

Local Tae Kwon Do instructor wins gold at world competition

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As if martial arts students in Collinsville did not have enough reason to admire their instructor, four medals - three gold and one silver – in international competition should do the trick.

Steve McArther, owner of McArther's Tae Kwon Do & Fitness in Collinsville, competed April 3 in Athens, Greece, in the Olympic Tae Kwon Do event. Out of five competitions, McArther brought home four medals.



McArther won gold medals in Olympic Tae Kwon Do Sparring, Korean Forms, Division 35 and older, and in Open Forms - division 35 to 45. He earned a silver medal in Tae Kwon De Forms in the 18- and-older age division.

"I did all my events in a matter of about four hours, back to back, he said. "I didn't get to see a lot of the other competitions."

McArther said the trip to Greece was a dream come true beyond earning the top medals.

"We got there early and spent a few days touring Athens. We saw a lot of ruins, a lot of history and Greek mythology," he said. "One of the highlights was that I got to witness the lighting of the torch in Athens.

"They brought the flame from Olympia, and lit the cauldron torch there and then actually transferred the flame to the city of Athens," he said. "Now it's touring from that one flame all over Greece. Then, of course, it will be used to light the Olympic flame to start the games."

McArther said the setting for the torch-lighting ceremony was particularly impressive.

"That was a pretty amazing thing to watch, to witness," he said. "It was a pretty formal ceremony, and we stood in the Olympic stadium that was built in 1896. It was a crowd of about 30,000 people, and it was all marble, every seat was marble. It was incredible."

McArther said that the martial arts competition drew thousands of competitors from all over the world. The U.S. team numbered about 150 ranging in age from teenagers to seniors.

The athlete, who has been competing for more than 20 years, said the level of competition was the toughest he has ever faced.

"I was very surprised. I was amazed at how strong the competition was. People that were there were at the top of their game, no doubt about it," he said.

"The U.S. team did very, very well. We were probably the stiffest competition overall. It was pretty impressive how well we did."

McArther said the medals he won are being mounted and will hang in his martial arts training school. He hopes his success will be an encouragement to his students.

"I was able to show that at my age - I'm 35, and I'm pushing the edge of international competition - that people can follow their dreams and still compete," he said. "My students hopefully will be able someday to experience the same level of competition, and move out of local, state and even national level. It's a whole new path and level I can offer my students."

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