

San Jose Sports Authority News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Judo and Taekwondo Olympic Trials come to San Jose on Saturday

SAN JOSE (May 28, 2004) – The San Jose State Event Center will be the site of an important first Saturday, June 5, when it hosts the combined U.S. Olympic Team Trials in Judo and Taekwondo.

Never before have two sports joined together in the United States to choose their Olympic teams in a joint event, and in doing so judo and taekwondo have returned to their American roots in San Jose. The San Jose area was home to the movements that culminated in Olympic recognition of both judo and taekwondo, and it produced some of the sports' most influential coaches as well as several of their most accomplished and honored athletes.

The trials – with preliminaries at 1 p.m. and finals at 7 p.m. – will fill 11 berths on the U.S. Judo Team and two berths on the U.S. Taekwondo Team for the Athens Olympic Games in August. Gold medal favorite Ronda Rousey of Santa Monica will be one of the featured judo athletes; she'll be going for an Olympic berth in the 63-kilogram weight class against four contenders including Heidi Bartkowski of San Jose. Competing for taekwondo berths will be defending Olympic champion Steven Lopez of Sugar Land, Texas in men's welterweight and his sister, Diana Lopez, in women's featherweight.

Ten of the athletes contending for spots on the U.S. Judo Team are from San Jose or the immediate surrounding area, and half a dozen of them are products of the spectacularly successful judo program at San Jose State University, which has won more national titles than any other school. (A full listing of local athletes is at the bottom of this release.)

"If it wasn't for the Mecca of judo here, I don't think I would have made the Olympic team," says four-time Olympian Mike Swain, a local judo coach and SJS graduate who won a bronze medal in the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

Swain was coached by Yosh Uchida at San Jose State. Uchida started at the school as a student judo coach in 1940 and 13 years later helped develop the weight classification system, later adapted by taekwondo, that helped judo win official

recognition by international sports governing bodies and paved the way for inclusion in the Olympics. When judo was added to the Olympics in the 1964 Tokyo Games, Uchida was the first U.S. coach, and two of his SJS athletes in Tokyo were Ben Nighthorse Campbell, now U.S. Senator from Colorado, and Paul Maruyama, a retired U.S. Air Force colonel who coached the 1980 and '84 U.S. Olympic Teams.

Swain is one of three SJS athletes to have won Olympic judo medals along with silver medalist Bobby Berland (1984 Los Angeles) and Kevin Asano (1988 Seoul).

On the taekwondo side, San Jose's Ernie Reyes, a bronze medalist in the 1977 World Taekwondo Championships, was instrumental in winning Olympic acceptance for his sport, and he trained another San Jose resident, Diane Murray, who won a silver medal in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. Dana Hee of nearby Redwood City won a gold medal in the 1988 Seoul Games, the first to include taekwondo.

"We were in the forefront establishing taekwondo in the Olympics," Reyes said.

Event tickets are available by phone at Ticketmaster outlets or online at www.ticketmaster.com. Discounted group tickets (15 or more) for martial arts schools or clubs can be obtained by calling (408) 288-2932.

The U.S. Olympic Team Trials in Judo and Taekwondo are among more than 120 sports events brought to the city by the San Jose Sports Authority. Visit our website at www.sjsa.org.

San Jose area athletes (all in judo):

Chuck Jefferson, 73kg, #3 seed
Jose Bencosme, 73kg, #5 seed
Heidi Bartkowski, 63kg, #5 seed
Tetsu Okano, 81kg, #3 seed
John Serbin, +100kg, #4 seed
Mike Barnes, 100kg, #3 seed
Sayaka Matsumoto, 48kg, #1 seed (Richmond, Calif.)
Lisa Uemura, 78kg, #4 seed (Salinas, Calif.)
Ellen Wilson, 57 kg, #1 seed (formerly from Salinas)
Charlee Minkin, 52kg, #1 seed (formerly from Half Moon Bay, Calif.)