

# The Devil's in The Details

By Hayward Nishioka

When still a boy of 5 or 6 I first heard these words, "The devils in the details", but what I heard and what a boy of 5 or 6 interprets is a different thing. It didn't register correctly to my young brain. I didn't know what the word "details" meant. What I had interpreted was, "The devil is in (his) tail." I did think it was an odd thing to say, but then, at that age, I thought, "maybe it's something I don't understand". Of course, the devil can go where- ever he pleases. As an adult, I know what the words mean but am surprised to find out that even if we may know what it means, we still do nothing about it most times. Maybe even this time.

A case in point is the promotions from 6<sup>th</sup> thru 10<sup>th</sup> *dan*. Both Ms. Janet Johnson and Dr. David Matsumoto have done a wonderful job and pointed us in the right direction. Given the right people and the right conditions it may work and has worked for us. We may identify some of the qualities mentioned in both reports. However, what are the things that we really want to recognize and accomplish. Yes, we want to see progression at each level. Yes, we want to honor those individuals who have contributed to the betterment of USJF. Yes, we want to show others that this is what it is to be a USJF 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> *dan*. And yes, this is what it means after a lifetime of dedication to be 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> *dan*. We should hope that the contributions have been progressive both for the individual being honored and of benefit for the membership at large. Of course, we are looking at the three pillars (San iku shugi) that Dr. Matsumoto talked about and alluded too by Ms. Johnson.

My problem is that it is hard for me to figure out the progression part. How does one progress when we don't know what we are progressing from or too? This brings up the question, what are the things we have learned in judo up to the point of *godan* and what are the qualities that are needed to progress to the next rank and the next? These have never been spelled out, not even in Japan. It's just a ballpark figure we are given.

Speaking of Japan, this is another problem. We try hard to emulate Japan's promotion system. This is a mistake to even try. They have hundreds of thousands of *shodan*'s right now that are ready to advance to the next level all the way to 10<sup>th</sup>. Try as we may, there will never be a foreigner to attain a Kodokan *Judan*, or even a *kudan*. It's a purely Japanese club made for only Japanese citizens alone. That being said, why are we trying to emulate a system which has more resources than any other country in the world of judo? We have our own problems in America.

The USJF must look at their rank system as Jigoro Kano did early on. In essence it was an engine to create more judoka during his time, which he did singlehandedly. It just so happens it still works, even for . The black belt has become a symbol of excellence. One that we need to work to better our situation. We need to replace worn out parts, refurbish needed areas, and oil up and start our PC engine.

6<sup>th</sup> thru 10<sup>th</sup> now that is a different thing. The grade numerically is higher, but its toughness of youth has started its decline here. It did not matter for Kano the educator, who thought of what the judoka gained from having taken part in the traversing of the “judo road” no matter how limited it may be. To travel through and learn through his or her physical experiences (*taiken*). Here though, in the *kodansha* ranks the judoka is stressed in a different way, less physical and **more cerebral**.

Let’s face it, age has its limitations, a young athletically ready for anything 3<sup>rd</sup> *dan* competitor of 20+ is always going to have the favor of nature on his side over a 6<sup>th</sup> *dan* wisen sensei of (40 or 50). Especially for those over 6<sup>th</sup> *dan* thru 10<sup>th</sup>. At 10<sup>th</sup> *dan* we are frail, in a bed or a wheelchair from finishing our life’s bucket-list and ready to kick it, rather than someone of substance ready to walk another footrace. The golden age of judo competition is between 15 and 30 years of age. That’s when we can go up to the next rank if we beat 10 others in our same rank, but that’s only for *shodan*’s thru *godan*. Today we hardly see anything above *nidan*’s competing in local meets. We don’t find any more Mas Yoshioka’s or Mickey Matsumoto’s winning National Championships, beating young 20 year old’s at age 40+.

So, what are the lessons learned that we should give credit for promotions from 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> *dan*? What are the experiences that are of import that we should advance 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> and then to 8<sup>th</sup>, and on to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. This is not as easy to assess as was counting the number of wins between each of the lower ranks of *shodan* to *godan*. Can anyone tell us what should be given credit to get to the next **higher** rank?

Let’s see, - - What are the lessons learned and how do we quantify or qualify them? Where do we find the value of our lessons? What should be countable and what should not? How do you assess if a person is honorable, honest, determined, courageous, loyal, humble, dutiful, mindful of others? By whose standard are we measuring these subjective qualities? These are the **details** that we have not fleshed out for our high ranks 6<sup>th</sup> thru 10<sup>th</sup> to be considered.

It was once suggested that credit should somehow figure in the attaining of certain **certification’s**; teacher, coaching, refereeing, kata and they are most certainly needed in our beloved judo. However, these certs are so few and taken at earlier times from the higher rank considerations given at a PC *shinsa*. The main advantage of the certification’s is that they have a **set curriculum** (accepted body of knowledge) and a **test** associated with it. The last part of a test is important in maintaining excellence. Even so not every high rank has all of them. These are assessable areas that can aid the candidate and the organization in growing USJF judo taking or making them.

What are some other areas that can benefit USJF judo as a certification? Here are a few example certifications that are not in existence at the present time but could or should be in existence, or at least something like these. But, who will do them?

- ✓ How to give a Judo Clinic
- ✓ How to run a Judo Tournament or a judo camp

- ✓ How to write a grant for judo
- ✓ How to write a judo article
- ✓ How to submit judo news to your local newspapers and magazines
- ✓ How to create a judo think tank in your YDK's
- ✓ How to do judo announcing for You Tube
- ✓ How to write a judo certification program
- ✓ How to understand simple Robert's Rules of Order and run a meeting.
- ✓ How to get on to and understand Safe Sport and Heads Up

Is there anything else that would enhance the USJF organization and its Membership? Just a thought. Do you think that the above certifications or something like it would help to build a better USJF? Someone will have to write these certifications. Someone will have to administer them." **The Devil is in the details.**"

We even interchange our own value systems when it comes to friends and those we do not know. "Oh, he belongs to my YDK so I have to stick up for him, regardless." Or, "That guy is always at the tournaments." Yes, but what does he do other than sit and watch judo?" "I saw him referee once or twice last year." Is that enough for a higher rank of 6<sup>th</sup> dan and above? What is enough? and what qualities are we looking for. Do we then sit and hope that he or she will change for the better later? What can we look at too to see that an individual is contributing to the betterment of himself and others? Especially at the higher levels?

Understandably at the lower levels progression can easily be measured by competitive points. In Japan there are some who attain 4<sup>th</sup> and even 5<sup>th</sup> dan by the time they graduate at around age 23. But of course, there is much more opportunities to compete in judo. and it's the right age. We use to have 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> *dans* competing in the United States. Mas Yoshioka, Sumikichi Nozaki, Tosh Seino, Paul Maruyama, Mickey Matsumoto, were in their late 30 and early 40s when they practiced, competed, and won. When their bodies could no longer keep up with the next younger up and comers, they continued to practice and counseled the next generation, provided leadership at the YDK level as assistant instructors, referees, officers, and "Gave Back" to judo in various ways what they had gained from their experience in judo. But what did they give back, and at what age, and how much. This has not been qualified or quantified.

This is much like Japan but perhaps on a different scale. We have not looked at our promotion system as **Our promotion system**. It is a system modeled after the Japan's old system