



11. Medal Winning Forms

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Forms, patterns, tul, by what ever name you call them they offer an exciting element to Taekwondo tournament competition. As a judge at AAU Taekwondo tournaments, I know what a great pleasure it is to see a crisp, powerful medal winning form. If you are nervously awaiting your first tournament competition, or are a seasoned medal winner, here are some tips to help you enjoy the experience and hopefully bring home the gold.

First, lets look at what the judges are looking for. In AAU Taekwondo tournaments we welcome a wide variety of traditional Taekwondo forms including ITF, ATA, WTF, and TSD/MDK forms. This variety means that the judges may not themselves practice the form that is being performed before them. So, how do they judge it? By using criteria which the AAU considers common to all these forms. These criteria are: beauty, grace, rhythm, focus, power and technique. Now that you know what the judges are looking for lets take a closer look at how the scoring system works.

Here's a hypothetical situation. A competitor has performed their form and the five judges have presented their scores. First, the high and low scores are dropped, and then the three remaining scores are totaled. If those scores were 8.7, 8.9 and 8.8. they would add up to a total 26.4. After dropping the high and low scores from the next competitor their three remaining scores are 8.4, 8.5 and 8.5 and add up to a total of 25.4. If there were only two competitors we now know who would win the gold medal and who would win the silver medal. When do they use the high and low scores? In the case of a tie, first the low score is added back in and if the score is still tied then the high score is added back in.

Here are some tips for how you, the motivated and enthusiastic competitor, can maximize your score.

Enthusiasm - This definitely get you off on the right foot. When your name is called out and you smartly acknowledge, respectfully bow and present yourself to the judges, this sets a tone that alerts the judges that there is a motivated competitor coming.

Power - Unlike in class where you might be expected to punch and kick for an hour or two, the chances are that you will only have to do one pattern that lasts a couple of minutes. There is no reason to save yourself for later. Let it all out, while remaining in control, and really show you have the power to make each punch and kick count.

Don't Race Through The Form - Really showcase that you know each move. Don't race through the form just to get it over with. If there are parts of the form where you feel you are weak, focus your training on improving them rather than just trying to get past the weak spots quickly.

Learn The Meaning of The Moves - The more you understand the purpose behind the moves the easier it is to perform them correctly. Learning the intended target and the purpose of each move helps you bring "realism" to your form.

Enjoy Yourself - Remember why your there; to enjoy a fun day of competition, to challenge yourself, and win or lose, to have a good time meeting and competing with other martial artists. It's not life or death. So, enjoy the experience and use those stomach butterflies productively; to raise your intensity level.

Don't be Afraid of the Judges - Who are the judges? They're people like you who enjoy Taekwondo. They love to watch a crisp powerful form and are rooting for each competitor to their best. Don't be intimidated if they sit their stone-faced, they are doing it



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out of respect for you. You wouldn't want them laughing and joking up there now would you?

Don't Lose Your Energy If You Make a Mistake - Nobody's perfect. Some days are good days and some we try to forget. If you make a mistake keep going. Remember, 7.0 is the lowest score for a completed form. If you throw in the towel after a mistake your score drops to 0.0. Everyone makes mistakes even your competitor. So, just because you kicked at the wrong time don't let it phase you. Show the judges all the rest of the things you can do well.

Don't Be Discouraged if You Have to Start Over - O.K., so you had a mental block and momentarily lost your place and you just cannot continue. It's all right. If you are a colored belt at an AAU tournament you can start again. Just bow to the judges and ask if you can start over. Your second chance will now be scored fresh without consideration of the first attempt. After the judges have totaled your score they deduct two-tenths (.2) of a point from the total score (not from each judges score!). Thus, a 27.5 only drops to a 27.3. Give your second try all the enthusiasm and effort of your first try and you may still win the gold!

Your Competitors Are Your Peers - Feel intimidated by the black belt with 6 gold stripes standing in the lobby? Don't worry, because your competing against your same age and belt level. Your competitors are people just like you with a similar experience level. They're nervous too!

Make Sure You are Doing the Correct Form for Your Rank - AAU tournaments are quite specific which patterns go with each belt color. Make sure you check this year's handbook. Don't get disqualified because the pattern you did doesn't conform to the AAU rule book. "My instructor always teaches Choong- Moo or Pal Gwe 8 to yellow belts," doesn't matter. The rules specify which patterns go with each belt color and "No Variation Will be Accepted." This is your assurance that you are competing on a level playing field and that someone doesn't get up and do a black belt form as a yellow belt.

Practice! Practice! - Think how confident you'll be when that form you practiced all winter really shines at the spring tournament.

Don't be Disheartened if You Don't Win a Medal - Many people don't realize that the scores are usually very close. If 27.9, 27.6, and 27.5 win gold, silver and bronze, there are probably plenty of scores that just finished out of the money. Your 26.9 means you are probably average for your level. The people that won were above average that day. So, don't feel discouraged, just work hard to be above average next time!

Lastly, here is a little secret from one competitor to another. Everything you did to improve your forms for the tournament doesn't go away. Win or lose you've made yourself better and that sticks with you long after the tournament is over. That's the ultimate gold medal!