



### 37. Philosophy of Coaching Taekwondo

( By Robert K. Fujimura )

As Taekwondo nears its debut in the 2000 Games, its spectators, athletes and coaches are challenged to make sense of the ancient martial values in light of modern sport implications. The master plays a pivotal role in integrating the old with the new. Ultimately through the performance of its athletes, Taekwondo will be judged as a sport worthy of continuation on the Olympic Program or relinquished as a sport not worthy of Olympic competition.

Taekwondo, as it has evolved as a competitive activity, has been and is being tried by the general public as to its appropriateness in our society. The standards for judging success of athletes will help to shape the future growth (or decline). What should be the gauge of success in competitive Taekwondo?

Derived from the Greek words of "philo" and "sophy" or the lover of wisdom, philosophy is the general understanding of values and reality by speculative rather than observational means. With this analysis, the basics are developed first and then applied to the real situation. This becomes important since situations develop and may be unpredictable. Success is the degree or measure relating to the goal that has been established.

Interpreted strictly, "do" from Taekwondo relates to a way or path. It is, of course, derived from the same character used in the other martial arts such as "Tang Soo Do", "Hapkido", "Kendo", "Kyudo", etc. Each martial art offers a distinct methodology or path. Likewise Taekwondo "The way of Kicking and Punching" offers a distinct practice or way. Part of the modern interpretation of Taekwondo has been its ability to use competition (practice leading up to, competition and post competition activities) as an integrated part of study. Traditionally, in the study of a martial art, the activity is the tool by which the individual enhances his mental and physical self.

In an address given at the 7th World Taekwondo Championships, International Olympic Committee President Juan Antonio Samaranch explained what Taekwondo exhibited to the general public:

"Taekwondo is a sport, certainly. But is more than just a sport. It is also the age-old expression of the soul of a people which understood at the very early state the benefits of physical activity in terms of intellectual and moral equilibrium and gave manifold express to this idea. In this respect, Taekwondo is only one example. It is a sport, then a martial sport. However, it is also an art, since it was born of an attempt, at striving to create a harmonious and indissoluble relations between body and spirit, the physical and mental, in order to arrive at all sense of elevation, of equilibrium, of perfect harmony of gesture and its control by the mind.

We find here principles which come close to--one might almost say "merge" with--those advocated by the Baron De Coubertin, principles of which the International Olympic Committee, of which I am president, is the Universal Guardian.

This is, incidentally, the reason why the IOC agreed that Taekwondo should feature on the programme for the games of the 24th Olympiad in Seoul as a demonstration sport, thereby recognizing the tradition perpetuated by this sport and its educational value and with a view to encouraging its development and expansion throughout the world by virtue of its accession to Olympic glory."

Interpreting the role of the Taekwondo coach may also be viewed in light of the roles of the Master Instructor, Instructor, etc. The Master is by definition a coach to the athlete. He may however have other subordinate coaches that by virtue of their daily or regular contact with the athletes training become the athlete's primary coach.

In light of the modern Olympic Movement, documents such as the United States Olympic Committee Coaching Ethics Code create an excellent frame to assist the Taekwondo coach in creating and maintaining a healthy relationship with the athletes. As outlined in the six general principles of Competence, Integrity, Professional Responsibility, Respect for Participants and Dignity, Concern for Others' Welfare and Responsible Coaching, it seeks to have a sport-generic approach to dealing with ethics of coaching(1).

Drawing on the tenants of Taekwondo (the core values as expressed by its creeds, standards of conduct and principles), the coach can integrate this into the modern sports movement. For example:

1)Competence - Taekwondo Coaches must maintain a high standard of excellence in their practice and instruction of Taekwondo. They must consistently strive to keep current the knowledge and skills required in this developing sport. They must take care in presenting and coaching in areas that they have competence and training commensurate to the level of the athlete.

2)Integrity - Taekwondo Coaches seek to promote honesty, fairness and respect between themselves and other participants. The coaches strive to be aware of their own belief systems, values, needs and limitations and how these affect their ability to teach and coach. The coaches avoid improper and potentially harmful dual relationships through clarification of roles as they affect athletes and others.

3)Professional Responsibility - Since the Taekwondo coach serves and relies on the public's trust, there is an obligation to consult with, refer to or cooperate with



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other coaches, institutions, etc. to best serve the public and ultimately the athlete.

4) Respect For Participants and Dignity - The understanding that both the athletes and other participants should be respected is foundational in creating programs that do not condone unfair discriminatory practices.

5) Concern For Others' Welfare - Embodied in the concept of the senior/junior relationship is the need to assist ones placed in the seniors' care. Likewise the coach should be sensitive to the differences in power/position between themselves and others. They should seek to fairly represent themselves in their professional relationships.

6) Responsible Coaching - As with other sports, Taekwondo seeks to be a responsible part of society. Coaches can use their knowledge of the sport for the betterment of human welfare. They should comply with the law and encourage the development of laws and policies that are in the sports best interest. Additionally, they are encouraged to contribute a portion of their time for little or no personal advantage.

From philosophy should spring practice. Likewise, the philosophic base of ethical coaching and teaching, should drive the coach to practice his trade guided by these ideals. Situational ethics demand that standards for conduct vary depending on the desired outcome. However, guided by the principles that Taekwondo and Martial Arts embrace, the coach should conduct himself accordingly.

With reference to coaching in the public schools, it has been sighted that "Many persons believe that coaches form the last bastion of law and order in the school system in a world filled with disorder..."(2) Likewise, the practice of Taekwondo and Martial Arts places a great emphasis on order and discipline making it an excellent tool to reach youth. The coach that takes on this responsibility, has an opportunity to mold the bodies and minds during an impressionable time of life.

It is essential that the competitive activity of Taekwondo be tempered by the realization that it is a component of the whole rather than the goal or end in itself. The need to win as the objective of competition or the philosophy of the sport can debase rather than heighten the competition experience for the participant. Competition should highlight the practice in the dojang rather than be viewed independently.

The modern Olympic Games Creed reads:

"The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win, but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered, but to have fought well"(3)

In light of the commercial success of modern Olympic Games and the commercial success of the sport of Taekwondo, it is easy to forget the values that make the practice of Taekwondo special. It is the coach that can temper competition with the wisdom of experience and oversight that may be lost to the competitor or his supporters (parents, spectators, etc.). The modern, win at all costs can erode the values that a skilled coach should enhance in his athletes.

In many ways, the master and coach will be the tool to interpret the modern sport of Taekwondo in light of the ancient values. The careful consideration of training and competition by coaches will insure that the legacy of Taekwondo will remain positive.

2. Guide to Effective Coaching, Allyn and Bacon, Inc., Boston, Massachusetts, 1982.

3. Olympism Curriculum Guide Volume VI, Griffin Publishing, Glendale, California, 1996