



Redefining a “Champion” Respect – Responsibility – Resilience

Licensed coaches may nominate a youth athlete at the end of the year for a personalized USFL Champion Ring. Athlete must be 13 years old or older, meet these character traits and have participated in a minimum of 10 USFL events. Missed weight and other conduct related discrepancies will disqualify the bout from being counted.

The event check-in shall count as one event.

Respect in a martial arts context is largely aimed at conditioning for loyalty, better group cohesion, and control of the abilities when learning a martial art. It is difficult to quantify respect, especially since it can mostly be treated as a moral virtue; respect in the context of martial arts should then be qualified by individual conduct during training and competition as well as outside activities.

Responsibility is a core principle of what defines character. Particularly in a context of martial arts, responsibility helps foster leadership, discipline, and obedience. The Military regards character development as an individual responsibility. The youth participating in the USFL need to understand that ultimately the decision to have “good character” is an individual task that they need to take the control over. Responsibility includes owning up to the mistake one makes, and learning to grow from this. Under the umbrella of responsibility falls the notion of consequences, which is an important life lesson to teach the youth early on. In application of the sport context, it includes regularly attending practices, maintaining punctuality, paying attention to instructions given by coaches and officials, and upholding high academics.

Resilience, the ability to bounce back after failure, is another characteristic that is crucial for developing character. Resilience may also be defined as “achieving positive outcomes despite risk,” in the context of students from a high-risk background. By preparing students for the aftermath of failure, children no longer fear failure, which enables them to take risks that challenge themselves in their goals and actions. Within a Pankration context, resilience allows students to learn from mistakes after losing a competition, rather than giving up or sulking. It is common for children, especially at this age range of 8-16 years, to use unhealthy coping mechanisms.

A Comprehensive Character Development Course for USFL Coaches, Athletes and Parents is under development by the Kravis Leaderships Institute of Claremont Mckenna College. Participation is expected to be free for all licensees and part of the USFL Belt ranking and Champion Ring award program.