

Taekwon-Do thesis for 4th Degree Black
Belt testing

Umpiring Courses

An alternative approach for
conducting iTKD C grade
courses

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Umpiring courses – an alternative approach for conducting iTKD C grade courses.

Traditionally when looking at gaining an umpiring qualification, a student would need to attend an umpiring course. The course would cover the rules at a tournament, as well as procedures, scoring of patterns and sparring and so on. The courses would often involve the facilitator standing up in front of the students and talking to them about the areas of tournament just mentioned. What this essay will cover is an alternative approach to the way umpires courses at the C Grade level could be ran. C Grade courses are open to anybody (student or not) and cover the tournament disciplines of patterns and sparring. We will cover firstly the situation with umpires' qualifications as well as the growing demand on umpires. Then we will touch upon how this alternative approach to umpires courses works and how it differs from the traditional approach; thirdly how the alternative approach can be more beneficial or effective for the student wishing to improve their performance as a tournament official. Finally, how effective this approach has proven to be and the feedback received from students undergoing this approach to umpiring will be addressed.

In New Zealand with Taekwon-Do, there was a change in the structure and the branding a few years ago. This brought about changes to various committees (or Advisory Groups) one of which was the Tournament Advisory Group. ITFNZ (now iTKD) had umpires courses running for those who wanted to gain an umpiring qualification so they could officiate at a tournament. The grades at that time were C, B, A grade and for the top officials in New Zealand, P (Premier) grade. The grading system was that a student would acquire a C grade by attending an umpiring course. A and B grades would be attained by a student being assessed at either a tournament or an umpiring course by a member of the Tournament Committee, and if their performance was satisfactory they would advance to the next level. Premier level would be determined by the Tournament Committee if they thought a student was capable of officiating at tournament across all disciplines (patterns, sparring, power and specialty), and at all levels (regional, national and international). Since the restructuring and the rebranding, the Tournament Advisory Group (TAG) changed the system of the umpires grades: A,B,C and D. All grades are to be attained by assessment, however a student needs to be at a certain rank to undergo assessment. A grades need to be 4th Degree and above, B grades 1st to 3rd Degree, C grades 10th to 1st Kup and D grades who are without rank (parents, for example). In recent years there have been more tournaments added to the Taekwon-Do calendar. The addition of Round Robin as well as Junior Belt tournaments and so forth have made it so there is a higher demand on existing officials to commit which would make these tournaments run effectively and efficiently. The expectation on officials to commit to every tournament in the Taekwon-Do calendar year has proven to be too much of an ask for most. So what is the solution to this problem, do we look at cutting back on the number of tournaments? Perhaps even limiting the number of competitors for tournaments; or producing more officials and giving them more exposure to a tournament situation?

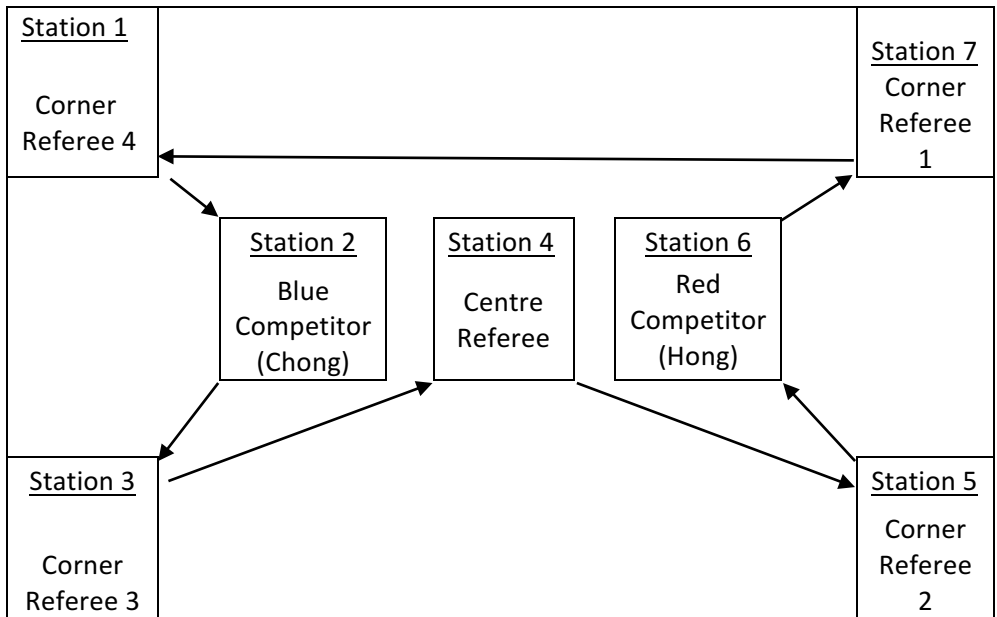
I can always remember in my first Dan grading my examiners Master McPhail and Mr Rimmer (now Master), talking about the goal of ITFNZ to have as many as ten thousand students, if memory serves by the year 2015. As has often been the case with Taekwon-Do in New Zealand, a majority of students for various reasons choose not to participate in tournaments. With this in mind, we would have the best part of ten thousand students not competing in either patterns, sparring, power or specialty. As mentioned earlier, the tournament side of Taekwon-Do in New Zealand is growing. The

tournament experience it is fair to say is foreign to many however, it is becoming whether we like it or not more a part of our Taekwon-Do. So if students don't wish to be part of the competitive side of Taekwon-Do what will happen with them?

Speaking for myself, I have over the years entered into the occasional tournament not having a great deal of success either I might add. With this I thought not to worry too much about competing at tournaments but rather focussing on progressing through the coloured belt ranks and ultimately achieving black belt status. This maintained my focus in Taekwon-Do for a number of years – it took me seven years to reach Black belt although about for four of those years Taekwon-Do was put on the back burner due to having other commitments (predominantly work and study) at the time. Once I had attained rank as a first degree black belt, the opportunity to progress to second degree would be at least eighteen months away, there needed to be something else I could set attention towards other than first degree syllabus at the time. About a month or so after grading, there was umpiring course happening in Levin. There was quite a number of Central Districts students that would attend this course as well, and with a good group of people to go with as well as learning how patterns and sparring were scored at a tournament, the experience gave me motivation towards another area of Taekwon-Do completely new to me – tournament umpiring. This area of Taekwon-Do I had developed a leaning towards, and I was often attending tournaments as an official which I really enjoyed doing. I would also attend other umpiring courses when they came along in the Taekwon-Do calendar with the willingness to learn more and develop my skills further as an official. In 2009 I was offered a position on the ITF NZ Tournament Committee (now called the Tournament Advisory Group or TAG); this enabled me to assist with conducting umpire courses as well as attending them.

Over the past several years that I have umpired at tournaments, there have been a number of people that have attended umpire courses and gained their qualification but have either been a little reluctant to use it if at all. It's always been my opinion that we can never have enough officials at a tournament and the more officials there are, the more efficiently the tournament is likely to be run. I also believe there is nothing worse than having a tournament run to six or seven o'clock at night. So really the big question is how do we get more people interested in umpiring at tournaments? Earlier this year I conducted an umpires course which was different from the way umpires courses as I knew them would normally be ran. The umpire's courses I have assisted with have been where the people in attendance would sit down with a pen and paper as well as a copy of the current rules and be taken through it all step by step. I and the person I'm assisting would field any questions the students may have. The way I ran the C grade course involved people being in the ring centre refereeing two people sparring with four people in each corner of the ring keeping score. Each individual would spar for two rounds consisting of one minute per round, after this each person would then rotate around the ring at a designated station. Every station would have a number one to seven:

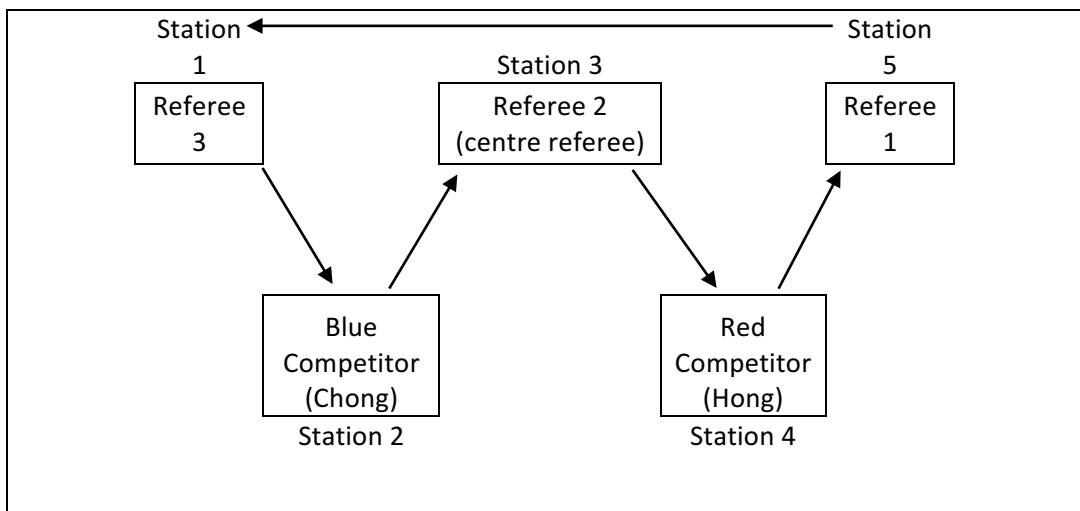
1. Corner referee number four
2. Blue competitor (Chong)
3. Corner referee number three
4. Centre referee
5. Corner referee number two
6. Red competitor (Hong)
7. Corner referee number one



The patterns diagram would be of similar format where the patterns judges (or umpires) would rotate with the pattern competitors only this time there are five stations:

1. Patterns referee three
2. Blue competitor (Chong)
3. Centre referee
4. Red competitor (Hong)
5. Patterns referee one

Here each competitor would do two patterns each as they would in a tournament situation. After this everyone would rotate around, station one would move to station two, two to three and so forth; station five would of course move to station one.

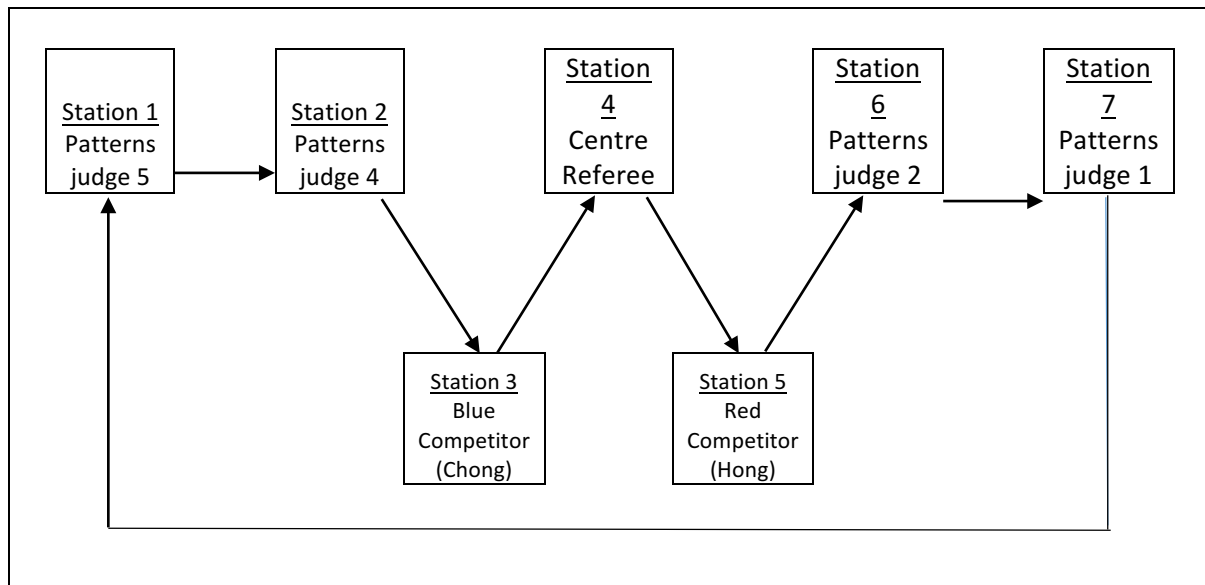


With this approach the students spend more time getting experience with assessing patterns as well as performing patterns themselves.

In years gone by, a student would attend an umpiring course and come away with the qualification in order to officiate at a tournament. Often the student wouldn't feel confident to officiate at a tournament and a common reason for this is they have never done it before. In many cases, the student wouldn't have much of an opportunity to put into practice what they have learnt other than at an actual tournament. As mentioned earlier there are more and more tournaments in the Taekwon-Do calendar year which does give the student more opportunity to practice their officiating however if their skills aren't up to a required standard the likelihood of making mistakes increases. It has been seen in tournaments gone by that making a mistake in officiating can be quite costly. With the C grade course, the disciplines covered are patterns and sparring. Here, the day would be split in half with the morning session dedicated to patterns and the afternoon session dedicated to sparring or vice versa. Your typical day for a course would begin at nine in the morning and finish at four in the afternoon, with this there would be three hours dedicated to each discipline with an hours break for lunch in between (the day may vary with time periods). Over three hours there would be a large number of bouts (again numbers will vary) giving the student plenty of opportunity to gain confidence with scoring patterns and refereeing sparring.

Officiating, like patterns, sparring, self-defence or anything that makes up Taekwon-Do requires practice. To me it seems unrealistic for a Taekwon-Do student to be a competent patterns judge or sparring umpire after receiving instruction of the tournament procedures for these disciplines (patterns and sparring) only once. Would any student of Taekwon-Do enter into a tournament after performing their graded pattern only once or doing one bout of sparring with an opponent? I'm hoping the answer to this question would be no, however it may have happened in the past I really can't be too sure. One thing I can be sure of though is that a student couldn't possibly master any discipline of Taekwon-Do after doing it only once. General Choi states that to achieve something, whether it is a higher degree or the perfection of a technique, one must set their goal then constantly persevere. One of the most important secrets in becoming a leader of Taekwon-Do is to overcome every difficulty by perseverance. All learning requires some form of rehearsal (Schmidt and Wrisberg, 2000). Rehearsal is defined by the Collins English Dictionary as a practice performance of a play, concert etc. Schmidt and Wrisberg continue by saying the very concept of a skill is based on the assumption that some period of practice or rehearsal precedes task mastery (p.216). When we look at the diagram above used in the example of sparring, a student would receive practice or rehearsal of the skill centre referee once, competitor twice, and corner referee four times before they have done an entire circuit of each of the stations. In years gone by at tournaments, there would be the issue of a ring being unable to get underway or continue due to there being a lack of officials. In most cases, the ring council would be lacking a corner referee as opposed to a centre referee or jury president. With this in mind it would make sense to give the student more rehearsal with corner refereeing as this is the position with officiating that has the largest demand in terms of numbers. This is also coupled with the idea that the corner referee position is often the first officiating role undertaken when people start out with officiating (perhaps with the exception of jury assistant). Looking at the diagram for patterns judging, the student would perform patterns twice and judge three times before completing the full circuit. When I took the umpires course with this approach earlier this year, I found there were a number of the students that were giving scores of nine, nine and a half or even ten out of a possible ten for a patterns score

in a competition situation. In previous umpiring courses I have attended (as well as competitions), if an official was to give a five (from a possible five) for technical content under the old scoring system, it would be assumed the patterns judge believed the pattern was technically perfect. With the new system of scoring if a ten was given to a student, it's assumed that the pattern was not only technically perfect but in every other aspect as well. Personally, I have never seen or heard of a student performing a pattern that is technically perfect or has no mistakes. Going on this way of thinking, the student undergoing practice with patterns judging will need a great deal of this as well as guidance from the course facilitator. An idea for future courses may be that there be two competitors with five judges as instead of three, the way this would work is shown below.



This idea would give the student more opportunity to assess patterns and works well in terms of numbers as the same amount of people are required for this as there is with the approach for officiating sparring.

This alternative approach to teaching umpiring has also a practical aspect to it in the sense that it can also be done during a training session. Prior to running the umpires course earlier this year, I ran a session of officiating with the sparring aspect at the club I train at. Fortunately, I was able to buddy up our junior members with a senior (somebody familiar with officiating). The training admittedly was a dress rehearsal to how I'd run the umpiring course. The students found it very beneficial as it gave the senior members a mentoring role when they were working with their juniors; and for the juniors, it gave them an idea of what to expect when it came to officiating or even competing at tournaments. For the more competitive students, it gave them an idea of what to look for when points were scored in sparring. If we use the composition of Taekwon-Do we see that it's made up of fundamental movements, dallyon, patterns, sparring and self-defence. When we look at sparring, General Choi classes this as simulated combat. The approach to teaching officiating at tournaments when we look at sparring in particular, it involves a more simulated (or realistic) situation the students would experience at an actual tournament. Here, the student can learn the material and practice the officiating at the course and then practice what they have learnt at a training session at club.

The feedback I received from the people in attendance to the umpiring course I ran earlier in the year was very positive. The students felt they gained a more hands on and interactive experience with umpiring and they had a lot of fun while doing it. Furthermore some students would cringe at the idea of having to attend an umpire's course. With the expectation of each club producing an umpire every certain amount of competitors at Nationals for example, these students would eventually have to bite the bullet and do one. Some would find them boring and not very productive. These students when looking at Fleming's Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic (VAK) model, could be classed as more kinaesthetic learners who according to Fleming, tend to learn through moving, doing and touching (2001). This style of learning with its more hands on approach would most probably be more suitable to this kind of student. The more traditional approach to would tend to be more appealing to the Visual and Auditory learners. The visual learners learn through seeing and create mental images to retain information; and the auditory learners tend to learn through listening and thinking in words rather than pictures (Fleming, 2001). This kinaesthetic learning approach worked well for the students I had in attendance of the course and training I ran earlier this year. I have in my fourteen years of Taekwon-Do come across students who dislike the idea of getting into the ring and sparring, as well as the students who don't particularly enjoy getting up in front of a group of people and performing patterns. With this taken into account, this different approach to umpiring is not for everyone.

To conclude, it has been outlined how this different approach to facilitating umpires courses at the C grade level works. It has been indicated how the hands on approach can be more effective with the student who learns better by doing, however not so effective with the visual or auditory learner. The increase in demand for umpires due to the fact there are more tournament in the Taekwon-Do calendar year than ever before has been acknowledged. With this alternative approach to umpiring courses, the idea that this application can be used during a training session at club gives it a more practical aspect with the hope that students can practice what they have learnt and through rehearsal can become better and more confident with officiating thusly, increasing the level of quantity and quality of umpires at tournaments. This approach however is by no means better or worse than the traditional way of conducting umpiring courses; it is merely a different way of teaching students how to umpire patterns and sparring. Some may find this way more effective, others may prefer the traditional way. All students learn differently and it would really all depend on what students are in attendance of the course to determine how it all would be ran.

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