



The Kano Society Bulletin



Issue No. 55

January 2023

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In This Edition

The main article in this issue of “The *Bulletin*” (produced by guest editor Llyr Jones) is a tribute by John Bowen to the late Yoshimi Osawa, *Kodokan* 10th *dan*. Also included is some more content pertaining to the life of this sublime *judoka*, as well as a feature on Colin Draycott’s recent promotion to IJF 9th *dan*.

Publisher’s Comments

The Kano Society along with the entire *judo* family mourns the passing of Yoshimi Osawa. In the 1950s, to use a term from boxing, the small, but fierce, Osawa was arguably, pound-for-pound, the finest contest *judoka* of his generation.

We also note with sadness the death on 7 November 2022 of one of our founders – former *Budokwai* Chairman, polymath and eminent specialist in geriatric medicine – emeritus Professor Malcolm Hodgkinson. A fuller tribute to “Hodi” will feature in the next issue of this *Bulletin*.

Finally, in these uncertain times the editorial team wish all *Bulletin* readers a peaceful and healthy 2023.

Contributions

The backbone of the Kano Society’s activities is this on-line publication. We welcome contributions in the form of articles or photographs etc. to “The *Bulletin*”.

Diana Birch

In Memoriam: Yoshimi Osawa *Kodokan* 10th *dan* (1926 – 2022) John Bowen

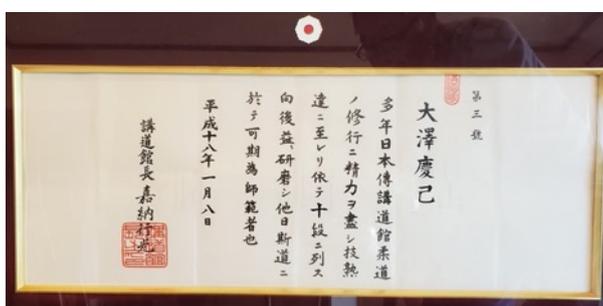


Yoshimi Osawa died of pneumonia on 21 October 2022 – he was 96 years old. Up to his death he was the last living *Kodokan* 10th *dan*, having been promoted to that grade along with Ichiro Abe (1922-2022) and Toshiro Daigo (1926-2021), at the *Kodokan Kagami Biraki* [New Year’s Rice-cake Cutting Ceremony] held on 8 January 2006. At just 167 centimetres tall and weighing in at 67 kilograms, Osawa brought exceptional skills and a competitive ferocity that combined to make him the most outstanding “small man” of *judo* in the first decade or so of the post-war era, which was dominated by big men. His favourite throws (all on the left) included *tai-otoshi* [body drop], *osoto-gari* [major outer reap], *uchi-mata* [inner thigh reaping throw], *sode-tsurikomi-goshi* [sleeve lift-pull hip throw], *de-ashi harai* [forward foot sweep], and *hiza-guruma* [knee wheel], though he also had many more techniques that he could spring on his opponents. Without doubt Osawa was a significant force of nature, and his mere participation made every competition a special event.

Osawa was lightning-fast and a master of body control and counters, which enabled him to successfully fight opponents of any size. Indeed, he had such quickness and mastery of movement that attackers often found their own attacks leaving them off-balance. At his peak he was a threat to even the biggest of contestants, and at some point in his career scored victories against many of the top-ranking *judoka* of that time – sometimes within the first 30 seconds of the match. In 1950 he scored with *okuri-ashi-harai* [foot sweep] as his opponent, a 7th *dan* named Shimizu, tried to take his opening grip. He was always a favourite with the crowds, who roared and cheered his every move, and although small in stature, he always carried himself like a champion.



Ichiro Abe, Yoshimi Osawa and Toshiro Daigo
on their promotion to Kodokan 10th dan in 2006



Yoshimi Osawa's 10th dan certificate

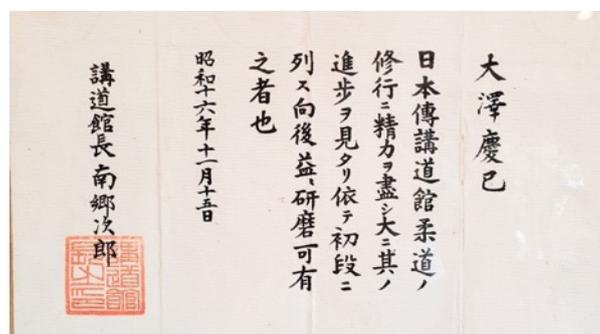
Osawa, the eldest of four children, was born on 6 March 1926 in Munakata, a village in the Inba district of Chiba Prefecture that is now part of the city of Inzai, which is about 70 km from Tokyo. His father was the mayor of Munakata for many years. After attending the local primary school, in 1938 he entered what is now Sakura Junior High School. When it came to military training, he had to choose *judo* rather than *kendo* in accordance with the wishes of his father, who was concerned about the future for his son.

Conscious of his own small size, the thought that he would be doing *judo* had never entered Osawa's head. The school's *judo* teacher was Shinji Tsuchiya, a Kokushikan University graduate who went on to become a Kodokan 8th dan. Under Tsuchiya's expert direction, Osawa and the 30-odd members of the *judo* club practiced for two hours each day.

As it happened, young Yoshimi was stronger than he looked, and highly energetic. His one-way commute to school took nearly three hours, involving as it did a bicycle ride at top speed along a gravel road to a ferry, which he boarded with his bike, to cross the prefecture's largest lake. Twice he fell into the lake when the boat was hit by sudden gusts of wind. From the far shore, he had to pedal some way to another station to take the train to Sakura. This daily commute, which continued over the five years he was at the school, greatly strengthened his legs.

He was dissatisfied with his contest performance at school, which he felt was only ordinary. However, also during this time, when he enrolled in the Kodokan in November 1941 at the age of fifteen, he was promoted to 1st dan within one

week, and in March 1943, was promoted to 2nd dan after defeating 15 opponents at the *Kodokan tsukinami-shiai* [monthly contest] held in February. Clearly, he was already showing superb natural reflexes and body control. At school, he had been successfully countering his teacher's *uchi-mata*, rolling him over, despite *uchi-mata* being Tsuchiya's strongest throw.



Yoshimi Osawa's 1st dan certificate

In 1943 Osawa entered Waseda University and joined its *judo* club, marking the start of a life-long association. In no time he became the captain of the club, where he would practice for two hours and then go to the Kodokan for another two hours. When asked whether practicing for four hours a day was hard? "Not unusual in those days", was his answer.



Yoshimi Osawa entering Waseda University

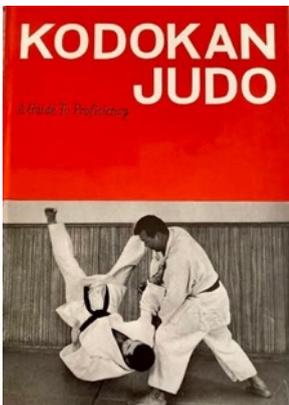
After graduating from Waseda in 1946, he started to make his mark in competitions. 1948 was a particularly active year for him, starting with a win in the 4th dan category of a tournament encompassing Tokyo and nearby prefectures, along the way giving away 30 kg and still beating Shokichi Natsui, who a few years later would become the first World *Judo* Champion and an All-Japan Champion. Two months later, Osawa lost to Daigo in the traditional Kodokan Spring *Kohaku-shiai* [red-and-white competition]. However, he was able to get his revenge later in the year by defeating Daigo in the final of a Kanto area competition. Again, Daigo outweighed him by over 30 kg and was some 12 cm taller. Then in October, giving away the usual 30 kg and nearly 20 cm, he beat the reigning All-Japan Champion, Yasuichi Matsumoto, countering Matsumoto's *harai-goshi* [hip sweep] with *utsuri-goshi* [hip transfer].



Yoshimi Osawa performing *Utsuri-goshi*

In 1949, Osawa made his first appearance in the All-Japan Championships, losing in the second round to the eventual co-winner, the famed Masahiko Kimura. In 1950, Osawa again came up against the 1948 winner, Matsumoto, but this time he couldn't throw him, however neither could Matsumoto throw Osawa. In the end, Matsumoto got a close decision. Every time Osawa made a move or kept his large opponent at bay, the crowd roared. Osawa did well in 1952, when he reached the last eight, scoring ippon in his first contest with *okuri-ashi-harai*. In his second contest, he threw his opponent off the mat with *tsurikomi-goshi* [lift-pull hip throw], banging his (opponent's) head in the process. Eventually, Osawa threw him with *tai-otoshi*, but then lost, again to the eventual winner, Yoshihiko Yoshimatsu, who threw him with an immense *osoto-gari*. In all, he entered the event five times and was always loudly cheered each time he appeared – something that had started several years earlier.

In 1951 Osawa became a trainee at the *Kodokan*, joining his friend and rival, Daigo, in an association that lasted over 70 years. Part of their responsibilities as trainees was to practice with a never-ending stream of college students, which served to toughen them both up even further. Also, with Daigo (and Yoshizo Matsumoto and Teizo Kawamura) Osawa was a member of the editorial committee for the 1968 text "*Kodokan Judo – A Guide to Proficiency*" which is considered to be one of the all-time best *judo* books. In addition to their co-authorship, the demonstrations in the illustrating photographs were also done by Daigo and Osawa.



"*Kodokan Judo – A Guide to Proficiency*" – edited by Yoshizo Matsumoto, Teizo Kawamura, Toshiro Daigo and Yoshimi Osawa – Daigo and Osawa would later achieve *Kodokan 10th dan*

In 1952, in response to an invitation from Sao Paulo, the *Kodokan* sent Osawa, along with Yoshimatsu to Brazil as members of a delegation, headed by Shinzo Takagaki. The delegates were welcomed at a special tournament at which they demonstrated *kata* to local *judo* fans and took on a line-up of 15. Hélio Gracie, the most famous Brazilian martial artist, was in attendance and took the opportunity to challenge Osawa to a contest, but the *Kodokan* did not allow it to happen. The delegation also visited Argentina, Peru, Cuba and Mexico, demonstrating *judo* at each stop and taking on 10-man and 15-man line-ups, which were wildly popular.



Document provided by the Brazilian Embassy for the trip Yoshimi Osawa took with other *Kodokan* representatives to Brazil in 1952



Kodokan group meeting Brazilian President Getulio Vargas



Yoshihiko Yoshimatsu, Shinzo Takagaki and Yoshimi Osawa during the *Kodokan's* 1952 diplomatic trip to Brazil



Yoshimi Osawa – aged 29

In 1953 Osawa became Tokyo Champion. He had just been promoted to 6th dan, entered as the clear favourite, and lived up to the billing, never looking in any trouble. As was usually the case, he was the smallest man in the competition. Geof Gleeson wrote an account, into which I'll dip (and paraphrase) to provide some idea of Osawa at his peak, starting with his contest with an opponent named Matsutani:

Osawa was greeted with a great roar from the crowd...He is a real champion, takes his time, and oozes confidence. Uses counters quite frequently, which like his throws, are very fierce (some say vicious). Nearing the edge of the contest area (which was raised about 18 inches from the actual floor), Osawa slashed in with hidari osoto-gari. Matsutani levelled off about 4 feet up and then proceeded in a horizontal direction off the mat. Osawa was kneeling on the edge looking down into the audience waiting for the crash.



Yoshimi Osawa –
1953 Tokyo Champion

In a later contest:

Sakae Endo attacked with harai-goshi, and with sheer savagery Osawa threw him halfway across, and off the mat (about 15 feet), Endo rolling over twice...

This was interesting, as George Kerr once described feeling like he'd turned a somersault when thrown by Osawa (who Kerr regarded as his principal teacher). Gleeson described Osawa sweeping his left foot around behind Endo's legs, bending his left leg, and driving his left elbow into Endo's chest, knocking him over the bent knee behind him. When Gleeson asked Osawa how he did the throw, he said, "*Don't bring the elbow back into his face, that will probably hurt him – hit him in the throat*".

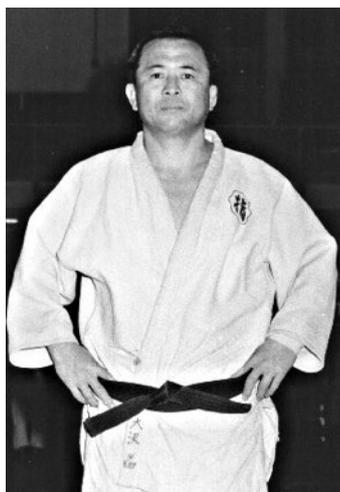


Yoshimi Osawa, George Kerr and Toshiro Daigo after practice –
Osawa and Daigo would go on to achieve Kodokan 10th dan, and Kerr International Judo Federation 10th dan

Osawa also had very good groundwork. Warwick Stephens describes Osawa gently placing his foot on the opponent's knee, whereupon the man would seem to fall over at his feet, and then he'd come down on top of him for groundwork. It took deceptively exquisite skill to catch someone off balance like that. At other times when he seemed able to get his opponent to move forward quickly, the man would describe a large circle in the air.

That also rang a bell with me. When I practiced with Takehide Nakatani, the lightweight 1964 Olympic gold medallist, I found myself stumbling over his feet all the time. A couple of months later, in the Tokyo area contests to get into the All-Japan Championships (no weight categories), he was gently doing the same thing to big 5th and 6th dan judoka, making them look clumsy as they tripped over or dropped on their knees. Finally, in desperation, the biggest fellow on the day, Yukio Maeda, just wrapped his arms around the tiny Nakatani and threw him with *ura-nage* [rear throw]. Nakatani did not have the dedicated ferocity that Osawa brought to the mat. Japanese- and English-language descriptions of Osawa in contests are usually rife with words such as "*fierce*" and "*savage*" and the like.

As he entered the final phase of his contest career, Osawa's emphasis turned increasingly to teaching, at both the Kodokan and Waseda. He continued to play an active role in the Kodokan's internationalisation efforts, travelling to Europe and North America, and teaching for one month in the Philippines in 1963. Back in Japan, he was an instructor in the Kodokan's International Division from 1979 to 1989.



Yoshimi Osawa as a *Kodokan* teacher

Osawa also played a significant part in the development of women's *judo* in Japan. Women's *judo* had been making rapid progress elsewhere in the 1970s, but it wasn't until 1979 that the All-Japan *Judo* Federation started to focus on women's *judo* and put Osawa in charge. When the first Women's World Championships were held in New York in 1980, the participation of a Japanese team stirred a lot of interest. But it didn't go well. Japan competed in seven weight categories but were only able to win a single medal, a silver in the -52kg category, which was won by a young Kaori Yamaguchi. Osawa and coach Hisashi Yanagisawa were stunned and embarrassed by the poor showing. They returned to Tokyo, got down to the task of developing a competitive team and the medals soon started to trickle in. At the third Women's World Championships, held in Vienna in 1984, Yamaguchi became Japan's first female World *Judo* Champion when she won the gold medal in the -52kg division. From 1985 to 1989, Osawa served as Director of the Women's National Team, which eventually rose to the top of the world rankings.

Osawa would meekly answer, then get up and throw whoever it was up and down the *dojo*. George Whyman told me he saw him do that. The first time I practiced with him, he was relaxed and laughing as we moved around, and he shouted, in English, "I know what you are going to do!" He was in his forties then, and more mellow.

In one class during my time as a *Kenshusei* [Special Research Student], Osawa taught *kata*. While we were getting on with some of the moves, he was sitting on the mat with his legs crossed thumbing back and forth through a small *kata* textbook. In later years he was a regular senior teacher at the *Kodokan's* Summer *Kata* Course – often leading the teaching of *Itsutsu-no-kata* [Forms of "Five"].



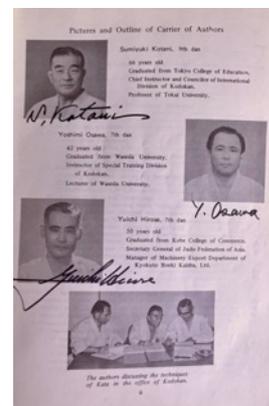
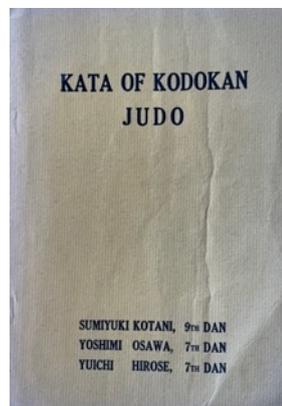
Yoshimi Osawa 10th dan and Shiro Yamamoto 9th dan at the 2013 *Kodokan* Summer *Kata* Course

In another contribution to the development of *kata*, Osawa was a co-author, along with Sumiyuki Kotani and Yuichi Hirose, of the comprehensive and popular 1968 book "The *Kata of Kodokan Judo*", and its subsequent revision.



Yoshimi Osawa teaching at 2015 *Kodokan* Women's Course [Source: *Kodokan Judo* Institute]

Despite being a ferocious competitor, Osawa had his fun side, too. At the *Kodokan* he used to sit hunched over at the side of the mat, looking even smaller than he was. Big, strong judoka up from the countryside to visit the *Kodokan* would gruffly order him to practice with them. "Who, me?"



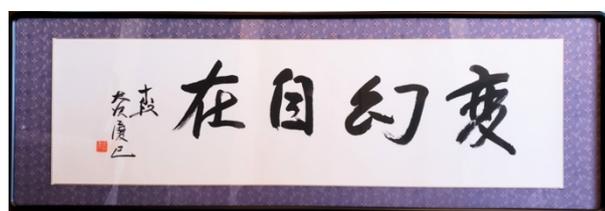
"*Kata of Kodokan Judo*" – by Kotani, Osawa and Hirose – Kotani and Osawa later achieved *Kodokan* 10th dan

From an interview in the *Kodokan's "Judo"* magazine:

For someone his size, nearly every contest was with a bigger opponent. If he came to grips and just waited, he would have got pulled in and thrown. So, he just decided to 'have a go'. His advice was to do *randori* only with people stronger than you. After about 10 minutes of practice, take a rest while you look around for another strong person. He said he found that after doing this for some time, he was able to deal with anyone – the big and the strong. This is similar to Trevor Leggett's advice.

Osawa talked about when he was in peak contest form, how his *tai-sabaki* [body control] enabled him to put up a good fight against strong champions such as Daigo, Yoshimatsu, and Yasuichi Matsumoto, to the extent that they'd complain about the frustration of his constant ability to evade their techniques. On the mat Osawa used to battle Matsumoto using every bit of his fighting spirit and skill, but off the mat they were friends, and Matsumoto used to invite him out for meals.

Yoshimi Osawa continued to go to the *Kodokan* well into his nineties. When asked what his secret was, he said it was two glasses of wine every day. He was a very free-spirited person in all aspects in his life – so free that he was never overly bothered about wearing his *judo* belt properly. He also very much enjoyed singing *karaoke* – sometimes even at the *Kodokan*.



Personal Motto of Yoshimi Osawa 10th dan
"Hengen jizai" – "Ever Changing"

There were no weight categories in Osawa's day, which in practice meant that the major championships were won by big men who were also skilful and quick and nimble despite their weight. Osawa structured his *judo* with the specific aim of beating them by ceaselessly thinking of ways to counter attacks and honing techniques that could help overcome the weight difference. Though small in stature, he was strong and quick and had exquisite balance and body control. Perhaps just as important, he had the true confidence of a champion and a fierce determination to win.

In his later years, he knew that competition based on weight categories was here to stay but felt that the *judoka* of today needed to have a mindset that enabled them to compete with opponents that outweighed them by 10 to 15 kg. In that regard, he had nothing but praise for the late Toshihiko Koga (1967-2021), who weighed 75 kg in 1990 when he defeated one heavyweight after another to reach the final of the (open weight) All-Japan Judo Championships, eventually losing to the 115 kg Naoya Ogawa.

Yoshimi Osawa was truly one of a kind. He is mourned by a *judo* community that has now lost all three *Kodokan* 10th dan holders in the space of just over a year.

I recommend readers search out some old black-and-white videos on the internet showing Osawa performing some techniques.



Ichiro Abe, Yoshimi Osawa and Toshiro Daigo



Yoshimi Osawa, Toshiro Daigo and Ichiro Abe at the *Kodokan* New Year's party in 2020

Biographical Summary & Promotion History – Yoshimi Osawa *Kodokan* 10th dan (1926 – 2022)

Biographical Summary

- 1926 Born in Chiba Prefecture
- 1941 Entered the *Kodokan*
- 1941 *Kodokan Shodan*
- 1946 Graduated in commerce from Waseda University
- 1953–1996 *Shihan* (master teacher) of Waseda University *Judo* Club

- 1964 Coach at Tokyo Olympics
- 1974–1996 Professor at Waseda (thereafter Professor Emeritus)
- 1976 Referee, Montreal Olympics
- 1983–1989 Member of Board of Directors, All Japan Judo Federation (AJJF)
- 1985–1989 Director of Women’s National Team, AJJF
- 1990–2012 Member of Board of Trustees, AJJF
- 1992– *Kodokan* – Member of Board of Trustees
- 2006 *Kodokan* 10th dan
- 2008 *Kodokan* – Technical Expert
- 4 March 2010 Awarded Honorary Citizenship of Inzai City

Promotion History – Rank, Date, Age

講道館での昇段歴		
段位	年月日	年齢
入門	1941年11月8日	15歳
初段	1941年11月15日	15歳
二段	1943年3月12日	17歳
三段	1944年9月14日	18歳
四段	1946年9月12日	20歳
五段	1948年5月24日	22歳
六段	1953年1月30日	26歳
七段	1961年5月2日	35歳
八段	1971年5月1日	45歳
九段	1992年4月28日	66歳
十段	2006年1月8日	79歳

Yoshimi Osawa & Waseda University

Osawa Judan [10th dan] Farewell Party

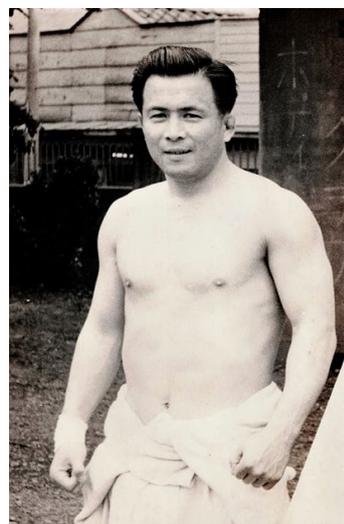
Yoshimi Osawa maintained a life-long association with his *alma mater*, Waseda University. On 10 December 2022 the University Judo Department held an “Osawa Judan Farewell Party” as a memorial to their beloved teacher. Some photographs of this memorial event and of its commemorative display are shown next.



Farewell Ceremony for Yoshimi Osawa – 10 December 2022 at Waseda University Judo Hall



Students attending the Farewell Ceremony at Waseda



Yoshimi Osawa in his mid-30s



Yoshimi Osawa in Paris in 1960



Yoshimi Osawa – in his 80s



Appointed a Professor at Waseda University in 1974

Sports Museum – Judo Club Exhibits

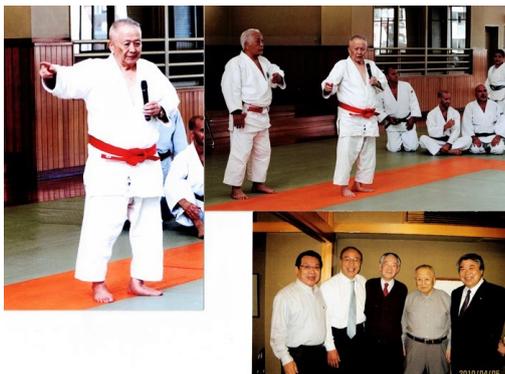
The Sports Museum at Waseda university has a specific exhibition for its *Judo Club*. Several of the exhibits commemorates the life in *judo* of Yoshimi Osawa. Photographs of this exhibition and some of its exhibits are shown below.



Yoshimi Osawa – in his 50s until his retirement from Waseda



Judo Club Exhibition – Waseda University Sports Museum



Yoshimi Osawa Teaching on a Kodokan Summer Course



Waseda University Judo Club – Information Panel



Yoshimi Osawa – ashi-waza

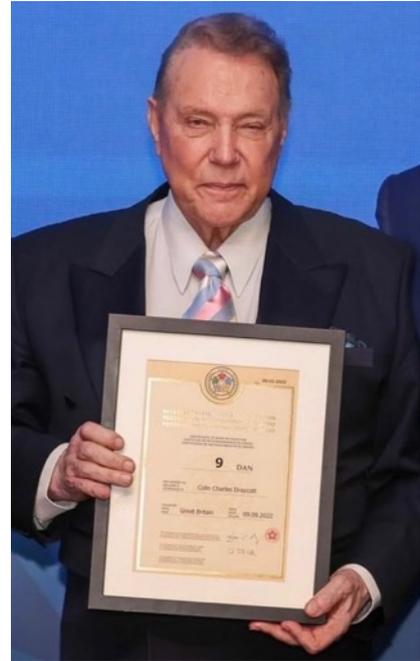


Yoshimi Osawa – information Plaque



Yoshimi Osawa 10th dan – Aka Obi

Dr Colin Draycott Honoured by the European Judo Union and Promoted to IJF 9th dan



Dr Colin Draycott – International Judo Federation 9th dan

The Kano Society is thrilled to report that during the Gala Dinner held at the end of the 74th European Judo Union (EJU) Ordinary Congress in Slovenia, Dr Colin Draycott was awarded the EJU Golden Order of Merit and promoted to the International Judo Federation (IJF) grade of 9th dan. The dinner was held on the evening of 10 December 2022, with the official date of Colin’s promotion being 9 September 2022.

Colin has made a very significant all-round contribution to judo and was the subject of a detailed article in Issue 48, April 2021, of this *Bulletin*. It is very pleasing to see him getting some of the recognition that he so richly deserves.

Points to Ponder

“Educating an individual and bringing him into the society of his generation, one makes a contribution that will extend to hundreds of generations to come.”

Jigoro Kano (1860-1938)

“For one thing, Judo in reality is not a mere sport or game. I regard it as a principle of life, art and science.

In fact, it is a means for personal cultural attainment.”

Jigoro Kano (1860-1938)

“Put all your power, all your focus and all your effort into one movement. That is a judo throw.”

Tsuba Goya

“Only those who strive can hope to arrive.”

Brian N. Watson

“Never believe anything until you know it is true.”

Brian N. Watson

“No side ever wins a war. Both lose, one side suffering more than the other.”

Brian N. Watson

“Professor Kano’s judo teachings extol virtue never violence.”

Brian N. Watson

“No sword can oppose kindness.”

Japanese Proverb

“Judo should be free as art and science from any external influences, political, national, racial, and financial or any other organised interest. And all things connected with it should be directed to its ultimate object, the benefit of humanity.”

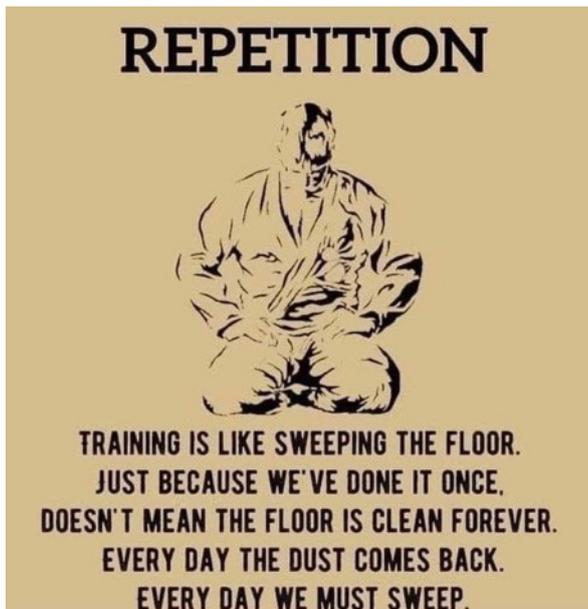
Jigoro Kano (1860-1938)

“The main point [of judo] is to rise above the problem of life and death, from the feeling of fear and apprehension.”

Jigoro Kano (1860-1938)



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Judo Collections



UNIVERSITY OF
BATH

The “Bowen Collection” at the University of Bath Library, contains the extensive *judo* archive amassed by *judoka* and scholar Richard Bowen during the course of individual research for his many books and publications.

Alongside the “Bowen Collection” is the personal book collection of Syd Hoare which includes many rare texts, some in the Japanese language, given to Syd by Trevor Leggett. As well as the books, there is a bound compendium of the educational articles and lectures written and delivered by Syd.

Also residing at Bath is the “Woodard (*Judo*) Collection” – a compilation of archival material relating to the history of women’s *judo* assembled by Marion and Graham Woodard.

All of these collections represent a wonderful resource for present and future *judo* researchers. They are for reference use only (not available for loan) and can be viewed between 0900 and 1700 hrs.