

Galway taekwon-do instructor is Irish Competitor of the Year

Veteran taekwon-do instructor and contestant Shane Fitzgibbon was recently presented with the prestigious Irish Senior Male Competitor of the Year for 2009. The award is based on international competition results over the entire calendar year. He

competed internationally three times last year, amassing an impressive total of five gold, three silver, and two bronze medals.

This is actually the 35-year-old's fourth time in five years winning this award. During this time he has captained Ireland to

gold in two different world championships in taekwon-do and kickboxing. In his four world championship outings he has accumulated four gold, three silver, and two bronze medals. He will be captaining Ireland to their defence of the world title this July in South Korea. Due to Fitzgibbon's phenomenal success as Irish team captain he was selected to captain the European team for the annual Intercontinental Cup on three occasions in 2006, 2007, 2008.

The European team won on each occasion with Fitzgibbon winning all of his own matches.

So what drives the Galway instructor, who is native to Kerry? "Well, I absolutely love to compete," he said. "For every success I chase there is the risk of defeat. There's nothing quite like it. Even after 16 years I am happy to still be competing at the pinnacle of my art. I have a number of up-and-coming students that I hope will do far, far, better than me. But as their instructor, I have to set the

pace. Of course competing is only a small part of what we do. Taekwon-do is based on self-respect and respect of others. This is taught alongside the ability to defend oneself. But if we're going to compete why not be best that we can be? That means training smart, eating smart, and having a good attitude. The attitude is essential. Many students and instructors that don't compete at international level have found equally satisfying and important roles to play such as helping with the junior students or even opening their own schools."

While Fitzgibbon is training hard for the upcoming World Championships, he is concurrently preparing for his sixth degree black belt test, an extremely high rank in taekwon-do. "Moving through the grades is important," he said. "It is vital not to get complacent with training after reaching black belt. We need to keep improving, developing new skills and always, always, developing ourselves as martial artists and people. As the saying goes, 'as long as you're green, you're growing, when you're ripe, you're rotten'. In other words, when you feel you've learned all you need to know, you're finished. That applies to all areas of life in my opinion."

Fitzgibbon's organisation, Connacht Taekwon-do Schools, runs classes all over the county. To find your nearest school, you can contact him directly on (087) 2070577 or visit www.connacht-taekwondo.com

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For further information contact:
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