

AAU Taekwondo Announces Annual Award Winners!

Each year at this time the AAU Taekwondo Program acknowledges the hard work and sacrifice being made at the 'grassroots' level of our Program in helping to insure the continuity and long-term success of AAU Taekwondo.

In doing so, the AAU Taekwondo Program annually presents six (6) awards to those Districts (and District Sport Directors) who have excelled in the field of athlete registrations. Three of these awards are presented to the Top Three Districts in actual AAU membership registrations.

Those winners for the 2010-2011 fiscal/competition year just ended on August 31, 2011 are:



#1 Juan Portal and the Gulf AAU District. This past season the Gulf District (comprised of that geographic area centered around Houston, Texas) registered the amazing total of 1,873 athletes in the sport of Taekwondo! Making this achievement even more remarkable is the fact that Gulf was Number One the previous year with registrations of 1,822. And so Juan and his colleagues in the Houston area took what was already the largest District in the country and made it even bigger in 2011 when most entities (including sports) suffered as a result of the economic recession. "What the Gulf District

accomplished this past year only further demonstrates that regardless of economic constraints the best run organizations can continue to grow by providing those kinds of services that the public is looking for" said National Sport Chair, Mike Friello.



#2 - Scott Fiorillo and the Maryland AAU District. While showing a slight decrease in members from the prior year, Maryland continued to establish itself as one of our top performing districts with 843 registered members. For the past several years Maryland AAU Taekwondo has remained in the Top Three Districts year, after year, after year. Such consistency in membership registrations is a true reflection of Master Fiorillo's and the Maryland District's steadfastness as it relates to AAU Taekwondo's objectives of offering quality programming and consistent value.



#3 - William Dewart and the Pacific (San Francisco area of California) District. The Pacific District rounded out the top three with athlete membership of 613 members. The Pacific District has also set a high standard of finishing in the Top Three for many years now. And it too demonstrated a modest 3.2% growth rate in 2011. Our West Coast Districts are in the process of reestablishing their leadership personnel and headed by Master Dewart the AAU Taekwondo Program looks forward to even greater growth in the years ahead.

Recognizing the fact that not all AAU Districts can be the biggest for a lot of good reasons (population densities and economic factors as they relate to different areas of the country) the AAU Taekwondo also presents three additional awards to those Districts who have increased their memberships by the greatest percentage of growth. In this fashion all Districts regardless of location and size have an opportunity to excel.

This year's TOP GROWTH Districts include:



#1 - Master Greg Tubbs and the Southwestern AAU Taekwondo District (Dallas, Texas area). This year, the Southwestern District grew memberships by a whopping 74.55%! “Master Tubbs has done a remarkable job for us in the Dallas, TX area” says Master Friello, and in doing so, has set a precedent for many of our other districts. One of the most challenging aspects of managing a national Program like AAU Taekwondo is getting the various ‘groups’ of people all working in the same direction. And by ‘groups’ I mean administrators, athletes, coaches, and officials. For too long in this country these various

groups often see themselves in an US versus THEM type of environment. In AAU Taekwondo, we have worked continuously, from the very beginning, getting all members to understand that we all in this together! Two years ago, after having already distinguished himself as one of the Program’s top elite-athlete coaches in the Program in his early years with AAU, and then assuming the additional responsibility of serving as our National Head Coach with distinction, Master Tubbs agreed to step up once again and assume the even more pressing duties of District Sport Director—taking charge of membership growth and hosting of the Southwestern District Qualifying Championship. This year’s outstanding growth performance is just another example of Master Tubbs’ dedication to excellence in all things.

#2 - Ray Lumampoa and the South Texas (San Antonio area) District. With the AAU National Championship being hosted in Austin, TX this past year we expected to see some growth in all of our Texas Districts, but South Texas’ 53.26% growth in 2011 was totally amazing and a true testament to the hard work and dedication to success exemplified by so many districts this past year. With the unfortunate state of the economy this past year and high unemployment rates throughout the country, any business demonstrating even a modest 5% growth could easily be labeled successful. But a 50% growth rate is truly extraordinary. Congratulations to Master Lumampoa and the South Texas District.



#3 - Shannon Wiehoff and the Kentucky AAU Taekwondo District. While far from new to the Program, this is the first time that Kentucky has broken into the Top Three District Category on either level. Kentucky’s growth numbers are also extraordinary with a remarkable 48.10% growth in athlete registrations! “It’s exactly for Districts like Kentucky that we initiated these Growth Awards, says Master Friello. While Kentucky AAU Taekwondo may never be eligible for one of our Top Three Largest District Awards, for a lot of good reasons, it is precisely this kind of work and success at the grassroots level that

makes AAU Taekwondo as strong as it is. A National Program like AAU Taekwondo cannot succeed on the status of the ‘big guns’ alone. It takes the work of everyone, in all districts—large and smaller, pulling together—and doing their best to grow the Program. In this fashion, we can continue to offer the very best of everything to our members from general liability insurance to the member clubs, bonafide and educational training programs for our coaches and officials, a safe and properly managed competitive environment for all students regardless of age and belt experience to the highest levels of training, travel and competition for our elite athletes”.

In addition to these six District Awards, the AAU Taekwondo Program also singles out one individual for the David Rivenes Award presented to that individual for outstanding service and contributions to the AAU Taekwondo Program. The award is distributed annually in memory of David Rivenes, past president of the AAU, who, together with Ken Min in the early 70's, first established Taekwondo as a National Sport. This was prior to the formation of the USOC and the NGB's. Ken Min was in fact the first recipient of this award in 1976.



This year's recipient is **Master Chuong Pham**, National Chief Referee for the AAU Taekwondo Program. "Master Pham's contributions to the success of the AAU Taekwondo Program have been immeasurable, says Master Friello. Some may forget that when we started this 'new' AAU Taekwondo Program more than twenty years ago, the Program was initially set up and offered only as a 'point sparring' venue. And even as we first added 'Olympic-style' sparring to our product offerings, all official's training was done 'in-house' by and for the current members.

As we initiated our National Teams' Programs and started traveling abroad it became rather obvious to most of our leadership (although not all!) that we needed to secure even more knowledgeable 'outside' help in order for us to attain the highest standards that we had set for our Program—thus benefiting our athletes, coaches, and officials alike. That help initially came in the form of Master Chuong Pham, an internationally well-known AND well-respected International Referee.

Master Pham's initial work with AAU Taekwondo involved his taking on the task of 'Teaching the Teachers'. The AAU Taekwondo Program had already established a formal three day course of instruction for its' Clinic Administrators—those best of the best officials within the program who were authorized to conduct our Official's Clinics at the local level certifying their ability to work AAU sanctioned events. As too often happens with the better of any one group, they too often have the responsibility of becoming the teachers/trainers of what they do/know best, with little further training being provided THEM! Master Pham was asked and agreed to provide this continued education.

And what a job he has done! Master Pham, to this day, is continually designing new and exciting programs within AAU Taekwondo, all with the intent of helping to make it better. He travels thousands of miles on our behalf spreading the AAU gospel and representing AAU Taekwondo at International competitions throughout the world.

His input and guidance have been invaluable on so many levels from the development and interpretations of our own Competition Rules, Coaches and Officials Education, one of the finest 'upgrade/promotional programs for officials in the country (often having to take the heat personally when a candidate for promotion is disappointed), to officiating personally as some of our local qualifying events.

At the Nationals his leadership and work ethic is unquestioned. Master Pham has taken full responsibility for setting up, scheduling, and conduct of both the Coach's and Official's Seminars, the Ring Assignments for ten full rings for five full days, as well as the testing, filming, and evaluation of all Official's Upgrade Candidates. Of course he doesn't perform all this work in a vacuum, but it is his leadership and expertise that has shaped our entire Program for several years. Congratulations Master Pham.