

Ji Hong's Glory in Thunder Bay

2022 National Martial Arts Championship and Festival

By Julianna Huang

4 years after the last Canadian National Wushu and Taiji Team Selections in 2018, the Ji Hong family is glad to finally be back in action at the 2022 Canadian National Martial Arts Championships and Festival. This year's event was held in Thunder Bay, Ontario at Lakehead University, from July 28th to 31st. With 500 participants coming in from all around the country, Ji Hong is proud to have represented Edmonton with 19 students competing in both the Wushu and Taiji competitions.

The wushu portion of this event was divided into four age group categories: Group C (ages 11 and below), Group B (ages 12-14), Group A (ages 15-17), and the senior category (ages 18 and above); there were also three different styles of wushu demonstrated: ChangQuan (long fist), NanQuan (southern), and TaijiQuan (tai chi). Ji Hong had a total of 2 senior competitors, 3 Group A competitors, 4 Group B competitors, and 3 Group C competitors in the wushu competition. Among these athletes, 6 competed in ChangQuan, 4 competed in NanQuan, and 2 competed in TaijiQuan.



Other than the wushu national team selection, Ji Hong also had athletes competing in the tai chi competition. Although this competition did not choose who would represent Team Canada, exemplary performance during this competition will be rewarded with a score boost in the team selection. Ji Hong had a total of 5 competitors in the Competition Taiji category, and 4 competitors in the Demonstration Taiji category.

All students performed phenomenally, they won a total of 31 gold medals, 17 silver medals and 4 bronze medals, we are proud of each and every one of them.



Since the COVID 19 pandemic drastically disrupted our regular training schedule, everyone went into this competition not really knowing what to expect. One year of only online classes is enough to unmotivate anyone, however, this team was able to persevere through the obstacles of online classes. Even up to the last month before the competition, Masters Gu and Luo were still trying hard to compensate for the missed classes due to the pandemic. For many students, this included having to learn new forms in less than 30 days. Despite such a restricted time limit, students from each category were all able to train and improve their respective forms under the masters' teaching.



Achieving this was no easy feat, especially for the Group C athletes who were all under the age of 12. This would be their first national competition, as well as their first competition held in a different province. Some students even had to learn entirely new forms within the last month, and were able to perform it to an exemplary level by the time the competition rolled around. Each and every Group C student did remarkably well on the competition carpet, and made sure that their efforts weren't put to waste. Out of the three Ji Hong students competing in this age group, Melissa was chosen as a reserve for the national team with her gold medal in QiangShu and silver medal in JianShu. Matea was awarded with a silver



medal in Gunshu and bronze medal in DaoShu, and Isaac won a gold medal in QiangShu as well as a silver medal in JianShu. We are very proud of all three students for their amazing performance in their national debut, and we look forward to seeing continued hard work and success in future competitions!



Other than the Group C students, we have two more high performance national debuts from Ji Hong this year: Anson and Natalie competing in the Group B category. From competing in the recreational level of the national competition in 2018 (the last competition before the pandemic) to winning a bronze medal in JianShu for the high performance level, Anson has significantly improved and demonstrated his perseverance in wushu. As for Natalie, we are equally proud to see her on the competition carpet despite only learning that she will be competing in the Group B category (rather than Group C) months before the competition. She had a very limited time to prepare for this competition, yet she performed exceptionally well. Excellent job to the both of them!

As mentioned previously, this championship showcased three different styles. Ji Hong's last ChangQuan representative was Brandon Luo, competing in the senior age category. With silver medals in both ChangQuan and DaoShu, and a bronze medal in QiangShu, Brandon secured his spot as a reserve for Team Canada. Despite the senior category being the most competitive, Brandon was able to continue to perform well and represent Ji Hong on the carpet. Keep up the good work!

Following ChangQuan would be Nanquan, with all 4 Ji Hong athletes competing in this category for the first time. Additionally, this would be the first national competition for Gavin and Samuel as well. We are all proud to be able to say that Ji Hong dominated in the NanQuan style! Gavin and Max both won gold and silver medals in all of their categories, respectively. Samuel was awarded with a gold medal in NanDao and a silver medal in NanQuan, whilst William won a gold medal in NanQuan and a silver medal in NanDao. Despite this being the first time the 4 students have competed in this style, they were still capable of performing their forms impressively. We hope to see them continue to train and perfect their skill in NanQuan!



Last but definitely far from least, we would like to congratulate all of the athletes who competed in the TaijiQuan style of the championships. With a sum of 9 Ji Hong athletes from both the Competition and Demonstration Taiji categories, Ji Hong showed complete dominance in what we specialize in. Out of the 5 Competition Taiji athletes, 2 also competed in the wushu portion of this event. Good work for both Yan and Julianna, who competed and won gold in all of their senior and Group A categories, respectively.



We would like to applaud Yan in particular, who persevered through the entire duration of the competition despite suffering from severe ankle injuries. Despite the pain that she went through before the competition, after the competition, and especially during the difficult movements of her forms, she did not let any of it get to her and continued to perform her form to a degree of excellence. Not only were her movements strong as ever, we saw that her spirit was also unwavering, like a true warrior. Although her performance was hindered by the ankle injury (and thus she wasn't able to perform at the level she typically trains at), Yan insisted on continuing to compete. Yan, we hope that you will recover from your injuries, and come back as vigorous as ever!

Other than Yan and Julianna (who also won gold in all of their Competition Taiji categories), Justin, Charlene, and Jackie also participated in Competition Taiji. This was Julianna, Justin, and Charlene's first national championships in tai chi, and although they all expressed how nervous they were before it was their turn, it's undeniable that all of them performed their movements swiftly and gracefully on the carpet. Due to their remarkable performances for their first competition, Charlene was able to earn gold medals in 42 TaijiJian and 42 TaijiQuan, as well as a silver medal in Yang Style TaijiJian. Likewise, Justin won gold medals in 24 TaijiQuan and 42 TaijiQuan, as well as a silver medal in 32 TaijiJian. Congratulations to both Justin and Charlene, and we hope to see more from them in the national team selections!



The last competitor of the Competition Taiji category would be Jackie, a former ChangQuan athlete who is also an instructor at Ji Hong. Known within the college for his drunken sword form at Lunar New Year and Heritage performances, we see how the elegance of his proficiency in other forms carry into his tai chi. Jackie proceeded to be awarded with gold medals in Yang Style TaijiQuan and Yang Style TaijiJian, as well as a silver medal in Optional TaijiQuan. However, whenever Jackie was off the competition carpet, he became the leader we all looked up to for instructions, especially when Master Gu was busy recording our performances. As many of the Ji Hong athletes competing were once Jackie's students, we were comfortable with following him to know what to do: when to arrive at the cafeteria for breakfast, when to begin warming up in the competition gymnasium, and more. Whenever in doubt, we would turn to Jackie to ask "what's next?" And to none of our surprise, he would always have the answer. Thank you Jackie, for taking the lead and being there for all of us whenever we needed it!

Not only did Ji Hong establish complete dominance in the Competition Taiji category, the same was shown for the Demonstration Taiji category. Raymond finished the competition with gold medals in all of his categories, Siaw Kin and Wendy both won two gold medals and one silver,

and Rex earned two silver medals and one gold. All 4 Ji Hong athletes competing in this category further demonstrated to everyone watching in the stands how Ji Hong specializes and excels in tai chi.

As this championship has come to an end, we would like to give one last round of applause and words of congratulations for all Ji Hong competitors, as well as all of the parents who have supported these amazing and hard working athletes. While the students were the ones on the carpet competing, the parents also worked hard behind the scenes – ironing the silk uniforms, doing the makeup, recording scores, taping performances, and cheering them on. Dear parents, no words can fully describe the amount of gratitude we have for you! None of our success would be possible without the



strongest pillars supporting us through all of the obstacles we may have faced through the competition. Although some

parents weren't able to fly to Thunder Bay to attend this event, we would also like to thank you for the support you have provided us by enabling us to continue taking classes at Ji Hong. As well, special thanks to the parents who "adopted" another student if their parents weren't able to come. All of your efforts did not go wasted, as our athletes have represented Ji Hong College and made us all very proud. Thank you to all athletes, who ensured that the time and effort that Masters Gu and Luo put into training each and every individual student hasn't gone to waste. And our last word of thanks must go to Masters Gu and Luo. Thank you for your dedication to this sport and the students who train in it, and thank you for leading all of our athletes to success! Congratulations to all. Although some competitors may have felt disappointed not being able to perform at the level of their day to day training, everyone had learned something from this competition. At the end of the day, this is all a learning process. It is undeniable that all of you have brought honour to Ji Hong Wushu and Tai Chi College, and we are proud of each and every one of you!

