

- Question; *How do you see our organisation currently, and are we moving in the right direction?*

This is a broad, important question which I've chosen to narrow to answer as it relates to the high-performance programme. Firstly, how I see our organisation and then some examples of how we can improve and my own conclusions.

My firm belief is that our organisation has very solid roots, with many of our pioneers still actively involved and driving the organisation forward in a way that recognises our willingness to honour the past and considers new ideas for the future. We have passionate leaders who inspire and a core of people who endlessly work voluntarily to ensure the wider membership has many forms of events to add to their club activities. We have well established pathways for grade progression, incorporated involvement in our grade syllabus and active encouragement for the membership to step up and grab opportunities for personal growth and experience. We have these opportunities to participate in tournaments, public demonstrations, seminars, technical updates, semi social senior training weekends, local and national camps etc. we are an organisation that caters to everyone with policies to protect members and have inclusive clubs that are accepting and allow for anyone to participate. A truly solid base to continue growing Taekwon-Do in New Zealand.

There will always be ways in which an organisation can improve. In the main, being open to change, having up to date policies and listening to members is essential to growing the organisation. We are engaging in some new ways to connect with our membership and recognising that we need to stay current. With work being done in policy areas such as a safety, surveys of our membership to better understand how what we do, can be done better with a new youth council and we are talking constantly about what Taekwon-Do NZ looks like going forward remaining open to ideas.

In many ways we are moving in the right direction. That's not to say there aren't areas to improve or haven't been more thoroughly looked at or updated yet. An area I'm most involved with in the organisation has been the high-performance programme as NZ Taekwon-Do team manager. I have held this role for the last 7 years. During that time, I have managed teams of various sizes and traveled to Ireland, Germany, Sydney and Finland to assist teams compete internationally. Each one of these campaigns have involved high performance selections, monthly training camps over a minimum of six months and all facets of team preparation from organisation travel and accommodation domestically and internationally, procuring uniforms, travel gear and equipment to train and perform with. It would suffice to say the role is varied, requires an understanding of our art, our sport, our individuals, our national team mana, preserving our team culture, our expectations and a solid ability to plan and coordinate many people including athletes, coaches and families, organisers, vips, guest services etc

So, my knowledge of managing the team is extensive and I am well placed to offer a perspective on what we do really well already and how we can do things better. For the purposes of this essay, I will answer the above questions on the topic of the growth of the high-performance programme and, to a lesser extent, the national team's competitive potential. This is the area where I can offer the most insight into how our organisation can continue to move in the right direction.

Firstly, I believe that our national team should not only be a source of immense pride for our country, our members and our leaders, but also a legitimate pathway to encourage individual growth in the art, development of technical and practical ability as well as a huge potential to bring NZ Taekwon-Do

more into the public consciousness, to increase retention of students in clubs and grow membership. I believe with the right structure and vision we can achieve all this.

I haven't yet mentioned rebuilding the national team back to the number one position in the world but that is not only main driver of these improvements but the intended outcome that I believe can come from these ideas. Improving what we do locally will undoubtedly improve our international results and help to maintain our international competitiveness. They are all achievable with the proposed change.

Change to maintain retention and fill gaps in the high-performance programme is needed to grow and achieve our collective goals. From a management perspective some essential steps are needed.

1. Part of the management duties needs to extend to debrief, report and hand over where change in management occurs. Currently there is no requirement for this in the job description or any formal instruction for management on hand over. At least none has been conducted or enforced.
2. Planning each campaign from the end of the last. There are numerous learnings that are uncovered each campaign. Currently the tenure for management and coaching positions is two years. After the end of each campaign most of the knowledge is effectively lost. What's needed is an overlap of campaign and a continuation of the current team. I'm aware it has been discussed at board level already that there is need for a programme covering talent development and that immediately after world champs and world cups each year that all athletes and coaches would move from the high-performance programme to the talent development programme. This would maintain the level, retain coaches and management and allow a pathway for more members to access and improve among world class athlete and coaches. It makes growth and improvement in our sporting ability accessible regionally and continuously feeds robust trials for the national team improving standards through more competition. Without this we are doomed to start from scratch each new campaign.
3. Funding and recognition. Every program and event in the ITKD calendar requires funding. From what I can tell/have heard, this becomes a push and pull between senior membership over what is more important. There will always be a finite amount of funds available. What's needed is acceptance and agreement that all activities that improve the organisations ability to grow are given the support they need. After all growing membership is a core value of our art as prescribed by our founder. But the ways we do that and what we present to the public needs to change with trends in public preference. For example, while mixed martial arts is very different to what we offer, its popularity and ability to draw crowds, media and funds is almost unparalleled. I do not suggest that we copy this model or try to surpass this, but it does prove that there is a place for martial arts in main stream preference as entertainment. Starting with live streaming our tournaments, making our national finals more accessible and attractive to the public and pushing for media coverage are a place to start. We can't simply argue over what to fund from a finite set of membership fees, we need to grow our revenue and reach by growing our public appeal. These are a few ideas but an example of the conversations we should be having and are long overdue. Doing what we have always done is not, in my opinion, going in the right direction. This doesn't forgo any of the above programmes we offer now at club level or national level, it simply adds to the tournament/sport side of our art where we have the biggest opportunity to grow popularity and funding streams. Without appropriate funding, management coach and athlete attendance, retention, performance and consistency are greatly restricted. I do not believe the high-

performance programme can continue to provide the best, world class talent without better recognition of the enormous personal sacrifices these positions demand. There are few examples in any organisation where roles as involved as these are not financially recognised in any way. Certainly, the ones that aren't often fall victim to poor retention as a result. Passionate experts who give their time outside of their professional lives, do so because they are enthusiastic and enjoy the enormous satisfaction that comes from enabling transformations to world class competitive athletes out of our everyday membership. The growth of these members is incredible, and, more importantly, they pass this back to their clubs to inspire others. But passion will only retain these people for so long. A large part of the work that is not recognised is resourcing the training camps in the lead up to any competition. Funding the travel and equipment needed is also a huge distraction from the most important thing, preparation of athletes. Full funding for training venues, coach and management travel domestically and internationally, athlete travel to training and provision of equipment and any required outside experts should be minimum for any campaign. Removing obstacles and freeing up time by funding these aspects of the campaign will ensure the coaches and managers can focus on improving what they provide and remove a considerable stress that finding these resources creates.

4. Acceptance that the high-performance programme is not outside of Taekwon-Do values or needs to be discussed as something that is a nice to have. As with the question of funding, our members need to decide if embracing change and developing new public facing programmes are universally accepted. Without full support of clubs and instructors, a few enthusiastic volunteers will not succeed implementing change. There are many aspects to training members at club level and not all clubs specialise in everything. Some are strong in self-defence, some in sparring, some in patterns etc. Acknowledgement that each has a strength is so important and allows clubs to share resources, collaborate and offer more to their members. Tournament development is just another part of this. Every instructor should recognise that if there is expertise outside of their own club environment that embracing an extra programme for student development would be as natural as sending students to a course or having outside instructors visit their clubs to share knowledge. Realising that our students all have different strengths themselves and varying potential is crucial to keeping membership strong. Restricting opportunities and narrow focus at club level can lead to complacency, boredom and reduced retention. As an organisation we need to be more multifaceted, more involved and accessible to the membership providing opportunities to students, instructors and senior leaders alike. We do this but can take it to a whole other level.

In conclusion, the high-performance programme is a highly successful world class part of ITKD that is low on resources, recognition and innovation. As an organisation, we are asking the right questions, so we are going in the right direction. Asking questions and being open to new ideas, new directions and embracing all that we are is the right place to start. We have, in our organisation, incredible talent, world leading experts, passionate volunteers and committed members. Agreeing that all directions are valuable by each club and instructor and getting buy in to share resources and expertise needs acknowledgement. What keeps us relevant in today's world and where the biggest opportunities are need more discussion but expanding our reach into more popular events and programmes does not mean abandoning our core values, rather, it's an opportunity to showcase them. Never was there a more public display of our tenets than at our tournaments, the way we interact, our procedure, the way we compete, our respect for each other and our seniors for example, imagine that being televised!