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Where Olympic Journeys Begin

2025 USA Senior National Team Selection Process and Procedures

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Definitions

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For purposes of this document, the following abbreviations/words/terms are used.

AAC	Athlete Advisory Council
Athlete Pool	All athletes that participate in the Team Trials.
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DOS	Director of Sport
Elite Category	Team Trials Category
Nationals	National Championships and Team Trials
NCS	National Coaching Staff
PKF	Panamerican Karate Federation
Senior Team	Official US Senior National Team that will represent the US.
Returning Top Seeds	Top 2 Kata & top 2 Kumite athletes from prior year's Senior Team Trials.
Team Trials	US Senior Team Trials
WKF	World Karate Federation



Policy

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1. Purpose

- a. Select the best athletes to represent the USA Karate Sr Team at international competitions.
- b. Select and publish the names of the Senior Team no more than 30 days after the end of the Team Trials.

2. Kata and Kumite Returning Top Seeds

- a. Kumite Returning Top Seeds must compete in the same weight categories that they competed in at the last Team Trials.
 - i. If the Returning Top Seed changes weight category, they are no longer a Returning Top Seed and they **must** compete and qualify at Nationals to qualify for the next Team Trials.
- b. To qualify for the Team Trials, all Kumite and Kata Returning Top Seeds must:
 - i. compete at Nationals; or
 - ii. request an exemption based on USA Karate approved scenarios. See Addendum 1.
- c. Any Returning Top Seed who competes at Nationals but fails to finish in the top 6, will join the top 6 athletes that qualify from Nationals.
 - i. To qualify under the “compete at Nationals” option, the Returning Top Seed **must** physically compete or request an exemption based on USA Karate approved scenarios. See Addendum 1.
 - ii. Failure to compete or have the on-site medical personnel confirm an injury/medical condition will disqualify the Returning Top Seeds from participating in the Team Trials.
 - iii. In the unlikely event that a Returning Top Seed is the only athlete in a division and thus has no one to compete against, the Returning Top Seed will maintain ranking and move on to the Team Trials.

3. Individual Kumite Category Process

a. Qualify from Nationals

- i. To be eligible to compete in the Elite Category at Nationals, kumite athletes must:
 1. be at least 18 years of age as of December 31st of the current year;
 - a. For example, if a kumite athlete is 17 at the time of Nationals but will turn 18 before the end of that calendar year, the athlete will be eligible to compete in any Elite Category.



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2. Referees will make a reasonable effort to ensure that each athlete has a coach in the coaching box at the beginning of the bout.

- a. Should a bout start without the presence of an athlete's coach, the coach will be allowed to enter the coaching box while the bout is in progress.

3. Video Reviews.

- a. Coaches will be able to call for a video review for each bout, regardless of any use in previous bouts.
- b. Video reviews may be worked by officials with PKF Kumite Referee A or higher licenses.
- c. No fines will be assessed to athletes or coaches.

ii. Pool Play will use the WKF's Competition Rules.

iii. In the event of a tie, the resolution process in the WKF's Rules for ties will be utilized.

iv. Bout points will follow the WKF's most recent stance, which is as of November 2021.

1. 3 points for a win.
2. 1 point for a tie with points.
3. 0 points for a tie with no points.
4. 0 points for a loss.

4. Individual Kata Category Process

a. Qualify from Nationals

- i. To be eligible to compete in the Elite Category at Nationals, kata athletes must:
 1. be at least 16 years of age as of the December 31st of the current year;
 - a. For example, if a kata athlete is 15 at the time of Nationals but will turn 16 before the end of that calendar year, the athlete will be eligible to compete in any Elite Category.
 2. bring a valid US passport when picking up their competitor pass. Failure to provide a valid US passport will result in the athlete not being allowed to compete in any Elite Category.
 - a. Passport must be current and valid for at least 6 months **after** the completion of the next international event in which the athlete qualifies to compete in from Team Trials.



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- ii. Athletes are only allowed to compete for 1 country, regardless of having multiple citizenships. Thus, any athlete who is a member of another country's national team is not eligible to be on the Elite Team (for exceptions, see addendum 1).
- iii. The top 6 athletes from the Elite individual kata category will qualify for the next Team Trials. **1.** All athletes in medal rounds will be qualified for the Team Trials (Gold, Silver, 2 Bronzes & 2 fifth places).
 - a. The Gold medal winner of the 18-20 year old Elite Category will qualify for the Team Trials.

b. Format of the Team Trials

- i. The Team Trials will have a MAX number of 9 athletes.
 - 1. This expected 9 athletes consist of:
 - a. Prior Year's 2 Returning Top Seeds;
 - b. Top 6 athletes from this year's Nationals; &
 - c. The winner of the Elite 18-20 Category.
- ii. The format will run as follows:
 - 1. Round 1: Each athlete will perform their kata in the order described below. The athletes with the top 6 scores will advance to Round 2.
 - a. The #1 Returning Top Seeds will perform last;
 - b. The #2 Returning Top Seeds will perform next to last;
 - c. The Gold Medal winner from Nationals, if not a Returning Top Seed, will perform before the #2 Returning Top Seeds;
 - d. The Silver Medal winner from Nationals, if not a Returning Top Seed will perform before the Gold Medal winner from Nationals;
 - e. The remaining athletes are randomly assigned to the performance order via the randomization algorithm of the tournament bracketing software.
 - 2. Round 2: The top 6 athletes who advance from Round 1 will perform based on the randomization algorithm of the tournament bracketing software. The athletes with the top 4 scores will advance to Round 3.
 - 3. Round 3: The top 4 athletes who advance from Round 2 will perform based on the randomization algorithm of the tournament bracketing software. The athletes with the top 3 scores will advance to Round 4.
 - 4. Round 4: The top 3 athletes who advance from Round 3 will perform based on the randomization algorithm of the tournament bracketing software. The athletes with the top 3 scores will compete in this Medal Round and the athletes will be ranked 1 – 3 for the Senior Team.



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- a. The athlete who was #4 and did not progress to Round 4 will be an alternate if any of the top 3 athletes are unable to compete.
 - iii. Any ties will be resolved using the most current WKF tie-breaking rules.
 - iv. For each round, athletes must perform a different kata from the WKF approved kata list, and no kata may be repeated.

c. Team Trial Rules

- i. The Team Trials will run using the latest version of the WKF Competition Rules, with certain exceptions. Exceptions include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Conflicts of Interest must be made to the Tatami Manager at the beginning of each match by athletes, coaches and officials.
 - a. The Tatami Manager will then determine the severity of the conflict and make substitutions in the referee panel, if necessary.
 - b. The Tatami Manager will make every effort to ensure that any bias or the perception of bias is removed from the referee panel.
 - c. Documentation of the perceived conflict and resolution will be created and signed by the Tatami Manager.
 - 2. Referees will make a reasonable effort to ensure that each athlete has a coach in the coaching box at the beginning of the match.
 - a. Should a match start without the presence of an athlete's coach, the coach will be allowed to enter the coaching box while the match is in progress.
 - 3. No fines will be assessed to athletes or coaches.
 - 4. Pool Play will use the WKF's Competition Rules.

5. Senior Team Kumite Category Process

a. Initial Selection

- i. The NCS will select 8 male athletes and 5 female athletes from the Athlete Pool, as selected from the Team Trials.
 - 1. Each athlete will need to meet the same requirements needed to participate in the Individual Kumite Category.
- ii. The NCS will provide the athlete names to the AAC for approval, prior to the event in which the team will be fielded.



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b. AAC Involvement

- i. The AAC must respond to the NCS within 15 days with their decision.
- ii. If the AAC does not approve an athlete, they will:
 1. document the reason why they are turning down any athlete; and
 2. make a request of the NCS for information defending their nomination of the athlete(s) in question.
 - a. The DOS will provide the AAC with additional information justifying the selection and will do so within 15 days after hearing back from the AAC.
 3. If the AAC still does not approve an athlete, the NCS will repeat their selection process until the AAC grants final approval or the NCS believes that it is no longer practical to field a Team.

c. Team Approval

- i. Upon receiving AAC approval, the Kumite Team will be seated.
 1. The NCS will be notified immediately, and the DOS or designee will inform the team members immediately that they have been seated.

d. Adjustments to Team members

- i. If an AAC-approved athlete is not able to or does not want to compete, the NCS will recommend another athlete from the Athlete Pool and the approval process noted in V-a through V-c above will be utilized.
- ii. The NCS has the right to recommend that a previously approved athlete is removed from the team. To do so, the following steps need to be taken:
 1. Recommendation must be made to the AAC.
 - a. The recommendation must include the reason for recommending the athlete's removal.
 2. If the AAC agrees that the athlete's removal is in the best interest of the team, the Kumite Head Coach must inform the DOS and then the affected athlete.
 - a. If the affected athlete has paid for travel expenses, a reimbursement request may be made.
 - b. The NCS will then recommend another athlete from the Athlete Pool and the approval process noted in V-a through V-c above will be utilized.



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3. If the AAC does not agree with the recommendation to remove the athlete, the Kumite Head Coach and the AAC Chair will take the matter to the DOS for final resolution of the matter.
4. In the event of an emergent situation such as, an athlete is injured, becomes ill or is otherwise unable to compete on the team once the team has arrived in-country, the NCS shall have the right to make substitutions without AAC concurrence. The Head Kumite Coach, in consultation with NCS staff in-country, will make necessary substitutions to field the best possible team. The Head Coach will notify the DOS and AAC Chair as soon as practical at the conclusion of competition. The decision, with justification, will also be noted in the Head Kumite Coach's after-action report and made available to the AAC.
5. The NCS shall have the discretion to make substitutions to the team kumite roster without AAC concurrence, based on performance or behavior while the team is in-country. Should the Head Kumite Coach believe an athlete's performance, while in-country, will negatively impact the results of the team kumite, the Head Kumite Coach, in consultation with the NCS, will notify the DOS and Head of Delegation (or President) of their desire to make a substitution. With the approval of the DOS and Head of Delegation (or President), the Head Kumite Coach will make the substitution on the team roster. The Head Kumite Coach will notify the AAC Chair as soon as practical and document the decision and substitution in the after-action report.
 - a. This discretion shall apply to behavior issues as well. Should the Head Kumite Coach believe an athlete's behavior while in-country will negatively impact the team kumite or places the USA Team in a negative light, the Head Kumite Coach may make a substitution following the above process and documenting the decision. Further, the Head Kumite Coach, may recommend the athlete to the Ethics Committee or Team Leader for corrective action depending on the severity of the behavior.



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6. Senior Team Kata Category Process

a. Teams that Qualify

i. From Nationals

1. To be eligible to compete in the Team Kata Category at Nationals, each athlete must:
 - a. be at least 16 years of age as of the December 31st of the current year;
 - i. For example, if a kata athlete is 15 at the time of Nationals but will turn 16 before the end of that calendar year, the athlete will be eligible to compete in the Elite Category.
2. bring their US passport when picking up their competitor pass. Failure to provide proof of a valid US passport will result in the athlete not being allowed to compete in any Elite Category.
3. Passport must be current and valid for at least 6 months after the end of the first international event following the selection.
4. Athletes are only allowed to compete for 1 country, regardless of citizenship, thus if any athlete is a member of another country's national team, that athlete and thus the Team, as constructed, is not eligible to compete.
5. The top 4 teams will qualify for the next Team Trials.
 - a. The 2-third place teams will compete against each other to allow for a 1 – 4 ranking to be utilized at the Team Trials.
 - b. The top 4 teams will qualify for the next Team Trials.

ii. Qualifying solely from Team Trials

1. If less than 3 Kata Teams performed at Nationals, teams may register at Team Trials and attempt to qualify.

b. Format of the Team Trials

- i. The top 4 Kata Teams from Nationals will qualify for the Team Trials.
 1. However, if any Kata Team that qualified at Nationals is not substantially the same as it was at Nationals, the Kata Team will no longer qualify.
 - a. Substantially means that at least 3 of the 4 team members that competed at Nationals are still on the Team.



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- ii. If the #2 and #3 seeded athletes from Team Trials compete at the Sr. PKF Championships, the #2 seeded athlete will be the only athlete able to earn WKF Ranking Points.
- iii. This assignment occurs at the time of registration for the Sr. PKF Championships and cannot be changed after the competition in accordance with WKF rules.

8. Qualification for the Karate World Championships Qualification Tournament – (Phase 1)

- a. Per the WKF, the Karate World Championships Qualification Tournament is a closed tournament for National Federations that awards 6 quota per category to attend the Karate World Championships. National Federations may register 1 Competitor per category in which they do not already have a qualified Competitor via another allocation criteria, specifically, the current world champion, continental championships, Karate World Championships Standing and NF Host.
- b. Should the USA earn quota spots in the Karate World Championships Qualification Tournament, those spots will be awarded to the #1 or #2 seeded athlete from the Sr. Team Trials in the following manner:
 - i. For those categories in which the #1 or #2 seeded athletes are ranked in the top 32 WKF ranking, the athlete with the highest WKF ranking will be awarded the spot regardless of position on the US National Team.
 - a. For example, if the #1 seeded athlete in the category is ranked 28 with the WKF and the #2 seeded athlete is ranked 16, the #2 seeded athlete will be awarded the spot at the Karate World Championships Qualification Tournament.
 - ii. Ranking position will be 30 days before World Championship qualification event.
 - a. For those categories in which neither the #1 or #2 seeded athletes from the Team Trials are ranked in the top 32 of the WKF ranking, the spot will be awarded to the #1 seeded athlete based on US Team position and WKF ranking will not be a factor. For example, if the #1 seeded athlete is ranked 89 and the #2 seeded athlete is ranked 48, the #1 seeded athlete out of the Team Trials will be awarded the spot regardless of WKF ranking.



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iii. The WKF ranking will be 30 days before World Championship qualification event.

A stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop and a long horizontal stroke.

Brian Ramrup

USOPC AC Representative

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Cain" in a cursive script.

Michael Cain

CEO, USA-NKF



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Addendum 1 – Exemptions for participating in USA National Competition

1. Conflicting Qualifying international event (Sr WKF sanctioned or World Games Level events)

- a. Since Qualifying international events may conflict with Nationals, an exemption is allowed for Returning Top Seeds to compete internationally without losing their rank. i. Any such Qualifying international event must begin either **15 days before** or **15 days after** the final day of Nationals to be considered for exemption.
 - i. The CEO reserves the right to allow for a minor extension of the date range.
 - ii. A formal request must be to the CEO at least 45 calendar days prior to the start of Nationals for the request to be considered.
 - iii. Request should be made on the Request for National's Competing Exemption form.
 - iv. Returning Top Seeds must show proof of attendance/competing at the international event.
- b. If the International competition results website does not show that the athlete competed, the athlete must provide proof of travel/competition to the CEO for exemption from competing at Nationals.

2. Medical condition

- a. If an athlete has an injury or condition which is acknowledged by USA-NKF.
 - i. Returning Top Seeds must make a formal request of the CEO and the request must be accompanied by a doctor's note.
 - ii. Request should be made on the Request for National's Competing Exemption form.
- b. If a Returning Top Seed registers for and attends Nationals but does not compete due to a medical reason, the on-site medical personnel will have final say if the Returning Top Seeds is able to use the medical condition as a reason for not competing.

3. Family considerations

- a. If a Returning Top Seed has a family emergency or event, the athlete must make a formal request for an exemption to the CEO.
- b. Request should be made on the Request for National's Competing Exemption form.
- c. The CEO (or designee) must make a determination and respond back to the athlete within 15 days of receiving the request.



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4. Multiple citizenships

- a. Any athlete who has competed on another country's National Team in international competition within the past 2 years must be released by that country's National Federation and must be accepted by USA NKF for competition.
- b. This is done via written release such as an email from the president or head coach of that country's National Federation.
- c. USA NKF acceptance will be made by the DOS in consultation with the NCS



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Exemption Request For Participation in USA Nationals

Name: _____

Kata: _____ Kumite: (kg) _____

Exemption Due to International Competition

Event: _____

Date of Event: _____

Website of International Competition Results: _____

Exemption Due to Medical Reason(s)

Injury/Condition*: _____

** This form must be accompanied by a doctor's note verifying the injury/condition and verification that athlete should not compete at Nationals.*

Exemption Due to Family Reason(s)

Family Issue:

Athlete Signature:

Date of Request: _____