

# Open Letter To All Students and Families Regarding the Upcoming MUSA Challenge Tournament

Hello everyone!

I have been very pleased to see so many people getting excited about our upcoming tournament on Saturday April 30<sup>th</sup>. There has been a lot of great training happening, and along with that, a lot of improvements already. Remember all of the info and registration is online here =

<http://hwarangdominneapolis.com/wp/musa-challenge-annual-tournament/>

I am writing today in order to take a moment to explain, clarify, and overall help create more understanding about this event for all of the different ages and levels of our Academy regarding this tournament. First off, as you already know our school and martial art is NOT that of a “sport” school and the primary focus of what we do is that of genuine personal development for ALL students. We do not place a focus on simply winning medals and trophies as our primary pastime which can be found in many other martial art programs, however tournaments once in a while (*if the event has the proper philosophy*) can become a very empowering and educational experience for ALL levels and ages of students.

One of the paramount principles of doing Hwa Rang Do and Tae Soo Do is that of becoming a stronger human being. Gaining real confidence in oneself through building strength physically, mentally, and emotionally is a path that we walk both inside and outside the dojang. We train in order to grow strength in these areas of our being, and training comes in many forms. We train on heavy bags, we train forms, we do calisthenics, we stretch, we kick targets, we spar, throw, and grapple, we joint lock and choke, we work with weapons, we do acrobatics, and countless drills and exercises to get better at each of these areas.

However, all of these things within our curriculum are our vehicle. These activities are only one facet of real growth. As we continue on this martial path over time we also encounter:



**Camaraderie** – loyalty, trust and sharing with peers as we work, throw, grapple, and sweat together.

**Challenges** – facing our fears and weaknesses whether it is a difficult skill, testing, or “unknown” experiences.

**Confidence** – only through experience can one gain understanding of the unknown, overcoming fears, and develop physical, mental, and emotional control to deal with all kinds of situations and circumstances.

**Growth** – through it all, wisdom on many levels is acquired on the sincere journey.

The character for “Do” or the “Way” is symbol for a country road. It is a road not straightly paved, but rather one with bumps, curves, dirt, and contains times where you may not see far into the distance. However, the more one follows and commits to their chosen path, forward movement and progress will lead through the vastness of the country to the mountain top.

Life is rarely clean or free from blemishes and bruises – but even so – the world keeps turning and life always continues on!

After teaching martial arts for over 25 years now, one of the most important realizations I have gained is that of developing, maintaining, and strengthening character. I say this not only because I have seen so many people, both kids and adults, go through and overcome all kinds of obstacles, but also because I have experienced many struggles personally. The reflective experience of life brings forth the deeper issues that we struggle to deal with, and our fears and doubts come to the surface. There are times when we try hard to embrace our experiences/situations and put ourselves “out there” – yet the vulnerability of this kind of experience is food for fear, doubt, and hesitation. This is true for both kids and adults alike.

Whether we are alone, with friends, amongst a group, or in front of strangers, the times when we are sincere, we cannot avoid how our “self” engages with the life and the world around us. Yet, the “how” in which we experience situations defines our character. Does fear and doubt control our actions and responses? Or can we truly commit and live with purity and freedom?

What I have seen in myself and others is that it is much easier to act out of compulsive habit and try to hide or cover-up fear and shortcomings than it is to honestly face the weaknesses we have. However, the noble pursuit we all struggle with always remains staring at us every day – how can we manifest our genuine potential right here, right now?

When life is hard, how do we act?  
When life is difficult, what do we do?  
When we are tested, how will we fair?  
When we are challenged, how will we respond?

When life is good..... everything looks good, everyone is well spoken, and everyone is happy.  
But when the poop hits the fan, an individual's true colors are readily apparent.

This is the time when true character is shown.

This is also a time of opportunity to develop character!

Character and skills are not with us at birth, they are grown and cultivated throughout our lives. Walking on the country road is something we will do everyday, and it is so essential to reflect. It is up to us personally and individually to constantly learn from the different opportunities that present themselves to us. If we ignore our experiences we have not engaged with our lives – yet if we reflect and grow, then our experiences bring forth wisdom and develop our character to better deal with the journey we face ahead.

## **OUR TOURNAMENT, THE MUSA CHALLENGE!**

I know that was a long introduction, but I feel it is important for you to have greater insight into the purposes of our Hwa Rang Do and Tae Soo Do Tournaments. These are opportunities for you or your child to gain experience, and win or lose, you or your child WILL grow stronger and develop character because of this experience.

Our tournaments are family gatherings – only for HRD & TSD people. These are not cut-throat events that are political and demeaning to participants. These are friendly and positive that

build participants up, and recognize those who excel on that day. We train all year round and it is important to have moments that test and challenge what we know and what we can do in order to really see if those capabilities are really true. The motivation of this challenge will help us all evolve and broaden our horizons.

This is why our tournament is called the “MUSA” CHALLENGE!

Musa literally means “martial person” or better yet warrior! We train our best to walk the warrior’s path, and while the experience of matching and battling against other warriors is an external challenge of glory, the internal challenge of living up to our warrior ethos, our Hwarang spirit, is the challenge of our character.

Prior to COVID, we held this tournament once every year here in Minneapolis and there is also a World Championship event held every summer. While other regions host their own events, and it is understandable not everyone attends those, I am proud so many of our local students attended the World Championships each year. As a reminder, this MUSA CHALLENGE event hosted here in Minneapolis has the expectation of 100% participation from our dojang. This has been on our dojang calendar all year long, and unless you have some other MAJOR commitment, we do expect your attendance – all kids and adults included, both regular classes and TLK afterschool program. Of course, we also encourage you to compete in all possible divisions and events as this will help you gain more experience as you face more challenges and grow stronger! However, everyone must compete in at least two divisions.

Also, while we do recognize and support that many of our students are involved in other ongoing sports or activities, this tournament is a **once a year major event** so we appreciate your understanding in prioritizing this annual tournament event over regularly scheduled sport games or activities.

## EVENTS

As you have seen on the flyers and registration forms there will be events in all of our areas of martial art training:

- Open Hand Forms (or Basics for Little Tigers)
- Weapon Forms
- Sparring
- Grappling
- Weapon Fighting

We will be spending significant time until tournament focusing on these areas, and go over the specific rules and what to expect for the divisions of your ranks within your classes. Otherwise, the full rules are linked at the above listed webpage.

Remember, all events are divided up to be as fair as possible, and even on the day of the tournament we may combine and divide people within divisions to make it even more fair for all competitors. **EVERYONE WILL ONLY BE COMPETING AGAINST THE SAME LEVELS, SIZES, AND AGES OF OPPONENTS!**

For grappling please notice there are two kinds of divisions: submission and position. You must choose one of these (Beginner juniors & little tigers are only position grappling). Both types of grappling will be scored by the grappling point system, however in the position

divisions there are NO lockup attempts or chokes. You must try and get as many positions as you can in the 2 minute time. Submission grappling has all lock-ups and chokes and also uses points unless someone TAPS and submits before time runs out. Again more details will be discussed in the appropriate classes.

There will also be a bit of weapon fighting to finish out the day – Bongtoogi (stick fighting) and Gumtoogi (sword fighting). We will also be doing the FOAM SWORD Fighting for the Kids – and the full event is going to be pretty awesome!!!

## **SPECIAL NOTE FOR PARENTS**

I know we have a number of parents who have had their children compete in our tournaments before and also those newer people to the program who have not. I know that the past events have been a blast and I am sure everyone that has been to them before can attest to the growth and fun that the kids gain from participating. I once again wanted to stress the importance of encouraging your child through the whole “experience” – the training and practice to work for a goal (a good performance), the emotional support before and on the day of (helping instill belief in your child that “they can do it!”), and the reflection after the day (win with congratulations/pride and positive sportsmanship, lose with support and encouragement on how to become better for next time). Learning how to deal with this situation on ALL sides is very important for balanced growth and it is very evident through my years of teaching that kids NEED to learn how to work hard, learn how to win, learn how to lose, learn how to grow, and it is through these opportunities and experiences that this occurs!

While I know most of the kids are extremely excited about the tournament and ready to jump into the rings right now, I also understand that your child may have some “nerves” about participating or might even feel somewhat scared about the event too, especially if you are newer to the martial art world. However, please have faith in them and don’t re-enforce their fears by saying it is ok to not participate. It is only natural for them to have fear about an “unknown” event, where the result is yet to be determined. Everyone, kids and adults go through this about any moment of important action; “will I win?” , “will I lose?” , “what’s going to happen?” , “what if I forget my moves?” , “what will my mom and dad think?” , “what will the other kids think of me?” , “what happens if I mess up?” , “can I really do it?” These ideas and fears bounce around inside everyone, but the only way to ever overcome these kinds of fears is to face them, and through time and more experience the individual will gain the confidence needed to conquer these fears on their own! And as I mentioned above, this is by far the most important reason why we are holding this event in the first place – we want to see the children strengthen their character so they can face any obstacle in their lives now and in the future with courage, determination, perseverance, and with confidence!

We will of course help the kids all the way along the process before and on the day of. The event will be fun and also educational as they will get a chance to see the higher belts perform as well. Also, in recognition of the children’s courage, along with the gold, silver, and bronze medals for top placements, we will be awarding participation medals for all kids in every division that they compete in.

I am sure it will be an exciting and fun day of growth for everyone!

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

I hope that everyone trains hard these next couple weeks, and that you do your best on the day of the tournament. While everyone of course must be in control during all matches – I hope that you all come with committed spirits and meaningful performances. Make sure to pay attention to your details and once you have them down practice at full “show” speed, energy, and of course with KIAPS!

The deadline for pre-registration is Thursday April 28<sup>th</sup>! (if later than this an additional \$10 will be added to your registration fee). Registration is done online here:

<https://hwarangdo.org/civCRM/event/register?id=248&reset=1&cid=0>

We will have rings on the floor, and additional training times available the last weeks of preparation. Check out other announcements as they come and practice hard!

On tournament day morning on the 30<sup>th</sup>, the competition will start promptly at 9:30am (check-in opens at 9:00am).

The order of events will be Weapon Forms & Basics for Tigers, then Open Hand Forms, Grappling, Sparring, & Weapon Fighting. All Ages & Ranks of students will compete for each event division category listed above. As one event completes, we will move directly into the next category. Sorry, but we are unable to provide specific times due to the many subdivisions that will occur for each category. Event divisions will progress from beginner to intermediate to advanced levels. The entire tournament will take the morning and most of the afternoon. If parents wish to drop children off, and come-or-go throughout the day, that is fine as long as they have another adult helping with supervising duties.

The location of the event is our Academy, and there will be hot dogs, drinks, and some basic snacks available for purchase in Packs with your registration or individually on the day of.

Also, please remember that of course Family, Friends, and other Spectators are welcome, as I hope everyone will be ready to CHEER all day long!

So, TRAIN HARD, do your best, and I look forward to seeing EVERYONE compete with our fellow brothers and sisters from around the Midwest here at the dojang!

Hwa Rang Forever!  
Master Sirny