

SERIOUS JUDO INJURIES—Highly Infrequent, But Physicians Say They Can Be Made Even Rarer

A careful and detailed review and analysis of all judo injuries that occurred in the San Francisco Bay area between January 19, 1969, and March 25, 1973, has shown that serious mishaps take place far less often than most people suppose, but that there are ways in which injury prevention can be further improved. The study covered 90 shiais, and, in addition, 54,720 hours of instruction and supervised work-outs at the Santa Clara Judo Club.

There were nine serious injuries to white-belts in 3, 123 bouts, or one injury for every 347 bouts. Green-belts were involved in 6,005 matches, and sustained just six injuries, or one for every 1,000 matches. Eighteen purple-belts were badly hurt in a total of 6,518 contests, or one player hurt in each 362 bouts. The record showed only 1,270 contests in which brown-belts took part—a deceptively low figure, probably due to the fact that brown-belts were quite often lumped in with the black belts. There were 17 injuries to brown-belts in those 1,270 bouts, or one per 74 bouts, but that statistic is of doubtful reliability. Finally, there were 24 injuries to black-belts in 3,651 bouts, or one for each 152 matches.

THE AUTHORS ARE WELL KNOWN PHYSICIANS

The authors of the review and analysis are physicians with excellent qualifications both in judo and in medicine: Mas Yamamoto, M.D., F.A.C.P.



Doctors urge falling practice to prepare students for hazardous *o soto gari* falls such as this one.

Thomas Devlin, M.D., A.A.O.S., and Joseph Fitzsimmons, M.D., A.A.O.S.* They disregarded bloody noses, sore or sprained toes and bruised ribs, and recorded and commented upon only (A) fractures (broken bones), (B) sprains in any of the three more serious types [(a) ligaments painfully stretched or torn, e.g., "shoulder pointer," (b) ligaments stretched and torn so that the bone rides partially out of the joint. (c) a joint completely disrupted.]; (C) concussions; and (D) disorientation (stunned condition—judoka "sees stars," can't tell what town he's in or what day it is).

At the Santa Clara Judo Club there were 12 serious injuries during routine work-outs in the first two years of the period covered by the study, but in all of the remaining time—two years and four months—there was only one serious mishap not connected with a tournament.

BACKWARD FALLS NEED MORE PRACTICE

The doctors feel that variety must be stressed in *ukemi* drills. Otherwise, students are likely to concentrate upon falls forward to their right and to their left. Many of the injuries included in the study occurred as the result of backward falls, e.g., after *o soto gari*. They go on to say that many throws are executed so that *uke's* head is only an inch from the mat, and because he is unused to that situation, he may not get his head through or his shoulders around promptly to avoid being hurt. Thus, they warn, There should be more *ukemi* practice for rear throws, low forward throws and "twisting out."

THE DOCTORS FIND FAULT WITH REFEREES

The physician authors are highly critical of "the so-called *maki komi*" and modifications of standard techniques

* F.A.C.P. indicates that the doctor is a specialist in internal medicine. The letters stand for "Fellow of the American College of Physicians." A.A.O.S. indicates that the doctor is a specialist in orthopedic [i.e., bone] surgery. The initials stand for "American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons."

Sensei who want copies of the study, or answers to questions about it, should write or phone Dr. Fitzsimmons, 1333 Meridian Avenue, San Jose, California, 95125.



Dr. Fitzsimmons in action at the 1973 Nationals

that enable "win-at-any-cost" competitors to throw their opponents any where and any way they can. Then they come down hard upon referees for negligence. Speaking of injuries resulting from out-of-control throws in Hokka Yudan-shakai during the past four years, they seem ready to shake their fists or to pound a table: "Not one *honsoku* was given for any [such] injuries. There are rules designed to prevent injuries and [prevent any rewarding of] overly zealous but incompetent contestants. We know of only one *keikoku* that was given for this type of activity. Referees are neglecting this aspect of their duties. Article 28. Article 34B."

THEY'D RESTRICT MAKI KOMI AND KAMI BASAMI

Having got that off their chests, the doctors concede: "A *maki komi* is a good throw, and properly done, it should cause no injury." But then they say: "Its use, though, should be restricted to purple and brown-belt *Ni Kyus* and above. Anyone below that rank is usually too interested in winning to consider the basic premise of judo or his own lack of ability. He also hinders his overall development of skills."

They want *kami basami* (flying scissors) denied to boys who haven't gained their full height. In the injuries that they studied, there were two instances of damage to the growth centers in the farther end of the fibula (one of the two major bones in the lower leg) that occurred following an attempt at that technique.

OTHER CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

Drs. Yamamoto, Devlin and Fitzsimmons made a number of other comments that merit attention:

1. Except for the thin, horsehair

DOUG NELSON IS BACK!

wrestling mat, judoka can use any type of mat without risk of injury.

2. A "springing" floor seems to reduce the injury rate.

3. A player who has been rendered unconscious should withdraw from the tournament.

4. Referees should realize that some people convulse or develop rhythmical movements of the arms, legs and head after having been choked out.

The physicians report difficulty in gathering and recording information about judo injuries while they are busy examining the hurt judokas, and patching them up or deciding whether they should or should not resume fighting. Too frequently, they say, they don't get around to the paper work before one of the contestants has disappeared or before being called to attend some other patient.

They suggest that someone should be assigned to work with each attending physician during tournaments, and that person should go out onto the mat with the doctor whenever a player has been hurt. By such means he can learn rather more than most non-physicians have a chance to do about the medical aspects of judo, but in addition he can "keep the books" on injuries.

The doctors would like injury-report cards to be prepared, with spaces on them for the following data: 1. Physician's diagnosis 2. Mode of injury, as described by *uke* and *tori* 3. *Uke*'s rank, years of competition, age, weight, height and name 4. *Tori*'s rank, years of competition, age, weight, height and name 5. Type of mat: tatami, ensolite, canvas-covered ensolite, horsehair 6. Floor "spring": none, poor, fair, good 7. Date 8. Place. The physician's assistant would be responsible for securing, recording and filing all of that information.

JUDO CAMP, JUNE 24-30

Princeton, Indiana

The Evansville, Indiana YMCA is sponsoring the Midwest Judo Camp, June 24-30, near Princeton, 30 miles north of Evansville, for judoka of all ages. Professor Ryozo Nakamura and Dr. Laura Friedman will be two of the instructors. Besides judo instruction and randori, which will occupy the mornings and the evenings, there will be swimming and other sports.

For further information, reservations, etc., call Mr. Merlin Morris, judo director, Evansville YMCA, at (812) 476-6712 or (812) 385-3597. Enrollees will be accepted until the camp has been filled. The fee for adults is \$75 (includes everything), and for children it is \$55. There are special rates for families.

Throughout the 1973 AAU National Judo Championships, in Atlanta, people were asking each other, "Where's Doug Nelson?" Everyone was astounded at the absence of the judoka who won the light-heavyweight crown and the grand championship at St. Louis in 1971, who took the U.S. heavyweight title in Philadelphia last year, and afterward was America's entry in the Heavyweight Division at the Olympic Games, in Munich.

Believe it or not, he was then a deckhand on a freighter outbound from Japan! You see, an ambitious judo player who doesn't have gobs of money, yet feels that an extended stay in Japan is essential for the improvement of his skills, takes whatever transport he can find in getting to and from the Orient, and undertakes all sorts of tasks, in addition to English-teaching assignments, to keep body and soul together while in Japan. Doug had fully intended to return to this country in time to participate in the 1973 Nationals, knowing that a fine performance there was a prerequisite to his being appointed to the team that will represent the United States at the 1st World Championships, in Switzerland. Unfortunately, however, the steamer on which he was working had a sailing schedule which had it docking after, not before, the Atlanta tournament.

Incidentally, there is considerable likelihood that the United States won't be able to send all of its 12 men who were chosen recently to compete in this year's World Championships. To begin with, the USJF has made its contribution of expense money contingent upon the U.S. Olympic Committee's putting up an equal amount. Besides that, the announced plan calls for training our contestants for a considerable period in Europe, prior to the tournament, at a cost of \$1,000 per man for 12 judokas, the coach, Mr. Young Nam Chung, and the manager, Mr. Mel Augustine. If insufficient money is available, the team may be reduced to just eight members, thus lessening the chances that America will make a creditable showing.

In any case, Doug Nelson won't be on the U.S. team this year, and though he is disappointed, he's not letting his misfortune get him down. He'll be ready for all the important tournaments, national and international, in the years to come! Upon his return to the U.S. he visited Chicago for an extended period and, between vigorous workouts with the Chicago-based judokas, talked at length with our staff members. A continuing theme throughout these talks was Nelson's continuing interest and dedication to the sport of Judo.

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Doug Nelson's visit to Chicago included several workouts at the Military Arts Institute. During a break in the practice shown here are, seated from left to right, John Sufie, Dick Haberkorn, Robert Mita (3rd place in the 139 Lbs & Under-1973), Doug Nelson, Curtis Belmont (past national champion and 1973 coach of the Chicago senior team), Dean Sedgwick (1973 Heavyweight National Champion), and Cliff Lundquist. Standing, left, Mr. Tom Watanabe, president of the Chicago Yudanshakai.