

Report from ISKF Mountain States Camp 2012

I attended the Mountain States Camp from August 2-5, 2012. The camp is located on the University of Northern Colorado campus, in the city of Greeley which is located about an hour northeast of Denver. I flew from Calgary to Denver and rented a car for the remainder of the journey. Accommodations were in Turner Hall, one of the dorms at UNC. Rooms varied in size, with each holding between two and five people. Each person had their own bedroom complete with bed, desk and wardrobe. There was a common living room and bathroom area (some of the larger rooms have two bathrooms) and free wireless internet. The only downside was that it seemed to take an inordinately long period of time for hot water to reach the 8th floor, so I had a number of distinctly cool showers over the weekend! Meals were provided in the dining hall a short distance away, and the choice and quality of food were both excellent.

The camp started on Thursday night with training from 7-8 pm. Training occurred in the campus recreation centre, which thankfully was air conditioned as the temperatures were above 30C every day! On Friday and Saturday there were three different training sessions, from 6:30-7:30 am, 10:30-11:30 am, and 3:30-5:00 pm. However, I found no difficulty with this schedule as most of the sessions were more technically challenging than physically challenging. I've been in far worse shape after doing the double intermediate/advanced class with Sensei Baker than I was at the end of the camp. :P For the majority of the lessons, the coloured belts left the main gymnasium and we had our own session in a smaller aerobics studio.

Each session was taught by a different Sensei. Every instructor has their own style and method of teaching, so sometimes a slightly different way of explaining things caused the proverbial lightbulb to go on and I gained insight into a number of concepts. Also, each Sensei has their own personal pet peeve, so I was constantly being corrected on numerous items which helped me improve a lot of things in a short period of time. Exposure to this diverse group of very talented instructors was an extremely interesting and valuable experience! My favorite lesson included practicing kata with our eyes closed.... a very odd sensation but I managed to end up only about 15 degrees off the direction I was supposed to be, so I guess that wasn't too bad. ;)

There was also a tournament on Saturday afternoon. It was only open to brown and black belts so I obviously did not participate, but I enjoyed watching the various events. That evening dinner took the form of a lovely BBQ on the lawn behind the dormitory. On the final morning Master Okazaki taught a session for all belt levels. It was somewhat intimidating but also very cool to train with so many wonderful and dedicated black belt karateka all around me and over a dozen instructors wandering around offering advice.

I would highly recommend the camp to any student of any level. I was a bit hesitant about how I would fit in as a coloured belt, but in actuality this is the best time to attend camp as our class was so much smaller than the black belt class - resulting in way more individual attention! In addition to the fine karate training, I met a number of people from throughout Canada and the USA and everyone was very friendly and welcoming. Hopefully I will run into my new friends at other events and camps in the future. :)

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