

USA Senior National Team Selection Process

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Definitions

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

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| AAC | Athlete Advisory Council |
| Athlete Pool | All athletes that participate in the Team Trials. |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| 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. |
| Seniority Athlete | 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

I. Purpose

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

II. Kata and Kumite Seniority Athletes

- a. To qualify for the Team Trials, Seniority Athletes must:
 - i. compete at Nationals; or
 - ii. request an exemption based on 1 of the following USA-NKF approved scenarios:
 1. *Conflicting Qualifying international event:*
 - a. Since Qualifying international events may conflict with Nationals, we allow for an exemption to allow our Seniority Athletes to compete internationally without losing their rank.
 - i. Any such Qualifying international event must begin either **30 days before** or **60 days after** the final day of Nationals to be considered for exemption.
 1. The CEO reserves the right to allow for a minor extension of the date range.
 - ii. A formal request must be made of the CEO at least 45 calendar days prior to the start of Nationals for the request to be considered.
 1. Request should be made on the Request for National's Competing Exemption form.
 - iii. Seniority Athlete must show proof of attendance/competing at the international event.
 1. 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; or*
 - a. If an athlete has an injury or condition which is acknowledged by USA-NKF.
 - i. Seniority Athlete must make a formal request of the CEO and the request must be accompanied by a doctor's note.
 1. Request should be made on the Request for National's Competing Exemption form.
 3. *Family considerations.*
 - a. If a Seniority Athlete 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.
 - b. Any Seniority Athlete who competes at Nationals but fails to finish in the top 6, will join the top 6 athletes that qualify from Nationals.
 1. To qualify under the "compete at Nationals" option, the Seniority Athlete **must** actually compete or provide a reason, as noted in ***II-a-ii*** above, for not competing.
 - a. If a Seniority Athlete 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 Seniority Athlete is able to use the medical condition as a reason for not competing.

2. Failure to compete or have the on-site medical personnel confirm an injury/medical condition will disqualify the Seniority Athlete from making the Senior Team.
 - a. In the unlikely event that a Seniority Athletes is the only athlete in a division and thus has no one to compete against, the Seniority Athlete will maintain ranking and move on to the Team Trials.

III. 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.
 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. The athlete's passport must be valid for at least 6 months after the completion of the next international even in which the athlete can compete in after qualifying at Team Trials.
- 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, except by the exception noted below. Such individuals are eligible to compete in advanced categories.
 1. 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 we must accept them.
 - a. This is done via written release such as an email from the president or head coach of that country's National Federation.
- iii. The top 6 athletes from the Elite individual kumite 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 maximum number of 9 athletes.
 1. The maximum of 9 athletes consists of:
 - a. Prior Year's 2 Seniority Athletes;
 - b. Top 6 athletes from this year's Nationals; &
 - c. The winner of the Elite 18-20 Category.
- ii. The format will run as Pool Play to single elimination.
 1. Pool construction.
 - a. The 2 Seniority Athletes will be placed in different pools.
 - b. The Gold and Silver medal athletes from Nationals, if different than the Seniority Athletes, will be placed in different pools.
 - c. Members of the same club, organization and/or family will be placed in different pools, if possible.
 - d. The remaining athletes are randomly assigned to the 2 pools via the randomization algorithm of the tournament bracketing software.
 2. The bouts are set via the randomization algorithm of the tournament bracketing software.
 3. The top 2 athletes emerging from both Pool A & Pool B will compete in a seeded single elimination to determine team positions 1 – 4.

4. Final 4 bouts:
 - a. The top athlete from Pool A will face the second athlete from Pool B and vice versa.
 - b. The athletes will advance through a standard single elimination bracket to determine the Team ranking.
 - i. First Place Bout: The winner of the A1-B2 bout will compete against the winner of the B1-A2 bout.
 - ii. Third Place Bout: The loser of the A1-B2 bout will compete against the loser of the B1-A2 bout.
- iii. For any category that is not large enough (less than 6 athletes) to run Pool Play, double elimination format will be used.
 1. The athletes will be assigned to brackets via the randomization algorithm of the tournament bracketing software.

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, the following:
 1. Conflicts of Interest must be made to the Tatami Manager at the beginning of each bout 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.
 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.
 4. 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 listed 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.

IV. 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.

- 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, except by the exception noted below. Such individuals are eligible to compete in advanced categories.
 - 1. 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 we must accept them.
 - a. This is done via written release such as an email from the president or head coach of that country's National Federation.
- 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 maximum number of 9 athletes.
 - 1. This maximum of 9 athletes consists of:
 - a. Prior Year's 2 Seniority Athletes;
 - 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 Seniority Athlete will perform last;
 - b. The #2 Seniority Athlete will perform next to last;
 - c. The Gold Medal winner from Nationals, if not a Seniority Athlete will perform before the #2 Seniority Athlete;
 - d. The Silver Medal winner from Nationals, if not a Seniority Athlete 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.
 - 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, the following:
 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.
 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.
- ii. Pool Play will use the WKF's Competition Rules.

V. 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.
 1. The Kumite Team names will be provided to the AAC no later than 15 days after the end of Team Trials.

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 Head Coach 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 Head Coach 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. However, 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 CEO 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.
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 CEO for final resolution of the matter.

VI. Senior Team Kata Category Process for 2024

For 2024, the WKF Team World Championships will utilize the 2024 PKF Championships for qualification. The PKF Championships take place in May before our Nationals, thus the 2024 process will be a 1-time process. The Kata Team will be selected using the following process:

- a. Kata teams will register for the Team Trials, as they do for Nationals.
- b. Teams will compete as they would during Nationals and the Gold Medal team will be the US Kata Team for 2024 international competitions.
 - i. Teams will compete in the Senior Team Trials as they would during Nationals.
 - ii. Any ties will be resolved using the most current WKF tie-breaking rules.
- c. Bunkais will be performed in the last round with the number of rounds determined by the number of teams competing.
 - i. If there are 5 or more teams, three rounds will be held. The first round advances the top 4 teams. The second round advances the top 2 teams. The third and final round determines the first and second places.
 - ii. If there are 3-4 teams, two rounds will be held. The first round advances the top 2 teams. The second and final round determines the first and second places.
 - iii. If there are 2 teams, one round will be held to determine the first and second places.

VII. Senior Team Kata Category Process for 2025 & Beyond

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.
 - b. 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.
 - i. Passport must be current and valid for at least 6 months after the end of the first international event following the selection.
 2. 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.
 3. 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.
 2. Each athlete on each Kata Team will need to meet the same requirements which are required to participate in the Individual Kata Category at Nationals or the Team will be disqualified.
- ii. If less than 3 kata teams competed at Nationals, teams may register to compete at the Team Trials.
- iii. Seeding
 1. Teams that competed at Nationals will be seeded based on their Nationals' results.
 2. Teams who appear at Team Trials without competing at Nationals will be seeded last, in a random order if there is more than one team.
- iv. The format will run as follows:
 1. Round 1: The top seeded team from Nationals will face the fourth seeded team from Nationals and the second & third seeded teams from Nationals will face each other.
 - a. If only 3 teams compete, the #1 seeded team from Nationals will receive a bye.
 2. Round 2: The winners from Round 1 will compete for first and second place and the losers from Round 1 will compete for third and fourth place.
 3. Bunkais will be performed in the last round with the number of rounds determined by the number of teams competing.
- v. Any ties will be resolved using the most current WKF tie-breaking rules.

c. Final determination of Kata Team

- i. If the NCS feels as though the top kata team is not proficient enough to be competing against teams from other countries, the Kata Head Coach may recommend that the team is not sent to international events.
 1. Recommendation must be presented to the CEO and AAC for their approval.

Request for National's Competing Exemption

Name _____

Kata _____ Kumite _____

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 _____