



Kazoku Kai International

Sato Cup

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SATO CUP 2007

For the last few years Sensei Sato 8th Dan, based in Vancouver, Canada has held a prestigious tournament named the Sato Cup. It has grown from strength to strength over the nine years it has been held and he



has constantly asked for a team from England to come along and take part in the tournament.

Teams from Portugal, USA, Canada and Japan have always supported the event and I decided this year that as Senior squad coach for Kazoku Kai we would try to get together a team to take part in the tournament for the first time. This decision was made in July 2006 and I put it to all the senior Englishmen in the squad who would like to go. Four guys from the Blue Dragon Karate Club in Tenerife and one from my own dojo decided they wanted to go.

The major hurdle to go to such an event was costs and it was decided that we would go for sponsorship for anyone wanting to support the group. Through the efforts of Tim Smith from Tenerife one of our top sponsors: Linekers Group based in Las Americas were enthusiastic about what we were doing and came up with cash straight away. The Star of India restaurant backed this up shortly after (Los Christianos) and also gave Team England financial backing. To them we owe a huge amount of gratitude and I shall be thanking them personally in March this year for the help they have given us.

By November 2006 we stepped up the training and started intensive preparations for the Sato Cup held on the 3rd February 2007. Not only did the squad train on the technical skills needed for the fighting and Kata events, there was much work on the cardio-vascular fitness required for the three minute rounds required to compete at a high level. Even alcohol was off the menu for the three months preparing for the event.

The fitness regime set up by the squad's fitness coach Tim Smith certainly helped in our success in the tournament.

Vancouver

When we landed in Vancouver we took a limousine to our hotel in Coquitlam (it was cheaper than the taxis and great to arrive in style)! We arrived on the Wednesday afternoon, took an early night and up at 7 am Canadian time (they are 8 hours behind UK time) and after breakfast straight to the Gym for a two-hour workout and settling into Canada time. The Thursday evening Mike Scales 7th Dan, Shotokan instructor based in Vancouver, came and met up with the squad and became a great source of help for us during our stay in Vancouver. Originally from Southport (UK) he was 100% English while we were there and became our assistant coach for the duration.

After light training on Friday we were as ready as ever for the competition ahead.

Sato Cup

On Saturday 3rd February we arrived at the BCIT Campus where we registered in at 9 am for the tournament. When we arrived we were well received by everyone and the tournament host Andreas Kuntze met up with us and made sure we knew where we needed to be and made sure any of the teams needs were met.

I have been to hundreds of competitions around the UK and Europe but this was the very first tournament I have been to where there were "marshals" as they were called going around throughout the whole day looking after all the competitors, ensuring everyone was in the right place at the right time and doing much of the running around for the organisers, officials and competitors. And there have not been many competitions that I have witnessed six areas in use throughout the day keeping the flow of the event going constantly. A credit to the organisation of the event.

Mike Scales introduced me to Sensei Sato and he was over the moon that a team from England had come along to his event and he was visibly thrilled to see us there. Mike also introduced me to the special guest for the day, Fumio Demura (authors of books such as "...Karate Weapons of Self Defense" series and starring as the double for Miyagi in the Karate Kid films as well as in the film Diamonds are Forever etc... He was also pleased to see us.

At 12 noon, after some thrilling demonstrations by Sato and Demura the team event started and we were on! We were teamed up with the Canadian national side and Lee Smith was our first fighter and came away with a thrilling 3 points to 3 draw. Tim Smith fought next against Canada's no 1 fighter who showed his class and Tim lost his fight. Chris Unsworth went out next and scored immediately in the first few seconds of the fight. Unfortunately, this seemed to wake up the Canadian fighter who looked slow but came back strongly to win the fight 2 points to 1. We were out at the first hurdle but at least we got a 3rd place for our efforts.

Disappointment

After this disappointment the squad needed a lift before we took part in the individual events and we had to step up a gear to compete. We knew after the team event what a high level some of the fighters in the competition were.

I was up next in the Masters Kata tournament and after performing Gojushiho Sho I tied for first place and had to come out perform another Kata, so out I came and performed Kanku Sho. I was edged out by .1 and came 2nd. The second medal of our campaign was assured.

After Mike Hart, Lee Smith and Kevin Greenwood were eliminated from the Kata events we had the Kumite to try and redeem ourselves.

Next fighting event was Mike Hart in the Under 80 KGs event and Mike was taking part in his first ever tournament. Normally it takes a few tournaments to get going, not Mike and after getting a bye in the first round he went out against a top fighter and beat him 3 points to nil. The next fight was to get into the final and 3 points to 2 edged him out but still had to fight off for 3rd place to which he did convincingly. Another bronze medal was ours.

Next up was Kevin Greenwood (Turk as we call him) and he was in the 1st Kyu section. Kevin outclassed his opponents in a convincing display in all his fights and took our first Gold medal of the day.

Tim fought next in the over 80kgs category and boy there were some big guys in this. One of the fighters must have been 7ft tall and another could have doubled for "The Thing" from the Fantastic Four! Tim once again ended up facing the Canadian champion in the first round. But this time Tim fought much better and was only narrowly beaten and scored a creditable 5 points but lost 8 points to 5. Tim had to fight off for third place in the following round and beat his opponent 8 points nil. Another 3rd place award for England.

Lee Smith was up next in the 6th to 2nd kyu section and like Turk earlier won all his fights convincingly to come away with England's 2nd Gold medal of the day.

Tim asked me if he should enter the open weight category of the event and of course he was in (although he was a little tired!) Glad I put him in as he went out and fought very well, just losing in the first round but when he had to fight off for third place against a very dangerous opponent the crowd saw the best fight of the day. Strength, courage and as one of the referees said at the end, "boy, you guys have a lot of heart", Tim managed to beat his opponent and our final award of the day was ours.

Conclusion

At the end of the day, Mike Scales was thrilled with our performances especially with an inexperienced squad in its early development and great comments from Demura and Sato saying how much they enjoyed our fights it was a great day. Not many teams from outside of Canada have gone to the Sato Cup and took away several awards.

I would like to thank personally Sensei Sato for putting on a great tournament with excellent sportsmanship from all the Canadian

competitor. Thanks to Andreas Kuntze for organising and helping us on the day and to Mike Scales who provided us with much needed help on the day and for his hospitality throughout our stay in Vancouver.

Our Medals Tally

Lee Smith 1st Mens 6th – 3rd Kyu Kumite
Kevin Greenwood 1st Mens 2nd – 1st Kyu Kumite
Dave Wilkins 2nd Masters Kata
Tim Smith 3rd Over 80 KGs Mens Kumite
Mike Hart 3rd Under 80 KGs Mens Kumite
Tim Smith 3rd Open Mens Kumite

TEAM EVENT

1st Canada
2nd Portugal
3rd England

By Dave Wilkins
Senior Squad Coach
Kazoku Kai International

Dave can be contacted on 0116 2704344
Or visit www.leicesterkarateclub.co.uk

Special note from sensei Derek Ridgway

I would personally like to thank all the squad who went to Canada and did so well. They really flew the flag for Kazoku Kai and i am very proud of them. A special thanks to sensei Tim Smith and squad coach sensei Dave Wilkins without their guidance and support the trip would have not happened. Last but certainly not least i would personally like to thank our sponsors [Linekers](#) and the [Star of India](#) again we are deeply gratefull for all your support.