



Taekwondo

Ssireum (Korean Wrestling)

## Traditional Korean Sports

SPORT IS IN OUR BLOOD



06



# TAEKWONDO





## Taekwondo

Taekwondo is a sport which originated in Korea and is now practiced worldwide. Taekwondo uses the whole body, particularly the hands and feet. It not only strengthens one's physique, but also cultivates character via physical and mental training. Coupled with techniques of discipline, taekwondo is a self-defense martial art.

The evidence of taekwondo's existence as a system of defence using the body's instinctive reflexes can be traced back to ceremonial games that were performed during religious events in the era of the ancient tribal states. During religious ceremonies such as Yeonggo and Dongmaeng (a sort of thanksgiving ceremony), and Mucheon (dance to Heaven), ancient Koreans performed a unique exercise for physical training. This exercise was the original inception of taekwondo.

With this historical background, taekwondo (also known by its older name, taekgyeon) secured its status as Korea's traditional martial art. During the Three Kingdoms period, taekgyeon became a required military art; the martial art was emphasized to enhance national defense and battle capabilities, and was practiced in the Musadan (a military organization), which was responsible for national defense.

The aforementioned traditions were continuously developed during the

◆ Children engaged in Gyorrogi (sparring) to upgrade their skills

◆ Supyeong ilja-chagi (horizontal single line kick), an attacking technique of Taekwondo





A taekgyeon (an older name for taekwondo) match painted on a mural from the Goguryeo era (37 BC-AD 668).

Goryeo period. The value of taekgyeon as a martial art for the defense and prosperity of the nation was acknowledged, and as a consequence, its standards were raised, leading to further systemization and popularity.

With the advent of explosives and the appearance of new weapons by the end of the Goryeo era, however, taekwondo, which had been highly supported at the national level during the beginning and middle periods of the Goryeo Dynasty, went into a steady decline. As a result of its weakened function as a martial art, the sport was transformed into a folk game at one point. According to records in the *Goryeosa* (History of Goryeo, 1454), people who gambled on taekgyeon for money or material goods were punished with 100 strokes of a paddle; a house owner who provided boarding or gambling money to gamblers also received the same punishment. Such records imply that taekgyeon was enjoyed as a folk game by many people and was deeply rooted in Koreans' lives.

Later, during the Joseon era, military arts regained their prominence due



to political circumstances in the early period of the Dynasty's foundation and the need for national defense. People who were skilled in taekgyeon received preferable treatment, and taekgyeon was recognized as a military art. Documents show that during the selection of military soldiers by the Uigeumbu (the military high command) during the 10th year (1410) of King Taejong's reign, persons who had beaten three rivals in taekgyeon matches were selected to become bangpaegun (shield carriers). In the following year, skills in taekgyeon were applied as a major criterion for recruiting soldiers. This practice attracted to the military service many of the gwanno, male provincial government slaves, who by virtue of their work were mostly well versed in the martial art.

However, once the country's organizational structure was solidified, the importance of the martial art was again deemphasized due to the unavoidable strengthening of the power of the literati. This trend was reversed when the country was beset by travails such as the Imjin waeran (the

The basic movements of taekwondo are included in Muye-dobongji (Comprehensive Illustrated Manual of Martial Arts), written during the Joseon era (1392-1910).

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A group of taekwondo athletes perform a jumping kick in front of the National Assembly building.

Japanese invasion of Joseon) in 1592 and the Byeongja horan (the Manchu invasion) in 1636. At the national level, the Hullyeon dogam (Military Training Command) was established to support martial arts.

With the passage of time methods of national defense changed, along with peoples' attitude. Consequently, taekgyeon became primarily a folk game rather than a military art. With Japan's undisguised intention of invading Korea, however, taekgyeon emerged as a national pastime. The fact that it was already established as a folk game, coupled with Koreans' consciousness of belonging to a homogeneous nation distinct from the Japanese, fueled their passion for the art.

During the Japanese colonial period, taekgyeon was suppressed. Nevertheless, it was secretly passed on among certain taekgyeon masters even during this time.

After national independence in 1945, taekgyeon underwent a renaissance, aided by restored personal freedoms. It was during this period that a new word, "taekwon" was coined and began to be widely used. Concurrently, the



characteristics of the master-trainee relationship in taekwondo changed to emphasize the characteristics of taekwondo as more of a sport than a martial art. With the foundation of the Korea Taekwondo Association in September of 1961, taekwondo was recognized officially as a sport.

In 1962, the Korea Taekwondo Association became a member organization of the Korea Amateur Sports Association, and the following year taekwondo was chosen as a regular entry for the National Sports Festival.

In 1971, the Korea Taekwondo Association established criteria to guide those practicing taekwondo. The criteria include areas of etiquette and attitude, articles to follow in daily living places and in practice halls, dress code and personal appearance guidelines to be followed when conversing with or visiting someone. The Gukgiwon was opened in 1972 to function as the central practice hall and competition stadium for taekwondo.

The first World Taekwondo Championship was held in Seoul in 1973, at which time the World Taekwondo Federation was founded. The World Taekwondo Federation eventually became a member of the GAISF (General

Soldiers giving a tile-breaking performance



## Main techniques of taekwondo



Araemakgi



Sonnalchigi



Yeopjireugi



Yeopchagi



Bandalchagi



Association of International Sports Federations), and was chosen as an official entry by the Committee for the International Soldiers Meet (CISM) in 1976. Today, the World Taekwondo Federation has 184 member countries, and 3,000 masters have been dispatched to these countries to instruct approximately 60 million trainees worldwide.

The sport's steady progress and growth were responsible for taekwondo's selection as an exhibition sport for the Olympic Games at the General Assembly of the International Olympic Committee on July 15, 1980. During the General Assembly of the International Olympic Committee in 1981, taekwondo was also chosen for inclusion in the 10th Asian Games. Having

The 1st WTF World Taekwondo  
Grand Prix Final in Manchester,  
UK



been selected as an exhibition sport for the 1988 Olympic Games, taekwondo firmly established its presence in the international sports arena.

The First International Taekwondo Academic Conference, which was held in Seoul in December 1983, also greatly contributed to the development of the sport. Partially as a result of the heightened worldwide interest in taekwondo stemming from this event, it was decided during the International Olympic Committee meeting held in Sydney, Australia, that taekwondo would be an official entry in the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. Former Olympic taekwondo champion Moon Dae-sung was elected as a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) athletes' commission during the Beijing Olympics.

The training methods of taekwondo can be differentiated into gibondongjak, pumse, gyeorugi, dallyeon, and hosinsul. The gibondongjak (basic movements) refer to dynamic elements of the use of hands and feet and are the basis of taekwondo. They include chigi (striking) techniques using the fists and the outer edge of the hand. Pumse refers to training that is done alone with an imaginary counterpart. Here, one seeks to master effective techniques of attacking and defensive movements so as to improve one's readiness, muscular power, flexibility, ability to shift one's center of power, control of breathing, and speed of movement. Types of pumse include Taegeuk (1-8 jang) and Palgwae (1-8 jang) for non-grade-holders, and Goryeo, Geumgang, Taebaek, Pyeongwon, Sipjin, Jitae, Cheonggwon, Hansu, and Ilyeo for grade-holders.

Gyeorugi, the application of pumse to an actual situation in order to demonstrate techniques of attack and defense, is divided into two parts: machueo-gyeorugi and gyeorugi. Machueo-gyeorugi refers to a synchronized demonstration of given attack and defense techniques, while gyeorugi refers to the free application of those techniques to an opponent's vulnerable areas. The latter enhances one's spirit of fighting and courage.

Dallyeon involves strengthening body parts such as one's hands and feet through the use of various equipment, in order to increase one's power for attack and defense. Hosinsul consists of techniques to defeat a rival's attack and to effectively counterattack.

Taekwondo matches are held according to weight categories. These



categories include finweight, flyweight, bantamweight, featherweight, welterweight, middleweight, and heavyweight. The time allotted for a match is three three-minute rounds, with a one-minute rest period between rounds.

The competition floor is a square with sides of a total length of eight meters. The competition surface is covered by a mat. For the safety of the competitor, protective pads for certain parts of the body, such as the torso and head, are worn over the taekwondo uniform. One examiner, one chief referee, and four officials act as officiating judges.

A Taekwondo demonstration held at the Time Square in New York. The martial art is now widely regarded as a symbol of Korean cultural heritage.



SSIREUM



## Ssireum

(Korean Wrestling)

Ssireum, a Korean traditional form of wrestling, is a type of folk competition in which two players, holding on to a *satba* (a cloth-sash tied around the waist), try to use their strength and various techniques to wrestle each other to the ground.

The history of ssireum began at the same time that communities began to form. In primitive societies, people unavoidably had to fight against wild beasts, not only for self-defense, but also for obtaining food. In addition, it was impossible for these communities to avoid coming in conflict with other groups of different blood ties. As a result, people ended up practicing different forms of fighting to protect themselves. During this period, when grappling was a predominant method of combat, various wrestling techniques were born.

With the advancement of human intelligence and political and economic development among local communities in Korea, ssireum developed into a military art. It can thus be said that ssireum's elevated status as a military art was a natural outcome of social development.

By the beginning of the Goguryeo Kingdom (37 B.C.-A.D.668), ssireum was already established as a military art. This is substantiated by the murals in

Ssireum is a form of Korean traditional wrestling. Competitors try their skills during folk competitions.





Ssireum gained widespread popularity during the Joseon Dynasty. Ssireum, as depicted in a genre painting by Kim Hongdo. Late Joseon period.

the Gakjeochong which is believed to have been constructed in the 4th century. Drawn on a stone wall in the main chamber was a vivid scene depicting ssireum. The mural contains a scene showing two men wrestling, with a referee judging the match. The location of the drawing implies that ssireum was a major part of Korean life during that period.

Ssireum's status continued into the Goryeo period (918-1392). A record in Goryeosa (History of Goryeo) states that in the mid-fourteenth century King Chunghye ordered soldiers to compete in ssireum and observed the match during a banquet. It was during the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), however, that ssireum gained increasingly widespread popularity.

Evidence of this is depicted in the genre paintings of Kim Hongdo, which frequently

featured scenes of ssireum competitions; it is clear that by the Joseon era ssireum had become well-known as a folk competition in addition to being a military art.

Virtually every country has seasonal folk celebrations that express the unique characteristics of that country, and Korea is no exception in this regard. Ssireum contests, which could be held virtually anywhere or anytime, were a frequent part of the various celebrations held throughout the year. Many ssireum competitions occurred during Dano (the May Festival), but also during other holidays as well. On holidays such as the 3rd day of the Third Moon, the 8th day of the Fourth Moon, Buddhist All Souls' Day, the 15th of the Seventh Moon or the Harvest Moon Festival during the Eighth Moon, townsfolk gathered to compete in ssireum matches as a way of sharing their joy and releasing mental and physical tensions from the strenuous farming work that lasted from spring until fall.

The surrounding atmosphere became festive with the beginning of

ssireum matches. On days when ssireum matches were held, gambling games such as yut (a four-stick game like parcheesi) and various card games, which were ordinarily prohibited, were allowed. Upon demonstration of a fine ssireum technique or announcement of the winner, the people would raise a shout of joy, and pungmulnoli (farmers' music and dance) was performed.

The final winner of the ssireum tournament was customarily awarded a bull, which was not only a symbol of strength, but also a valuable asset in an agricultural society. Because farming was primarily accomplished by a bull's strength at that time, it was a most meaningful and generous award in every respect.

Ssireum matches include group and individual matches. The competition schedule is determined by a drawing in the presence of the individual team's representative, while victory is determined by a player or a group's winning two out of three rounds of the match. The decision is made by the executive official after gathering opinions from the officials of the competition committee.

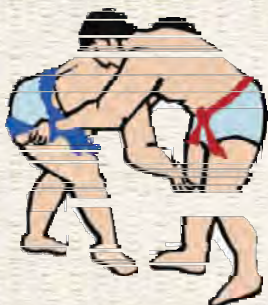
The time limit for the match differs according to category, which includes elementary, middle school, and high school and above (including college and general public). A match for the elementary and middle school categories is set for two minutes. If there is no winner, a two-minute extended round is held after one minute of rest. For matches in high school and higher categories, matches last for three minutes. If a winner is not decided, an extended match is held after a minute of rest.

Upon exhaustion of the second match time limit when the first match's winner has already been determined, the winner from the first match becomes the winner of the competition. If there is no winner during the first match, the winner from the second match wins. When the score after the first two rounds is 1-1 and a winner is not decided in the third round match due to expiration of the designated time limit, a player who has received a warning or citation loses the competition. If neither of the players has received a warning or citation, the lighter player becomes the winner.

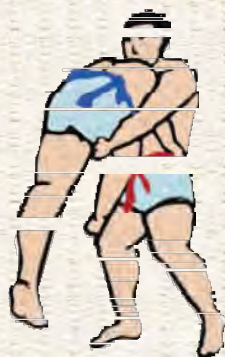
During the match, a player who touches the ground with any part of the body above the knee or steps out of the ring is defeated. If a player purposefully pushes his opponent outside the ring or steps outside due to his



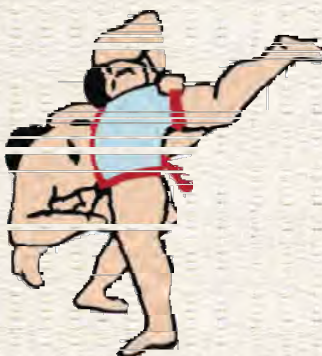
**Ssireum uses various techniques.  
Some of them are shown in the pictures:**



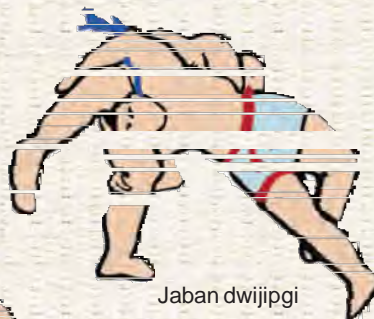
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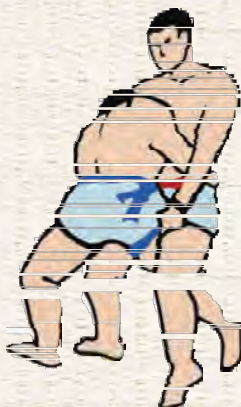
Apdari deulgi



Ammureup dwijipgi



Jaban dwijipgi



Andari geolgi



Ssireum employs techniques using different parts of body.

own mistake, a warning is given. However, when the match is completed outside the ring as a result of a player's natural progression in a ssireum move, the player whose move determined the end of the match becomes the winner. Squeezing the neck, hitting with the head, twisting the arms, kicking with the foot, punching with a fist, covering the eyes, and other actions that hinder the opponent's performance become grounds for revocation of the right to further participate in the competition.

The judging panel consists of one chief referee and three sub-referees. In addition to judging the match, they are also responsible for administration of





issues pertinent to match. The chief referee moves in and out of the ring and is expected to announce his judgments in a speedy and accurate fashion. Sub-referees are positioned outside the ring, one on the left and another on the right. To ensure the fairness of the chief referee's decisions, sub-referees observe the match thoroughly. If an unfair judgment is announced or the chief referee is unable to make a decision upon completion of a match, they can request a revocation of the decision or a rematch. Sub-referees can also recommend the immediate cessation of the match when injury is likely to be incurred by a player due to the match itself or outside conditions.

With the development of consistent rules and guidelines, ssireum has continued to progress from a traditional sport and self-defense method into a

well-loved folk competition and popular modern sport that is a part of the lives of Koreans today.