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Thursday September 4, 2008

Young talent dreams of Olympic gold in 2012

By [Walt Kaechele](#)
Senior correspondent

Wednesday, September 3, 2008 4:35 PM EDT

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Ty Ax (left) has his eyes on the gold especially the 2012 Olympic gold in London. At 14 he is already winning matches in the 14-17 age groups. Daisy Radke (right) has become an accomplished Tae Kwon Do athlete at the age of 10, and she enjoys the sport. (Photos by [Walt Kaechele](#))

They're not yet full grown, but they pack a big wallop and opponents from across the country have experienced how painful it can be when they are matched up against Ty Ax and Daisy Radke in the sport of Tae Kwon Do. Coached by Rafael Cabrera at Great Lakes Tae Kwon Do in Allegan, these two juniors are rapidly moving up through their belts and into prominence in the Junior Olympics. Both found success in recent months during competition at their various venues.

Ty took top honors at the AAU Junior Olympics Tournament in Novi in the 14-17 year-old division. And as a 14-year-old, he is one of the youngest competitors, but his age

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cannot diminish his talent and his desire.

“I’ve put in a lot of blood, sweat and tears along with some good training to get where I am,” Ty said.

Cabrera said at 14 he was adept at using his feet and quick to counter his opponent, which often led to some early conclusions to contests.

“I think in the Chicago tournament one of the bouts lasted about three seconds,” Cabrera said. “He caught him with a spinning hook kick right up by the temple and down he went.”

This particular move is one Ty likes.

He said, “My favorite move is the spinning hook kick. I like to get in close and let them commit. If they come with a right kick, I’ll set up on my left and spin with my right.”

According to Cabrera, this move can generate a lot of power and is a very quick move, but like everything else in athletes, all moves work when the person with the right skills applies them and Ty certainly has the skills.

Ty is one belt away from a black belt and he will test in November to earn the belt.

“He will do anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour testing, which will include sparring as well as knowing all the technical positions for Tae Kwon Do that a black belter should know.”

Ty is confident about his skills and has some lofty goals.

“I like to spar,” Ty said. “My goal, in sparring, is to knock people out and sometimes that happens. But someday I would like to make the Olympics.”

At 14, and moving through the AAU and Junior Olympic tournaments, it may be only a question of time before Ty makes his way to the five-ringed arena.

Cabrera’s other successful Junior Olympic athlete looks more like the quintessential stereotype of what 10-year-old feminine cuteness should be and not a Tae Kwon Do sparring juggernaut, but Daisy Radke is just that—a cute and lethal competitor. She took a second place silver medal from her latest USA Junior Olympic tournament.

Like Ty, Daisy is at the young end of her age group and she is also at the low end of her weight group. At 58 pounds, she often spars against competitors bigger and older than she is, but she doesn’t see this as a disadvantage.

“I don’t think I’m at a disadvantage,” Daisy said. “I like to spar. It’s fun to try your best and do well. It’s fun.”

Daisy’s success in sparring and tournaments, according to Cabrera, is her quickness and aggressiveness and the support she receives from home.

Cabrera said, “It helps when parents support the coaches and their child in any kind of training situation. These parents know that it takes hard work to get to the top. There is no wishing to get there. It takes hard work and training.”

Daisy’s training began four-and-a-half years ago when her father, Josh Radke, enrolled her in the class.

Radke said, “I enrolled Daisy in the class because I thought the exercise would be good for her and the kicking part of the class would help her with soccer. But once she

got into the class she just took off on her own.”

Daisy’s father is currently enrolled in the classes as well and he said, when Daisy gets her next belt, he will have to bow to her in recognition of her superior skills. When asked if he would have to do this at home, Daisy was quick to assure everyone, with a smile and a shake of her head ,there will be no bowing at home.

Daisy, like Ty, knows what it is going to take to reach their goals as potential Olympians and she is up for the challenge.

“I will have to try harder and get faster,” Daisy said. And this was all good news for Cabrera.

He said, “These two are really pretty exciting. They continue to improve. Their endurance, training and discipline also helps, not only with the tournaments they are in, but with a healthier life-style they can take with them for life.”

For more information about Great Lakes Tae Kwon Do, call Cabrera at (269) 673-5429 or email him at greatlakestk@yahoo.com.

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