

Name: Shawheen Daniel Nabizadeh (Shawn to my friends)

Age: 17 years old. Height: 6'0

Born: August 30, 1988

Status: Single

Occupation: High school student in my senior year. Clark Magnet High School in Lacrescenta, CA.

Hobbies: Martial Arts, Paintballing, snowboarding, playing the guitar, singing, videogames, movies.

I was introduced to martial arts at a very young age, around 3. My father used to do martial arts in Iran (kyokushinkai; a Japanese style of full-contact martial arts), which is how I was introduced to the sport at the age of 3. He taught me how to make a fist, and accordingly, how to punch, as well as a few other hand techniques in addition to some basic kicks. At the age of 5, my father enrolled me in Ken Nagayama Martial Arts, which was a mix of Karate, Judo, and a royal Japanese martial art called Mutsuroboi (Not sure of spelling). I went there for about 4 years and nearly received my black belt though had to resign due to moving and the very long commute that resulted from it. I was also simultaneously doing tennis where I also did well and won a few tournaments, and again, had to stop because of the commute. So for two years, I wasn't involved in a sport, until the age of 12, when I found the Dae Myung Judo/Taekwon-do Academy a 15 minute walk from my home. The master of the school is Jae Ho Park, an 8th degree black belt in Taekwon-do and Judo, and a 7th degree black belt in Hap ki do. He is father to 3 sons, one of which is my instructor and coach, James Park, and also a 7 time National Champion himself. I quickly skipped belts because of my prior experience and skill.

(Currently a red belt, which normally requires 1.5 to 2 years before you can be eligible for receiving a black belt). I competed in the Jimmy Kim Invitational Tournament and won first place in sparing when I was a green belt. I loved the feel of competing, and of course, winning. I then trained, and trained, and decided that I would try to qualify for the Nationals. About 2 weeks before the Qualifiers. I pulled my right hamstring muscle. It was the most painful thing I've ever felt and probably the worst injury I've every sustained. So now, I couldn't kick with my right, or balance on it to kick with my left. An analogous situation would be swimmer without his arms. I still went to class...though had to watch as my teammates trained. It was a horrible feeling, not being able to do anything when my mind wanted to but my body couldn't. By some miracle, I had a buy for the Qualifiers, as in I didn't have anyone in my division to spar for that specific tournament in California. I was saved. I still went to the tournament, and was prepared to do what ever I could in the ring should I have been called on to fight (although none would enter my division that day). Now I had the time to rest, heal, and train harder for the Nationals which were two months away. (The Qualifiers were in late April). Slowly, I began to go through the motions of kicking, and tried to condition (sit-ups/pushups) in order for me not to lose any stamina and keep in shape. My leg never reached 100% healed, which it needed to be, (and it wouldn't be for another 4 months), though I qualified so I wasn't too concerned about it, and wasn't about to pass up the opportunity that I'd been set on for the entire year.

So the trip was booked, and I made the flight to San Antonio, TX. I would compete on Friday, June 24th, and actually had to miss the last day of school to make it to San Antonio and weigh in before competition. The day came, and I had only 2 fights lined up. One of

the competitors was from Idaho, the other from Virginia. The first was shorter than me by about 2 inches, and the second was about 2 inches taller, both skilled. The first match was against the former, and I started the match with a back kick straight to his stomach as he came at me with a roundhouse. He hit the floor, grabbing his side. They had to stop the match to make sure he wasn't seriously injured, and his coach and another referee argued that the kick was in fact to his thigh, though a referee of higher standing, who actually saw the kick land, said it was legal and I kept the point awarded. (Later viewing the video my teammates, coach and family confirmed it was good, and laughed as my opponent doubled over in the air from the kick and hit the floor.) Due to the long--nearly 6 minute--break, my opponent had a chance to recover from the blow. Had it not been for the intermission, the match would have been over much sooner. I would continue to control the match, knocking him down several more times. It became close, as he scored small, nearly unnoticeable points, and at a score of 5-4 with me winning, time ran out. But it wasn't over. My competitors coach argued that there was more time on the clock left from a previous time out when i knocked his student on the floor. The match was stopped, and the referee's held a meeting at the table. My coach was called over and was explained this: Your competitor can take the medal, as we believe the time is correct, or we can add time to the clock as is the request of the other coach. My coach, confident in my ability, replied "Add as much time as you want." The match continued, my opponent ran in to score a quick point to send the match into sudden death (meaning another round would ensure and only last as long as it would take for either my opponent or I to score once). Though using my height advantage I did a sidekick straight into his chest which sent him reeling, giving me another point, and finishing the match (6-4). Next was my second and last opponent, who was at least 3 inches taller than me, so my previous advantage of height was gone. The match began and I realized that he wasn't AS skilled as the prior competitor, though still good in his own right. I had fun with this one, and sent him to the floor roughly 3-4 times. Although, he did manage to punch me square in the mouth (an illegal move in this sport) and was not penalized or even warned. My lip began to bleed though I was unaware, and the medic ran out to tend it. She cleaned the blood from my mouth piece and the bleeding slowed, and with a slightly fatter lip I finished the match with a score of 6-2, and was now the National Champion. It hadn't sunk in yet, and still hadn't as the medal was being placed around my neck on the podium. I just knew I had done it, that after all the difficulties and injuries, I persevered. It was the best feeling in the world to know I had put time and effort into something and was able to reap the rewards. A motto I try to emulate every aspect of my life.

I really couldn't have achieved to the degree I did without the support of my family: my father, mother, sister, grandmother and friends.