

## Martial arts champ wants to take on the world

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Published on Sep 13, 2008

Tiauna Steadord's big brown eyes look intent as she prepares a move she has been practising.



With her legs and arms outstretched, her braids fly as she completes one position and then moves fluently into another.

Tiauna, 9, has been performing Wushu for three years and is heading to the Junior Nationals competition in British Columbia this week, fresh off wins at the Ontario Junior Wushu championships.

Wushu, which means martial arts in Chinese, is an exhibition and full contact sport derived from traditional Chinese martial arts.

Three years ago, Tiauna and her mother happened to be at Markville Mall in Markham where a lion dance was being performed. The young Richmond Hill resident was immediately interested.

She picked up a flyer at the event and found herself at the Sunny Tang Martial Arts Centre in Scarborough.

Now she loves Wushu.

"I like it because I get to learn new weapons and I like to learn new things," Tiauna says with a smile.

Her practises, however, are no laughing matter.

She practises five or six times a week for three to five hours a day.

The rigorous practise doesn't faze the young competitor, particularly since she has her eye on competing at the World Junior Championships in Bali, Indonesia in December.

If she finishes in the top two in her age category, she will be off to compete half a world away.

And if she's nervous, she's not showing it.

"It's like an exciting nervous," Tiauna explains.

The only extra preparations she is making is getting to bed around 8 or 8:30 p.m. for the week leading up to the competition.

Coach Alan Tang, a champion competitor in Wushu, has coached for 18 years

and believes Tiauna has a great future in the sport.

“She’s already very talented, but it’s her passion that sets her apart,” Mr. Tang says.

Wushu is more common than people realize, Mr. Tang said, noting that it is seen in movies and on TV but people often think it is Kung Fu, because that was what people like Bruce Lee used to call it when they first brought it to North America.

Wushu was recently recognized as a special sport at the Beijing Olympic Games and Mr. Tang sees it growing in popularity.

It helps increase memory and keeps you fit, the pint-sized, 9-year-old explains.

Tiauna’s grandmother, Sabrina Mathews, has come to admire the sport after seeing Tiauna practice.

“I think it’s a great sport. It’s good for building memory and discipline. If they had this when I was young I would have done it,” Ms Mathews said.

While Tiauna is ambitious and wants to do well at the junior championships, she hasn’t lost sight of why she started Wushu in the first place.

“It’s not only about winning, it’s about having fun, too,” she said.

She also hopes to one day compete in the Olympics.

For more information on Wushu, visit [www.sun\\_nytang.com](http://www.sun_nytang.com) or [www.wushucanada.com](http://www.wushucanada.com)

#### Wushu facts

- Wushu was created in the People’s Republic of China after 1949.
- It has spread globally through the International Wushu Federation (IWUF), which holds the World Wushu Championships every two years; the first being held in Beijing in 1991.
- Wushu is composed of two disciplines: taolu (forms) and sanda (sparring).
- Taolu forms are similar to gymnastics and involve martial art patterns and manoeuvres for which competitors are judged and given points according to specific rules. The forms comprise basic movements (stances, kicks) based on aggregate categories in traditional Chinese martial art style and can be changed for competitions to highlight one’s strengths.

—Source: Wushu Canada