

The Rising Need for Kukkiwon

The founding of Kukkiwon was not a simple matter. Indeed, it was the fruit of more than 10 years of combined efforts by the Taekwondo community following the founding of the Korea Taesudo Association (KTA) in the early 1960s. As the five Kwans created immediately following Korea's liberation split into countless schools and factions, the need was raised for a powerful association exercising general direction and management authority over the Kwans. All of the Dojangs and the headquarters in the nation had a desperate need for joint, centralized promotion testing, and for a single central authority to manage and administer official competitions. The foundation of Kukkiwon was a pressing issue, not only for the Taekwondo community but also for the Korean Sport & Olympic Committee and the Ministry of Education (now the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism).



Kim, Yong chae, president of the Korea Taekwondo Association (KTA), declared in 1970 on multiple occasions via various daily newspapers that the creation of a Taekwondo Center was critical (Chosun Ilbo, July 24, 1970).

In the early 1970s, national-level Taekwondo competitions and promotion tests had been hosted by facilities such as the Sports Center of the Korean Sport & Olympic Committee in Seoul, the gymnasium at Hansung Girls' High School, the special outdoor volleyball arena at Seoul Sports Stadium, and the Jangchung Arena. There were times when finding a suitable venue for competitions and tests was a difficult task.

The Efforts of Kim, Yong chae

Kim, Yong chae chaired the Korea Taekwondo Association (KTA) for four years from 1967. A former member of the National Assembly, he served as the Association's 5th and 6th president, making numerous contributions of merit in systematizing the Association, establishing official Poomsae, dispatching of Masters (Sabum) overseas, efforts toward Kwan unification, and more. He is also credited with the initial drive to establish the Taekwondo Center. Kim was promised the present-day site of Kukkiwon by then-mayor of Seoul Yang, Tae sik and the National Assembly designated about KRW 28 million in national treasury grants for construction of the facility.



Kim, Yong chae, former president of the Korea Taekwondo Association (KTA), received the 2017 "Award for a Proud Taekwondoists" for his contributions to the growth of Taekwondo and the foundation of Kukkiwon.

Kim made a request for a site of about 9,917 m² to the mayor of Seoul for construction of the Taekwondo Center. His personal friendship with the mayor is said to have been an important factor in securing the site. Kim, Yong chae originally wanted to place Kukkiwon in the Jongno district, but no suitable site was available in the urban area. As an alternative, a site of about 11,239 m² was offered in the location where Kukkiwon now stands. He remarked later that the location had been seen as rather ridiculous at the time, since, while Gangnam is central to Seoul today, back then it was across a large river from the city and in the middle of a wide open field.



The design of Kukkiwon, which appeared on the cover of the inaugural issue of the Korea Taekwondo Association (KTA) in 1971, was a direct improvisation on the Geunjeongjeon Hall of Gyeongbokgung Palace, but was revised soon after.

Kim, Un yong's Drive and Achievements

Construction of Kukkiwon as the Central Dojang for the Korea Taekwondo Association (KTA) finally began during the term of Kim, Un yong, who took office as 7th President of the KTA in early 1971. Immediately upon assuming office, he applied himself in establishing Kukkiwon. This was due to the keen awareness of the need for "Kukkiwon" as a central focal point for Taekwondo. Kukkiwon was to Taekwondo as the government's Cheong Wa Dae was central to the executive branch, and as the National Assembly was central to the legislative branch. A single point of authority was required to consolidate and manage the Dojangs scattered in disarray throughout the country.

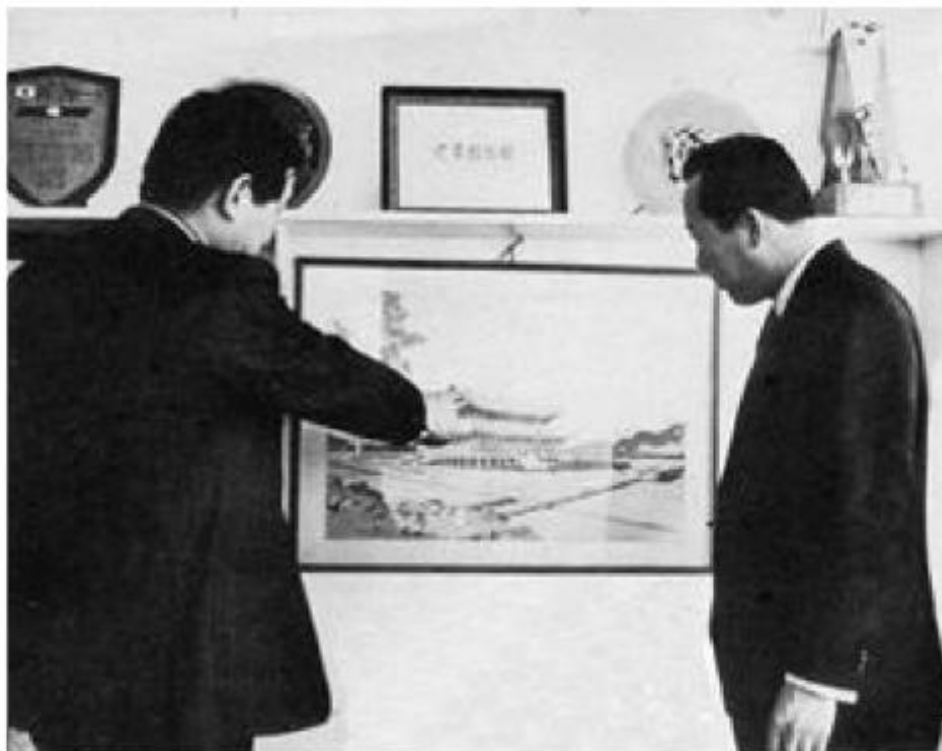


Kim, Un yong established Kukkiwon immediately after becoming president of the Korea Taekwondo Association (KTA) in 1971 (Chosun Ilbo, January 30, 1971).

The first task was to select a fitting site. Initially, state-owned sites were considered near the city center including the foothills of Namsan and the area around Bongwonsa Temple in the vicinity of Yonsei University. In the end, a plot of municipal land owned by the Seoul Metropolitan Government was allotted. The mayor of Seoul said that "flattening hills takes a lot of work, so we will offer a flat and low-lying site." But Kim, Un yong was determined that the Central Dojang was to be a monumental structure and that it would be of great value to build it at a high place. The design of the mecca of world Taekwondo standing in grandeur atop a high hill was thus devised.

There were also numerous hurdles in terms of funding and procurement of construction materials. The KRW 28 million or so in treasury grants from the Ministry of Education was helpful, but not even close to being able to fund the entire Taekwondo Center project.

Kim, Un yong sought the help of wealthy entrepreneurs and acquaintances. The late founder of Samsung Lee, Byung chul and Hyundai E&C Vice President Chung, In yung each contributed sizable donations of KRW 3 million and 2 million, respectively. Poonghan Paper donated KRW 2 million, and Daenong also donated construction materials worth KRW 2 million. Byuck-san Slate and SsangYong Cement donated 3,500 bags of cement, while Incheon Steel provided 600 tons of steel rebar; all of the glass for the project was provided by Hankook Glass and Donggwang Glass. Kim, Un yong collected donations from his school alumni in all places, and even funded part of the project himself.



In 1971, Chair Lee, Chong woo (left) of the Korea Taekwondo Association (KTA) Technical Deliberation Committee and Executive Director Hong, Chong soo (right) discuss the building plan for Kukkiwon.