



Wednesday May 27, 2009

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Competitors to battle in series, nationals across York Region

Sports

May 26, 2009 09:48 AM

Sanshou, anyone?

By MICHAEL HAYAKAWA

You've probably heard of the martial art discipline of wushu.

Canada has fared well on the international stage in the routine, or non-combative elements, side of the sport.

But with the GTA hosting the 10th World Wushu Championships at the Ricoh Coliseum from Oct. 24 to 29 for the first time, there's another facet of the sport Alan Tang would like to see Canada embrace.

It's sanshou, which focuses on the full combative side and includes the elements of striking, kicking and throwing.

To enhance sanshou's profile and fuel enthusiasm for the worlds, Tang is hosting a series of matches in York Region over the next few months starting next weekend.

The Sanshou Qualifier Series will begin Saturday and Sunday at the Magna Centre in Newmarket and then hit Markham Centennial Arena June 6 and 7, Richmond Hill's Elgin Barrow Arena June 20 and 21 and the Magna Centre July 18 and 19.

The series will culminate with the national championships at the Magna Centre Aug. 15 and 16.

"We want to educate people about the safety elements of the sport along with the different rules and regulations," said Tang, who was national team coach the last three years.

"We also want to give people who are already in sanshou an opportunity to get practice in preparation for the world championships."

The series includes semi-contact divisions for competitors ages 15 to 35 with some background in martial arts and a full-contact section for those aged 18 to 35 already familiar with sanshou.

"It's a sport anybody is able to participate in," he said.

"In Canada, we have a lot of good martial artists. What you're doing is taking martial artists from different backgrounds and showing them a different set of rules and educating them about the aspects of sanshou."

The towns of Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Markham have been a major help in promoting the events.

"So far, the response we've had to our events has been incredible. It's what we expected," Tang said.

You can enter one or any of the events. Competitors accumulate points with the hope of winning their weight class title in the series championship.

The event in Richmond Hill will also serve as a qualifier for the Quebec provincial team.

"This gives competitors a chance to practise and experience the sport," he said.

The national championships will be geared for full contact competitors and showcase all provincial team qualifiers from across Canada. The Canadian team headed for the worlds will be selected at the nationals.

While Tang is excited with the prospects of staging his events in York Region this year, he's already looking ahead to next year when his series will take place in other cities across Canada.

"We hope to have a national sanshou series next year. This is the start of something big," he said.



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Ali Chowdhary (left) steps back from a lunge by opponent Brian Montgomery in the heavyweight 85-plus kg category during Saturday's provincial qualifier event, held at Elgin Barrow Arena. Wushu Canada plans several tournaments this spring and summer in preparation for the Canadian Championship in Newmarket in August.

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Admission to the qualifier events is \$8 at the door. For the national championship in Newmarket, admission is \$25.

For more on wushu and the upcoming provincial qualifiers and world championship, visit www.wushucanada.com or www.10THWWC.com



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