

# Kicking The Competition

In just three years, freshman becomes world-champion martial artist



**Sonya Sud** • Assistant Editor in Chief

It all started in Sept. 2019, when freshman Emi Limon decided to try out karate.

Three years later, he is now a champion martial artist with four medals in world competitions.

In May 2022, Emi was told he would be competing at the World Kickboxing and Karate Union Championship in Wales, UK. In Oct. 2022, he traveled to Wales for a week with his sensei.

There, Emi won medals in four categories. He was awarded with two gold medals in Korean Forms and Weapons with Music, a silver medal in Hardstyle Forms and a bronze medal in Weapons with no Music.

Although Emi was relatively new to competition and karate, his sensei and owner of Premier Martial Arts in Wildwood, Brett Thomason, was not surprised by his results.

“Emi started training with me a few years ago, and he’s worked really hard to advance to what we would consider a professional level for martial arts,” Thomason said.

Still, Emi’s skill is not the only factor to his success.

“He’s always here working hard, learning and trying to improve. I think that really speaks to his character. He sets goals and works hard until he achieves those,” Thomason said.

Emi trains about 25 hours a week.

“He’s excelled pretty quickly. That’s atypical of most students. Your average student trains two to three times a week. Emi’s here almost every day, but that’s what it takes,” Thomason said.

Along with his skill and dedication, Emi also has a strong passion for karate.

“I love it because I joined karate when I was at a low point in my life. So, my two instructors really helped me get out of it. As I was picking myself back up, I realized how much I loved doing karate,” Emi said. “It means a little bit more to me than it would to someone else. Because to someone else, karate is just like fighting, but to me, it means a lot more.”

Because Emi is at the dojo so often, he considers it his second home.

“Whenever I’m stressed out, I’ll usually listen to music and then I’ll train. When I’m training and I have music, I can’t think about anything else because I

have to be focused on training. It’s like all the other thoughts in my head disappear and it’s my happy place,” he said.

Despite the amount of time he puts into martial arts, Emi doesn’t do any training at home. Instead, he just goes to Premier Martial Arts to train.

“Well, the [martial arts] school is my home. Like, I have a key to the building, so I can go anytime I want. If I’m ever bored at home, I can just go. So I don’t practice at home because school is like my home and it only takes me five minutes to walk there,” Emi said.

In fact, Emi spends so much time at the school that his mom, Siul Limon, makes sure he does his homework during breaks. She also has Thomason’s contact information in case she ever needs to reach him.

“He’ll sit at a table to do his homework. And if I ever need to reach Emi, [Thomason and I] are friends on Facebook, and we have each others’ cell phone numbers,” Siul said. “So Emi’s very personalized [with the dojo] and I love that about him.”

Because of the relationship Emi has with his senseis and the school, his parents knew he would be in good hands going out of the country for the World Kickboxing and Karate Union Championships. They were happy Emi would be doing what he loved, even if he had to go far away from them to do it. “He’s never been away from us that much, or overseas, so he was a little nervous. But I knew he was in good hands and doing what he loves. Because it’s definitely a passion, what he has for martial arts,” Siul said. “He will drop everything in a heartbeat to go over there.”

Emi’s dad, Francisco Limon, feels something greater than pride with his son’s achievements.

It’s something that’s more than just being proud of your son,” Francisco said. “You see your son as a baby, and now he’s a teenager going out of the country to get gold medals.”

Like Francisco, Siul is happy to see Emi commit himself to what he loves to do.

“I am so proud that he is where he is right now, and of the person that he has become. I love his passion for what he is going to do in the future,” Siul said.

Emi loves the sport so much that he wants to pursue a career in martial arts, just like his sensei.

“My instructor, Sensei Brett, runs the school and that’s his job. That’s how he feeds his family, so I think that’s what I want to do, to follow in his footsteps,” Emi said. “This is what I plan on doing so I want to be really good at it.”

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