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## The Present and Future in Australian Judo

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### Introduction :

Judo in Australia has developed over the years into a more technical and scientific art. This has been strengthened over recent years by regular visits to the country by well known and respected Judo authorities such as Shigeo KATAOKA, Yukio KATAOKA and Takeshi ITO. Their visits to the various Australian States and individual Judo clubs have shown Australians the more technical side of Judo. Also, in contrast to this, Australian Judo players have visited Japan for the purposes of learning about the "Japanese Judo Spirit" as well as the technical aspects of the Sport.

Because Australia is positioned on the globe a long way from leading Judo Nations, the knowledge and experience obtained by Australians has been limited. It is rare to see High Grade Japanese Judo Instructors teaching in the country. During their visits they made observations, analyzed teaching and coaching methods and discussed their criticisms of the Australian Judo "System" with the people involved. As a result, this article has been prepared to explain the problems that have, in the past, plagued Australian Judo as a whole and the forecast for Judo in this country in the future.

### History of Judo in Australia:

In the 1940's, Judo evolved in Australia. It was introduced by migrants, mainly with a European background, after the Second World War. Judo was

taught and practiced in youth centers and halls throughout the major cities. People realized that many of the Japanese sailors docking at the various Australian ports were exponents of Judo. So, regular trips were made to the docks seeking out the sailors who practiced Judo. They would be invited to the different clubs and asked to teach the Australians the new-found art of Judo. This happened for many years to follow.

Judo quickly spread across Australia. Although it began to increase in popularity, it was and still is regarded as a "Minority Sport". It was being taught at police boys clubs, recreational institutes and at schools.

An Australian Judo body was formed in the 1950's so as to unite the various clubs across Australia. This body was known as the Judo Federation of Australia (J.F.A.). The J.F.A. was the sole controlling body for the sport in Australia at that time. Soon after, the Oceania Judo Federation was also formed and was mainly managed by people from New Zealand and Australia.

As time went on, the number of people learning Judo increased. From about 1970 to 1985, Judo had reached its peak in Australia. From 1985 onwards, the number of students studying the sport appear to have decreased from that of the previous years.

### Causes for the Reduction of Judo Practitioners in Australia:

The cause of this is wide and varied. Other Martial Arts started appearing and were becoming popular to television and movie audiences across the nation. There were the "Bruce Lee", "Chuck Norris" and "Karate Kid" movies which depicted and promoted the Karate, Tae Kwon Do and Kung Fu fighting arts. The fight scenes were spectacular, which leant appeal to the growing youth.

Unemployment has also grown in Australia to nearly 12% of the working population. People are now spending a longer time at school and trying to go on to university because there are no jobs.

This requires them to do more homework and spend more time studying so they can obtain maximum results in the schooling system, thus resulting in people not being able to make Judo lessons during the week. Because Judo is a full contact sport, people prone to injury rarely try it.

As a result, Judo took a back seat in the combat arts, while Karate and Tae Kwon Do increased and flourished in numbers. Judo lost appeal to the up and coming beginners as there were no high kicks or strikes to be learnt. After all, who wanted to be able to grab someone and throw them to the ground? This was the attitude that many people held.

The aims of the Australian Kodokan Judo Association, and all of the affiliated State Kodokan Judo Associations, is to promote and teach Judo to any person who wishes to learn the sport. It aims to promote and encourage the sport at a "Grass Roots" level and enhance the participation of more children and youths in taking up the sport. It also dedicates much time to elevating and advancing Judoka in the teaching of Kata, which is the basis of all Judo.

We have realized that Judo, although an individual sport, is not unlike group team sports. Without having a firm base of Juniors who are keen, talented and up and coming in the sport, there will be no one in the future to continue on with the art. This is duplicated also in the selection of International Competitive

Players. Without the base of players, the number of participants competing in tournaments and of Judoka from which coaches are able to select the best possible competition players is restricted.

The majority of people in Australia learn Judo as a form of sport, at a social level. There is very little money available for allocation to "Minority" sports. Therefore, Australia will probably never have any player competing at the international level who will rise above players from countries which encourage and sponsor "Minority" sports and pay players to practice full time.

In Australia, people have to work to earn a living, thus placing Judo in the category of a social sport. The people who practice long hours are only able to do so when they fit it around their work commitments.

#### **About The A.K.J.A. and The J.F.A:**

The A.K.J.A. and the J.F.A. have been rival associations since 1981. There has been much animosity between the 2 groups since that time. Each of the 2 National Associations has affiliated "bodies" in each State of Australia.

The State bodies are responsible for the administration of Judo in their respective States, with the National Associations making National policy on the implementation and running of Judo throughout the country.

Each state organization, ( regardless of whether it be the Kodokan Association or the J.F.A.) holds individual club competitions and a State Title every year. Both the A.K.J.A. and the J.F.A. host separate national tournaments annually. These tournaments are usually held in a different state each year, with the comparative State Association organizing the event.

Kodokan members are not allowed to compete in J.F.A. tournaments unless they become members of their Association and vice-versa. J.F.A. members are not allowed to compete in Kodokan tournaments.

The standards of both players and coaches in the 2

Associations are comparable. As has been previously stated, all Judo in Australia was originally run by the J.F.A. After much disappointment and disagreement between senior Dan grades and officials in all states, a split occurred within the J.F.A., and another National organization, the A.K.J.A., was formed.

Initially, all of the Dan grades were taught by the same people, thus giving some semblance of standardization. After the second organization was formed, suddenly, unless you were a member of the J.F.A., your Dan grading, your refereeing ability and your Judo as a whole was no longer recognised. How can this be so?

The A.K.J.A. was formed by Mr Ivan ZAVETCHANOS, one of the forefathers of Judo in Australia. In his time, he taught and graded many of the people within the current J.F.A. It is these people who have turned and have declined to recognize the standards of the A.K.J.A. in Australia.

This rivalry stems back many years to a small group of people who were, and still are, very hard-headed. They are more concerned about their grades and where the next one is coming from rather than improving the sport so that more people are able to enjoy Judo for what it is and not what it was.

In South Australia, the J.F.A. refuses to accept Kodokan grades for what they are. They also refuse to acknowledge or give referee status to Kodokan members. This example is the same in every state.

The Sakura Kodokan Judo Association, which is the South Australian-based A.K.J.A. affiliated Association, has in the past invited J.F.A. clubs and their members to participate in joint tournaments and training sessions. The usual result was that none would turn up. The Executive of the South Australian J.F.A. had told their members that they were not to associate or practice with non J.F.A. clubs.

In August, 1995, an open Junior Judo Tournament was arranged for any junior Judo player regardless of to which association they belonged, to enter the

competition. Invitations were sent to every Judo club in South Australia. The tournament was being hosted by Japanese 7th Dan, professor Shigeo KATAOKA, Japanese 6th Dan. associate professor Takeshi ITO, and professor Yukio KATAOKA, who were visiting Australia at that time. On this occasion, the South Australian J.F.A. Executive went one step further. They threatened to expel any player or club who participated in the tournaments, as it was not a "Sanctioned" J.F.A. contest. Considering that the tournament was for the benefit of children and was being hosted by visiting Japanese "High Grades", this was an extremely foolish action on the part of the J.F.A. The consequences of their actions resulted in the embarrassment of Professors KATAOKA.

The J.F.A. is the recognized National Judo body in Australia, although membership numbers between the 2 Associations are similar in size. Because they are the recognized body, they are directly linked to the International Judo Federation(I.J.F.).

#### **Funding and Sponsorship of Judo in Australia:**

The National body of the J.F.A. received \$511,300.00 from the Australian Government in 1994/95 through their "Sport Funding Allocation," \$424,300.00 of the total amount is to be spent on "Elite" athletes, leaving \$84,000.00 to be spent in any way the J.F.A. decides.

The A.K.J.A. does not receive any money whatsoever from any Government body. Its sole funding comes from membership fees. None of the Executives, Coaches, Instructors or helpers involved in the A.K.J.A. receive payment for any of their services.

Unlike the J.F.A., the National coach receives a substantial salary, as does the National President and Secretary. As can be seen in the figures given for the allocation of funds to "Elite" athletes within the J.F.A., a lot of money is spent on a selected few people. These few still do not achieve any outstanding results in international tournaments.

It is believed that the allocation of money should be divided up between the 2 National Association and then distributed amongst the individual States for allocation in promoting the sport at lower levels. Once Judo achieves a wide and firm base in Australia, it would be understandable to spend more money on the "Elite" athletes.

**The Foreseeable Future of Judo in Australia:**

The time has come for the Judo in Australia to be unified. Members of the A.K.J.A. are lobbying for the forming of an "Umbrella Body" for the 2 Associations. The 2 groups would still be able to run autonomously but would compete together in a joint run national tournament. The "Umbrella" Association would have representatives from each party.

Jointly, the representatives would select and administrate the national team. They would also be responsible for selecting the National and Olympic coaches. This would be a much fairer system for Judo to operate under in this country. Doing this it ensures that the best players from both associations have the opportunity of competing internationally and representing Australia.

The model on which to base the "Umbrella" body would be the same as that which the U.S.A. did some years ago. They have 2 main national associations

which host separate national tournaments. The winners from the 2 associations then compete together and against each other in a "Umbrella" Association tournament, resulting in the winners, regardless of which Association they belong to, being selected to represent their country in international tournaments.

For the "Umbrella" body to be formed, the I.J.F. needs to intervene in the running of Judo in Australia. The I.J.F. needs to recognize the A.K.J.A. and its member associations for the part that they play in the sport of Judo in Australia.

Currently, the A.K.J.A. and its affiliated State Associations has about the same number of members as the J.F.A. has. It is because of politics and stupidity that there are 2 national associations in this Country. The I.J.F. should recognize that the 2 associations with to remain as separate entities and because of this, should not presume that everything that the J.F.A. does is good for Judo in Australia.

If Judo continues in the future, the way that it has done in the past, come time for the 2000 Olympics, Australia will have very diminished chances at winning or even providing a substantial competitive national or Olympic team.

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