

## BECOMING THE BEST VERSION OF MYSELF

*Starting life from scratch as a woman on my own has been difficult. I had to leave behind my beloved family and friends, my profession and career that I had so carefully been building. Arriving here I had sometimes desperate thoughts that I couldn't do anything not knowing Dutch nor English. My mood was getting worse every day until one day I decided that it all starts by being in a good physical condition, so I added exercise to my daily schedule again and I felt awake.*

All of this thanks to fact that I have been practicing karate at a young age. When I discovered karate, I saw that women can prevent and secure themselves. At the age of ten when I attended an official match, I discovered that I was really powerful myself. That was also the moment that I became part of the national team of Iran. This resulted into successes in both domestic and international competitions. I have visited many countries like India and China. The level of the matches there is very challenging.

The system of karate works as following: for the first step you can obtain eight belts in different colors, starting from white, yellow, orange, green, blue, purple, brown to the black belt. After this there are nine levels to reach, called 'dans'. I have black belt five. For woman the top is black seven. For men they can reach black nine. At the highest level there are many complex techniques. Karate originated in Japan. I would like to visit Japan as soon as possible to discover the roots of karate.

I have won many medals, yet when I was twenty-one, I got injured unexpectedly. I tried to start again, but I couldn't continue anymore. That was a very painful time. My parents suggested I could maybe become a referee. They helped me to start, I wanted to make them proud aiming to reach a high level.

As a referee I always try to have justice in any match, as an athlete I know all the techniques by heart. I studied the rules and followed high level matches. During a match I try to stay focused. This seemed to work. I was invited as a referee to many important tournaments. I became famous and popular in Iran and made sure our team won also internationally. The players shared their feedback with me: "When you are the referee, we are happy and calm because of the just decisions that you take."

**WORKSHOP  
BECOMING  
STRONGER**

Samaneh Habibi,  
national Karate  
Champion, coach &  
international referee  
(black belt 5th level)

DISCOVER HOW TO  
BECOME THE BEST  
VERSION OF YOURSELF



Starting Monday 11th  
of September 2023

15-16hr Womenhour  
16-17hr Menshour

Location: House of the  
Neighbourhood Het  
Klooster  
Afrikaanderplein 7  
3072 EA Rotterdam

In Holland I managed to conduct several workshops to introduce karate sport to newcomers during weekly masterclasses in a local Community Centre thanks to the support of two NGO's Mano & De Stadscoalitie. I want people to get self-confident and be able to defend themselves against anything. Karate is all about defending. When you are in danger, you are allowed to defend yourself.

With the help of my friends and guidance from one of my instructors in the UK I arranged for a meeting with the Dutch Referees Council. I had to take a theoretical and practical test of arbitration. If I passed the test, I would be able to act as a referee in any competition. As a result, I was invited to be a referee in Almere-Lemmer-Zwolle. Attending this tournament was a great experience and I was happy that the authorities were very pleased with my performance. Now I will be working in a club as a coach.

My dream for the future is that everybody has a dream to become the best version of themselves. I have a lot of goals that I have to work for. Language learning, taking courses to work as a physiotherapist and a wider career in judging international karate competitions. I want to become the best referee here in The Netherlands and eventually work at Papendal. I thank God for being with me and putting good people in my life. I have never compared myself to anyone else and always try to be the best version of myself.

Samaneh Habibi  
*International Karate Referee & Coach*