

THE 1st EUROPEAN TAIJIQUAN COMPETITIONS

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The Second European Taijiquan competitions organised on behalf of the Taijiquan and Qigong Federation for Europe, will be held in Vejle, Denmark, 18th to 20th October 2002. Now is a good time to look back to the First European Taijiquan competitions which took place in Utrecht, Netherlands, 17th to 19th November 2000.

Competitors came from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kroatia, Netherlands, Russia, Scotland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. The British competitors excelled themselves, but it was sad to see that only two British club organisations were represented at such a major European event. Hopefully for 2002 British team spirit will overcome some of the traditional apathy that some organisations seem to be stuck in.

I was there both as judge and spectator, with no organisational responsibilities, so my comments are coloured by this.

The range of competition categories was impressive. As well as hand and weapon forms categories for every style, there were also two person and group, hand and weapon sets categories. In addition to Taijiquan events, there were categories for Bagua and Xingyi. Many of the performers were of the highest standard, and a pleasure to watch. We were also treated to a charming Taijiquan display to music by Russian children who had had an arduous journey to reach us.

For those of you who are interested in forms judging, 10 points were awarded for each of the following 10 criteria: posture, stance, discrimination between yin and yang, coordination of movement, smooth transition from one technique to the other, intention and focus, balance in turning and stepping, relaxation and gentleness, aesthetic appearance, martial expression. Weapons forms were judged on all of the 10 preceding qualities, with the addition of 3 further criteria: harmony between body and weapon, control over the weapon and projection through the weapon. Judges had to sign each judging form they completed so that they could be easily identified in case of appeals - and there were appeals which were admirably handled by the Appeals Committee. Needless to say, coming from so many different backgrounds, we judges had disagreements on everything, from which way the competitors should face to why were some judges finding it necessary to influence other judges, and calm composure in action was a quality some of us lacked. But problems were overcome and we all settled down to get on with our job.

The Pushing Hands started off with extremely controversial refereeing, and at certain points the rules had to be clarified. Referees and competitors lost their cool at times, and many hard lessons were learned. Hopefully with this valuable experience, the referees will be clear on every rule and nuance for 2002. If you wish to see the competition results from 2000, log on to www.tcfe.org, where they are posted in full. Four British competitors who did especially well in Pushing Hands against tough competition were Sami Berik, Albert St. Catherine, Jason Fallows and Rachel Salih.

While the competitions were underway in the main hall, there were also seminars in the internal arts being given in other halls. Unfortunately I didn't have a chance to attend any of these, but heard good reports from those who had.

There were so many different nationalities, some of whom had little or no knowledge of English, and it was a credit to all concerned that there were so few misunderstandings. Epi van de Pol, the President of the TCFE at that time, certainly had his hands full and dealt with every dispute with equanimity. I found the mix of nationalities exciting and heartwarming. It was wonderful to touch base with so many people from different cultures. I would encourage anyone to support the British contingent, reach out a little and attend 2002.

To find out more, check the following websites:

www.taichiunion.com

www.tcfe.org

www.taichiskole.dk

