Athletics beyond the stadium

UL Karate Club President Philip Richard practices Wednesday at the Comeaux Recreation Center in Lafayette. LESLIE WESTBROOK, THE ADVERTISER

Club sports ‘just like a family’

By Megan Wyatt
mbwyatt@theadvertiser.com

They train multiple times per week to prepare for regional and national competitions.

They are successful yet often uncelebrated athletes in the Ragin’ Cajun world.

And although they are sometimes overlooked, those who participate in club sports at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette say it’s not about recognition but about the family bond that forms among teammates.

The club classification can be a misleading one. Those who

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UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA CLUB SPORTS

» Cajun Bass Masters Club, founded in 2007
» Cricket Club, founded in 2002
» Ice Hockey Club, founded in 2007
» Judo Club, founded in 2000
» Karate Club, founded in 2005
» Lacrosse Club, founded in 2010
» Men’s Soccer Club, founded in 2004
» Men’s Volleyball Club, founded in 2012
» Powerlifting Club, founded in 2001

» Ragin’ Cajun Bowling Club, founded in 1990
» Rugby Club, founded in 2000
» Sport Shooting Club, founded in 2006
» Swim Club, founded in 2013
» Tae Kwon Do Club, founded in 1979
» Tri (Triathlon) Club, founded in 2005
» Ultimate Frisbee, founded in 2011
» Wakeboard Club, founded in 2005
» Water Ski Team, founded in 1992
participate in UL club sports are competitive, disciplined athletes.

During the 2013-2014 school year, the UL Water Ski team competed at a national level and is currently ranked No. 2 in the nation. Sports shooting tied for third place in its division at the national level. Karate won more events than any other collegiate team in its region. Powerlifting competed at the national level, and men’s soccer competed at the regional level.

The club sports provide a competitive outlet for those students who wish to compete at a high level but may not wish to play NCAA sports, “said Dave Sutter, director of recreational sports for the university. “The club sports also provide opportunities to students whose particular sport may not be offered at the NCAA level.”

Although the club sports aren’t as active during the summer months, most competitors still keep up with regular training.

On Wednesday evening alone, the taekwondo, powerlifting and karate teams trained — the sharp whips of kicks, loud clanks of weights and harsh shouts of Japanese evidence of their work ethic.

The presence of these club sports can go unnoticed to those who do not frequent UL’s Bourgeois Hall often, but the athletes continue to push themselves anyway.

Senior psychology major Brooke Olivier has participated in UL’s taekwondo team for three years and now serves as president.

The sport is one that she finds challenging, rewarding and useful.

“I like the fact that it’s competitive,” Olivier said. “I like the fact that it’s a lot more physical than most sports. You don’t see a lot of girls here.

Junior exercise science major Richelle George joined UL Powerlifting just last year to complement another workout program.

“The strength of the team is like a family,” George said. “We come in three days a week, but we all keep in contact almost every day.”

Senior psychology major Philip Richard found out about UL Karate his freshman year during a university event that highlights ways to get involved.

Club sports are competitive, disciplined athletes, and members and all the things that can happen with those members — politics or hosting tryouts and cutting people maintaining a budget, there’s just a lot of real-life skills they acquire.”

With all of the recognition traditional Ragin’ Cajun athletes have had during the last school year — a third-straight New Orleans Bowl win for football, an NCAA Regional game for basketball and a Super Regional competition for both softball and baseball — some who participate in club sports feel lost in the shadow.

“I do feel that club sports do get a lot of neglect,” Olivier said, “in the fact that although we are smaller and a little bit tighter knit, we do serve a chance in the spotlight.”

Others, however, feel that each sport will only get the support it demands.

“I think it’s up to us to promote our own sport.” Whether competing for national-level recognition or participating to unwind from studying, those who participate in club sports at the university share a common sentiment that each group serves as its own family of sorts.

“This is just like a family,” Olivier said. “And we’re always welcoming new members to that family.”

Brooke Olivier and Jerrad Edwards work together during taekwondo club practice Wednesday at Bourgeois Hall in Lafayette.