

United States Martial Arts Association

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Personal Touch in Martial Arts Promotions

Phil Porter, the founder of the USMAA, wrote about the unfairness of martial arts promotions in the United States years ago. The USMAA is dedicated to provide a means for all martial artists to receive appropriate rank based skills, dedication, and years of experience. The USMAA has developed examination boards of high ranking martial arts with decades of experience to evaluate 5th Dan and above. Independent martial artists and martial arts teachers are encouraged to contact the Regional, Style Boards, or National USMAA leaders and discuss our process for evaluating and issuing certification of fair rank.

The standard in the orient for most martial arts is teachers are a minimum of 5th degree black belt, some arts are 6th degree black belt. We have seen many teachers in the United States that are still ranked at 2nd or 3rd degree black belt after 10 or 20 years of teaching. The standard in the orient for black belt promotions is eligibility after an equal number of years of training or teaching equal to the current belt level. There are special considerations for promotions above 6th degree. Dedication, knowledge, and skill level is a large part of that evaluation. Not all martial arts styles use the same testing criteria. The USMAA has created examination boards comprised of senior martial artists experienced in the style they evaluate. We have published standards for promotion so everyone participates in a fair and equitable promotion system.

Through the past decades it has not been uncommon for oriental martial artists to board a plane on their way to America as a 2nd or 3rd degree black belt and arrive in America as a 7th degree black belt or Grandmaster. We have many martial artists in this country that have been practicing and teaching longer, have better skills, and were dedicated to the arts long before these self defined masters. The numbers of National Grand Champions arriving from foreign countries have far exceeded the number of championship competitions ever held. Over the past 70 years, remember belt ranks are only about 100 years old, the martial arts has become an international art no longer the property of a few oriental nations. There are thousands of dedicated martial artists throughout the world today that have studied the arts for 40 or 50 years and deserve the appropriate recognition for their work and dedication to the arts. There are martial artists in many countries today that began their martial arts training as teens, and even pre-teens, that have many decades of training and teaching. Their skill levels and dedication to the arts is equal to anyone in any country. It is not uncommon to see American and European teams dominate international competitions in the past few decades.

Phil Porter, the USMAA founder, wrote an article years ago describing the dilemma of martial arts in America. He described thousands of Judoka at 6th Degree Black Belt in Japan under the age of 30. While it was common for teachers with 30 years of experience outside the Orient to still be 2nd and 3rd Degree Black Belts, a real injustice. This is an

unacceptable state of the martial arts. The USMAA has been hard at work for many years to correct this unfairness. O'Sensei Porter was clear that a perfect promotion system was not attainable, but an equitable and honest standard is. The USMAA will maintain this goal of fairness and equitability.

We have seen politics in associations and organizations as a major force of ranking martial artists. Politics is another unacceptable standard for promotions. Martial Artists must be evaluated based on dedication to the arts, knowledge, skills, and teaching ability. It is our intent to provide fair standards to ensure fair ranking for all martial artists. The association has developed regional and style based leaders responsible to support fair and equitable promotions. Our Martial Art Style Examination Boards will use equitable guidelines so all martial artists are evaluated by published standards of the USMAA.

If you have not been treated fairly or have been teaching independently and do not have a Sensei to evaluate and promote you to a fair rank we encourage you to contact the association leaders for your region, martial arts style, or the national headquarters. Our leaders will work with you so you can receive a fair evaluation and certification.

The USMAA will continue the tradition of the Sensei system that ensures a personal touch.

In Service and Friendship,

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