

COMPETITORS

Responsibilities: Competitors should read and know these rules. Competitors must present themselves at their designated ring suitably attired and physically prepared to compete. Jewelry or any object, which the referee feels might endanger any competitor, cannot be worn. It is the competitor's duty to be ready to compete when called to compete. If he/she is not suitably attired or physically prepared to compete as deemed by the center referee, the competitor may be penalized for delay of contest. It is the competitor's responsibility to know the rules and to be ready for competition at the appropriate time. Three (3) calls will be made for competition, first call, a second call, and a final call. If a competitor is not at his/her ring when competition begins, he/she **may not** be allowed to compete. If a competitor leaves a ring after the ring competition begins and is not present when his/her name is called to compete, the name will be called three (3) times at ringside to compete. If he/she is not present to compete on the third call, he/she **may** be disqualified if the referee feels it is appropriate.

- ◆ **Age Rule:** Competitors may compete for the entire season in the age division that is proper for their particular age as of the date of the first NCKA Event, usually held in September.
 - ◆ **EXAMPLE:** Contestant is 13 years old on September 1st, the first tournament of the season. He may compete as a 13 year old for the entire season. If this competitor turns 14 in January and chooses to compete as a 14 year old which is a different division, the competitor may move to the 14 year old division but, this competitor's points WILL NOT carry over from the earlier events or count in the 14 year old division.
- ◆ **Uniform:** All competitors must wear a complete uniform in a good state of repair, (top and bottom) traditional or professional sport karate (Kung Fu, Tae Kwon Do, etc.) A competitor with offensive words or offensive artwork on the uniform may be denied the privilege of participation. The appropriate color belt or sash must be worn in competition. No t-shirts, sweats, tank tops or shoes are allowed.
- ◆ **Uniform - Sparring:** All sparring uniforms must have sleeves that reach at least to the middle of the forearm. No t-shirts, sweats, tank tops or shoes are allowed in the sparring divisions.
- ◆ **Uniform - Form:** Removal of the uniform top is allowed in form competition if the removal is considered relevant to the artistic expression or safety of the competitor. Shoes may not be worn in form competition.
- ◆ **Rank Rule:** All competitors must compete at the highest belt level they have earned in karate or in a comparable martial art. A competitor can never compete in a division at a rank that he/she has not earned. Once a competitor competes as a black belt, he/she must always compete as a black belt.

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED SAFETY EQUIPMENT

North Central Karate Association (N.C.K.A.) *approved* hand and foot pads, headgear, mouthpieces and groin cups (for male competitors), are mandatory for all competitors in all-sparring divisions. N.C.K.A. approved equipment means each competitor's equipment will be checked to see if it is safe for use. If it is deemed unsafe, he/she will be asked to change the equipment before he/she can compete.

The following is a list of important and required features of N.C.K.A. approved safety equipment:

- ◆ **Hand Pads** - A soft padded surface must cover the fingers, wrist and any striking surface of the hand. The striking areas such as the ridge of the hand, the side of the hand, the back of the fist, and the knuckles must be covered with a soft padded surface.
- ◆ **Foot Pads** - A soft padded surface must cover the instep, sides, toes, ankle, and back of the heel of the foot.
- ◆ **Head Gear** - the forehead, sides and back of the head must be covered by a soft padded surface.
 - Adult Black Belts Head Gear must have a cage, mask or guard
- ◆ **Chest Protectors** - for 17 & under youth sparring.
- ◆ **Optional** - elbow, shin guards and rib protectors are not required but ***HIGHLY RECOMMENDED***.
- ◆ **Illegal Equipment** - Boxing and other contact sport equipment are not allowed. Insufficiently padded equipment will not be allowed. Shin guards with a hard surface or insert. Equipment must be in good repair and free from tears, heavy taping or any other repairs that may cause injury. Equipment with heavy or too many seams on the striking surface will not be allowed.

OFFICIALS, TIMEKEEPERS AND SCOREKEEPERS

Judges: The judges call points as they see them. It is the majority vote of the judges and referee that determines a point. To help in determining penalties or warnings, a center referee may consult the judges, although the referee has the power to issue them alone.

Calls an Official May Make: When the *referee* believes there has been a significant exchange of technique, or when signaled to do so by a corner judge, he/she shall call out the word, "**Stop**" in a loud voice. The referee shall then return the competitors to the starting marks and address the judges by saying "**Ready, CALL**". All judges and the center referee cast their votes simultaneously in the following manner:

- ◆ **Point is scored:** When a judge sees a point, he/she should hold up both flags. At that time, he/she should **yell** the word "**Call**" in a loud voice indicating to the referee that he/she has seen a point. When asked, the judge will hold up the color flag of the competitor who he/she feels scored the point. (If the judge is calling for a two-point kick, he/she will raise two fingers on the other hand at the same time. If he/she is calling for only one point, only the flag is raised.) If no flags are used, the judge will point with his/her hand at the competitor who he/she feels scored the point and point with two fingers if a kick is being called.
- ◆ **No point scored:** The judge crosses flags, if used, or arms at waist.
- ◆ **Contact:** If a judge sees an illegal or an excessive amount of contact, he/she will raise the flag of the person who was **struck** while simultaneously striking the palm of his/her hand with the fist of the other hand.
- ◆ **Disqualification:** A disqualification vote is taken separately from any other vote. When a disqualification vote is asked for, the center referee will say "**Ready, Call**". A judge will then hold the flag color of the competitor he/she thinks should be disqualified. If he/she does not believe there should be a disqualification, he/she does not hold up a flag.

(Note: The center referee has the authority to overrule judges awarding a point and to issue a penalty, and/or warning.)

JUDGING: POINT KARATE SPARRING

Number of officials: at least one referee and two (2) or four (4) judges shall conduct each sparring elimination match. A timekeeper and a scorekeeper shall assist these.

All grand champion matches (matches between first place winners) shall be officiated by four (4) corner judges, a referee, a timekeeper and a scorekeeper. In the grand champion form rounds; there shall be a minimum of four (4) judges and one (1) center referee.

- ◆ **Timekeeper:** The person responsible for keeping time. He/she will start and stop time at the command of the center referee and will inform the center referee when the two (2) minutes for sparring or the three (3) minutes for form have expired. In sparring, the timekeeper does not start or stop a match. His/her only duty is to keep time for the center referee.
- ◆ **Scorekeeper:** The person responsible for keeping score. He/she will write down the form scores from each judge, eliminate the high and low scores (if 5 or more judges are being used) and add the remaining scores to attain a total score. The scorekeeper should check his/her addition a second time (calculators should be used). In sparring, the scorekeeper will record the score at the command of the center referee. The scorekeeper should inform the center referee when a fight gets the appropriate number of points to automatically win. It is the scorekeeper's duty to listen very closely to the center referee and to keep an accurate score as the referee commands. The center referee, not the scorekeeper, will make the final score decision.

Added Powers of the Center Referee:

1. Match starts and ends only with his/her command (not the command of the timekeeper).
 2. Has power to issue warnings and award penalty points without a majority decision.
 3. Can overrule a majority point call to issue a warning or penalty point.
 4. The center referee calls "stop" when he/she sees a competitor goes out of bounds.
 5. The referee is the only one who can stop the match.
- ◆ **The Positioning of the Competitors**
 1. When determining which competitor will be designated as "**Red**", the referee will, if possible, choose the competitor that is wearing a red head gear, colored head gear, uniform or hand pads. If both competitors are wearing colored gear, the referee will pick the one with the most red.
 2. If neither is wearing red, the referee will choose.
 3. At the beginning of each match, the referee will stand in a position enabling him/her to see the scorekeeper. The referee will return everybody to the beginning position before asking for a point call and at the end of each match.
 - ◆ **Protest:** To protest a rule clarification, the competitor must ask the referee to stop the match and have the arbitrator and or promoter give a ruling. ***Any protest must be made immediately. No protest will be allowed after the competition has resumed.***
 - ◆ **Change of Officials:** A sparring official can be changed at any time during a division once a match has stopped. A form judge cannot be removed until the division he/she is judging is completed.

THE RING

The size of the adult fighting and form rings shall be no smaller than 15' X 15'. During Team form, team members may use as much space as the promoter deems appropriate. The borders of each ring shall be marked. Additionally, each ring should be posted with a ring number visible to competitors, officials, and medical personnel from across the floor.

SPORT KARATE POINT SPARRING RULES

- ◆ **Length of Match:** An elimination match shall last a total of two (2) minutes running time, unless a competitor earns enough points to be declared the winner before the two (2) minutes have expired. (Running time means the clock continues to run during point calls etc., unless the center referee calls for a time out.) During unusually long point calls, equipment adjustments, rule clarifications, etc., the center referee may stop the time. If at the end of two minutes the match is tied, the match will continue into a sudden victory overtime period. The first competitor to score a point is declared the winner.

All grand champion fighting matches will be one two-minute round. The competitor with the most points at the end of the round will be declared the winner. A tie will be settled as above.

- ◆ **Point Values and Winner Determination:** All legal hand techniques that score will be awarded one (1) point. All legal kicking techniques that score will be awarded two (2) points. All penalty points will be awarded one (1) point value. The first competitor to score five (5) points will be declared the winner regardless of whether or not the two minutes have expired.
- ◆ **How points are awarded:** Points are awarded by a majority vote of the judges. The majority of judges do not have to agree on the same technique being scored, only that a point was scored. Judges will indicate whether it was a one (1) or a two (2) point technique by holding up two (2) fingers if it was a kick, or one (1) finger if it was a hand technique. A majority of the judges calling for a point must agree that a kick scored in order to award two (2) points. Otherwise only one point is awarded. (Example; If three of five judges see a point for one competitor, two of the three judges must call a scoring kick in order for the competitor to be awarded two points. If there are only three judges being used and two of the three see a competitor's scoring technique, but one sees a hand technique and the other sees a kicking technique, the competitor receives one (1) point. To score a point it takes a majority of judges to see the point. To be awarded two (2) points, a majority of the judges who saw a point must see a kicking technique.) See **Penalty Points** for additional information on receiving penalty points and scoring points at the same time.
- ◆ **Point:** A point is a legal sport karate technique scored by a competitor in bounds that strikes an opponent with the allowable amount of focused touch or focused control to a legal target area. Criteria that officials use when deciding if a point was scored are as follows:
 1. Was it a legitimate and legal sport karate technique?
 2. Was it delivered with the required focused control or allowed focused touch contact to a legal target area?
 3. Was the competitor who scored in-bounds?
 4. Had the center referee stopped the match before the point was delivered?
 5. Was either competitor down when the point was scored?
- ◆ **Legal Target Areas:** Entire head and face, side of the neck, ribs, chest, abdomen, collarbone, and kidneys.
- ◆ **Illegal Target Areas:** Spine, back of the neck, throat, groin, legs and upper back are all illegal target areas. Any attacks to these areas could result in a warning and/or penalty points.
- ◆ **Non-Target Areas:** Hips, shoulders, buttocks, arms, and feet are all non-target areas. Points cannot be scored to non-target areas. If it is deemed that a competitor is actually attacking these areas, a warning and/or a penalty point may be awarded.
- ◆ **Legal Techniques:** All controlled sport karate techniques except those listed as illegal. When determining the legality of a technique, the official considers if the technique is a legitimate, controlled sport karate technique that obeys all the other rules governing sport point karate. For more information, see "**Judging Section**".
- ◆ **Illegal Techniques:** Head butts, hair pulls, bites, scratches, elbows, knees, eye attacks of any kind, ground fighting, attacks to a downed opponent, grabbing*, slapping, uncontrolled blind techniques, any throws, take downs, spinning backfist, and any other uncontrolled dangerous techniques that are deemed unsafe by the tournament arbitrator. (* trapping of the opponent's front arm for one second is allowed)
- ◆ **Sweeps:** Sweeps not to take down an opponent, but only to obstruct the balance can only be executed to the back of the front leg at mid-calf or below. These described sweeps are legal on all types of fighting surfaces if the sweep is only to force the opponent off balance so as to execute a technique to an upright opponent. If the sweep is responsible for knocking down the opponent, then it would be an illegal technique. It is important to note that sweeps do not make it legal to kick the legs. A sweep must be deemed a proper sweep and not a kick, to be legal.
- ◆ **Take Downs & Throws:** Take downs and throws are not allowed.

TOUCH CONTACT DEFINED

- ◆ **Touch Contact:** Means *any contact* regardless of how light.
- ◆ **Light Touch Contact:** Means there is no visible movement of the opponent as a result of the technique.
- ◆ **Moderate Touch Contact:** Means slight penetration or slight target movement.
- ◆ **Excessive Contact:** Is made when an opponent strikes with force in excess of that necessary to have scored a point. Though it is largely a judgment call, indications that contact has been excessive may be assessed by the following reactions:
 1. Visible snapping back of a competitor's head from the force of a blow.
 2. A knockdown of an opponent (not including when the fallen party slipped or was off balance).
 3. A knockout of an opponent.
 4. The appearance of severe swelling or bleeding. (bleeding or other obvious external injury may in itself be grounds for excessive contact if it is considered the fault of a competitor.)
 5. The distortion or injury of the body from the force of a blow to the body.

METHODS OF PENALIZATION

- ◆ **Warnings and Penalties:** One and only one warning is given for breaking the rules. **However, in the case of head contact in divisions below adult black belt, a penalty point is awarded upon the first infraction.** A penalty point is awarded to the opponent on each and every infraction of the rules after the first warning is given. If a competitor receives four warnings (giving 3 penalty points to their opponent) in any one match, he/she is automatically disqualified and their opponent is declared the winner. If the result of the first rules infraction is considered by the referee to be severe enough, he/she can omit the first warning and issue a penalty point automatically. A penalty point can determine the winner of a match.
- ◆ **Other Penalty Rules**
 1. **Any** head, face or head gear ***touch*** in divisions below adult black belt.
 2. Delay of Contest Penalty- If a competitor does not present him/herself suitably attired to compete; an automatic warning will be issued to the competitor. A penalty point will be issued for each minute the competitor is not properly ready to compete. Upon receiving three (3) penalty points, the offending competitor will be disqualified.
 3. A competitor ***cannot*** be penalized and receive a point on the same call. A penalty ***always*** overrules a point by the same competitor.
 4. A competitor can receive a point because his/her opponent was penalized and at the same time receive a point or points for a score. (Example: Competitor "A" receives three (3) points because he/she scored with a kick to competitor "B" and at the same time competitor "B" hit competitor "A" with excessive contact, therefore receiving a penalty. The referee awards two points to competitor "A" for the kick that scored and one point to competitor "A" for the penalty by competitor "B").
 5. If, in the opinion of the referee or medical personnel, a competitor is unable to continue because of an injury caused by an illegal attack executed by his/her opponent, the offending competitor shall be automatically disqualified. If a competitor is injured and it is considered that he/she is responsible for his/her own injury, ~~or~~ no fault can be associated with the injury, the opponent will not be penalized (i.e. ducking into a knee, butting heads, etc.). In the event a fighter is unable to continue because of a no-fault foul, his/her opponent will be declared the winner even if he/she is not ahead at the time of the foul.
 6. If a competitor scores a point and then proceeds to break the rules, even if it was after the point technique, the warning for breaking the rules voids the point (a competitor ***cannot*** receive a point and a warning).

- ◆ **Causes of Penalization:** (This is a partial list of possible causes of penalization and may be used as a guideline to follow)

1. Attacking illegal and non-target areas
2. Using illegal techniques
3. Running out of the ring to avoid fighting (not fighting out)
4. Falling to the floor to avoid fighting
5. Continuing after being ordered to stop (fighting after break)
6. *Any* head, face or headgear touch in any division other than Adult Black Belt.
7. Blind, negligent or reckless attacks
8. Uncontrolled techniques
9. Grabbing (trapping the opponent's front arm for **one second** is allowed. Grabbing of the arm for any longer could result in a penalty)
10. Any unsportsmanlike behavior from the competitor or his/her coaches, friends, etc.
11. Any abusive behavior from the competitor or his/her coach, teammates, family, friends, etc., such that the referee feels it affects the outcome of the match or the performance of the officials or other competitors.
12. Excessive contact
13. Not being prepared or ready when it is time to compete (See delay of contest penalty; competitor's responsibilities)

- ◆ **Disqualification:** When a competitor is disqualified, it is proper to notify the tournament rules arbitrator. All awards and rating points for that division are forfeited. (An exception to this rule is if the competitor bows out due to a substantiated injury verified by the tournament medical personnel.)

- ◆ **Out-of-Bounds:** A competitor is out-of-bounds as soon as he/she does not have at least one (1) foot touching inside or on the boundary line. Stepping out of bounds does not immediately stop the match. An out-of-bounds competitor may be scored on by his/her opponent so long as the in--bound competitor has at least one foot in bounds and the referee has not signaled to stop. In the event of a jumping technique, the competitor must land with one (1) foot in-bounds in order to score.

- ◆ **Coaching:**

1. Never, at any time, can a coach, friend, team member, etc., enter the ring without the center referee's permission (only the officials, competitors and medical personnel are allowed in a ring).
2. No abusive, violent, unsportsmanlike or over zealous coaching allowed.
3. A coach cannot ask for a time out (only a competitor may ask for a time out).
4. A coach can never, at any time, interfere with the proper running of the ring or the decisions of the judges.

The center referee issues penalties for any of the above infractions

SPORT KARATE POINT FORM RULES

- ◆ **Competitor:** All competitors must present themselves suitably attired (as described in an earlier section on competitors' dress) and ready to compete. The competitors may be divided into separate divisions based on style, sex, and origin of the form or age. To enter an adult form division, you must be at least 18 years of age or older. Seniors can choose to enter the regular adult division or the senior division, but not both.
- ◆ **Late Entries and Order of Performance:** It is the responsibility of the competitor to be at the ring prior to the time that the form division starts. Once the division is organized and the first competitor begins, there will be no additional entries. If a competitor comes late but the first competitor has not started, he/she can compete but must compete first and immediately. The order of performance will be by random draw or selection, shuffling cards, computer selection, numbers, etc. Switching the order of performance numbers is **not allowed** between competitors. If there is good reason to believe that competitors switched numbers, they will be disqualified. The first three competitors will execute their form **before** any scores are announced. After the third competitor executes his/her form, the first competitor will return and receive his/her score. After the first competitor is scored; the second competitor will return and receive his/her score. After the second competitor is scored, the third competitor will return and receive his/her score. All remaining competitors will be scored immediately following their performance.

Grand Championships: The order of performance of the grand championship rounds will also be determined by random draw. If the competitor(s) are **not present** at the designated time to draw numbers, they will automatically go **before** the ones who are present. If only one is not present, he/she will automatically go first. If more than one is not present, a separate drawing is made by the designated form coordinator for those not present. They will go in that order **before** the competitors who are present. If a competitor has won multiple divisions, he/she will be allowed one draw for each first place he/she has won. The competitor may then use the draw of his/her choice.
- ◆ **Form Penalties:**
 1. **Starting a Form Over:** If a competitor starts his/her form over because of a memory lapse or any other reason due to his/her own negligence, he/she may perform again. A competitor can only start a form over one (1) time. If a competitor does not finish on the second try, he/she will be disqualified. If a competitor has to start over not due to his/her own negligence, the competitor may start over without penalization. It is important that the referee discuss the penalization procedure with the judges and scorekeeper. The Head Referee will instruct the Score Keeper to deduct .2 from the offending competitor's final score. When a competitor starts over, the clock is reset and starts over as well.
- ◆ **Traditional Form:** A traditional form is a form that places emphasis on stances and basic martial arts techniques. In A traditional form, the following techniques are NOT allowed:
 - Flips, Gymnastics, Splits, 360 spin kicks, More than 2 kicks with the same leg without placing one's foot on the ground,
 - Multiple spins.
- ◆ **Traditional Weapons Form:** Same as above plus the following techniques are NOT allowed:
 - Release move, Over head baseball type swings (Bo),
 - Behind the back moves, Spinning of the weapon,
 - Singular figure eight moves **must** be followed by a strike,
- ◆ **Musical Division:** The Musical Division allows music, and the use of martial arts weaponry. Music must be used in the Musical Division. It is the responsibility of the competitor to provide their own battery operated cassette player for their music. If the music box or cassette malfunctions due to no fault of the tournament and its coordinators, the competitor will be downgraded by the judges (see Starting a Form Over rule).

- ◆ **External Aids:** No external aids such as props, weapons, music, etc., can be used in any division except those divisions where it is permissible (i.e. Musical and Weapons, Teams divisions). No external aids can be used that would damage or render the competition area unsafe for the other competitors, spectators or judges .
- ◆ **Weapon Divisions:** When judging a weapons performance, *the judges will focus primarily on the effective use and control of the weapon* as well as other aspects of form competition.
 1. Referees should check all weapons for safety. Weapons are subject to referee's approval. No sharp weapons allowed in the under black belt divisions.
 2. Referees should make sure all spectators and competitors are at a safe distance from the performing competitor.
 3. Safety is a major concern. Therefore, the competitor's control of his/her weapon is of utmost importance. If a competitor recklessly or carelessly misuses his/her weapon, he/she may be penalized or disqualified.
 4. If a competitor wins the weapons form division during the eliminations, he/she must perform with a weapon in the weapon grand champion round (if a weapon grand champion round is offered).
 5. Striking the floor that causes any damage to the floor will result in a .5 deduction from each judge.
 6. In under Black Belt weapons, the competitor is not allowed to swing his/her bo over his/her head in a whipping motion, which utilizes a one or two handed baseball type grip.
 7. In under Black Belt weapons, the competitor must maintain contact with his/her weapon at all times. (No release moves are allowed in under Black Belt weapons.)
 8. If a competitor drops his/her weapon once he/she has entered the ring, he/she will be disqualified.
- ◆ **Team Division:** Two to nine person forms are considered team form.
- ◆ **Mega Team Division:** Ten or more persons are considered Mega Teams.
 - ⇒ **Bonus Points: The following will be added to the Team's final score.**
 - Teams with 11-20 members will receive .01.
 - Teams with 21-30 members will receive .02.
 - Teams with 31-40 members will receive .03.
 - Teams with 41-50 members will receive .04.
 - Teams with 51 or more members will receive .05
- ◆ **Scoring of Form and Ties:** The head referee will establish a scoring range before a division begins. Each official shall award scores within the range set by the head referee. Hundredth intervals must be used. The high and low scores should be eliminated (if 5 or more judges are being used) before totaling the scores. The first three competitors must perform before any scores are given (grand champion rounds and divisions with less than 5 competitors are exceptions to this rule). In case of ties the competitor who received the majority vote (winning scores of the judges) will break the tie. (Some events to will eliminate the tie will give all the competitors who tie, the award.) If there is a second tie, the competitors who are still tied must perform again using the same form to break the tie.

In the grand championship round, the high and low scores are added back in to determine the winner. If there is a *second tie*, the competitor who received the majority vote (winning scores of the judges) will be the winner. If, for some unusual circumstance, the score remains tied, the competitors will perform again until the tie is broken.

- ◆ **How to be a good judge:**
 1. You should know and understand the rules in their entirety.
 2. Make all of your decisions quickly, decisively and in a confident manner.
 3. Call only what you *see clearly, not* what you heard or thought you saw.
 4. Give each match your *full, focused attention*. Do not let outsiders distract you from your duty. (i.e. other judges, fans or coaches)
 5. Stay out of the way of the competitors.

DEFINITIONS

- ◆ **Point:** A point is a controlled legal sport karate technique scored by a competitor in -bounds that strikes an opponent with the allowable amount of focused touch contact or focused control to a legal target.
- ◆ **Control:** Holding back in reserve the amount of force that if not restrained or pulled short of full contact, could have incapacitated or inflicted damage to an opponent.
- ◆ **Focused Touch:** Light, medium and excessive (see rule book definition on touch contact).
- ◆ **Focused Control:** No contact is allowed, but the technique must be focused approximately one inch from the "no touch" target area.

DECISIONS TO BE MADE ON EACH POINT CALL

1. Was it a legal, legitimate sport karate technique?
2. Was it focused to a legal target area?
3. Did it have the required legal control or focused control in the execution of the techniques?
4. Was it a clash (each competitor scoring at the same time)?
5. Were there any rules violations immediately following the scoring technique (i.e., a competitor can receive a point and receive a penalty on the same call)
6. Was either competitor on the ground when the point was scored?
Had the time expired?

JUDGING: POINT KARATE FORM & WEAPONS

- ◆ When judging form and/or weapons competitors, judges are actually comparing the various competitors in the division against each other to arrive at the top competitors in that division.
- ◆ **Judging Categories:** Each form and weapon routine is judged on **execution, presentation and difficulty**.
- ◆ **Execution:** the act or process of performing the techniques of the form. The execution stage is the *most critical* and should weigh the most in the judge's final score.
→ **Elements of Execution:** balance, power, speed, stability, coordination, flexibility, stamina, timing, technique skill, etc.
- ◆ **Presentation-** the image or impression of the competitors as reflected in his/her performance of the form. The presentation stage is the *second most* important and should weigh accordingly in the judge's final score.
→ **Elements of the presentation:** Confidence, poise, determination, commitment, imagery, respect, sportsmanship, realism, concentration, spirit, showmanship, appearance, imagination, etc.
- ◆ **Difficulty-** the complexity and intricacy of the form or weapon routine. The difficulty category is the *least critical* of the three judging categories, but could become the deciding factor if a judge feels that two competitors are equally as good in the execution and presentation categories. Value should never be awarded for a technique performed poorly. Difficulty alone, without proper execution, should always be downgraded.
→ **Elements of Difficulty:** Complexity of techniques, flexibility, balance, versatility of techniques, stamina, length, etc.