

Kids need to toughen up, coach

KARATE

By JON BATHAM

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RICHMOND-BASED karate sensei Debi Steven has no time for 'non-competitive sport'.

The South African-born black belt, who coaches at the Funakoshi Shotokan Karate Club, is no fan of the 'let's all be winners culture', which has seen so much sport removed from the state schools, and insists England needs to coach a winners' mentality if it's to breed future champions.

It's a philosophy which saw 10 of her students – six children and four adults – win 21 medals at the

recent FSKA World Championships in Sun City, South Africa.

And the Kew resident insists if England want success in 2012, the sooner they ditch the no-winners-and-losers mentality the better.

She said: "I believe children love to compete and be pushed to reach their potential. I'm finding more people are coming to me for coaching because I am strict about technique and character.

"If England are going to be producing all round excellent athletes, they need to have children being competitive in their sport at six and seven."

In Sun City it was Steven's

youngsters who led the way to the huge medal haul. Brother and sister Hannah and Thomas Marwood, along with Spike King, took gold in the six-eight year-old's mixed team kata (synchronised movements).

"That was the event of the tournament," said Steven.

"They just went out there and blew the crowd away."

The Marwoods went on to win individual golds, Hannah in the six-year-olds' individual kata and Thomas in the seven-year-old boys' equivalent. Hannah also took silver in the six-year-olds' 10th Kyu fighting, while Thomas claimed bronze in his fighting

class. Not to be outdone, their mum, Eva West, took gold in both the eighth kyu individual kata and the kumite eighth and ninth kyu over 35s. She then teamed up with Lisa Coster and Jonathan Hubble to take gold in the adult intermediate mixed team kata.

Coster took bronze in both the kata and kumite women's black and brown belts 35-40 category, while Hubble took bronze in the individual men's kata.

Freya Thompson took silver and bronze in the eight-year-old kata and kumite events, an achievement matched by Leuan Hamilton-Bass in the 11-year-old boys' brown belt event.