

One MERIT BADGES[®]

INTERSCHOOL TOURNAMENT

“How To Run Your Own Successful Interschool Tournament”

by Professor Brannon Beliso © Beliso 2009


Many martial arts school owners are choosing to host their own interschool tournament. It's both profitable and allows you to create an environment that truly promotes the core values of your school such as good sportsmanship, teamwork and respect. Here's a "How To" to successfully run your own interschool tournament:

- **Decide upon a date for your event.** We hold our tournament on a Sunday, so it does not create scheduling conflicts with our regularly scheduled classes. You don't want to cancel classes, which inconveniences your students and loses you income, to accommodate this event. Choose your date at least two months in advance to have time to promote it properly.
- **Create a timeline.** From the day you choose the date, to ordering trophies, to creating email campaigns, everything involved in hosting a successful tournament should be included in a timeline for you to follow, check and make sure happens in a timely manner.
- **Decide upon your divisions.** Always base this upon your active students. We have a huge preschool program, so I created a division tailored specifically to this age group. (See the *One Merit Badges Interschool Tournament*) It draws over one hundred participants in our school. Create divisions that accommodate your students. I never put more than three to four competitors in any one division. That way everyone has a higher percentage of earning a 1st, 2nd or 3rd place trophy. The impression this'll have on your students self-esteem and your parents "perceived added value" is invaluable.
- **Decide upon entry fees.** We charge \$40 for one event, \$60 for two, \$80 for three, and \$95 for four. You want to make sure you profit from this event but do not overcharge your students and parents. The focus of your interschool tournament should be to create "Perceived added value." This creates retention, which is key to growing your martial arts business.
- **Create an application.** Make sure all the pertinent information such as name, age, height, weight, belt rank, release of liability and what divisions they are participating are listed. Also include a deadline for application submission that is about a month before the actual date. This is important because you will need time to order trophies, get them made and shipped to you in time.
- **Choose a trophy vendor.** I use *AD Trophy* (www.adtrophy.com), an awards company out of New York. I found they offer the biggest trophies at the most competitive prices. They send me samples of 1st, 2nd, 3rd and participation trophies two months in advance, which I display on our front counter and show off in all our classes, to generate interest. We pass the first place trophy around at the end of all our classes for students to touch and hold. Our instructors ask, "Who'd like to earn the first place trophy?" This gets them very excited and encourages more participation. Order your trophies at least one month before your date. (Continued on page 2)



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- (Cont. from page 1) AD Trophy is great with their turnaround time, so expect your trophies to arrive two weeks after you order them. I always order extra trophies because there are always last minute entries and you'll want to make sure you accommodate everyone and create additional revenue.
 - **Create an in house flyer.** Design an eye catching, appealing flyer to display in your school. A simple stand alone acrylic frame, you can purchase from Office Depot will look great on your front counter to help display it. They also make a wall hanging version which you can put in your restrooms, waiting area, and dressing rooms. You'll want your upcoming interschool tournament constantly in your students and parents sights and on their minds.
 - **Create an email campaign.** Design an email to promote your interschool tournament with all the pertinent information. Keep it short but attention grabbing. Send it out at least once a week until your tournament date.
 - **Create an environment that builds your students self-confidence.** I remember growing up in tournaments where only 1st, 2nd and 3rd place trophies were awarded. Those who didn't place often felt dejected and it lowered their self-esteem. In our interschool tournament everyone earns a trophy. We create a staging area, where the competitors line up after their division is completed, announce their names over a loudspeaker, and award them their trophies one at a time. We offer each student equal recognition and treatment. Parents recognize this value and every student's self-confidence is improved. Many times, especially with the younger students, they don't even know who won 1st, 2nd or 3rd. They all think they're a winner because of the equal treatment they receive.
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- **Create atmosphere.** You want to transform your school into an environment that looks like a tournament. It should say everyone is a winner. You may want to set up a snack bar or a pro shop display table with specials to generate additional revenue. You may have a representative on hand to speak to potential students, who are there to watch, about the values of your school, which encourages new sign ups.
 - **Make a list of needed supplies.** You'll need stop watches, clip boards, pencils, calculators blue painters tape (To create rings), division signs, score cards for judging, and red and white sashes for sparring. Print out at least four updated division lists for tracking results and trophies awarded. I have a great Excel file template I use for this that I will gladly email you.
 - **Practice with your students in class.** About six weeks before the actual tournament date, we start practicing for the tournament in all our classes. We set aside the last fifteen minutes of class time to prepare all our students, even the ones who are not competing. For example, all our students learn their presentation for form competition. This teaches our students how to present themselves in the best way possible. They'll need this skill if they run for class office, do a book report in front of their class, or to approach someone to make a new friend. This inspires our students who may not be entering the tournament to sign up and participate. (Continued on page 3)

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- (Cont. from page 2) Parents viewing the class, recognize the value of learning this skill, and are encouraged to sign up their children. Remember, many of your beginner students and parents have no idea what a tournament is about, so find no value in it. If you educate them on all the benefits, they are more likely to participate.
- **Trophy set up.** Make sure your trophies arrive at least one week before your interschool tournament date. You'll need at least two days to unpack and check your trophies for breakage and scratches incurred during shipping. This'll give you time to call *ADTrophy* and have them ship replacement parts. They'll do so at no extra charge with two day air so the parts get to you in time. We average around two hundred and fifty trophies and it takes about two days to set them up. The first place trophies we order need to be screwed together because they are too tall to ship as one piece. Make sure your trophies look immaculate for your students to enjoy and experience.
- **Properly staff your interschool tournament.** You'll need someone at the front desk to check in students and direct them where to go. You'll need several coordinators, walking the floor, to organize students into their divisions and get them to their rings when needed. You'll need score keepers and time keepers. I recommend you use your own instructors for judging. They know your students, forms and curriculum better than any outside judge. Make sure your instructors are properly prepared by going over the rules and regulations, and practice judging in your weekly instructor's meetings. I provide my staff a continental breakfast and box lunch on the day of the tournament. I make sure they're paid for their time just like any other workday. I believe this action is very important because it shows you value your staff and their time. They'll perform at a higher level of professionalism if you create this atmosphere.
- **Make sure your tournament runs on time.** Nothing says more about your school than a tournament that is well executed, runs smoothly and is on time. We've all been to tournaments that run late. We'd all agree that's not a good experience. One of the innovative things I developed for our tournament is running forms and sparring back to back. Here's how it works; let's say you're running the five year old forms division. As soon as they are done with forms and trophies are awarded, you then have them put on sparring gear and immediately run their sparring division. This way they are in and out in about an hour or so. I remember as a child doing forms in the morning and then having to wait all day long for my sparring division. This adjustment to your schedule makes the parents very happy, especially on a Sunday. We even announce it in all our classes, so the parents know ahead of time, they'll not have to be there all day. This time consideration you offer your students and parents is a great incentive for them to participate.



Professor Brannon Beliso is the owner of One Martial Arts in San Francisco. He has about 550 active students and grossed over one million dollars in 2008. He may be reached at (650)745-8818, www.onemeritbadges.com or www.onemartialarts.com