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Youngsters at Tower Hamlets club excel at spectacular Korean martial art



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BY DAVE BROWN

IF you're good enough, you're old enough, goes the old saying, and sisters Jennifer and Nini Tu are proof of that after winning gold medals for Taekwondo.

Just eight years-old, Jennifer is one of several youngsters who are excelling in the high-kicking Korean martial art under the watchful eye of Russian coach Elena Shutova at the Bulldog Taekwondo Club, based at the Workhouse in Tower Hamlets College, Poplar.

The Bow schoolgirl only started training properly in February, but at the English Championships in Crawley recently she topped the rankings in the patterns category, where competitors have to perform a series of movements.

She also took a silver medal in sparring, is already a yellow belt and will be going for her green belt this month.

Meanwhile her older sister Nini, 11, also competed at the English Championships in November and went home with a gold medal from the patterns section.

"She has taken to it very quickly," said Elena, a second degree black belt and former member of the English national team.

Elena, who lives on the Isle of Dogs, set up the club and says it has now become a big part of her life. "It's amazing to watch

how their confidence grows and their passion for Taekwondo," she said.

Seven-year-old James Nguyen is another of the young members doing well, but Elena says the club caters for all age groups and that it's never too late to start.

"There are about 12 students training from age seven up to people in their 40s," she said. "They are all focussed and determined and there is a good atmosphere in the class."

Taekwondo is a sport that combines technique and helps build stamina, conditioning, speed and flexibility.

The Bulldog Club caters for all levels and includes sparring and pad work.

Elena, who won a gold medal at the 2006 English Championships, said she wants to start up a class for children as young as two.

For more information about the club go to the website www.bulldogtkd.com

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