

'Karate kids' get kick out of teaching classes

By Barbara Ann Homick
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Edwin Emerson and Carlos Obando got such a kick out of karate lessons that now the two youths teach self-defense skills to other young athletes.

Emerson and Obando make up two-thirds of the staff teaching self-defense to students at several Jennings Karate Academies in the Rochester area. Emerson, who teaches at the academy in Brighton, and Obando, an instructor at the facility in Henrietta, both said their love for karate motivates them to spend many long hours in the studios.

Emerson, a sophomore at McQuaid Jesuit High School, began taking karate lessons with Matt Dorsey — who is a sensei, meaning "master" or "teacher" — when Emerson was 6 years old. Even though Emerson said he had to stop taking lessons because of financial reasons, he added that he knew he would eventually return to the sport.

"It was fun as a little kid. I learned a lot and made a lot of friends," said the McQuaid student.

Three years ago, at the age of 12, Emerson got his chance to resume taking lessons.

Currently a brown belt, Emerson began teaching when he received his green belt more than a year ago. The first belt earned in karate is white, followed by yellow, orange, green, brown and finally black.

After spending a year instructing students in karate, Emerson said he has found teaching more enjoyable than taking lessons.

"I learn more from teaching the little kids in class because I find ways of teaching, ways of talking and ways of dealing with them," he explained.

Although not all of Emerson's students are young children — his oldest pupil is 65 — he said the smaller children are the most challenging to teach.

Obando, on the other hand, only teaches youths between the ages of 4 and 12. But he agreed with Emerson that teaching smaller children can be quite difficult.

"The little kids are the hardest because of their attention span," noted Obando, a seventh-grader at Northeastern Catholic Junior High School.

The 12-year-old Obando said he began taking karate lessons as a second grader after Dorsey gave a demonstration to his class at St. John the Evangelist School, 549 Humboldt St. After getting his green belt



Phillip Archer/Photo Intern
Carlos Obando (left) and Edwin Emerson make up two-thirds of the staff teaching self-defense to students at several Jennings Karate Academies in the Rochester area. Emerson, who teaches at the academy in Brighton, and Obando, an instructor at the facility in Henrietta, both competed in the National Junior Olympics and the Amateur Athletic Union Karate Nationals in Florida this summer.

four years ago, Obando began teaching his own classes under the supervision of an adult instructor.

Now a black belt, Obando said he loves karate because it keeps him in top form. In addition to teaching 11 classes a week, he spends time working out on his own.

This summer, both youths experienced quite a workout when they competed in both the National Junior Olympics and the Amateur Athletic Union Karate Nationals in Florida.

In the Junior Olympics in Tallahassee Aug. 2-4, Emerson placed fifth in weapons and sixth in sparring, while Obando took the sixth-place medal in kata, and eighth place in both weapons and sparring.

During the AAU Karate Nationals in Orlando July 5-7, Emerson was sixth in weapons and eighth in fighting. Obando finished ninth in weapons. Kata is the name

for individual performance. Weapons is individual performance with either a staff or a small sword, and sparring is point fighting — similar to fencing.

Dorsey, who said he was pleased with both of his students' performances, said Obando has come a long way since he began taking lessons at age 6. He noted that as a teaching assistant Obando has become a role model for the young children. Obando's reaching the level of black belt by age 12 is quite an accomplishment, Dorsey acknowledged.

"By achieving a black belt at such a young age, he has a lot of potential for the future — for competing, for teaching or for just about anything he wants to do," noted Dorsey, who runs the Jennings Karate Academy in Henrietta.

Dorsey's wife, Jackie Dorsey, has been teaching Emerson for the past three years. Also a sensei, she said that the young instructor is a fine young man both on and off the mats.

"The parents, students and his peers enjoy his teaching," said Jackie Dorsey. "Most of the kids think he is in college be-

cause he handles his classes so well."

Emerson, who also enjoys playing football and lacrosse, said he finds karate more challenging than most sports — both physically and mentally. The McQuaid student said he would like to own his own karate studio someday.

Obando, who would also like to open a karate school in the future, said the sport is more useful than any other activity because it has a practical purpose.

"Karate will help you later on, when with another sport once you stop, you stop," noted Obando. "If you get in trouble, you can defend yourself with karate."

Both Matt and Jack Dorsey said that the youths should have no problems as far as their karate careers are concerned. Each has gotten started on the right foot, Jackie Dorsey said.


"It is unique for kids so young to have their own class and the role of a teacher," she said. "There is no one else I would put in this position and leave on their own as I would these two."



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