

The United States Plum Blossom Federation Competes in Xuwen China

Report by
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The First International Xuwen Huajian Garden Cup Wushu Invitational Tournament was held August 5 and 6 2006 in Xuwen China in the Guangdong Province, an unlikely yet fitting place for such a significant competition. Xuwen is located on the most southern tip of mainland China, and it has been said that Xuwen is the start of the Chinese civilization. Even more unlikely is that a team from the other side of the world could attend this event and compete with such success.

Grand Opening of Chan Heung's House After Renovation

The Plum Blossom International Federation team made this happen under the leadership of the Plum Blossom Federation founder Grandmaster Doc-Fai Wong.

The Plum Blossom Group brought 48 members from the United States and United Kingdom traveled through Hong Kong and met the China's Plum Blossom members (a total 50 of us), and then traveled by bus to King Mui (Jing Mei), a village of the Xinhui district of Jiangmen city in Guangdong province, China. This is the birthplace of the Choy Li Fut founder, Chan Heung. We arrived there on August 3rd to a warm welcome from the people of the small village. This was the 200th birthday of the founder and a huge celebration was planned and executed at the original home and the original training hall of Chan Heung. The villagers say that it has never rained on Chan Heung's birthday so there was little concern or preparation for rain. However, with the promise of a typhoon in southern China, this 199 year record was now broken. The villagers felt that rain on the 200th birthday of Chan Heung was a good omen. As our bus arrived in the small village, we were greeted with a traditional lion dance and welcoming banners, while the villagers applauded and looked on. All of the fanfare was captured by China's television cameras.

We visited Chan Heung's home which recently underwent an extensive renovation project spearheaded by Grandmaster Doc-Fai Wong. Here we paid our respects and met other Choy Li Fut practitioners. Original scripts of Choy Li Fut forms and herbal medicine books were on display in secure glass cases as well as original weapons and personal artifacts of Chan Heung. As the honored guest, Grandmaster Doc-Fai Wong was asked to bless two new lions for the event. The dotting eye ceremony was performed in the home by Grandmaster Doc-Fai Wong under constant camera shutter snapping.

Grandmaster Doc-Fai Wong led the present lion a short distance to the original training hall of Chan Heung. There, we entered the training hall and paid our respects. The Plum Blossom group performed traditional King Mui hand forms, as well as weapons and two person forms in the packed hall. We departed under a roar of applause and a final lion dance.

Celebrating Chan Heung's Birthday

A short two-hour bus ride later we arrived at the Yucca Hotel, a five star hotel in Jiangmen where the night's activities included a lion dance with 9 lions, an extensive 16 course banquet, and a Choy Li Fut demonstration by all of the visiting teams worldwide who were in attendance to celebrate Chan Heung's birthday.

The Plum Blossom Federation was asked to perform almost half of all the performance spots and we gladly accepted. We performed weapon forms, animal forms with a performance of the rare and advanced Dragon and Tiger form by Sifu Jason Wong, and a special performance by Grandmaster Doc-Fai Wong performing the exotic Chinese flute form of Choy Li

Fut. The entire day was dedicated to the celebration of Chan Heung's birthday. With the dedication of the Chan Heung renovated home and celebration of his 200th birthday, we were excited to be in attendance and to be a part of Choy Li Fut Kung Fu history!

Xuwen Competition

The next day (August 4) we arrived in Xuwen after a long 8-hour bus ride, and we made final preparations for the competition. Due to the typhoon there was extensive damage to the area including flooding of homes, buildings, and vehicles, high winds and trees that were snapped in two like bread sticks. The rainfall at times was as if you were standing inside of a car wash; not just rain but sheets of water pounded the area relentlessly. As a result there was much concern that an outdoor venue for the competition was certainly not going to be suitable should the rain and high winds continue.

The morning on the day of the competition (August 5), it was still raining and all the teams were gathered in a central city auditorium for a tournament meeting and special reception. The tournament committee discussed the purpose of the competition and then they entertained us with performances by local singers and traditional Chinese music and instruments. After a day of local sightseeing we went to the tournament venue.

The evening of the competition the rain suddenly stopped. The competition was held at 8 p.m. at the newly developed Xuwen culture square. This outdoor square was created to bring cultural events to the city of Xuwen. We arrived at the square to an estimated 30,000+ spectators according to city officials. This was the largest group of spectators to ever assemble for an event at the square. In addition to lights and cameras there was a large red-carpeted stage and a decorated backdrop where each competitor performed. Due to the size of the crowd, we had to have a police escort to get past the excited "fans" of kung fu who were clamoring to get a glance of the foreign competitors. The people reached out to shake a hand of our team or a high five. Some had small pieces of paper and pen that they reached and pushed through to the front of the crowd in our view hoping to get an autograph. This was the most energized and excited group I have ever performed for by far! The organizers also provided a giant "Jumbotron" style TV to show the action as it happened to the sea of people located far in the back.

Day 2 (August 6) of the competition began with an impromptu demonstration by each competing group's leaders. The Plum Blossom group performed traditional animal hand forms, King Mui and Jiagmen lineage forms and again received a hero's applause. The opening ceremonies then continued with each team lining up behind each of the signs for the 15 countries represented to march in and take the stage under a warm reception and much applause. We were led to a VIP seating area in the front center and were treated to a lion dance by a local champion team. The lion dance was performed on the competition high jongs and climaxed as two lions blew fire on a large center ring at the center highest jongs. The two lions then jumped through the ring of fire as they concluded the most spectacular lion dance performance. We continued the day by sightseeing and, to our surprise, as we were touring, we saw a large billboard with a picture of Grandmaster Doc-Fai Wong and his teacher Great Grandmaster Wong Gong! The billboard was advertising that they were in the local town and would be performing! Our sightseeing brought us to the southern-most tip of Mainland China, an area not regularly visited by foreigners. This rural area, rich in farming, was in stark contrast to the large city of such as Shenzhen or Guangzhou China. The people's living conditions were meager, their work difficult, but their warmth and welcoming of us to their distant villages was very strong. They had great respect for us as foreign Kung Fu practitioners and they never resisted a handshake and friendly picture. After the afternoon of sightseeing, we returned to the hotel for a quick change and went back to the competition venue for day two of the tournament.

Great Grandmaster Wong Gong also competed at his young age of 78. He demonstrated the very heavy and advanced Choy Li Fut Trident form, for which he was awarded a gold medal. After two evenings of competition in the view of conservative estimates of 60,000 spectators, the Plum Blossom Federation scored huge competing in hand forms,

weapons, two person forms, and two person weapon fighting forms. Grandmaster Doc-Fai Wong earned two gold medals for his performance of the internal Buddha palm hand form and the weapons division performing the lethal Chinese flute form. Team Captain Sifu Jason Wong was not to be outdone: he earned a gold medal for his performance with the advanced Choy Li Fut Dragon and Tiger hand form and a gold medal in the weapons division, successfully wielding the traditional Plum Blossom broadsword. Other Plum Blossom team leaders scoring huge with gold medals was Tai-Sifu Alan Hubbard, Sifu Don Tittle, Sifu Ben Stanley, Sifu George Estrada, Sifu Jaime Marquez, Sifu Matt Stroh, Sifu Evelina Lengyel and Simo Jo Willcott. A few of our team members were sick due to the bad weather and extensive travel with little sleep, however they still won big! The total medals earned in the competition were 45 gold, 12 silver, and 6 bronze—a total of 63 medals for the Plum Blossom International Federation group!