

A long trip to bring home Gold, Silver, and Bronze

Written by By Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent
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The end of June was a busy time for Garcia's Judo Club as six students and their parents flew

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or drove to Spokane, Washington for the USA Judo National and International Junior Olympic Championships held in the convention center across the street from the Grand Hotel where the team stayed.

“The parents put a lot of effort towards this trip,” said Sensei Miguel Garcia. “We did a lot of fund raising and appreciate all who donated or bought our enchiladas which we offered for sale.”

The team weighed in on Thursday, June 15, with over 600 students of the art competing in the Nationals (on Friday) and the Internationals (on Sunday). There was a glitch in the registration process for six-year old Daniel Wagner when the person at the desk gave out the wrong weight category info and placed him in the wrong weight classification. That mistake caused the young man to forfeit his match, which greatly disappointed him. ‘Error by adult’ is often the cause of heartbreak for a lot of young competitors.

In the two days of competition, the Gallup team of six brought home seven medals: Kobe Bennett (17) and Shyanne Skeets both earned two golds in the two tournaments, while ten-year old Kyle Hollowhorn also placed first in the International games. Six-year old Daniel Wagner placed second in the Internationals and 14-year old Nancy Rodriguez placed third in the Sunday contest. Ten-year old Jocia Long fought hard but was unable to place in her class.

“With only six students competing, we did very well against tough competitors,” Garcia pointed out. “The fighting was very tough. The students battled fiercely and the Gallup club represented themselves well.”

Seven students had little time to reflect on Spokane as they headed to Albuquerque for the New Mexico Judo Games the following Saturday, June 24. Jocia Long, Kyle Hollowhorn, and four-year old Mercedes Wagner, in her first competition, all placed first. Kobe Bennett and eight-year old Jacob Yazzie placed second while Daniel Wagner was third. Eric Tsosie, in his first competition, fought hard but was unable to place.

Sensei Miguel A Garcia, has been practicing and teaching judo for 46 years. He studied in Japan and taught self-defense for women.

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“My dojo in Gallup has been open for going on six years now, and we have done very well.” Garcia was born in Gallup, graduating high school in 1971, and served two tours of duty in Vietnam, before heading off to Japan.

A second degree black belt, Garcia helped prepare his daughter as a wrestler for Gallup High where she competed against boys and girls in practice and did well in the state girls’ championships

“I’m very proud of my daughter, Duvien.” Garcia said. “She is married now with a daughter and son of her own, and is a beautiful person.”

By Tom Hartsock

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