replied without hesitation.

Afterwards, several students commented that Sir's first answer alone and the fact that he lives his words made the encounter worthwhile and one they will remember for life.

After talking with Sir, Mr. Takagi and his wife, also a black belt and his partner in building and growing his dojangs and clubs, commented with excitement,

"What Sir emphasizes as important – not politics but sharing the love of the art and to enhance



Mr. Takagi and his class with the ITC delegation after training.

lavish banquet after the training and Mr. and Mrs. Takagi promised to come visit ITC in the near future before parting.

Mr. Okazawa spent the most time with Sir not just in training in Taekwon-Do, but also donning a white belt to learn Hapkido.

“I will definitely come to Singapore to learn more Hapkido and it is my dream now to become a black belt in Hapkido and to promote the art in Japan, too. I have been looking for something to complement Taekwon-Do, and have tried many things, but nothing has struck a chord in me like Hapkido taught by Sir!” he said, with great enthusiasm.

Sir was impressed that Mr. Okazawa had no qualms about donning a white belt in front of his students as he was learning Hapkido.

“Mr. Okazawa’s humility and indomitable spirit are attributes I truly admire in him as a real martial artist,” says Sir. “He did not quit when he lost his title in 2004. He fought again to win it back in 2005. He teaches all six tenets by practicing them. His students are very lucky to have such an instructor,” Sir adds.

All members of the delegation found the trip worthwhile and enjoyable as well as enriching their martial arts experience.

“I seem to visit Japan every 9 to 10 years,” said Mr. Kenneth Kuah. “But I definitely hope to come back before 2015!” he smiled.

ITF-Japan hopes to invite Sir to the All Japan Championships and qualifying competition for the next World Championship scheduled for April 2006. In the mean time, instructors and students alike in Japan hope to be at the ITF Malaysia Championship as well as to visit Island Taekwon-Do Centre for training and further exchanges.

Article written by Jules Takagishi

Photos courtesy of ITF-Japan and Bela Schweiger