

Dufferin County brothers strike gold at Karate Canada National Championships

Written By **MARNI WALSH**

As the Karate Canada Senior National Championships came to a close last weekend in Gatineau, Quebec, two Dufferin County brothers packed up their gear and headed home with gold medals.

The 18 year old twins, Nicholas and Daniel Mustapha from Amaranth Township, saw their hard work and dedication pay off, when they competed against the best athletes from across the country - and won.

The boys' parents, Graciela and Max Mustapha, said the twins had qualified for Team Ontario for the last two years, but this year they had qualified for both the Senior and the Junior teams.

Daniel, who has Cerebral Palsy, qualified for two Para Athletic categories: the Mobility Impairment Division, where he earned a silver medal; and, the Intellectual Challenges Division, where he earned the title of National Champion for 2019, and his gold medal.

The intricate and intensive sport of Karate requires a grace and focus that presents additional challenges for Para Athletes such as Daniel. However, like his brothers, Daniel has been home schooled for much of his life, and says, that choice played an instrumental role in his development as a visual artist, as well as in Karate.

"I started the sport when I was five years old and have worked hard for thirteen years to get where I am," he said, "Karate has taught me honesty, integrity, loyalty, time, patience and focus."

This was Nicholas' first year qualifying to compete in Men's National Kata. Remarkably, he placed 7th in Canada with a 22.48 score. He also competed in Team Kata with two other members, where he and his team received the gold medal.

Nicholas is also an accomplished pianist. He plays piano in a jazz trio, performs solo for private events, was the accompanist for Theatre Orangeville's Young Company productions for the last two years, and teaches at Pamela Scott-Demetriou's music school in Orangeville. Next month he will play for a musical cabaret in Toronto.

He has acquired his grade nine Royal Conservatory qualifications, and is applying for a career in music performance and education in the Jazz Degree Program at Humber College.

In Quebec, Daniel and Nicholas received their medals from the president of Karate Canada, and were supported by their Senseis Veronica Ramos de Lugo and Eduardo Ramos from Dojo Seienchin, as well as, Sensei Khalepanah from Go Ju Do.

Both Mustapha boys express their gratitude to all the coaches of the Ontario Karate Federation for their amazing support and dedication, as well as the Karate Canada staff who made the Championship successful.

His gold medal win qualifies Daniel to represent Canada internationally, at the 33rd Panamerican Karate Federation Championships in Panama City, Panama, this March.

Nicholas will be competing again in May at the Junior National Championships in Edmonton. The brothers are training hard, in hopes of, once again, bringing home medals, but financial sponsorship is vital to reaching their goals and representing Canada in the sport.

It is hoped that local businesses and individuals will step forward to help cover the expensive cost of traveling, food, accommodations and equipment for the two local athletes. Interested sponsors may contact the Mustapha's at 519-925-2742 or

416-708-9817 or by email: gracielamustapha@yahoo.com.