

IMPLEMENTING AND EVALUATING A PERFORMANCE TRAINING PROGRAMME.

(Lecture given by Syd Hoare 8th Dan to the European Judo Union Foundation Degree Course at Bath University July 2005).

My first reaction to the title of this lecture which was set me by Bath University was to scratch my head. What 'performance' were we talking about? Eventually I thought that it must be about training people to win medals and that this was probably the sport funding bodies' jargon for it. So that is how I interpreted the title and nobody has since corrected me on it.

It soon became apparent to me that there are a number of interested parties in the production of medals. There is the individual player, his/her coach, his club, then at a national level there is the 'performance training manager/s', the British Judo Association, the British Olympic Association, the International Olympic Committee, the EJU and the IJF.

All these bodies impact on competitive judo in important ways and have their own points of view. For example some influence the qualification process which at some point tells the individual player that he will be the one to go to the next Olympics. Secondly there is a potential conflict between the player's personal coach and the national 'Performance training managers'. The personal coach may bring his player up to a high medal winning level and then has to hand over to people who may or may not be able to cut it.

Thirdly those who provide the money or who run judo nationally may propose the establishment of a single national training centre for their elite athletes but in the long run this may destroy those clubs who aim high. Who would want to lose their top people on a regular basis?

In my time I have been judo politician, club coach, national coach, Olympic competitor and TV commentator which will influence how I talk about winning medals. So apologies if I jump around the various points of view – it is a complex business

Napoleon once said "Beginners talk of tactics – professionals talk of logistics". The beginner says lets ambush them at that pass but the professional says do we have the ammunition and food? So we need to look at the wider logistical picture which may highlight problems which are difficult, time-consuming and expensive to change and at the narrower tactical picture which I interpret as the dojo one. With a correct mix of the two we may come up with results.

Part One of this lecture is to look at the tactics of winning medals – the narrower dojo picture - then in Part Two to look at the wider logistical picture.

As for the *evaluation* of a programme this is relatively easy. It is medals actually won at a high level that tell us whether our programme is working or not. Medals won in lesser championships for example may mark the progress of a future star but what one

really wants to see is that *actual* medal and if that medal is won at senior continental or world championships level so much the better. Certainly the government bodies that fund sport expect to see results at that level.

Creating Olympic medal *potential* means little. I served for two years as the judo representative on the National Olympic Committee (NOC) and this last point was brought home quite forcibly. If you win good medals you get the government funding but if you only create medal potential you may not because you are competing for funding with all the other sports that have not won good medals and who are busy telling the British Olympic Association (BOA) what ‘fantastic potential’ they have.

When I was NOC judo rep the BJA was winning Olympic medals. On that committee there was a fair amount of criticism of the government’s funding for sport and I spoke up for the BOA saying that the BJA was well looked after. “It’s all right for you”, said one rep, “you win medals but most of us don’t.”

PART I

Producing gold medal performances in any sport is a tricky business and getting to the top is difficult as any premier league soccer club manager will tell you. Yet in some respects it is very simple. Gather a young group around you. Teach them well from the beginning. Run say four or five strong randori sessions a week. Add in endurance and strength training. Sharpen or add to their technical repertoires. Enter them for contests. Make sure they learn from the contests. Try to foster the group both on and off the mat and inspire them making them part of an experience that they will never forget. It will take a while even with the most talented. So simple but there are a lot of assumptions here – for example what do you do if there are not sufficient young people around interested in judo to start with - behind all this the logistics must be in place.

Luck?

So who are the medal winners? I looked at my international (Olympic/World/Continental) judo competition results data base that covers a fourteen year period to get a picture of the results of international players (I record places 1st to 7th). What surprised me was that *half* of the people recorded managed only *one* result which could be any where from the gold to 7th place. In other words half of all international 1-7th place winners rise **once** like shooting stars then fall to earth never to be seen again at that level. This is not a criticism.

Spirit

However this interesting statistic may give coaches encouragement. What is it about this statistic and what does it tell us? Maybe it indicates that half of all medals/places are susceptible to an **inspired** performance. Sometimes we see an unknown competitor who comes through to the final of a major event such as the Worlds or Olympics and one gets an impression of peak fitness, freshness, and strength which he/she may find impossible to repeat later. Similarly we know that performing in front of a home crowd nearly always lifts performance.

Perhaps the quality we need to first identify in our young competitors is *spirit* and support it to our utmost ability since that may take them through to a good medal win. From the administrators point of view it doesn't matter that these solitary shooting stars may never soar again because if they keep us in the good medals we stay in the funding and we get that valuable media publicity that brings people into our game in the first place. And of course we may also have that rare multi-medal winner.

A sumo formula is *shin-gi-tai* which means spirit (shin), technique (gi) and body (tai). Other Japanese martial arts also use this formula. What the formula says is work on all three aspects for success. Perhaps one could add that if you have a talent in one area push it as far as it will go but do not neglect the other areas.

It is as well to recognize that coaches do not have a free hand. As coaches we like to think that we created a champion, that so and so is one of mine but in reality it doesn't work that way. First they have their own minds and learn from their own experiences (sometimes wrongly), secondly they are influenced by other competitors and coaches and finally some competitors don't want a coach at all - they want to do it all by themselves. At most one can say that one has helped a successful competitor.

So I ask myself how would I as an Olympic team supremo with a large pot of gold and a Kalashnikov in one hand, so to speak, implement a performance training programme.

While it is not impossible to train up a champion with a couple of training partners (as in a professional boxing type setup) the huge range of technique in judo demands a lot of time spent doing randori with as many different opponents as possible. So to start with the coach needs a good supply of randori partners of the same size as his would-be champ and the best fitness and technical expertise available. These I think are the unavoidable requirements. You need numbers on the mat and this requires organization skills.

If one could have as many training partners as one wanted how many would we go for? On a daily basis one might want to fight with at least ten similarly sized players. (With each one taking say six minutes this would equal a hard hour's worth of continuous work). But you would not want any old training partners. It would be a good idea to have both right and left-handers. Style wise it should include those looking for groundwork wins, counter-throw wins, passivity wins or straight throws. Furthermore the would-be champ might also need more people than the ten he has ordered since he needs to experience the many ways an opponent can attack. Getting used to strange techniques and styles is not the same as beating them but it helps.

There is one other requirement and that is the need for not such strong training partners on whom you can try new moves. Trying new moves on strong fellow squad members could be risky and depressing. So the numbers required are substantial and pulling them together needs funding and organization.

Obviously a small club with two or three good players could not provide the numbers for all weight categories but could perhaps do well by concentrating on a single weight category? At the same time one has to doubt whether the average national

association could fund a full number of trainees for all weight categories in a centralized dojo unless that association is like France, Germany or Japan with huge judo populations.

A central national training dojo might be able to provide good coaching expertise and more training partners but how do you weigh that up against the possible boredom of being located long term in one spot with not much to do outside of training hours.

Furthermore I think very few competitors would like their rivals in the same weight category to see what new moves they might be working on. When I was in the national squad I preferred not to meet my rivals during squad training. I preferred to keep the surprise element on my side.

However it is not a case of a central national dojo versus a small club dojo. It would probably make more sense to first look at how one can assist a talented individual in the best way possible for him/her and not commit dogmatically to any particular system. My feeling is that a single central dojo is not very workable but there is however a middle path. Training camps can be held but for short periods (eg. two weeks) and fairly frequently. Within a given area clubs can organize with other clubs to spread the hard training nights around so that trainees can have a full week of good training in different spots. The national association could also send its people abroad for training or organize lots of national mass randori sessions.

In fact if I could roll the years back I think I would feel tempted to take off to Japan again and train there for as long as possible. This would of course be absolutely dependent on getting sufficient competition experience and being able to participate in those events that are part of the national and Olympic qualification process.

There are ways round a lack of randori partners such as lots of uchikomi but much of this training is a waste of time in my view. The Japanese champion Sugai described winning judo as 'Skilful adaptation under stress' which I think is a very good description. Uchikomi does not address this situation because it mainly concerns itself with the beginning of the throw not its execution which is where the adaptation mostly takes place. Uchikomi has some uses though for which see below.

Spirit includes mental and physical liveliness in general and fighting spirit. It must not be killed off by locating the central national dojo in a wilderness. If the Olympic funding body decrees that we have to go for a central national dojo locate it in a big city such as London so that the competitors can have a life outside the dojo. I can already hear the wails from those outside London but it seems very likely that London would also attract quite a few strong foreign judoka. Government funding plus the co-operation of a strong local club could set up a fine London HQ and dojo.

The central dojo concept has one major defect which is that it drains the clubs of their life blood. What Association or club wants to see his best people constantly siphoned off? It seems a sure way to kill off British competitive judo in the long run.

A Case study

To take a practical example how do Japanese university judo students aged from 18 – 22 yrs train in Tokyo, a city with probably the biggest concentration of judo trainees

in the world? Firstly they train (*randori*) each afternoon in their own university dojo where there might be about 40 students at any one session. The training will be mostly in the afternoon 3-5.30pm or maybe later. At other times they have to study their degree subject. This training will be *non-stop* and hard (Mon – Saturday). During the year there will be special training camps known as *Gasshuku* when they will train in the country *twice* a day for two weeks. This will be even tougher.

The students will not always train in their own dojo. Often they will go to the Kodokan in the afternoon to train with other visiting university judo groups. The Kodokan afternoon practise will usually be as tough as the student groups visiting it. Often one university group will go and train in another university dojo. And it is fairly usual for student groups to go to the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Instructors dojo which runs a session every morning 10-11.30. The policemen are older and slower than the students but their groundwork is very strong. In order of toughness the university dojos come first followed by the Keishicho and then the Kodokan which varies a bit. As can be seen despite the large student numbers per dojo the format of the training varies considerably. They do not train solely with each other for weeks on end.

Test and measurement

Whether for technique, strength or endurance the coach will set targets which means that quite a lot of measurement must go on to check that the targets are being met. I know from my own squad experience that many squad members didn't like the tests or agree with them. Most players know that they are in the national squad because of what they have achieved in competition and trials not because of what they have done in tests. It was fairly common for a player to get in the squad but fail miserably at certain tests. In this case the judo skill of the player wins out. The fitness coach must do his best to bring out the champion in his charges who will react differently to his different programmes. Flexibility is needed here. As for technical monitoring the individual trainee and his coaches need to record all contest results, what he/she is working on and keep videos of them and their main international rivals.

Getting fit for judo is a relatively straight forward business – the knowledge is there – but training for technical improvement is less so. The classic model for technical improvement is the Japanese one of hard *randori* for long spells. This works well for the Japanese mainly because they have a large judo population and many people who have specialized in individual techniques. But it creates problems for those who do not have good numbers and technical specialists.

However there is a big danger here and that is it becomes far too easy for a coach to rely on *randori* for training. That is precisely what every other coach in the world is doing but the coach has to go beyond that for the extra edge. Small percentage gains have to be looked for in all aspects of training.

10,000hrs

Just recently I read about somebody who came up with the theory that every successful performer (sport, music etc) has put in at least 10,000 hours training to get to the top. This instantly reminded me of the Asian (Japanese, Chinese, Korean) attitude to training. So three hours training six days a week for one year would equal

936hrs and to reach that magic 10,000 would take about ten years! So start about 15 years old and become Olympic champion by 25 perhaps!

There was one Japanese champion who set himself a target of 10,000 randori per year but he fell just short of that target. (At six minutes per randori that would equal about 1000hrs per year). The great Kimura aimed to double what anybody else was doing. Food for thought!

Technical Training

The club coach starts with raw beginners and if he knows his stuff he can take them all the way to the top. This beginning period is the most crucial one there is. The national supremo would not of course start with a group of beginners, he would inherit people who have already been in judo a number of years. So they would be fairly set in their ways which presents problems. Any player can be analysed and technical improvements can be suggested but whether the player concerned can or wants to do anything about it is debatable. It's the old problem of leading a horse to water. All the coach can do is his best. If anybody can influence a competitor it is probably his personal coach who he started with and this is a good reason for not excluding him from the centralised squad training model.

It is a great advantage to have at hand people who are or were very good at their main technique. I was known as an Osotogari man. I often noticed that others who were pretty good at their main throw (Seoi or whatever) often seemed to miss the point when it came to teaching Osotogari (and they probably thought the same about my Seoi!). So best if possible is to have the specialists around to teach their speciality. Sometimes even minor adjustments can make a big difference.

Competition statistics

One technical pointer is contest stats. Competition statistics (including time and motion studies) can help identify what wins but they have to be accurate. Currently a lot depends on the skill of the people who record the winning techniques and allot them a name as per IJF lists. If they weren't that accurate or didn't exist I would suggest to Bath University for example that one of their graduate students did research into what scores. Identifying new successful competition techniques and trends is useful but many so called new techniques can already be found in other combat arts so I would take it a step further and make the squad regularly train in Olympic wrestling and other wrestling styles under a good wrestling coach. On stats I have three questions (1) how high does *uchimata* place in the statistics (2) how many Brits do you know who can do it well? (3) So why is this?

Judo analysis also needs to be much more thorough. There are three grey areas in judo I believe. First there is not so much bio-mechanical analysis of judo throws which there used to be years ago, secondly there is not much in the way of time and motion studies of judo. This type of study for example would tell you how many contests were won with left/right attacks, combination techniques or straight attacks etc.

Another set of questions here for you (1) How many top medallists are left handed and (2) Is this smaller or greater than the national average and (3) If it is greater why

is this? (4) Do combination throws really work or do they just happen? (5) Is the common concept of combination throws flawed?

Thirdly contest tactics and strategy seems to be a relatively undeveloped. For example the five minutes of a contest can usefully be divided into different sections with different rates of activity and different objectives.

As of now the coach has to rely on his own technical understanding of judo to a large extent which is not the case for judo fitness. There is a lot to work on and whoever does it first will have the edge.

Uchikomi v. randori v. nagekomi

Uchikomi has been in judo for a very long time but in my view it is mostly a waste of time. However its use persists and can be used to fulfil different functions. Coaches must be clear about why they do it:-

- (1) Warm-up uchikomi – good for starting a session
- (2) Conditioning uchikomi – used to create a hard physical workouts (in circuit training for example)
- (3) Learning uchikomi – practising new stuff in order to memorize it.
- (4) Reminder uchikomi - taking students over different stuff to their usual repertoire in the hope that some of it will stick
- (5) Sharpening uchikomi – working on increasing speed, accuracy, position, timing, power under realistic conditions. This is the most important aspect of the lot but it needs to be kept absolutely *realistic* if it is not to be a waste of time. In so far as the training partner knows what you are going to do there is no element of surprise and of course little or no adaptation under stress.

It is quite interesting how often uchi-komi and nage-komi and the actual contest throw differ. Say to a trainee do twenty uchi-komi on uchi-mata then finish it with the full throw. With the switch to nage-komi you may often notice a grip change. Then compare videos of the man actually throwing someone cleanly with uchi-mata in contest and the nagekomi version. The relative stances of the two fighters will often be different as will the footwork. What the coach must try to do here is work on the trainee and try to get all three to merge but with the actual good throw in contest being the lead factor.

Nage-komi (throwing the training partner) is a much better alternative to uchi-komi but suffers from the fact that few like being thrown hard too many times and it takes longer to make each repetition.

Records

I would expect the competitor and his personal coach to keep a technical record of what he does in training and every contest, win or lose, and state with the aid of his coach (personal or otherwise) what he is working on. Videos of major foreign rivals should be stored for reference and then some very hard-headed analysis sessions should follow competitions with the player concerned told **bluntly** what the coaches (and maybe other players) think. No admiration sessions. Considering national organizations spend a lot of tax-payers money on competitors we need to be able to demand value for money. Poor results then out. This is may not be so harsh as it

seems since a player could always prove his/her worth by entering some of the smaller World Cups dotted around Europe at his or her own expense.

Well all this is pretty well known already. I am not saying anything new and I am aware that I have missed all sorts of things out such as weight loss, diet, rest and recovery, suppleness etc. More than anything I lean to anticipating results from a good overall system and organization (logistics). Good numbers, strong clubs, intense rivalry, good competition structure including novice and club team championships, a more competitive membership, and a first rate coaching system for which see Part 2 for more on this.

When I was a competitor/coach I always brought back to the club any new moves or trends I had seen in the most recent competition. Before every single *randori* section I drilled them for half an hour with throws (nage-komi). I'd call out the names of the throws (or briefly demonstrate) and they had to do them hard and fast but not in *uchikomi* form. I used the dojo black board a lot and wrote up what throws our club squad had to work on long term. I remember the day when I wrote up on the black board Angelo Parisi –Left and right Osotogari and Seoinage and he later went on to win an Olympic gold (for France!).

The End Result

In my head I have an image of a successful competitor which I always work towards. They must be very fit and strong and *hard*, both physically and mentally and they must have a good range of precise scoring techniques. They must also be canny in contest meaning that they read a contest well and know what they are doing. Many of our foreign competitors come from countries where life is hard and sport is a way out of that. They are tough but we must be tougher than them.

I think a coach has to have a knack for identifying the mood of a training session. When they are knackered or flat reign back but when they are lively push the pedal to the metal and take them to the limit. Often the coach must become like an actor on the stage striding around and shouting and whacking them with his belt (so to speak) but always with a smile on his face. Very important.

In the coach we need organizational ability, communication skills, toughness blended with humour, ruthlessness when needs be, a very wide knowledge of judo and its training methods and an ability to think outside the box. It is the **mix** that the coach-administrator creates that is vitally important.

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PART TWO

In Part One of this lecture I looked at the tactics of winning medals but here in Part Two I look at the wider logistical picture. To repeat what Napoleon said “Beginners talk of tactics and professionals talk of logistics.”

Logistics

The Participation Base

If no one walked through the doors of our judo clubs we would have no raw material to work with. No doubt a country with a single dojo of forty fanatics could provide a national team and do very well but I suspect that they will not do as well as countries with many clubs and a large judo population such as France or Japan. So we have a duty as coaches/administrators to promote judo and increase the numbers as best we can. *The more members we have the greater the chance of discovering good performers.*

We need to look carefully at our sport. Are we winning or losing as far as the membership numbers go? I have lived through long periods when the trend of individual British memberships was plainly down and yet nobody ever mentioned it. It was like TV's Basil Fawlty in Fawlty Towers and his "Don't mention the war!" If a decline exists first acknowledge it and then do something about it in just the same way that a business would if sales were down.

Another indicator is the number of clubs in the geographical area one is in. Are the dojos increasing in number or are they declining? I can recall the days when there were well over one hundred clubs in London and now there are a mere handful – maybe thirty-five or less. Slowly the number declined but nobody in charge ever mentioned it. Perhaps they felt it was unpatriotic to do so.

Statistics as we know can be manipulated so care must be taken that like is contrasted with like, and that we are not comparing apples with pears. Phrases such as, '[Judo] is Britain's fastest growing sport' need to be treated as meaningless. Similarly picking out one small section of the membership and saying the membership is up is also misleading. The point about statistics is to acknowledge whatever facts emerge and do something about it. Skewed statistics help nobody.

The product

If the numbers are down we have to look at our product – judo. Why do people do it? Who are our competitors? Do people confuse us with other martial arts? Do people get what they want when they join a judo class? What image does judo project? Why do people stay in Judo? Or to take a different tack lets ask why do people do tennis or football or boxing etc and see if the answers throw any light on the judo situation.

At one lecture in Bath University I asked the students "Why do people do judo? There was quite a lot of hesitation and head scratching but eventually someone ventured the suggestion that they do judo for self defence reasons. The class sort of agreed with that so I said how many of your clubs offer self defence classes. None of them did so I asked, "Well does that must mean you are not giving them what they want?"

What I was trying to highlight was the fact that we ought to try and find out why people join us and do our best to full fill their wishes. It might be pure chance that draws people to judo but even knowing that might help us to increase numbers. For some answers to these difficult questions the national associations may have to spend

some money on *market research* but it needs to spend it very wisely. But beware - you may only learn from a market research organization what you have told it already.

Sometimes the sheer success of a talented competitor such as Neil Adams can pull many people along with him. This can play quite a large role in the fortunes of any performance programme and needs to be recognized and used. But all such individuals eventually retire from competition and can leave us all high and dry if we are not careful.

Our competitors

In the absence of solid market research I assume that as a combat sport our competitors are other combat sports. So if somebody is thinking of doing a combat sport why should they come to us? In what way are we different from the rest? I suspect that the general public confuses us with all those martial arts that wear white (or coloured) cotton suits, wrap coloured belts around their middles, bow to each other, do it barefoot and use Japanese/Korean/Chinese terminology.

When I was chairman of the BJA in the 1980s I organized some market research via a questionnaire which we sent to all the clubs. We asked judo people and we asked non-judo people their thoughts about various aspects. It turned out that very few members of the general public knew the difference between karate, aikido and judo and I suspect that things have not changed much since then. Judo is probably still a badly defined martial art. It's about time for another questionnaire I think.

The numbers game

A dojo needs a certain number of people to run viable sessions. Now you might think that having thirty to forty people on the mat is a good session but you have to look at the makeup of that number. If there are a handful each of veterans, teenagers, competitors and women there may not be enough in any one group to provide training for that group and the other groups will not necessarily be of much use to each other. Also within any one group it does not help to have a wide variation in weights and sizes. If a club is not careful there comes a point when the session will not be very viable (I am here talking about 'performance' clubs not recreational ones).

With big judo populations as in France or Germany it is possible to organize an effective pyramid of *local*, *area* and *national* training centres and then move the best of its trainees up to the *next level* as happens in France for example. But without the numbers it is very difficult.

The logistical picture may be good in which case one has to think in terms of continual improvement to avoid complacency setting in and if the wider picture is bad then remedial action is required.

Marketing

We could of course promote judo in the usual way as a fitness and character building Olympic combat sport but is that what people really want out there? I wonder what is

the point of promoting judo as an Olympic sport if there are many other Olympic sports to choose from? Nowadays if people want fitness they join a health club and in my experience few start judo for self-defence reasons.

In the distant past Judo grew massively on the notion that it was the way a little man could beat a big man and it was done by using his strength on him. In so far as judo grew very rapidly in the early days this may have been an amazingly effective advertising pitch!

Looking back to the early days just after the second world war, judo first flourished because it was virtually the *only* oriental martial art around. People queued up to get in. I can remember when beginner's classes at the Budokwai were always fully booked and there was a time in the early sixties when there were six full beginners classes running each week. Then along came Karate and Kung Fu etc and the judo numbers died away quite a bit. At this point many judo clubs adapted to the decline by running karate/kung-fu classes etc in the gaps in the timetable. This helped the clubs financially but since most people did not know the difference between the martial arts it probably diverted many people away from judo. There was a failure to realize that Karate etc were not complementary but were our competitors.

Also around this time judo got in the Olympics and of course many countries started doing judo which increased the overall numbers of those doing judo in the world but this did not necessarily swell the membership numbers of those countries already doing judo such as France. In fact the UK saw a big leap in membership numbers around 1964 (the first judo Olympics) but thereafter they slowly fell back.

Suck it and see

We found in the early days that it wasn't necessarily seeing judo that made people want to join up - it was actually doing it. In summer for example we did outdoor demonstrations - almost one a week - and we invited people to put on a jacket and have a go. The crowd enjoyed watching and many joined up after giving it a try. It was slightly scary doing this since you never knew who would give it a go but judo always coped well.

The Budokwai put on slick demonstrations in the Royal Albert Hall every year and mostly the Hall was filled (about 4-5000 seats). This had a great unifying affect because we met judo friends from all over the country on an annual basis (ditto for Crystal Palace when the national championships were held there).

The Ethos

Another attraction was the ethos of judo. We felt that we were a select band of brothers, running in the rain or snow, using a strange language etc. But it was a tough ethos soaked through with the samurai code of austere training. Training was expected to be hard. George Kerr – BJA President - once told me that after he returned from Japan he was asked to do weekend courses up and down the country. He said he always worked them till they dropped. I was later asked to go to Sheffield to run a weekend course a few months after George had been there. I asked them what George had shown them but not one of them remembered. The only thing we can remember said one of them proudly is that we could hardly walk for about a week afterwards!

Japanese judo?

In many ways judo is not like other sports so does being a Japanese sport work for us or not? A BJA SWOT analysis concluded in the 1980s that judo's Japanese background was negative. How this conclusion was arrived at is not known but it still raises the question how Japanese does judo need to be (or not need to be) to flourish.

The Dojo.

How big should a dojo be? We spend a lot of time there so it should be an efficient size I think. One mistake is to lay a (smaller) mat in a large hall with a hard wooden surround beyond the mats. This means that when you are doing randori near the edge your mind is pre-occupied with the possibility of being thrown off the mat onto the hard floor. This effectively loses about 2 metres of useable mat space all the way round which is quite a lot. Best solution is to use a space with a smooth wall or partition all the way round and mats that go right up to the wall. Provided there are no projections this is safe enough. In my experience this can give quite a cosy feel to a dojo. So if possible create an enclosed mat space and mark it like a proper contest area within that (including safety area) for most efficient use of space. Also put proper springing underneath or padding of some sort. If you want good numbers in a dojo make their landings reasonably soft. I once asked Charlie Palmer – long time BOA&IJF&BJA president what single thing would he most like to see in all dojos around the world and he replied – A sprung floor!!

My ideal 'performance' dojo would be one which gives a single randori couple about 250sq ft of space to work in (15' x 15') which means fifteen couples (thirty people) would require about 3750sq ft (roughly 60' x 60'). This is fairly easy to work out yourself – just count how many randori couples can work out *safely* on your present mat. If one wanted to cater for realistic groundwork (from standing) more space would be required to avoid injuries.

With the right space the trainees can randori continuously and not waste time leaning against the wall waiting for the coach to call change. *This is very important for judo fitness.* Secondly it allows for groundwork to occur naturally as happens in a contest. Large dojos are expensive but with the current UK trend to build large new dojos funded by the government the above needs to be considered. We must try to avoid creating dojos which looks quite big when empty but which only caters for say ten randori couples. Measure it up and work it out.

Session Time

Assuming there is sufficient space for continuous training the next thing to think about is the length of a club judo session. I would guess that the average length of a judo class in the UK on a medium sized mat is one and a half to two hours with a fair amount of time spent standing around. But if you are able to do *continuous* randori that would be quite a long time for an activity as strenuous as judo. Imagine going for a fast run for that length of time. So a big mat can make the training shorter and more efficient.

Dojo Structure

Best situation is for the club to own its dojo. If it is owned by somebody else they call the shots. It's as simple as that.

HQ

Another strategic factor is the location of the national association's head office. There are many functions carried on in or near the head office such as AGMs, presentations, committee meetings, press conferences and so on and by virtue of the HQ being in a certain location there is a good chance that major judo events will also be held nearby and that association employees will also be drawn from the immediate area. Media access is important since sports journalists may not travel much outside the capital if they can help it. It also helps to be located near the offices of the sport funding bodies as happened in the past. British judo lost a lot when its HQ moved to Leicester and stopped using Crystal palace for its major championships. There is a strong case for a judo HQ with attached large dojo and dormitory accommodation to be located in London to cater for the national squad training. I am fairly certain that a dojo in a major city such as London would also pull in a lot of resident foreign judoka and visiting teams who would be good training fodder for our guys. In short we have to ask ourselves is the HQ in the best position.

People Power

And we even have to ask if the structure of the national association is the best for producing the goods or does it just serve the needs of judo's political fraternity. In the case of the British Judo Association I have always thought that individuals rather than clubs should be the voting members of the Association and that they should have the right to propose people for the Board of Directors. One first step in that direction might be giving each club a vote according to the number of BJA members it has. This might also push up the BJA membership numbers. We need a system that brings the best people through whether competitors or administrators. In our quest for total excellence nothing should be sacred. (Check out the Leander Rowing club on the internet to see how they continue to produce Olympic gold medals).

Good Coaching

When we have got the product and the dojo right we have to think about (a) the technical correctness of what the club coach teaches and (b) how he or she makes people want to keep coming back to the club – the two are not the same. A coach's job is considerably more than teaching a correct Tai-otoshi. Judo sessions should be fun and running any kind of club requires a lot of skill. It would be useful for the national judo magazine to regularly feature coaching or promotional success stories and how the coach did it. A good coaching scheme is of course vital and I have no intention of talking about that now but the one observation I would make is that bearing in mind the complexity of judo a club coach's education should take quite a long time. What Bath University is doing here is a **huge** step in the right direction.

Another coaching aspect to think about is the people we use at the top level such as national coaches (in whatever name). Looking at the top managers in soccer for example I am often struck by what a wide variety of people they are. Their age range is wide (from golden oldies to young guys) and their styles differ (Ferguson, Wenger, Mourinho etc) but they know the game inside out and they get results.

In British judo I think we have had the tendency to either rely too much on successful British ex-competitors (and in more recent times foreign ex-competitors) to fill these jobs or go for people with no particular contest record but who have some paper

qualification. It seems quite likely that foreigners may fail to understand British culture or will not get on well with us. I think that people who can produce Olympic medal winners are pretty rare individuals so the last thing a judo association should do is give the job to an untried individual who then proves to be a dud. This is an old argument I know but the establishment of the Bath University EJU Judo Foundation Degree course is an excellent step in the right direction for providing the best coaches whether they come with a world class medal or not. A judo specific PE degree course is long overdue.

Dojo judo versus Sport judo

At this stage we come up against what I regard as possibly one of the biggest logistical problems as far as implementing a ‘performance training programme’ goes and that is the apparent non-competitive nature of judo. In the BJA we have roughly thirty thousand members but probably less than a thousand junior and senior competitors which represents 3.3% of that total. With many sports it is taken for granted that apart from learning it in the first place you then go on to compete in teams, leagues, championships or whatever. But in British judo there are few competitors and one must assume that judo in the UK is mainly recreational.

I suspect that one of the main reasons for this may be the grading system. It has many advantages but perhaps it helps create a closed dojo environment. The judoka gets his black belt and stays in his club which probably keeps him happy or maybe he stops altogether. What need is there to compete? Many a time when somebody learns that I do judo they ask what belt I have. Then I say black belt and that answers their question. If I was a boxer or a runner they wouldn’t ask that question they would say what have you won.

I think Britain needs to create as competitive an environment as possible in the clubs and I think only way to do this is to create **club leagues** as they do in France and Germany. I know this has been tried a few times in the past in the UK and it always died away but the BJA has to decide if it is a good idea or not and go for it even though it might take years to settle in. One thing I noticed when attending competitions in Europe was the ‘sporty’ feel of judo at the events.

The grading system may not be the cause of the problem I have raised but the question remains why do so few people compete in judo tournaments. Why has the BJA never got club leagues off the ground?

When I was chief instructor at the Budokwai our main London rival was the Renshuden which Trevor Leggett set up. The rivalry between us was really strong and both clubs produced international competitors that filled the national team for many years. I am absolutely convinced we could and should produce that same rivalry with club leagues. I have a question for you – which is the strongest club in the UK right now? If you don’t know, why don’t you know? If we asked that question in France I guess we would get a quick straight answer – Orlean/PSG/Racing Club or whichever club won the league. From our perspective as ‘performance’ coaches British judo has to be weaned off its recreational bias.

One immediate way to introduce more rivalry and competition would be to publish ranking lists of *clubs* according to how many people they have in the national squads.

A quick glance at the present squads shows certain clubs predominate so why not turn that into a competition and regularly publish the list in the BJA magazine?

Well in this Part Two I have dwelt on the logistical background to judo which will of course effect the production of international players. There may be little in the short term that the coach can do about some of the things mentioned *but* in the long term minds and policies can be changed. Coaches should get involved at all levels of judo.

PS

Three years after I first gave this lecture the British Judo team failed to win any medals in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. So come the start of the 2012 London Olympics that will represent a twenty year gap with no Olympic medals for the men and a sixteen year gap for the women! So what went wrong? Was it a hierarchical problem with nobody clearly in charge? Did anybody's head roll? Were too many cooks spoiling the broth? If my memory serves me right we had a similar fiasco in the 1996 Olympics. Has the system now been changed? Do we now have the judo version of Sir Alex Ferguson of Manchester United in charge?

SH

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