

Karate tournament tonight

The U.S. Kansas City spring regional karate championships will be held tonight in Memorial Hall and more than 500 competitors are expected to fight, according to promoters.

Day tournaments will be held prior to tonight's full contact Professional Karate Association sanctioned fights which will feature several national and world ranked contenders.

Among those fighting tonight will be Jeff and Mark Payne of Mission, Scott Lybarger of Lenexa and Ray Patton of Kansas City.

Nearly 20 fighters from Olathe will compete in today's tournaments, including 1979 Kansas State champion Jimbo Thompkins, who was graduated from Olathe high this past spring.

In tonight's main event, Jeff Payne takes on Tommy Williams, the number two super lightweight in the world.

In the super lightweight division, Payne is undefeated.

Jeff's older brother, Mark, meets Ray McCallum of Dallas. Both fighters are world contenders in the middle weight class. McCallum currently is ranked number one in the United States.

Lybarger, a middleweight, goes against Ike Stafford of St. Louis. Stafford is 2-2, but he trains under Ernie Hart, the world welterweight champion. Hart, billed as the 'People's Fighter', will not fight but has told tournament director Bob Boggs he will attend and put on a "show."

Patton faces Ron Smith, a Thai-kicker from St. Louis who is 9-0 since turning pro and is rated in the top ten in the world.

The other fight on the card places lightweights Alan Kelly of Tulsa and Randy Beard of Arkansas in the ring. Kelly is in the top ten in the world and Beard is the only full contact kick boxer in Arkansas.

"We're hoping for 500," he said late Friday afternoon. "We've had people from 10 states call us to reserve spots in the tournament.

"I imagine we'll have 1,000 spectators tomorrow night (Saturday)," Boggs continued. "We should have a couple thousand for the daytime thing."

Among those expected to be in attendance tonight is Kansas City, Ks. mayor Jack Riordan.

Announcing tonight's fights will be PKA representative Joe Corley, who is from Atlanta and works for CBS.

Registration for the day tournament is at 8 this morning. Eliminations will be at 10.

More than 160 trophies with cash prizes for the black belt winners will be awarded.