

'Cool mom' off to nationals

By Kelly Nadeau
Monroe Times Editor

Several people compete daily in local sporting events, but one local athlete has the honor of competing on the national level in Cedar Rapids, Iowa June 30 through July 3.

Kristina Centers, tae kwon do artist, will compete in the national competition in form and point-sparring.

"I think it will be exciting to go," said Centers who's company, Baker Concrete, is donating the funds for her registration and application.

"They've been real supportive," she added.

At the four-day competition, Centers will compete in the 19-34 age division.

"There's a lot of 19-20-year-olds in my division. That's the one thing I'm leary of," said Centers, 31.

Centers added that as she watched the high school students compete June 5 in the state competition, she was amazed at how much energy the participants had to have to go through continuous competition.

Centers prefers to compete in point sparring instead of Olympic sparring for that reason.

In Olympic sparring, competitors go head-to-head for a consecutive 15 minutes without a break. Movements allowed are fists to the top of the head, the chest and the side. Point sparring gives competitors a brief time to rest when a point is scored, so that judges can announce the point. Competitors are permitted to use their feet to kick the chest and head. Also permitted is a punch to the head.

Both are strenuous competition, but olympic sparring takes more out of you, said Centers, who looks at nationals as not only a chance to compete, but also to learn.

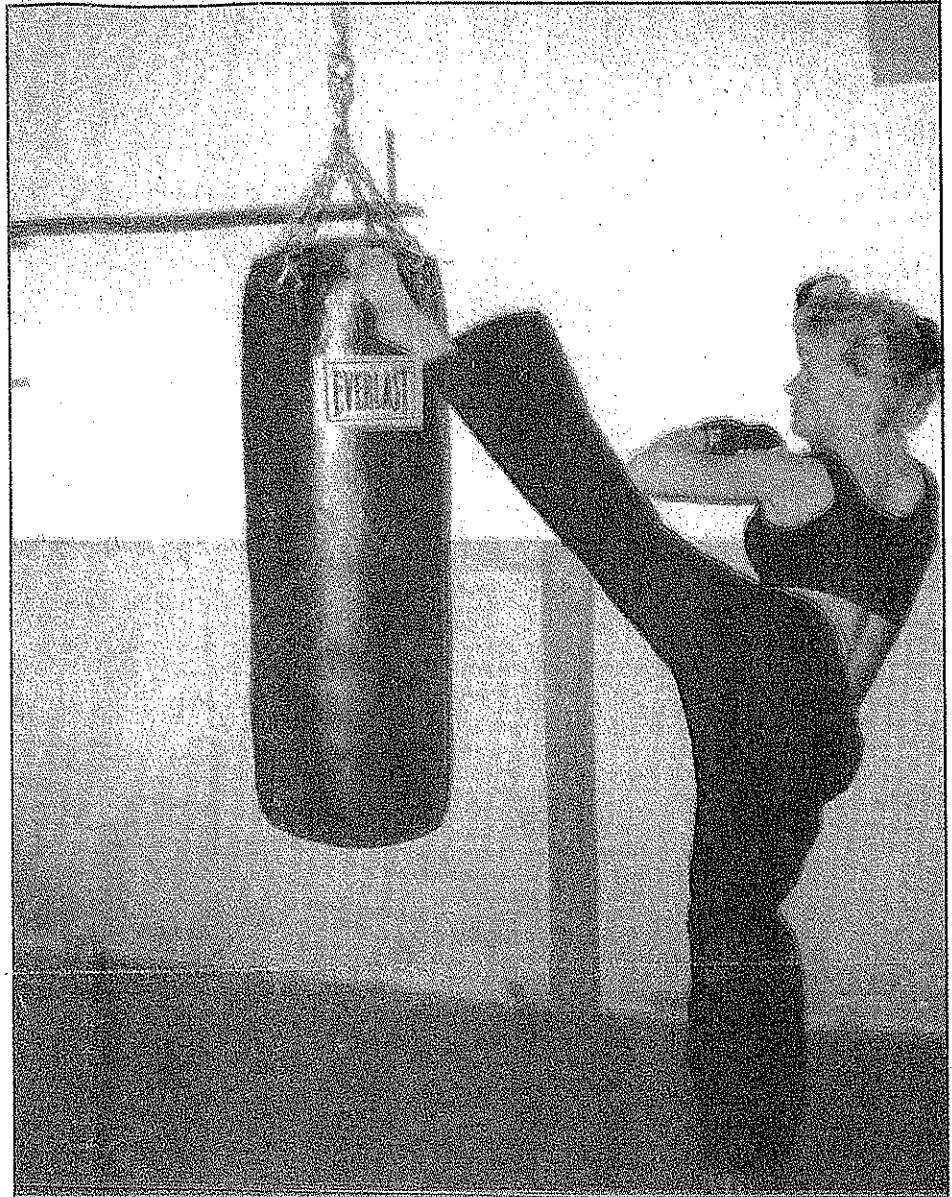
"I think it will be exciting to go, not only with competing, but watching all the different ranks and belts," said Centers.

Also offered at the competition are clinics, said Centers, who thinks it would be interesting to watch and learn the different techniques and different forms from each of the teams.

Another incentive to the national competition for Centers is that there will be more people her age.

"I'm looking forward to meeting everybody there," she said.

Centers, who has practiced at Mon-



For the Times
Kristina Centers practices for competition at Monroe Martial Arts. Centers will be competing in the national competition in Cedar Rapids, Iowa June 30 through July 3.

roe Martial Arts for the past 16 months, credits her skills and the skills of the other students to instructor Ernie Pendergrass. Pendergrass works well with the kids, said Centers.

"They listen to him and respect him. He has a lot of discipline," she said.

With Pendergrass's instruction and encouragement from Centers' two children, Cody, 7, and Cameron, 5, and husband, John, she has accomplished some of her goals and will use the motivation to accomplish more.

"One of the biggest rewards from all of this is that my children, who have attended my tournaments, see the respect and discipline that is maintained during the tae kwon do class," Centers said. "Yet during the kickboxing class, they see a more relaxed atmosphere and everyone having a great time. But the number one reward is that they think that I am, as Cody says, 'A cool mom' And as Cameron says, 'I am the best mom he ever had.'"