

## 18. *Judo* in the United States of America

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### 18. アメリカにおける柔道の現状

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#### 要 約

アメリカにおける柔道は、主に日系米国人の支持の下に進展してきたが、今日ではアメリカ独自の様相も呈している。

組織的には、アメリカの柔道界は複雑であり、三つの協会から成り立っている。そして、夫々が独得の役割を担い、夫々が独自の哲学を持っている。本調査では、アメリカにおける柔道小史、組織について触れるとともに、近年アメリカにおいてポピュラーになりつつあるマスターズトーナメントと形の試合について述べる。

#### INTRODUCTION

In the last several decades, *judo* in the United States has moved from strong Kodokan-based traditions into something singularly American. This article presents a brief, recent history of *judo* in the United States to serve as a background to several of the elements unique to American *judo*. The three national organizations are discussed and a brief outline of their philosophies, promotional systems, and ties to Japan presented. Also, in the United States national competition, several events besides the Senior National Championship are conducted. The master's competition, and competition in *judo kata* are described.

#### METHODOLOGY

Information on the membership and philosophy of American *judo* organizations and *kata* competition in the United States was gathered by interview. Those interviewed were:

Bob Brink	President, United States Judo Federation (USJF)
Bob Harder	Chairman, Board of Examiners, Northwest Judo Yudanshakai, USJF
Phil Porter	Founder, United States Judo Association (USJA)
Frank Fullerton	President, United States Judo, Incorporated (USJI)
John Phillips	Registration Chairman, Washington Judo, Incorporated, USJI
Keiko Fukuda	USA Kata Technical Adviser, USJI National Kata Committee

Jan Graden

3-Time Women's Overall National Kata Champion

## RESULTS

**HISTORY** While *judo* has always been a minor sport in America, its history is long and distinguished. As early as 1904, United States President *Theodore Roosevelt* studied *judo* with *Yoshitsugu Yamashita* (10th Dan), but the overall numbers of Americans practicing *judo* has remained small.

The strength of *judo* in America has traditionally been found in the strong, but quiet, Japanese-American population. Since the early 1950's top Japanese instructors and competitors have been either visitors or immigrants to the United States, particularly the West Coast. Notable among these were instructors *Sumiyuki Kotani* (10th Dan), *Kazuzo Kudo* (9th Dan), *Toshiro Daigo* (9th Dan), *Keiko Fukuda* (Joshi 7th Dan, now living in Northern California), and many competitors such as *Isao Inokuma* and *Kazuo Shinohara* (who still lives in America).

The Japanese influence was strengthened in the 1950's and '60s, when US Air Force personnel trained extensively at *Kodokan*. Initially involved in developing the armed forces curriculum for unarmed combat, this group of American servicemen provided much of the motivation behind the development of *Kodokan Goshin Jutsu*. This Air Force tradition was at the core of American competitive *judo* throughout the 1960's. *George Harris*, *Robie Reed*, *Toshiro Seino*, *Paul Maruyama*, and *Ben Campbell* (Tokyo Olympics Bronze Medalist, now a United States Senator) were among those involved.

While the Japanese traditions are still strong in American *judo*, recent years have seen new directions. There is a growing nationalism in US *judo* that has actively discarded the Japanese style of *judo* for that found in Europe. This "two-minded" approach to *judo* is reflected in the political organizations that govern the sport.

**ORGANIZATION** To an outsider, the current organization of *judo* in America must be bewildering: there are currently three separate national organizations, each with their own philosophies and priorities. They are described below.

The smallest of these organizations in membership, but the most visible in the arena of international sports politics is United States Judo, Incorporated (USJI). Last year there were about 4300 members. The USJI was created to replace the Amateur Athletic Association as the official American representative to the United States Olympic Committee and International Judo Federation. Because of this, all national and international American competitors are required to join the USJI. President Frank Fullerton emphasized that there is no link between the USJI and any Japanese *judo* organization. They have created their own Board of Examiners for granting *judo* rank, and have no mechanism for gaining *Kodokan* recognition.

The United States Judo Association (USJA) is a descendent of the US Air Force Judo Association and was founded by Major Phil Porter. In 1993, the USJA had about 5000 members that paid an yearly fee, and 13,000 total Life Members. The USJA is an extremely nationalistic organization that has the goal of making American competitive *judo* the best in the world. To this end, they have strongly embraced the European style of *judo*. The USJA has established their own system of ranks and promotion, which many feel is too largely based on financial donation or the recruitment of new members into the organization. Their efforts have met with some success, however. Mr. Porter reports that in the years 1985 to 1993, USJA members have won 500 medals in national and international competitions.

The oldest and most traditional of the organizations is the United States Judo Federation (USJF). After the reorganizations following the breakup of the AAU, their membership



dropped to 4,000, but climbed to almost 10,000 in 1993. President Bob Brink states, "We have solid roots and credit our vitality and regrowth to our strong ties with *Kodokan*." The roots of the USJF are indeed *Kodokan* roots, established and maintained for decades by the *issei* and *nisei* population in the United States.

The ties between USJF and *Kodokan* are also seen in the awarding of promotions. Once approved by their local or the national Board of Examiners, all USJF members are entitled to apply for *Kodokan* rank certification through a committee known as

*Kodokan* USA, and receive certificates from *Kodokan* itself. Many American *judoka* who live in areas dominated by USJI and USJA clubs maintain their affiliation with the USJF solely for the privilege of receiving their promotions through *Kodokan*.

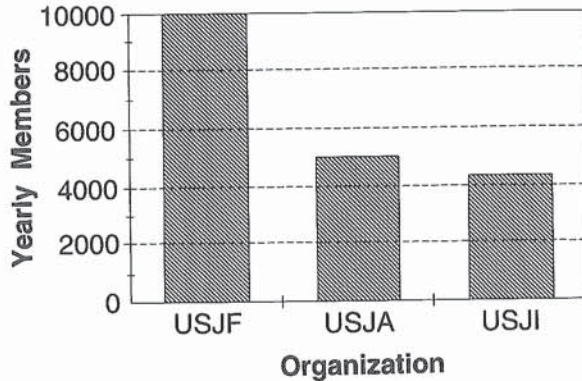
Although each of the US *judo* organizations have their own orientations and philosophies, many American *judoka* belong to two or all three of them. Therefore, the total membership is not a simple sum. On the other hand, probably only ten to twenty percent of active *judoka* are members of any official organization at all.

**COMPETITION** Another area that a non-American might find quite different in United States *judo* is their competitions. The United States Senior National Championships is, in fact, three separate competitions in one: a weight class competition of the very best American male and female *judoka*, a so-called master's competition (also held by weight class), and a men and women's *kata* championship.

The master's competition is nothing like the *Kodokan's* Masters Competition (held the week before the All Japan Judo Championship) in either form or philosophy. There are distinct age and weight categories, each of which is competed in typical tournament format until there is a national champion in each. The age categories are listed in Table 1; the weight categories are the same used in International Judo Federation tournaments, without an Open class. Both men and women compete. There is no limit on rank, and most of the competitors are low dan grades. The rise of these events (there is a master's division in most tournaments in the US, now) has little to do with the need for the practical application of pure technique by the higher ranks, but rather, is an outgrowth of the fitness movement in America.

*Kata* is also competed in the US. There are four championships awarded at the national level in divisions for men and for women: *Nage-no-kata*, *Katame-no-kata*, *Ju-no-kata*, and an Overall champion based on the individual *Kata* results. Contestants are scored on how their *kata* performance appears versus a "standard", ideal *kata*. Unfortunately, establi-

### 1993 MEMBERSHIP United States Judo Organizations



MASTERS COMPETITION AGE GROUPS MEN AND WOMEN			
30 - 34		50 - 54	
35 - 39		55 - 59	
40 - 44		60 - 64	
45 - 49		65 - 69	

Table 1.

KATA SCORING AND JUDGING CRITERIA (Edited)	
POINTS	DESCRIPTION
0	Skipped or unrelated technique
1	Numerous major or minor errors, gross lack of skill
2	Completely wrong movements within the technique
3	Numerous mistakes, poorly performed
4	Numerous errors
5	Minor errors, generally correct technique
6	Basically correct technique-AVERAGE
7	Displays more skill
8	Displays a greater degree of skill and spirit-GOOD
9	Displays close to perfect execution-VERY GOOD
10	Perfect execution of skill and spirit-EXCELLENT

Table 2.

Keiko Fukuda (shichidan). Since arriving in 1966, she is largely responsible for the interest and improving quality of *kata* in America. Through *kata* competition, *Fukuda Sensei* hopes to promote the philosophy of *judo*, both in the United States and internationally. She is saddened that outside Japan *judo* philosophy is being lost, and hopes that *kata* study and competition will help keep it alive. "The *judo* philosophy is most important," she states, "because it helps for life!"

### ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

These United States *judo* organizations, and masters and *kata* competitions are perhaps a reflection of the whole of American *judo*—different in form and substance to the *judo* found in Japan, with many people trying to break away from tradition for their own personal and political ends. But at their core are a number of dedicated *judoka*, loyal to *Kodokan* and the teachings of *Kano Shihan*, that remain the real force behind *judo* in America.

### SUMMARY

- There are three national judo organizations in the United States :
  - USJF ·· United States Judo Federation
  - USJA ·· United States Judo Association
  - USJI ·· United States Judo, Incorporated
- The USJF has about 10000 yearly members, the USJA 5000, and the USJI 4300 (See Figure 1).
- Only the USJF has maintained close ties to *Kodokan*, and utilizes *Kodokan* promotion procedures.
- The United States has an active "masters" tournament system in which men and women compete in age groups up to 69 years of age.
- *Nage-no-kata*, *katame-no-kata*, and *ju-no-kata* are competed in America by both men and women.

shing this standard has too often become a matter of politics and the personal interpretation of individuals who lack the strong *Kodokan* training required to understand the *kata*. Also, competitors are frequently scored against elements of style not found in the written standard, and that are not, therefore, known by all competitors. The scoring criteria are listed in Table 2.

The United States has been fortunate, however, in the powerful presence of