

# Taking it to the world – gold in Puerto Rico

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This has not been an easy article to write. How do you adequately describe in words the feeling of seeing a group of talented young New Zealanders that you have coached, pushed to their limits, and come to know over a long period of time, achieve their dream? It's challenging. But here goes...

The 2002 New Zealand Junior Team departed from Auckland on the evening of Thursday November 28<sup>th</sup> 2002, bound for Puerto Rico via Los Angeles and Florida. Puerto Rico is a small island nation in the Carribean Sea. That means it is very very HOT. While we there, the temperatures rose above 40°C every day, which meant that temperatures in the tournament venue were closer to 50°C. Fortunately we had five weeks of heat simulation training before we departed, which stood them in good stead. Not one of the team complained of problems competing in the heat.

The journey to Puerto Rico was long and tiring. We flew 12 hours to LA and arrived on Thanksgiving Day. Our overnight stopover in LA enabled us to have a traditional Thanksgiving Day dinner at the hotel. (If there's one thing Americans know how to cook, its turkey!) In order to work up an appetite, the team was put through their first training session of the journey in the hotel grounds, followed by a swimming pool session to cool off.

The following morning we caught a very early flight to Puerto Rico. We rose at about 4.30am, flew six hours to Florida, then three hours Puerto Rico. We arrived that evening in San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico (a full day travelling). We were met at the airport by Mr Luis Gato Gato (IV dan) from Puerto Rico. Mr Gato Gato was one of the tournament organisers and helped our team a great deal. By the end of the tournament Gato (as he liked to be known) had become a firm friend of the team and ITF NZ Taekwon-Do. We hope to see him and his family in New Zealand sometime.

The first thing to hit everyone when we stepped out of the air conditioned airport was the heat. It struck like a blast furnace. We spent two days acclimatising in San



Juan, training each day in a beachside park. We were still able to fit in some sightseeing around wonderful Old San Juan (a world heritage site, and justifiably so). During these two days, the team's mental focus shifted to the competition. We talked each day about what was ahead and the need to remember that we were in Puerto Rico "on business".



On 1 December we travelled two hours on a bus to our accommodation in the city of Ponce on the southern side of Puerto Rico. We had two days to wait before the competition began. The weigh-in day came and went, and with a bit of sweat (well, a lot for some, eh Rose), the whole team made their weights. Mr McQuillan and I were quietly confident of the team's chances – they were very focused, determined and had great self belief. The first day confirmed our thoughts. Regan Diggelmann (one of the youngest in the team) was the first kiwi in action, in I dan patterns. He put on a personal best performance. The result went his opponent's way, but Regan's professionalism and spirit on the floor set the scene for the rest of the team.

Enter Kyle Caldwell in special techniques. By now most people will know that Kyle won gold in this division. I was lucky enough to be on the floor with him during



his gold medal winning performances. The thing I will remember most about watching Kyle perform was the belief that grew in his eyes as he went from one technique to the next, flying and smashing the boards first attempt, at heights that others from around the world struggled to reach, let alone break. Perhaps the hardest part of the competition was that Kyle had to endure the agony of watching well over 30 competitors make their attempts after him before his gold medal was confirmed.

Later on the first day, Jessica and Roseanne Te Hau, and Harmony Moki competed in sparring. All three did themselves and New Zealand proud by giving as good as they got against far more experienced opponents. Harmony came away with a bronze medal. Roseanne simply destroyed her first opponent from the USA, who had no answer to Roseanne's speed and intensity. Roseanne's next match against Argentina was desperately close and deserved to be a final, such was the intensity and skill shown. Unfortunately the match was soured by sub-standard officiating (something which became all too common during the tournament), and this affected the outcome to the extent that Roseanne lost the match. The Argentinian coach said afterward that even though his competitor eventually won the gold medal, Roseanne was the best in the division.

Also on the first day Mark Trotter triumphed in III dan patterns. Mark's were the best III dan patterns most people had seen at a world event, and his gold medal was just reward for many years of training and competing at the top level. His semi-final match against an Argentinian went right to the wire, with a playoff deciding who would progress to the final. The selected playoff pattern was Juche, and the Argentinian could not match Mark's technique, precision and balance. Neither could the American that Mark beat in the final.

After the first day, the remaining individual medals were won by Daniel Kerr and Nikki Galpin. Nikki won a bronze medal in special techniques, and was denied a higher placing only by a freak slip on the landing mat while performing the overhead kick. Her leg just touched the ground and the judges had no choice



but to deny the break. This was desperately unlucky for Nikki who had easily achieved the required heights for high kick and turning kick, and was in a three way battle for gold. Nikki's medal was a testament to her sheer hard work at training in New Zealand, and a quiet but fierce determination to succeed.

Being on the floor with Daniel Kerr during his victory in the power event was the most intense time I have ever had at a Taekwon-Do tournament. Many may have read the detail of his victory on the ITF NZ website, but in a nutshell Daniel and a Czech Republic competitor had to play off after the preliminary breaking as both were tied on full points. The Czech was a typical eastern European competitor – unemotional, tough-looking and extremely focused on winning. In the end Daniel's superior intensity and technique won the day and the gold medal. Daniel's victory was also a lesson on the vital importance of conditioning attacking tools for board breaking – the Czech failed the deciding technique because he had damaged his knifehand in a previous attempt.

Throughout the tournament all of New Zealand's competitors put in world class performances. Space prevents me from detailing the team's remaining individual and team event performances, but in

summary I can say that Daniel Thompson, Tonee Francis, Phillip Diggelmann, Sam Skinner, Robert Buddle, Nicole Kettings, and Anna Wintle all gave performances to make New Zealand proud in their individual and team events. Their efforts convinced every spectator that the standard of the whole New Zealand team was very high and on par with the leading countries in the world.

While the team was very successful at the tournament, we also had to take the bad with the good. I was quite disgusted with the level of officiating in Puerto Rico. The level of contact differed from ring to ring and from referee to referee, and the sparring matches were extremely stop-start because the referees took so long to decide what call they wanted to make after breaking the competitors. Also some of the referees always took the competitors back to the centre of the ring to restart, which negated any advantage a competitor may have gained by working an opponent into a corner.

Everyone who watched, regardless of their nationality, had great difficulty with the decision against Harmony Moki in her patterns match against Canada. A near perfect Juche by Harmony against a very mediocre Choong-Jang from Canada, and then fairly even performances of Hwa-Rang, made it extremely difficult to see how the judges decided Canada won. Phillip Diggelmann was robbed of victory in individual sparring against an opponent who spent most of the match running out of the ring. The male team sparring loss to Puerto Rico was also very hard to take, and made harder by the fact that the entire stadium (and several resting officials) believed that New Zealand had won.



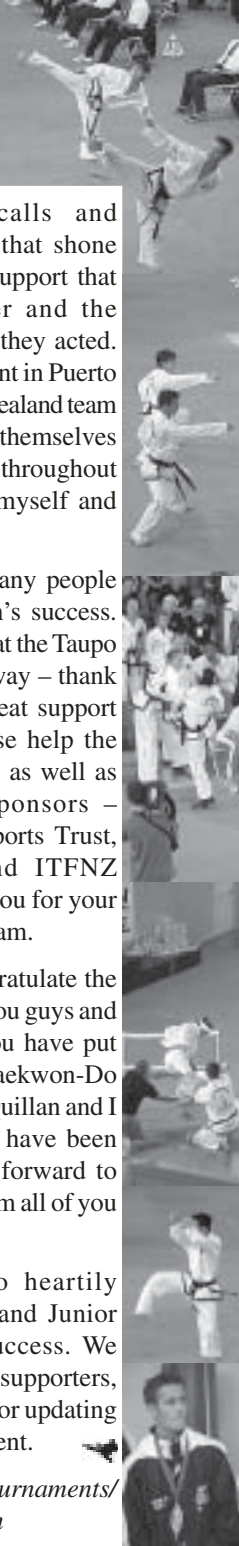
Through all the bad calls and disappointments one thing that shone through was the unity and support that the team gave each other and the composed manner in which they acted. The senior ITF officials present in Puerto Rico complimented the New Zealand team on the way they conducted themselves inside and outside of the ring throughout the event. This made both myself and Mr McQuillan very proud.

I would like to thank the many people who contributed to the team's success. To all the parents and helpers at the Taupo camps and while we were away – thank you so much for being a great support crew. Without your immense help the team could never have done as well as they did. To the team sponsors – Scottwood Trust, Oxford Sports Trust, Epsom New Zealand, and ITF NZ Taekwon-Do, we say thank you for your faith in and support of the team.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the team members themselves. You guys and gals were a class act and you have put NZ firmly amongst the top Taekwon-Do nations in the world. Mr McQuillan and I are proud and privileged to have been your coaches, and we look forward to seeing even greater things from all of you in future.

TKD Talk would like to heartily congratulate the New Zealand Junior Team for their fantastic success. We would also like to thank the supporters, the Webmaster and his team for updating us twice a day during the event.

<http://www.itfnz.org.nz/ref/tournaments/juniorworlds2002/index.htm>



**Gold Medals**

Kyle Caldwell - Individual Male Special Techniques  
Mark Trotter - Individual Male 3rd Dan Patterns  
Daniel Kerr - Individual Male Power

**Silver Medals**

Female Team - Special Techniques  
Male Team - Special Techniques

**Bronze Medals**

Nikki Galpin - Individual Female Special Techniques  
Harmony Moki - Individual Female Lightweight Sparring  
Female Team - Pattern  
Female Team – Sparring

**Team events**

Male: Tonee Francis, Phillip Diggelmann, Daniel Kerr, Kyle

Caldwell, Daniel Thompson, Mark Trotter

Female: Nikki Galpin, Roseanne TeHau, Harmony Moki, Jessica TeHau, Anna Wintle, Nicole Kettings

**The Junior World Championships Team**

Harmony Moki, Roseanne TeHau, Jessica TeHau, Nicole Kettings, Anna Wintle, Nikki Galpin, Mark Trotter, Daniel Kerr, Kyle Caldwell, Regan Diggelmann, Phillip Diggelmann, Sam Skinner, Tonee Francis, Robert Buddle, Daniel Thompson  
Coach, Steve McQuillan; Assistant Coach, Grant Eccles; Manager, Debbie Trotter

**Team Supporters**

Paul Trotter, Bruce Galpin, Judi Galpin, Glen Francis, Christopher Buddle, Andrew Niven, Greg Skinner, David Mills, Taryn Avery, Les Diggelmann, Vikki Diggelmann and Jodie Collins