

◇Putting On the USA Karate National Championships

When I was chief referee, back when the federation was with the AAU, the chief referees job included not only referee training and assignments, but supervision of all the tournament administration functions such as making judgments on registration problems and divisions, handling hotel problems, providing and supervision the medical, keeping the coaches under control, and the calling, assigning and charting of rings. Since that time a number of highly qualified and motivated individuals began to offer their time to take on and expand the different functions permitting the federation to develop a well oiled, highly efficient competition.

Putting together the national championships starts several years before a decision is made at the convention. USA Karate receives information from RSO's, cities, and individuals interested in hosting the championships. Further, we are listed in a number of sports information books that convention and visitor bureaus use for leads. Those interested parties put together proposals complete with facility cost, hotel information, and local support. At the national convention each year dates and locations are decided. Once determined, the ball starts rolling. Since The USA Karate Federation does not desire to use local promoters for its national championships, the entire event is coordinated and handled with volunteers at the direction of the national office. Let's take a look at what goes on.

Qualification -- In order to get the competition year on the road, qualifying events need to be established. Entries into the league championships which qualifies for the national championships come from regional sports organization qualifiers. These are grass roots qualifiers run by many volunteers across the United States. It is important to the overall event that these events are held 30-45 days or more in front off the respective league championships to enable registration to run smoothly. At the RSO events, the athletic registration takes place and information on the leagues is distributed. It is important to understand that no one can enter or compete at a qualifier unless they register as an USA Karate member. (Also, all memberships should be forwarded through the regional sports organization. This will help eliminate many registration problems. The national registration committee has been instructed to turn down individual registrations accompanying a league entry form. The reason is simple, if you were not registered at the time of qualification, you could not have been qualified. Areas with no qualifiers can seeking direct admittance by making written application to the national office and they should send their memberships to the national office. As far as the federation is concerned, there is no reason for the national registration committee to receive any membership applications so do not look for them to accept them this year.)

Tournament Administration -- Site preparation is under the direction on the tournament administration committee, Mike Bukala chairman. When possible the he visits the site a few months in advance to go over details of the event. By that time a diagram of the facilities showing ring positions, spectator seats, etc. has been completed. Before he leaves for the event, Mike will see that the computers, mats, score sheets, belts, stopwatches, etc. have been shipped from the national office. Arriving a few days before the everyone else, he will review final preparations and oversee the setup. Initial arrangements for the referee course, registration, parents orientation, etc. are usually handled by the national office, but the TA picks up this responsibility at the site. TA is also responsible for calling of the competitors before each event handling the line up for the divisions.

Registration -- While Jim Cottrell is the National Registration Chairman, the event registration committee is handled by Vicki Cottrell. She receives all the entries for the leagues as well as the nationals, collects the entry fees, notifies entries of missing information and enters all the information on the computer. Cut-off dates have been established to assist the event registration. Those who enter after the cut-off date are required to pay the late fee. If the late fee is not included with the application, the federation does bill the competitor for this fee. From information on the entry form, the charts are drawn for the competition. The chart program was written by George Anderson and it is not uncommon for both him and Jim Cottrell to be charting the events until the early hours of the morning as the influx of late registrations and incomplete applications does not permit charts to be drawn correctly in advance. That by the way is the reason for the late fee -- an incentive to register early and remove the burdens on those of the national staff in getting everything ready on time. As mentioned before, event registration is not to receive individual memberships. This will only complicate their job and if you were properly registered, you would have registered before you qualified. If you register after "qualifying" your entry and any medal received would be subject to a protest which would most probably hold. Registration will not accept registration either in the mail or at the event site. You must do this in advance through proper channels.

Master of Ceremonies -- During the event, someone is needed to see that the public and competitors are informed of the flow of the event. As the Master of Ceremonies, Tom LaPuppet is in charge of seeing that the events are smoothly called. He coordinates with registration and tournament administration. Each division has a number and the divisions are called in the order on a master listing. LaPuppet sees that this is followed and takes over the announcing and the responsibility for the medals and awards.

Referring

Referee Core is a group of about 90 highly qualified, certified referees who along with other aspiring referees handle the judging of the competition. At the Nationals, the entire judging function including time keeping, charting, and score keeping is handled by this army of "blue coats." Julius Thiry, USA Karate Chief Referee, along with the other senior referees provides the training and ring direction necessary to assure the smooth operation of the competition. The men and women under his direction are all are volunteers who pay back to karate a part of what they have received in giving their time in assisting and making the national championships the most fair and well run competition in America today. Consistent and high quality refereeing is the hallmark of USA Karate today.

Coaching -- The federation will establish a formal coaching function at the national championships this year. One coach will be assigned to each division to provide help and assistance to the competitors. Competitors have needs and it is the responsibility of the federation to see that trained coaches are available to assist exists the competitors during the event. A two day coaching seminar will be held before the event and coaches who complete this program and assist with the coaching function will be issued a coaching certification. Don Madden, head of the USA Coaching Section, and Patrick Hickey, USA Grass Roots Coaching Education Committee are working on this part of the National Championships.

Medical -- The sports medicine and medical committees set up the medical function for the event. This requires not only a medical doctor be present, but that an adequate number of trainers and other medical personnel be present to handle the needs of the athletes. This function has been overseen by Dr. Paul Liebert and Dr. Michael Dunphy.

The medical core is a very important part of event preparations.

Result Compilation -- This is completed by Carol Hofer back at the national office. The federation runs over 300 events at its national championships and substantial time is required to go over all the charts and list all the winners for the official records. This job, as well as seeing that all event forms are printed and ready falls on Carol.

1993 Event Information

Pacific League Championships June 26 - San Jose Hilton & Towers, San Jose, Ca. - 800-HILTONS Referee Course Thursday-Friday, Competition on Saturday. Another hotel to also be announced

Southern League Championships June 19 - Ramada Inn, Memphis, TN. - 800-228-2828 Referee Course Thursday-Friday, Competition on Saturday.

Atlantic League Championships July 15-19, Wednesday & Thursday referee course-at the National Office, Friday, Saturday and Sunday competition University of Akron, Akron, Ohio. Hotels include Hilton Inn West 216-867-5000 Tues-Sun, Days Inn 216-869-9000 Thur-Sun, and Radison Inn Akron-Fairlawn 216-666-9300 Thur-Sun. *The League Championships determine the final qualifiers for the 1993 USA Karate™ Federation National Championships*

1993 National Championships - August 10-15 - The Point Hilton as South Mountain, Phoenix, AZ. 800-HILTONS - Reserve Now!

Junior Olympics or All American Youth Championships - October 2, 1993 in Greenville, MS. Hotel and exact title to be determined