

Garcia's Judo Club brings Arizona medals home to Gallup

Written by By Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent
Friday, 11 March 2016 09:49



Twenty teams from a huge geographic area met in Phoenix on February 26-27 for the 2016 Arizona State Judo Championships and all five of the students from Garcia's Judo Club in Gallup did well.

Nancy Rodriguez, a five-year veteran in training with Miguel Garcia and a past state champion more than once (three-state champ titles in 2013 and another in 2014), held on to her title for 2016 at this meet. Rodriguez will compete later this year in a Junior Olympics and International Championship in Irvine, TX.

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In the 8-10 Novice Girls class, the trio of Paige Kee, Jocia Long and Alyson Pinto finished 1-2-3, respectively. They will also be attending the Junior Olympics meet in Texas later this year.

In the Women's Light Heavy Novice class, Amanda Richardson took second place in her first tournament.

"There were about 170 players," said Garcia. "It took almost seven hours for everyone to finish."

That makes for a long day for players and teachers, not to mention the officials, and the spectators on hand got to observe young kids and adults in this discipline.

Garcia has trained quite a few champions and high-placers with his recent teaching, including Rudy Graham and Amber Johnson with wins in NM and Levi Saucedo with wins in AZ, all in 2013. In 2014, Noah Junzo, Shinasha Benally, and Enrique Diaz all won Arizona state titles in their classifications. A longer list of placers are also honored on the wall of the small studio that serves as the current arena and classroom for the students.

Another Gallup native, Mathew Graham, received his certification in December 2015 as the #1 Ranked National Master Athlete for that year. Mathew earned second place at the 2014 Sr. Nationals after winning state championships in 2013 in both Arizona and New Mexico. Graham is employed by the Gallup Police Department.

Garcia was also a GPD Officer and a military veteran, and has 35 plus years in instructing students in the fine arts of Judo.

Located above City Electric Shoe Shop in downtown Gallup, Garcia's Judo Club is open five days a week, offering classes to adults and kids, with private classes available for Women's Self Defense. Miguel may be reached at (505) 879-5641 for more info or on Face Book at Garcia's Judo Club.

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Adult hours are Monday and Wednesday from 6:30 - 9 pm. Kids are trained on Tuesday from 5:30 - 6:30, and from 5:30 - 7:30 on Thursday, and also on Saturday from 10 - Noon.

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