

USFMAF
Judging and Referee Clinic in Southern California

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By Marc Lawrence

USFMAF held clinic at the Eskrimador Takwondo Academy in West Covina, CA. The Eskrimador Takwondo Academy is located at 1418 South Azusa Ave, Unit-B, West Covina, CA. The USFMAF President Darren Tibon, his wife, his son, some of his student and Angles Cabaes youngest son came down from Stockton to put on the clinic.

The USFMAF President Darren Tibon gave all of participants an orientation to the concept of judging and referee. He discussed the issue of integrity being the most important when come to judging. One of the big points he made was that it is different, in that these tournaments as they are televised and can have an instant replay. Matches in point stick fighting last 3 minutes in length or when one of the fighter's score of seven points is reached!

The USFMAF judging system is similar to the Karate judging system. The fights are more like a fencing match then a boxing match. The stick is seen like a blade. To understand the scoring you must understand the judging system. Each ring has five judges. There are four corner judges and the center judge/referee is also a judge. There is one time keeper and one score keeper for each ring. Each of the corner judges has a red flag and blue flag. The red flag is always held to the right of the center judge/referee's right. The blue flag is held to the center judge/referee's left. The center uses a stick or short staff to signal the start of the match. The fighters start at their marks 10 feet apart. The judge/referee says Labbon, which means fight and the fight starts.

In the point system when a strike is made to any part of the body; 1 point is scored by the first fighter to make contact and the Center calls "Break". The fighters must immediately stop and return to their marks. A point is awarded when at least three of the five judges agree on the score. If not no point is given. There are no points given for clashes or counters that are blocked. One of the things that, is interesting is if a judge did not see the point scored, the judge would cross their flags over their eyes to say they were blind to the call. A score by corner judges are reported while looking down so they are not be intimidated.

In order to learn how to do scoring in this system, a small tournament was held to train everybody in the system. As there were no trophies being handed out, so it led to just good natured sparring. This made for very good matches between the fighters of the different schools. Fighters at first' fought fighters from their own schools. As the comfort level increased fighters from other schools tried each others skills and systems.

Masters and Guros even got into the act with each other in some good sparring matches. The safety gear used in padded stick division is just head gear, groin and gloves. In live stick it included the use of body protection, elbows, knees and groin protection. The continuous padded stick was similar in scoring to the WEKAF System, which takes its scoring system from boxing. Each round lasts one minute with a 30 second break, with three rounds total. The scoring is based upon offense, defense, accuracy of strikes and overall ring performance.

The Southern California region was well represented by some the different groups that attended. They were members of Eskrimadors Academy, PAKAMUT International, LAMECO Eskrima, Siete Pares Escrima, Filipino Combative Systems and Angel' Disciples. After the clinic was completed everybody who could went out together for food and friendship at a nearby Filipino restaurant.

