



Episode 347 – Judo | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



### Jeremy Lesniak:

Welcome, this is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 347. Today we're talking about judo. My name is Jeremy Lesniak I'm your founder for whistlekick, I'm your host for martial arts radio and I love martial arts. That's really where my bio needs to end, there's nothing else that matters, I just do all the stuff because I love it so thanks for listening. If you want to shop our products, [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) you can use the code `podcast15` to save 15% and you can find all of our show notes at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) including transcripts and whole bunch other good stuff.

Judo. Let's talk about judo. There are some myths about judo. Some of what you think you know about Judo might not be accurate, so we did some research and this is as far as we can tell from cross-referencing and fact checking, this is all true stuff. Judo, is known as a modern martial art created by the Japanese educator, Kano Jigoro or Jigoro Kano depending on how you list the name in 1882. Judo, is commonly known for its throws and its takedown techniques where the practitioners, also known as judoka, use mats to avoid serious injury. Originally judo is not an Olympic sport but it became one in 1964. Techniques such as strikes and thrust with the hands and feet are prohibited in competition judo but they are allowed in kata, in forms matches. Like other martial arts, the foundation of judo lies on the principles of "life art and science". Kano Jigoro was born 1860 and passed in 1938 was the third son of Kano Jirosaku and Kano Sadako. Jirosaku's original name was Mareshiba Jirosaku, but since he was adopted by his wife's family he changed his last name to Kano. Kano Jigoro's father worked in a shipping



## Episode 347 – Judo | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

line but later became a government official, while his mother's family on the popular sake brewing business. Kano had a comfortable life as a child. Kano's father highly valued education so he sent his son to private schools. At an early age, around seven, Kano was already learning English and he was working on Japanese calligraphy and the four Confucian texts also called the four books and the five classics. In 1873, Kano was enrolled in a private British school, it was here he experience frequent bullying due to his small sometimes [00:02:32.20] his frail body so he thought he'd find some and teach him jiu-jitsu. Kano had difficulty finding a jujitsu instructor during that time, jiu-jitsu was becoming less popular due to its kind of vulgar image people thought it was really violent so many of the instructors had stopped teaching. He attempted to ask a few people which is a family friend, named Nakai Umenari who was the caretaker at their Villa and Imai Genshiro of kyushin ryu school jujitsu. All of them refused to teach Kano. Umenari showed Kano some kata but that was it. It took him several years to finally find an instructor.

Kano studied at the Tokyo University in 1877. He learned that many jujitsu instructors became bones setters or osteopaths. So he looked for these bones setters instead and eventually met Yagi Teinosuke. Kano was able to convince Yago to teach him jiu-jitsu, however, Yagi had no dojo. He then referred Kano to his friend Fukuda Hachinisuke who had a small dojo and also happen to be an instructor at the Tenjin Shinyo Ryu. That was the start of Kano's journey in martial arts.

Fukuda's manner of teaching was more actual practice the teaching theory. So kano was trained more in randori. Those of you that might not be familiar with that term, its free sparring. Aside from learning from Fukuda, kano religiously researched as well on European physical education, sumo techniques and European boxing and gymnastics. It was around this time that he devised a new technique called kataguruma or shoulder wheel which he used to topple a bigger opponent. In 1880, Fukuda passed away due to illness at the age of 52 and it was still undecided who would replace him as the dojo master. Kano being the best in both randori and kata was asked by Fukuda's wife to take over the dojo. Kano hesitated at first thinking he wasn't ready to take on such a huge responsibility but eventually he did accept. Kano was given all the manuscripts from the Fukuda dojo. After Fukuda's death, kano had no master so he decided to enroll at the Tenjin Shinyo Ryu school of jujitsu founded by Iso Matemon Masatari. The headmaster at the time was 62-year-old Iso Masatomo who was a well-known kata expert. Iso refined Kano's katas and entrusted the randori exercises to his other two best students to teach Kano. Because of Kano's sheer talent and diligence he eventually became an assistant instructor in Tenjin Shinyo Ryu. In 1881 just one year after Cano's previous masters death, Iso also passed away. Kano continue to broaden his knowledge in jujitsu so he studied several manuscript from iso. He also sought advice from masters of the old schools in Tokyo , he invested in jujitsu books that he bought from bookstores that were sold at exorbitant prices. After studying for some time, Kano met the 48-year-old Ikubo Tsunetoshi of Kito Ryu. Ikubo refined Kano's throwing techniques which he was an expert at. In February 1882, Kano founded his own school and he called it Kano Academy. This coincides with his employment at Gakushuin or peer school as a part-time instructor. In just a few weeks his students grew in number and he needed a better place. He decided to rent rooms at a Buddhist temple called Eishoji where he also slept. On June 5, 1882 Kato founded the Kotokan Judo. Kotokan means a place for



## Episode 347 – Judo | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

expounding the way. However, after some time to head priest of the temple asked Kano not to use the rooms anymore due to the damage caused by the training sessions. Just as an aside, going off script for a moment, you can imagine that right? I don't know about you but I've trained in some places where some people have flown into some drywall or cracked some Windows, it happens.

Kano's first students in this temple were Tomita Tsunijiro and Shiro Saigo. They were also the very first people to receive the shodan grade or beginning degree in any martial art. In August 1882, Kano was hired as full-time instructor at Gakushin and his compensation was higher. However, what he was getting was not enough to build his own dojo. He took a stressful part-time job at the Ministry of education as a translator. The job got him enough money to build his own dojo with 12 tatami mats. The term judo did not come first from Kano but rather from Terada Kanemon, the fifth headmaster of the Kito Ryu. Kano just revived the term in 1884 because he believed that the term jujitsu was not appropriate because the principles he'd incorporated into the art. Kano's principles involved seryoku zenyo, maximum efficiency, minimal effort and jita kyoei, mutual welfare and benefit. On top of the seiryoku Zenyo principle, he had this theory called ju yoku go o seisu, softness controls hardness. With the following explanation: in short resisting more powerful opponent will result in your defeat, whilst adjusting to and evading your opponent's attack will cause him to lose his balance, his power will be reduced and he will defeat him. This can apply whatever the relative values of power thus making it possible for weaker opponents to beat significantly stronger ones. This is the theory of ju yoku go o seisu.

Kano removed the techniques that were contrary to these principles because every conceivable technique is allowed in jujitsu. Rather, Kano stress the importance of technique execution while adhering to these principles. He developed jujitsu into judo just like the development of bujitsu martial art into budo or martial way. Therefore, judokas would not only learn the techniques but the principles that would shape and develop them morally. Moreover, Kano wanted Judo to be distinguished from jujitsu because the latter already had a negative connotation on a nationwide scale. As he explained: at the time a few bujitsu you experts still existed, but bujitsu was almost abandoned by the nation at large. Even if I wanted to teach jujitsu, most people had no stop thinking about it. So I thought it better to teach under a different name principally because my objectives were much wider in jujitsu.

The three basic categories of waza or techniques in judo are nagewaza, throwing, katame waza, grappling and atemi waza, striking. Judo classes typically begin with ukemi or break-falls as a sort of conditioning to avoid serious injury caused by throwing. This will train the tori or taker to correctly and safely perform the waza on the uke or receiver. There are different forms of ukemi including, ushiro ukemi rear break falls, yoko ukemi side break falls, mae ukemi front, zenpo kaiten ukemi, rolling. There are 67 nagewaza in total and all have three stages of execution. Breaking the opponents balance, setting the conditions to successfully execute a throw, and selecting and executing an appropriate technique based on the conditions. Before performing the breaking of the opponents balance, we've got have a



Episode 347 – Judo | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

firm grip on the opponent, this is called kumi kata. Grips can vary depending on the situation so it's important to devise a plan first to make the kazushi effective.

Randori as defined by Cano means free practice though literally translates to taking chaos. It is a type of practice that simulates an actual contest the participants can use whatever waza, whatever techniques they like. The intensity of randori also depends on the level of expertise of the participants. There are two main types of randori, light and hard. In hard randori, participants use more strength to compensate on skill. However, focusing only on power can be disadvantageous as the development of the technical skills can be left behind. Moreover, since it requires more energy participants will find it difficult to participate in more matches. Light randori on the other hand, strength is used only when necessary, its secondary. And as a result participants focus on refining their technique rather than delivering explosive movements. And since it uses less power, like randori it's not always safer but you can do more of it. Another form of randori is yakusoku geiko. It is a prearranged practice wherein the tori and the uke would plan first on the techniques to be executed with the intention of polishing one skill. In this type of rendering the tori would use tai-sabaki or body shifting and control to perform a nagewaza to the uke. The uke would use the ukemi to safely land on his back then the Tori might use his hiki-te pulling hand to hold the strike while maintaining his awareness I think you know where I'm going. In other systems this is called one-step sparring or three-step sparring or you know, there other names.

There's a lot going on here can you tell? I'm actually skipping over some bits not because it's not relevant but because we went deep with this one, even deeper and we needed to. Kata or forms are prearranged movements patterns or exercises of techniques in judo, honestly in most martial arts, were some of them are not permissible in competition and in randori for safety purpose. All kata are practiced with a partner but in Seiryoku Zen'yo Kokumin Taiiku no Kata meaning maximum efficiency national physical education kata, one of the two groups of physical exercises requires performing alone. The main objective of practicing kata is to get used to the techniques without being too conscious of the detailed steps when executing them given that the techniques executed correctly. The ancient techniques are also taught even if they are not already used in contemporary judo as they do have historical significance. The Kotokan recognizes 10 official named kata. Kano established the kotokan judo at the young age of 22 and two years prior to that, kano had already thought of considering judo a competitive sport if they could find a way to remove the more dangerous techniques. Since then, contests have been a vital part of Judo. The oldest forms of judo contest followed the Kohaku shiai or winner stays up method. Where the participants were ordered by size and experience. The winner of each match would stay on the mat while the loser would be replaced by the next in line.

The participant the highest number of wins would be declared winner. In 1899 Cano became chair of the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai or greater Japan martial virtue society to lay down the first formal rules to be used in jujitsu contest while also being applicable to kotokan judo practitioners. The contest duration was 15 minutes and the criteria for judging were limited to nagewaza and katamiwaza the atemi, the striking waza was prohibited. Two ippons points would guarantee a win and there were four possibilities



## Episode 347 – Judo | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

in getting one. First, when the opponent was made to fall on their back. Second, when the opponent was pinned or controlled. Third and fourth, when the opponent lost by submission or no, two kinds of submission, third and fourth when they loss by submission except for finger toe and ankle locks which were prohibited. These rules were adopted by the kotokan in 1900 but made some adjustments. For kyu grades, lower ranks, all joint locks were prohibited and for dan grades, the blackbelts, wrist locks were added. In addition to this, the ratio of tachi waza and ne-waza was set between 78% for kyu grades and for dan grades, 60 to 70. The rules were adjusted again in 1916 when the kotokan on prohibited use of leg joint locks, neck locks and trunk constriction. I don't know what that last one is but I am pretty sure I've experienced it and it's awful.

Kano demonstrated judo at the 1932 Olympics which was the first time that judo was seen in Olympic games event. However, Kano's view on including judo to the Olympics was passive as he said in the statement: I've been asked by people of various sections as to the wisdom and possibility of judo being introduced with other games and sports at the Olympic games. My view on the matter at present is rather passive. If it be the desire of other member countries, I have no objection. But I do not feel inclined to take any initiative 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 only one of the forms of judo training so-called randori or free practice can be classed as a form of sport. Certainly to some extent, the same may be said of boxing and fencing but today they are practiced and conducted a sports. The Olympic games are so strongly flavored with nationalism that it is possible to be influenced by and to develop contest judo, a retrograde form as jiu-jitsu was before the kotokan was founded. Judo should be free as art and science from any external influences political, national, racial and financial or any other organized interest and all things connected with it should be directed to its ultimate object, the benefit of humanity. Human sacrifice is a matter of ancient history. More than three decades later the international Olympic committee included judo at the 1964 Summer Olympics but only limited to men. However the pride of Japan named Akio Kamenaga, was defeated by the Dutchman Anton Geesink. Geesink was defeated by the Japanese in the 56 and 50 world championships wherein, kamenaga also participated. So Geesink's victory was quite unexpected. At the 1968 Olympics, Judo was removed by the IOC among other sports. The inclusion of women in judo in the Olympic start in 1988 was only as a demonstration event and was officially included as a medal event in 1992.

Kano developed Judo with safety measures for competition. Even though Judo does have dangerous techniques, these are prohibited by the rules established by the kotokan. Since Judo was developed by borrowing techniques and ideas from different styles as well as from Kano's own invention he devised it "for physical culture and moral training as well as for winning contests."

The person who practices judo is called a Judoka, in English, it pertains to a person of any level of expertise but traditionally, it only pertains to those who were fourth-dan or higher those below fourth dan were called kenkyu-sei or trainees. Imagine that for a moment, anybody below 4th degree black belt being referred to as a trainee, I like that. The person who teaches judo on the other hand is called



## Episode 347 – Judo | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

sensei or teacher. However, it literally translates to person born before another. Sensei is the common honorific for judo instructors and Western dodos but traditionally, the term is only used for those instructors were fourth-dan or higher. The uniform the judogi, is the term for uniform used by judokas. It's similar to a karate gi as they have the same origin. It follow the style of kimono and other Japanese apparel during the early 20th century. Judogi has changed over the years, but is still pretty close to that they were using 100 years ago. Some changes include the length of the sleeves and the pants, materials used and the fact there are no colors. The judogi is usually heavy and durable and is designed to endure the very nature of judo practice were it gets abused. The obi, the belt comes in different colors to identify the judoka's rank. The blue judo gate is use nowadays especially in hiring competitions for easier identification during a match. It was first suggested by Anton Geesink the name that we just heard about at the 1986 meeting. However, this idea was opposed by traditionalists because it kinda shies away, veers away I guess is a better way to say from the ideal of judo as sport versus not sport and you know the idea that white was traditional and that's what should be used exclusively. In Japan, a white judo he is always used by both competitors and only the belts are changed. For those matches hosted by the international judo Federation the IJF, each judogi has to go through mandatory inspections and must have the official logo of the IJF and one reason for this is to make sure that the uniform is not too slippery for proper grip. Yes people find any way to cheat. The IJF is the governing body of judo for all countries and the one that host the world judo championships. Originally it had federations from countries across Europe and Argentina but it grew over the years and now includes 200 national federations .among the members the African judo union, the Pan-American judo Confederation, the judo union of Asia, the European judo union, and the Oceania judo union. Each of these members has their own Judo associations under them. The IJF is also responsible for running the Judo events in the Olympics its headquarters is currently located at Lausanne, Switzerland. The current president is Marius Vizer. Currently honorary president is a Russian Pres. Vladimir Putin.

Judokas are ranked by their skill and level of understanding through the kyu dan ranking system from white to black. All the various steps in between, the ranks are easily identified by the color of the obi, the belt that they wear. The ranking system was developed by Kano, which he based on the Chinese board game Go. Beginners typically wear white and changes colors while the progress. Upon reaching the dan grade, Judokas wear the kuro obi or the black belt. The judoka would now improve his skills to climb the ladder from 1st to 10th degree. Ninth and 10th degree can only be achieved by practitioners who are promoted by the Kotokan itself and as of this writing there are only 17 people who were promoted to kotokan tenth degree. Originally the kotokan did not limited on level, according to them if a person is deserving to exceed 10th degree, there is no reason why he should not be promoted to 11th and so on. It is however different now, the kotokan has restricted the level to 10 and does not have any plans nominate anyone beyond that. The latest individual that was promoted was Massao Shinohara in 2017. He was born in 1925.

Now, if you like today's episode you might want to go back to episode 299 where go in depth on Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo, the founder of the Kotokan. While there was some overlap between this



Episode 347 – Judo | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

episode and that one, that one goes much more into the psychology, the transition of Kano from a small frail child into a man who launch Judo and had such tremendous impact on martial arts, not just judo, not just Japanese arts but pretty much everything that's come since. If you wanna check our products, you can find them at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com), don't forget code `podcast15` to save 15% and you can find our show notes including transcripts and more at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). Email me if you want [Jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:Jeremy@whistlekick.com) and find us on social media we put a lot of fun stuff out there. Thought-provoking, entertaining stuff that you want to see. Trust me, follow us on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, we are [@whistlekick](https://www.instagram.com/whistlekick). That's all I've got for you today, I appreciate your time. Thanks for listening. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day.