

# PROPOSAL: Hybrid Points System & Membership Based Funding Model

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## Overview

USA Taekwondo, the National Governing Body for Taekwondo in the United States, lacks the income to fund its National teams and has resorted to self-funded teams. Limited funding has also led to teams that have lacked the proper training to prepare for World class events causing the USA to not be a strong competitive country in the sport of Taekwondo. In addition, lack of funding has led to no depth in its referee program which has had detrimental impact on the results of major USA events, especially Nationals and Team Trials. While USA Taekwondo has implemented a new system meant to strengthen the competitiveness of teams, many coaches, athletes, and parents are frustrated with the program direction and are considering moving to AAU or leaving the sport. Change in the funding model is needed to continue to increase competitiveness, fund referee development, and sustain a multi-team system that supports top level and developmental athletes.

## Inconsistent Competitiveness

USA has won medals in both the Olympics and World Championships and has remained a competitive country in the Pan American region of the World Taekwondo organization. The last Gold medals for the USA at World Championships were in 2009 earned by a male and female athlete. USA Junior and Cadet teams have also been very competitive in the Pan American region. However, outside of a few athletes, the USA has not shown itself to be competitive with much of the world.

Inconsistent competitiveness is not due to a lack of quality athletes or because USA Taekwondo used a Team Trials system to select its team members. Limited funding for athletes has been a long-term issue that has continued to degrade the quality of the USA Taekwondo teams and has wiped out the depth of the USA program as athletes frustrated with the system quit or decide to compete for other countries.

The new system developed by USA Taekwondo will not increase team competitiveness and may even hasten the decline of the program as a significant number of current coaches and athletes become increasingly frustrated. Many are choosing to join the AAU program because they feel that it is a much fairer system for the athletes due to the use of Team Trials to form teams. Because the new system does not address the lack of team funding, it will not improve the program and resolve current issues.

## Current Operating Model

As a self-funded non-profit organization, USA Taekwondo does not have government or public sponsorship to help fund programs, even though the USA is one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The current income of the USA program is approximately \$3.1 million dollars and operates at a minimal profit, if not at a loss. This model does not include funding its programs in a way that helps them grow and in turn works towards developing a competitive program in World Taekwondo.

The current system rewards athletes that can fund their own progress in the new point chase. Unfortunately, for many athletes and families with limited funds to chase points, this system will not work. In addition, athletes in some geographic locations or remote states are disadvantaged as they require increased funds for travel and, unless wealthy, the impact of chasing points can be significant. For example, athletes in Hawaii and Alaska may need as much as 10x more funds to chase points than an athlete in California. They are not the only states where the cost of chasing points is beyond reach. With families considering the points chase out of reach, they may decide to pull their children from the sport or join the AAU program. In turn, the USA Taekwondo program is at risk for increased lack of depth and decrease in quality athletes in the sport.

With USA Taekwondo now providing the opportunity for events to be sanctioned, there is an increased number of events available for the athlete to earn points. Unfortunately, this widens the points gap for athletes with

limited funds as wealthier athletes increase their leads by traveling to many events. The increase in events does not bring any more funding into the USA Taekwondo program to help solve main issues.

### Developing a Hybrid Model

In talking to many athletes, coaches and parents regarding the current state of the USA Taekwondo organization, many are unhappy with the new direction. In parallel, the leaders of our organization have developed up a program that they believe will lead to the USA becoming more competitive. To meet the goals of both members and leaders of the organization, a hybrid model should be developed.

For the members, a hybrid model will be a chance to return to a Team Trials system, National team coaches keep the ability to select players they have identified as possible elite level competitors, and the points system continues to be used as an important component without being required for an athlete to have a fair chance to compete regardless of economic situation.

This hybrid system will create an A and B team that will compete in fully funded events that lead to the final decision of who will represent the USA in the event in which they are competing to be part of. To remove subjectivity from final decisions, criteria will need to be developed.

USA teams that need to be funded:

<b>Sparring-USA</b>	<b>Poomsae-USA</b>
Senior A Team	Senior Team
Senior B Team	Junior Team
Junior A Team	Cadet Team
Junior B Team	Para Team
Cadet A Team	Developmental Team
Cadet B Team	
Para Team	
Collegiate Team (every other year)	
Developmental Team	
Youth Team	

Athletes can still chase points but will be able to pick and choose quality events. In addition, with multiple paths to team trials athletes are not out of the chase due to one poor result.

USA Taekwondo will also create a new Youth team. These athletes will be determined based on the outcome of USA Nationals. This will not be a traveling team. Youth team athletes will receive a Black Belt embroidered as Youth National Team Member and will be recognized along with other USA National Teams. The Youth team athletes will have the opportunity to attend a National clinic at no cost but must cover their own travel, accommodations, and other expenses). Youth team athletes will also receive all National Team clothing if sponsored by an outside company at no cost to USATKD.

### Increasing Self-Funding

At its core it is the responsibility of USA Taekwondo to win medals and take care of its membership by giving everyone a chance to compete regardless of their economic situation. This means the members must pay their membership dues and abide by the organizational rules, there is no requirement to be wealthy. In the past the organization has not been developed for long-term success or depth in the program. Any changes to the program to improve this should be to the benefit of most members, not just a few.

The USA program currently earns approximately \$845,000 in membership fees and \$3.1 million in total income. To fund all our teams, income must be increased by approximately \$1 million dollars. As a self-funded organization, if we want to increase the competitiveness of our teams, increase membership, and improve the referee program while funding multiple teams and supporting member athletes, coaches, and referees we must pay for it.

Introducing a tiered membership system with Athlete, Coach, and Referee fees ranging from \$50 to \$275 annually, based on the number of current members and what membership category they are in, will create the funding support needed to grow the program. This model provides funding contributions to athletes in National A and B Sparring teams across Senior, Junior, and Cadet divisions, Senior, Junior, and Cadet Poomsae teams, Collegiate and Developmental teams, supports regional coaching staff travel, the coaching pipeline, and provides support for camps and clinics. In addition, by providing the opportunity for memberships to be renewed automatically, via a stored credit card, the potential for maintaining membership revenue year over year increases. Additional revenue can be generated from camps, clinics, events, certification, and USOC funding.

Membership Category	Member Count**	Proposed Annual Membership Fee	Possible Revenue
World Class Black Belts	4,000	\$275.00	\$1,100,000.00
Black Belts, Coaches, Referees	3,500	\$150.00	\$525,000.00
Color Belts	2,000	\$100.00	\$200,000.00
Support Membership and Non-Nationals Athletes	3,500	\$50.00	\$175,000.00
Clubs	500	\$350.00	\$175,000.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>13,500</b>		<b>\$2,175,000.00</b>

\*\* Member count is based on latest Tusah Ranking Raw Data and is approximated.

Parents may ask why they should pay a higher membership fee for their 7 or 8-year-old black belt but as we invest in the future of this sport the younger athlete will benefit from not only more opportunities but also an improved referee program. When younger athletes start competing for team spots they will be doing so under an improved and more equitable system than what is in place today. If forced to solely chase points to earn a place on a team, athletes and parents may spend thousands of dollars annually instead of less than \$300 a year.

### Funding for National Team Athletes

Under this model, USA Taekwondo Team athletes will be fully funded for events outside the USA. Athletes must compete in all events required as USA National Team Members. Not doing so will require a waiver from the USATKD CEO. Each athlete must understand that not competing in a required event may cause them to be demoted from their position on the USA National Team and may lead to dismissal. Any team position that is vacated will be filled by a developmental athlete, but only as a back-up to the current National Team athlete. The athlete may be fully or partially funded for trips but will not receive an athlete stipend.

Developmental athletes will be determined by High Performance and National Team coaches. They will receive no automatic funding. The athletes may have the opportunity to travel with the National team and this may have partial funding but is not guaranteed.

### Athlete Stipends

As long as the athlete remains on the National Team, they will receive a stipend as follows:

- “A” Team member = \$1500 per month
- “B” Team member = \$750 per month

Members may end up swapping team positions after final criteria-based events. Stipends will stay with the team position, not with the athlete.

Funding Category	Funding Contributions	USAT Funding Amount
Sparring Senior A team	4 events annually	\$195,000.00
Sparring Senior B team	3 events annually	\$120,000.00
Sparring Junior A team	3 events annually	\$130,000.00
Sparring Junior B team	2 events annually	\$20,000.00
Sparring Cadet A team	3 events annually	\$130,000.00
Sparring Cadet B team	2 events annually	\$20,000.00
Senior Poomsae team	1 event annually	\$75,000.00
Junior Poomsae team	1 event annually	\$75,000.00
Cadet Poomsae team	1 event annually	\$75,000.00
Collegiate team	1 event biennially	\$50,000.00
Youth team	2 events annually	\$20,000.00
Team Sparring National Team		\$40,000.00
Developmental athletes		\$25,000.00
Para Poomsae athletes		\$20,000.00
Para Sparring athletes		\$20,000.00
Senior A team Stipend		\$288,000.00
Senior B team Stipend		\$144,000.00
Miscellaneous expenses		\$93,000.00
<b>Total Team Funding Expense</b>		<b>\$1,540,000.00</b>

### Senior Trip Estimated Expenses

<b>US Open, PanAm President’s Cup</b>	
4 Nights Hotel (\$125/night – 2 athletes per room)	\$16,000.00
Flights (32 athletes with \$300.00 stipend per trip)	\$19,200.00
Food (32 athletes with \$150.00 stipend per trip)	\$9600.00
<b>International Event</b>	
Each Team – \$75K	\$150,000.00
<b>Closed Event for “A” Team</b>	
	\$75,000.00

### Junior and Cadet Trip Estimated Expenses

<b>US Open, PanAm President’s Cup</b>	
20 Athletes per Event (\$500.00 stipend per event)	\$40,000.00
<b>Closed Event for “A” Teams</b>	
\$90K per team	\$180,000.00

## Poomsae Trip Estimated Expenses

Each Team - \$75K	\$225,000.00
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## Hybrid Point System

A program should be developed that leverages the regional system and a hybrid point system, using both points earned and a team trials event, to award athlete spots on USAT National A and B Sparring teams and provide funding based on suggested annual USAT membership fee increase.

Reintroducing Team Trials in January of each year provides the opportunity for all athletes to earn a position on a National A, B, or Developmental team regardless of points earned.

## Available Points

	Regional	State	Local
Gold	150	100	80
Silver	100	50	40
Bronze (2)	50	25	20

Bonus points are awarded for medalizing at a G1 or G2 International Event:

- Gold = 200 pts bonus
- Silver = 150 pts bonus
- Bronze = 100 pts bonus

Maximum points may be earned at State events for each Division regardless of number of athletes in the Division. Extra points are limited to 2 certified events in or out of the athlete's region, not including State Championships. Local tournaments are limited to 2 per State except for California, Texas, Hawaii, and Alaska, which can have 3 local events due to size of state or travel difficulty based on locale. This will encourage high level competition and well attended events.

All points are zeroed out at the end of each calendar year. National "A" Team members will start the new year with 100 points because they are not required to compete in the State qualifier.

## Qualifying Events and Requirements

Athletes may attend up to 2 State qualifying events, with 1 required to be within the athlete's region. The second event may be USAT or AAU and be outside the athlete's region. Only one regional qualifying event is required for the athlete to qualify for USAT Nationals except for National "A" Team members who are not required to compete in State qualifying events.

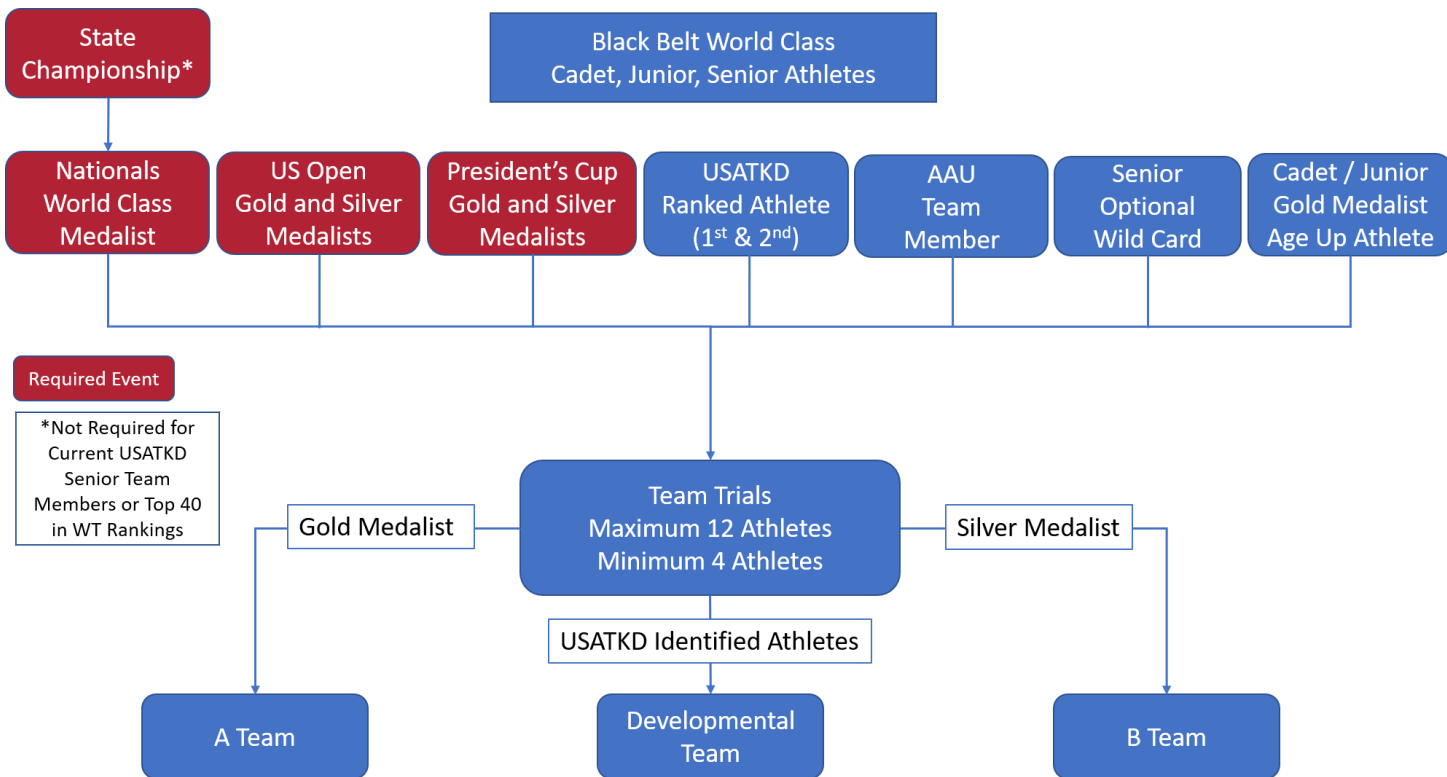
US Open, President's Cup, and US Nationals are required events. Gold and Silver medalists from US Open and President's Cup and all medalists from Nationals will proceed to Team Trials.

In December of each year all World Class athletes, Youth and above, must select their Division for the upcoming year. The athlete must compete at State Championships in the division that they selected, unless granted a change a higher weight class by USAT. No athletes can compete at Nationals in more than one weight division.

A Youth, Cadet, or Junior athlete may choose to go up a weight division during the competition year and all

points will transfer. However, if the athlete’s transferred points exceed the #1 ranked athlete’s points, the transferring athlete cannot be ranked higher than #2 in the new division and will remain 1 point behind the #1 ranked athlete regardless of points transferred.

The athlete must notify USAT of the weight change prior to the last State championship and can no longer compete at the lower weight division. The athlete must compete at Nationals



### Team Trials

Both USAT A and B teams will be developed in this hybrid model as determined by the following Team Trials proposal.

Gold and Silver medalists from US Open and President’s Cup, and all medalists from US Nationals automatically advance to Team Trials. The top 2 points athletes also automatically advance. In addition, USA National Team coaches may select 1 wild card athlete per Division to advance to Senior Team Trials based on pre-defined criteria. If the same athlete fills multiple spots, no additional athletes will be invited to Team Trials. 17-year-old athletes must compete as Seniors to make Team Trials. They may also compete in the Junior Division. Cadets and Juniors will have an “Age-up” athlete for Team Trials. This athlete must have earned Gold at Nationals in their previous age group.

Senior Team Trials will be held prior to President’s Cup each year. Junior and Cadet Team Trials will be held in January of each year, allowing athletes who age up to be eligible for the closed event.



Sparring Team Trials divisions will be fought in single elimination format. The Team Trials gold medalist will be the USA Taekwondo “A” team member and the silver medalist will be the “B” team member earning both athletes the opportunity to represent the USA and receiving funding for 3 or 4 required International events based on division.

USA National Team coaches may add any developmental athletes to the G-rated events, but they are not allowed to make the National Team.

USA Senior Team members will receive USAT funding based on A or B Team. This will remain in effect from Team Trials to Team Trials of each year. Funding may change depending on who represents Team USA.

#### Senior Division Format

In order to select the final athlete to represent the USA at the closed event for the year, both “A” and “B” team members from Team Trials will compete in a minimum of 3 G-rated Events, with US Open and President’s Cup being required, to decide which athlete will represent the USA at the closed event and for the rest of the year. The selection will be made by the USA Selection Committee.

#### Junior and Cadet Division Format

Junior and Cadet Divisions follow the same format as Seniors but with a minimum of 2 G-rated Events (US Open and President’s Cup).

#### Performance Based Criteria

Performance-based criteria will be developed and published prior to Team Trials. A group comprised of the USA Taekwondo High Performance Director, USA National Team Coach(es), and 3 additional coaches determined by level 2 coach members will be approved by the USA Taekwondo CEO to develop these criteria.

#### Team Trials Seeding

Seniors, Junior, and Cadet Seeding is as follows:

- #1 – US Open Gold Medalist
- #2 – US Open Silver Medalist
- #3 – Nationals Gold Medalist
- #4 – Nationals Silver Medalist
- #5 – President’s Cup Gold Medalist
- #6 – National’s Bronze Medalist (Lost to Gold)
- #7 – President’s Cup Silver Medalist
- #8 – National’s Bronze Medalist (lost to Silver)
- #9 – AAU Team Member
- #10 – Point Leader – 1<sup>st</sup> ranked
- #11 – Point Leader – 2<sup>nd</sup> ranked
- #12 – Seniors – Wild Card
- #12 – Juniors and Cadets – Age-up Athlete

#### Summary

Taekwondo is not an expensive sport compared to other sports, but it will become expensive if we, as members, do not do our part in funding our program and instead decide that chasing points is the best approach. If spending thousands of dollars earning points only to come in second, athletes and parents will become

disillusioned and potentially quit the sport or move to AAU. In today's model, even if earning a position on the team, athletes are not guaranteed funding for event travel.

By making changes to the membership system, USA Taekwondo will be able to fund all our National teams and assist with partial funding of other programs. However, this will only work if membership understands that it must make a financial investment into the NGB. With member investment, the NGB must use those funds to support the wishes of the membership that are aligned to helping improve USA Taekwondo's ability to compete against the rest of the world.

Our current membership fees do little to help our organization be successful as a competitive program. As members, we need to invest in a program that is going to be designed to give our athletes more opportunities to compete than ever before. The USA has never had a true A and B team structure, it has been years since USATKD has funded every team that represents the USA in major events. By introducing a new tiered membership model, USA Taekwondo can increase membership revenue which then supports funding teams, improving the referee system, and developing athletes. This coupled with a Hybrid Points System, including a return to Team Trials, will provide more opportunities for USA Taekwondo Athletes.