

Karate Girls Nominated for Sports Highest Honors



Left to Right: Gabby Viola and Lucy Lokay

Often times people associate martial arts as a rough-and-tumble sport dominated by male competitors, but two Pittsburgh area karate girls shattering the stereotypes. 9-year-old Gabby Viola and 14-year-old Lucy Lokay were recently honored by the national karate media and their peers with nationwide “People’s Choice Awards.” **Sportmartialarts.com** and **Point Fighter Live** are the equivalent to the Academy Awards and Grammys for sport karate. They are the two most popular media outlets in North America and recognize the top athletes at the beginning of each season with year-end recognition.

9-year-old **Gabby Viola** was nominated as “Competitor of the Year” by **Point Fighter Live**. The honor, dubbed as a “Power Award” was voted on by coaches, competitors, and promoters from across North America. After a nationwide poll, Viola not only won her category (edging out a talented competitor from El Paso, Texas) but was the highest vote getter of the show. The physical award will be presented this April in Warwick, Rhode Island at the Ocean State Grand Nationals.

Gabby is a third generation Viola to win national honors. She’s following in her Dad Bill Jr. and Grandfather Bill Sr.’s footsteps. She began her training as a toddler and has been a national champion since she debuted at the 2013 Kumite Classic. She’s a member of Team USA, and defending Gold Medalist from the WKC Nationals Championships. Gabby is an inspiration to other girls battling [bowel disease](#). At 7-years-old, she was diagnosed with chronic inflammation and ulcerative colitis. While there is no cure for the condition, she is fighting for remission every day and proving that nothing can stop her karate dreams. She is currently treated with infusions

at UPMC Children's hospital and will travel to the Washington, DC this May to meet with the Senate and Congress about funding new research to find a cure.

When asked about the recognition Gabby said, "I'm really happy. I hope this helps get me to Japan!" She's on a mission to fundraise to watch her Idol Sandra Sanchez from Spain compete for a gold medal at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, Japan. Gabby had the opportunity to train with Sanchez in Orlando, Florida this past July. When she's not competing, she loves playing piano, dance, and teaching her 2-year-old brother karate.

14-year-old **Lucy Lokay** was recognized by **Sportsmartialarts.com** in the "Overall Youth Female" category. She received enough preliminary votes nationally to beat out thousands of other competitors and earn a nomination in the final four, and a trip to Chicago, Illinois for the awards ceremony. Lokay explains, "I was so honored. I mean these other girls are already starring in TV shows and movies, and I'm just a small town girl. I'm just getting started. It's crazy."

Her coach Bill Viola Jr. agrees, "Lucy was the youngest in the field nominated by SMA. This puts her name on the radar for the entire league. She has a bright future." Although Lucy took runner up, just to share the stage with North America's top female martial artists was empowering. She is ranked #2 in the World Rankings by the North American Sport Karate Association. Not since one of her mentors, Ali Viola, a decade ago has any female from the tristate area ever been nominated for an SMA award.

Lucy is dedicated to giving back as a representative of the Western PA Police Athletic League, volunteering for their community initiative. She works alongside Pittsburgh Police and community leaders to help those less fortunate learn martial arts and boxing and helps organize "Stuff-a-Store" toy drives with her mother Amy.

Throughout the long season, Gabby and Lucy traveled to Illinois, California, Georgia, Florida, Michigan, New York, West Virginia, Ohio, New Jersey and Canada to compete. The honors are based on an entire year's body of work.

Gabby and Lucy are members of Allegheny Shotokan "Viola" Karate Dojo which recently celebrated its 50-Year Anniversary. The Dojo was honored with a proclamation from County Executive Rich Fitzgerald who recognized ["Sensei Viola Day"](#) on September 23rd 2019 for the Pittsburgh region. Sensei Bill Viola Sr. has 4 daughters, all of whom have earned their black belts. His Granddaughter Gabby and Lucy carry on the tradition of strong inspiring ladies from the dojo!

The team is gearing up for the 2020 WKC World Championships held in Madrid, Spain and fundraising to visit Tokyo, Japan and attend the 2020 Olympics. For more information visit www.alleghenyshotokan.com

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