

AAU TAEKWONDO AND USA TAEKWONDO STRIKE HISTORIC AGREEMENT

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (Mar. 15, 2018) - Following a series of discussions AAU Taekwondo and USA Taekwondo can today announce a new project of collaboration in two key projects - the development of the next generation of elite athletes, and an accord to share information related to serious allegations of misconduct.

Starting today, athletes competing in all AAU licensed tournaments in which black belt athletes weigh-in to compete (state events, AAU National Championships and the AAU Team Trials) will have the opportunity to earn points in the new U.S. National Rankings System which launched at the 2018 U.S. Open Championships in Las Vegas.

USA Taekwondo Executive Director Steve McNally said: *“USA Taekwondo has a stated goal to ‘Dominate in ’28’ when the Olympic Games returns to U.S. shores in Los Angeles, with an aim of serious depth and medal potential in every contested division, and AAU Taekwondo has a major role to play in that, particularly through the strength of their exceptional grass roots program.”*

“Athletes just beginning to make a name for themselves in AAU are key prospects for both the 2024 and 2028 Olympic Games, and this agreement, in conjunction with the new rankings system undoubtedly fixes a major blind spot for us. We are very excited to welcome AAU into the program. Going forward AAU will be involved in reviewing and revising the points system along with us to make it even stronger, and I believe they will bring immense value to those discussions.”

“This project will provide visibility deep into the AAU athlete development pipeline and place many more athletes on the Olympic pathway. We will work closely with AAU to identify and develop talent at a younger age than ever before, and both organizations are laser focused on those goals. We are fortunate that the senior leadership of AAU Taekwondo share in that vision, and it is a pleasure to be building bridges with them for the benefit of our sport on a national level.”

National Sport Chair for AAU Taekwondo, Mike Friello said: *“This agreement between USA Taekwondo and AAU Taekwondo shall go down as truly an historic event/undertaking by both organizations. For the first time in three decades AAU Taekwondo is being recognized as a key grassroots program for Taekwondo in the USA. This first step towards a much more cooperative relationship between our two organizations will prove to be the strong foundation that we both need and want, towards helping to develop the very best National Taekwondo Program in the world. I cannot express strongly enough just how thrilled I am to have played a small part in taking this initial first step. My thanks and gratitude to Steve McNally for having provided myself and AAU Taekwondo the opportunity.”*

Additionally, both organizations have pledged to keep the other fully informed of proceedings related to misconduct issues involving their members, with immediate notification of any suspensions that are issued for violations of the codes of conduct or the SafeSport Code.

McNally said: *“We believe this new partnership between our two organizations is also an important step forward for the safety of taekwondo constituents in the United States, and I would like to thank Mr. Friello for standing shoulder to shoulder with us in taking a strong position on perhaps the most challenging issue we all face. Sharing information is just one way we can ensure there are no safe harbors for predators within our sport, and if we continue to shine a harsh light on behaviors that almost always happen in the shadows then there will eventually be nowhere left to hide.”*

Mike Friello said: *“Something like this has been long overdue. This abominable activity has been a disease within our sport for decades! It behooves everyone connected to cooperate with regards to sharing information on the all too few who have been disciplined by one organization or another. I look forward to working with Mr. McNally and USA Taekwondo in this endeavor.”*

McNally continued: *“We believe that these are just the first steps in a much closer working relationship between AAU Taekwondo and USA Taekwondo. I am excited by the possibilities of what we can achieve together in a spirit of partnership and we will all continue to work towards that in the coming weeks, months and years.”*