

Houston's Young Brothers G-Force Taekwondo Team

Wins National Championship

Prepares to Compete Before Hometown Crowd at 2012 AAU Junior Olympic Games



Article written by Christine Rodriguez, Mark Manela, and Michael Rodriguez

The 2012 Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) National Tournament brought more than 1,800 of the country's best Taekwondo athletes together to battle for the title of national champion. This year, the best of the best Olympic sparring competitors came from Houston's own Young Brothers G-Force.

The G-Force Competition Team won the top honor of national champion team at the AAU's showcase event held in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, July 2-7, 2012. "The team trained hard, more than 12 hours a week, preparing for the tournament," said Head Coach Gianni Giambi, 3rd Dan Black Belt. Coach Giambi and his father, Grand Master Mark Giambi, 8th Dan, hand-pick each athlete on the G-Force team. For 2012, the Giambis assembled, a diverse team of 26 athletes ranging in age from five to seventeen from across Houston.

The Giambis' goal was simple: develop the very best Taekwondo athletes in the nation. And they succeeded. The G-Force team carried home an astonishing sixteen individual medals in addition to first place team honors:

- **6 Gold** – Giselle Giambi, (Red belt), Michael C. Rodriguez, (Black belt), Gianmarco Giambi, (Blue belt), Cameron Gibbons, (Black belt), Aidan Blackwell, (Red belt), and Ludovica Duchini, (Blue belt);
- **4 Silver** – Nina Ignatiev (Purple belt), Jaden Bosworth (Brown belt), Trinitee Stykes (Blue belt), and Jackson Blackwell (Yellow belt);
- **6 Bronze** – Carlos Ramos (Black belt), Gabrielle Shaddock (Black belt), Declan Little (Red belt), Kevin Ayala-Abdelnur (Brown belt), Connor Wright (Red belt), and Jordan Kramer (Black belt).
- Two more medals were won by Young Brothers' adult students who work with the team. Leonard Moon, Sr. (Black belt & Assistant Coach) won gold; and Michael R. Rodriguez (Black belt & G-Force team assistant) won bronze.

Now the Giambis are preparing their athletes for international competition. Team members Cameron Gibbons and Jordan Kramer have been named to the 2012 AAU Taekwondo National Cadet Team and team members Carlos Ramos and Gabrielle Shaddock have qualified to compete in the National Team Trials in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, Sept. 7 – 9, 2012. "This is a tremendous achievement," said Coach Giambi, a two-time AAU National Team member. The National Team Trials are used to select the national team to represent the United States in international competition. In years past the AAU Taekwondo National Team has competed in Puerto Rico, Aruba, Germany and Holland.

So what's next for G-Force? The majority of the G-Force team will continue to train for the Junior Olympic Games, July 25th – August 4th. "For the first time, the Junior Olympics will be held in our back yard," said Master Giambi. Houston will host this year's Taekwondo's competition at the George R. Brown Convention Center, July 29 – 30, 2012. Coach Giambi has reason to be excited about this year's event. At last year's Junior Olympic Games in New Orleans, LA, his G-Force team won an amazing eight medals. And each of his medalists is on this year's championship team:

- **5 Gold** – Giselle Giambi (Red belt), Jade Moon (Red belt), Cameron Gibbons (Black belt), Carlos Ramos (Black belt), and Michael C. Rodriguez (Black belt);
- **2 Silver** – Aidan Blackwell (Red belt) and Luke Kramer (Black belt)
- **1 Bronze** – Jordan Kramer (Black belt)

The AAU Junior Olympic Games are the pinnacle competition held annually by the US Amateur Athletic Union. There will be approximately 15,000 athletes from all over the United States and U.S. territories participating in 18 sports here in Houston. "Some of these elite athletes could be the next generation of Olympians for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil," according to Master Giambi.

The Giambis have reason to be thinking about the 2016 Olympics. The current G-Force team members have won twenty-one national championships:

Cameron Gibbons, a five time champion (2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2012) and 2011 AAU Junior Olympic Champion is a 13 year old who started practicing Tae Kwon Do at 5 years old and has been on the G-Force Team since 2005. Since competing in Tae Kwon Do, Cameron has had 112 sparring matches and has only lost 9 of those matches. Cameron attends Pin Oak Middle School and maintains an "A" average. He also loves playing baseball.

Michael Rodriguez, a four time champion (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012) and a 2011 AAU Junior Olympic Champion is a nine year-old with many goals in life. Michael started training in Tae Kwon Do a little before his 5th birthday and has been on the G-Force team for four years. After watching the G-Force team during a practice, Michael quickly decided he wanted to train extra hard so he could be selected for the G-Force team. After making the team he quickly laid out the goal of winning a gold medal at his first National Championships. Once that goal was achieved, he then set a longer term goal of beating the record of three consecutive national titles held by his teammate and best friend, Cameron Gibbons. Three years later, Michael achieved that goal this year and yet he still has other goals to achieve. "My greatest goal is to beat Steven Lopez's five-time world champion title," said Michael. He would also like to achieve the goal of making the Olympic team and win gold medals at multiple Olympics. This past season, Michael was undefeated in all 21 sparring matches, including the National Championship tournament. Michael is a straight "A" student at River Oaks Elementary and will be in the 4th grade this coming fall. He is an active Cub Scout in Pack 46 and on his free time, he enjoys running, gymnastics, playing basketball, football, baseball, chess and the piano. Michael is also an avid reader and loves listening to classic rock music.

Jade Moon, a three time champion (2008, 2010, 2011) and a 2011 AAU Junior Olympic Champion is a 14 year old young, dedicated lady with many great accomplishments. Jade started practicing Tae Kwon Do at the age of seven and has been on the G-Force Team since 2006. She not only focuses on being a top Tae Kwon Do athlete, she also focuses on maintaining high academic scores. Jade is a member of National Junior Honor Society. She has the goal of one day making the AAU National Team and the Olympics. Jade enjoys bike riding, swimming, playing volleyball, and being outdoors.

Victoria Murtland, a two time champion (2009, 2011) is 16 years old and will be a senior at DeBakey High School for Health Professions this coming fall. Victoria has been practicing Tae Kwon Do for five years and has been on the G-Force Team for 4 years. "Tae Kwon Do is not just a sport, it is a lifestyle. You learn about respect, discipline, and work. Tae Kwon Do is direct, as our coach says, "You get only as much as you put into it." There are many sacrifices to make just to show up, but well worth it by earning a first place trophy in tournaments," said Victoria. She has won 11 first place, 4 second place and 2 third place trophies. Aside from Tae Kwon Do, Victoria plays guitar and loves to draw;

Giselle Giambi, a two time champion (2011, 2012) and a 2011 AAU Junior Olympic Champion is 10 years old and will be a 5th grade student at Dickinson Elementary school in Sugarland, Texas this fall. She has been training in Taekwondo since the age of four and has been a member of the G-force Team since 2007. Giselle's long term goal is to qualify for the 2016 Olympics in Brazil. She also enjoys gymnastics, reading, drawing, and playing the guitar.

Jordan Kramer, a 2008 champion, is 12 years old and a 7th grader at River Oaks Baptist School. She has been with the G-Force Team since 2006. Jordan's goal is to secure a spot on the cadet team by winning nationals, which she accomplished this past AAU National Championship. Jordan enjoys baking, reading, science, and hanging out with friends when she is not training.

Luke Kramer, a 2010 champion; is 15 years old and a sophomore at St. John's School. He has been practicing Taekwondo since 2005 and with the G-Force Team since 2006. Luke's goal is to make the National Team and the opportunity to compete international. When Luke is not at the dojang training, he is spending time with family, playing soccer, watching movies, or reading.

This year's additional National Champions to the G-Force; Gianmarco Giambi, Aidan Blackwell, and Ludovica Duchini. That is a whopping ten athletes on the possible path to compete for spots on the US Olympic team.

The 2012 G-Force Team members are: Giselle Giambi, Gianmarco Giambi, Jade Moon, Cameron Gibbons, Jordan Kramer, Luke Kramer, Jaden Bosworth, Victoria Murtland, Gabrielle Shaddock, Catherine Welch, Alexei Ignatiev, Nina Ignatiev, Aidan Blackwell, Jackson Blackwell, Isaac Davidson, Rwendy Luna, Declan Little, Karina Barbosa, Carlos Ramos, Trinitee Stykes, Ludovica Duchini, Klaudia Pola Aronowski, Aron Manela, Kevin Ayala-Abdelnur, Connor Wright, and Michael C. Rodriguez. The G-Force staff includes: Assistant Coach, Leonard Moon, Sr.; Team Assistant, Michael R. Rodriguez; Team Treasurer, Rhonda Gibbons; Team Photographer, Mark Manela; and Team Manager, Christine Rodriguez.

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