

Rank Considerations for Judo Growth

The following is a list of things that the USJF promotion committee brought up as concerns when elevating our members to high rank. While most of the concerns centered about the highest of our ranks, as interim chairman I took the liberty of expanding on them to include all higher ranks. The following are the results of the 10 top considerations submitted by the committee followed by further input and questions that arise as to why, who, and how we promote.

Considerations:

- 1. Time in Grade (TIG)**
- 2. Contributions to judo and society**
- 3. Technical expertise**
- 4. Past performance as a regional, national or international competitor.**
- 5. Performance as a regional, national or international leader.**
- 6. Eminence and renown not only in judo but also in other fields of endeavor.**
- 7. Continued lifetime judo activity.**
- 8. Iconic role model for others to follow.**
- 9. Unquestioned moral character**
- 10. Mastery of the principles and philosophy of judo.**

In an effort to look into the past for information on not only how high dans were awarded but also the reason why dan rank is awarded books and the internet was researched. Unfortunately there was very little I could find of substance. Non-the-less a lot can be inferred from historical evidence. While we don't know for sure how the founder would have evolved a plan of dan grading modernly let's look at just one of the 10 major issues submitted by our committee members.

1 Consideration - Time in grade (TIG)

Time in grade varies considerably depending on the level of competitor one is, or was, and the number of wins over an opponent of equal or higher rank or his contributions to judo. This can be a troubling concept because:

1. Upper rank dans do not compete much. Why risk ego as a high dan?
2. There is little to gain in winning over a lower rank dan in age category competition, but much prestige to lose from a loss.
3. Preparation for upper older rank dan competition is painful plus costly.
4. Even with lower rank black belts, there are less and less competing.
5. The eventual result of this trend may be that more of our USJF yudansha ranks will be the result of having been in judo for a longer period of time and maybe not so much from the excellence found in competitive judo beyond the local and regional level.

6. On the other hand, champions don't always stick around to help develop judo after their competitive years but can return to be elevated at a faster pace, even after a hiatus. Who does more, the local shodan who is constantly around judo assisting but was never a champion, or the sandan National champion who hasn't been around for a while, and now years later returns and asks for a yodan?
7. Our TIG is longer than it was for Kano's 9th and 10th dans. Granted people live longer today. The youngest 10th dan was Shuichi Nagaoka at age 61 who rose through the ranks very quickly. He was one of the three students who received his rank directly from Jigoro Kano. The other two were Hajime Isogai, and Yoshitsugu Yamashita. Most of the other men rising to 10th dan while possibly receiving some upper ranking from the Founder, were quick to rise between ranks, spending on average about 7 years and as little as 5 to as much as 15 years, but eventually from a committee of their peers being elevated. (See chart A). It is difficult to discern what prompted a rise in rank so quickly in some while taking much longer in others and even some not attaining a high rank while living a legacy of excellence. E.g. Tsunejiro Tomita, Saigo Shiro, Sakujiro Yokoyama, Mitsuo Maeda, Toku Sampo, Masahiko Kimura.
8. Our TIG can be shortened but you have to join another organization in order to qualify for A, B, C and D classification and compete Internationally. Thus considering the 30% reduction rules under our own non competitive route it would take a minimum of 8 years TIG for 6th dan, 10 years for 7th, and 13 years for 8th dan. A cursory look at the non-competitive route would find a person starting at shodan at 14 years of age and proceeding just on the TIG table without reductions could find himself at 8th dan by age 88. How many get shodan at 14 much less reach 88 years of age?

Right now I think we are as good as we can get under present conditions. Our rank promotion system may have suffered an inflection point some 10 years back that we are just now beginning to feel the effects of, but with a little adjusting we can maintain our leadership role in judo rank promotions in the United States. While we are at this point only looking for areas we may need to adjust, this exercise should add a bit more clarity to our tasks as members of this most important USJF Committee. Every one of your ideas is important so please contribute not only in our committee but also as discussions proceed into the Board of Examiners. However insignificant you think your ideas may be, the more shots fired at a target the better chance of making a hit.

#2 Consideration - Contributions

Let's start by saying these are only thoughts that are floating around as we make decisions on ku and judan promotions. We are not at this time trying to change anything, merely consider, rethink, and ready ourselves for discussions as we look at higher promotions. As we are often reminded our current rules are guidelines and as such leave us wiggle-room. From time to time as members change, this type of discussion helps to delineate how much wiggle room to accept or reject.

While the issue of TIG seems to take center stage it is because "time" is easily quantifiable, and it comes with the possibility that over time the member has contributed by his presence (maybe). What is a problem however is measuring the quality of his or her **contribution** over that time. That is the topic of our next consideration. Also of importance is the question: What qualifies as a contribution? Is it enough that a person has been coming to judo for the past 15 to 20 years on a regular basis to be promoted to shodan, -- nidan,--- sandan, --- or what of yondan and above? For many of us the mind shifts as we begin to consider yondan and above. The mind shifts again as we reach rokudan, and then a final shifting of gears in considering kudan and judan. Why is it that we begin to consider rank promotion differently at these junctures?

Most often times, up to sandan, the member is competing for rank, but to attain higher rank, as the body ages, he or she now looks to other areas to continue his or her investment in judo. These areas can take on two major pathways, the continued self-improvement road (Internal), or "others" directed contribution road (External).

Internal Self Improvement – This pathway affords individuals a continuation of their quest for excellence. Often self-improvement is something that is done for the sake of its own inward rewards. This can be found in individuals partaking in simple activities such as reading a book or article to increase their knowledge. Committing ones self to learning more about judo. Learning new techniques or for that matter improving on the ones you already know. There are also those that just like the feel of randori and meeting the challenge of throwing without getting thrown in the process. We do these things not for the promise of an external reward but for our own self-satisfaction. This is not to say that there is not a benefit and contribution to others. Unwittingly we benefit our partners in randori or kata practice and others as a role model, but it takes time.

Explicit Contributions – The issuance of Kodokan higher ranks was not in existence from the incipience of judo. Actually the Kodokan ranking system wasn't formalized till the 1920's. It was most likely an after thought devised by Dr.

Kano as his original members grew older and reached godan and as others who joined in later began to catch up in rank. In an effort to delineate the contributions that his now older students were making to the development and spreading of judo as professional judo educators, he began to issue higher dans. Jigoro Kano's very first 10th dan was awarded posthumously to Yoshitsugu Yamashita in 1935. He was the person who taught judo to President Theodore Roosevelt, to whom he later awarded a brown belt. It was later reported that Jigoro Kano regretted that he was unable to have awarded Judan to his first international ambassador of judo while he was living. His next two 10th dan promotions in 1937 were to, 66 year old Hajime Isogai and 61 year old Shuichi Nagaoka. No doubt not wanting to make the same mistake of waiting too long as he did with Yoshitsugu Yamashita, who had died at 70 years of age in 1935 and had to wait 15 years between 9th and 10th dan. All three had contributed greatly to the spread and development of judo as professional teachers in a National or International setting.

This is something that our committee should also reflect on, the making of professional teachers. As Dr. Kano had set the tone, so did the conclave of high dan peers later set the tone for future Judans. All but one of those promoted to 10th Dan had a lifetime of service in important positions, professionally promoting judo. The one person that was promoted to 10th dan that did not fit the model was Matsutaro Shoriki who in his youth was an avid judoka, but later was busy as editor and later owner of the Yomiuri Shinbun, one of Japan's leading newspapers. He also served as a member of The House of Peers and also of The House of Commons holding a lot of sway in the continued development of judo in Japanese society. As an advocate of modernization of Japan he also promoted a wide range of issues from nuclear energy, to broadcasting and baseball.

Of course our promotion system will have to vary. Our social conditions and judo population differ, as do opportunities to excel, or to make a difference. So what are the areas that can make a difference in advancing judo, what are the pillars that hold up our roof? Here are a few:

1. The sensei
2. The dojo
3. The programs
4. The coach
5. The referees
6. The assistant instructors
7. Organizational judo leaders; local, national, international
8. Media; authors, announcers, Information Technology experts
9. Judo volunteers at dojos and tournaments and judo events

These are the basic areas of concern for any judo organization to do well. What may vary are the social conditions and the degree to which needs are met that will determine success. Here are a few of the things we want. We want great sensei's that will make good citizens through the practice of judo. We want the right environment in which judo is practiced. We want good programs that will enable our students to gain information and positive experiences that will assist them in a life long ability to face and meet life's challenges. We want to have help along the way by good strong leaders assisting us to excel beyond even our own expectations. We want to encourage the idea of community service and finding every way to assist others in finding their highest level of ability.

For those who are able to provide the aforementioned conditions over a lifetime of dedication, we honor them with our highest ranks. What was once bestowed upon by the founder was later to be awarded by a conclave of the higher ranks first known to us as The Kodokan Promotion Committee. As judo grew into a worldwide sport other countries seeking to honor their best judoka in a similar way formed their own promotion committees and issued their own ranks. In the United States what is now The United States Judo Federation was the very first to follow as close as possible the model of excellence provided by the Kodokan Promotion committee. Our job now is to maintain excellence even in our changing environment. At one time we could count Senior Championships we had won, onto our request for promotion but now the number of quality senior competitors has diminished, as has the value of these Senior Championships. What of representing our country on an international team? Or becoming an International Coach or Referee? To place these achievements on our resume for the next rank we now need to be a member of another National Judo Organization. So will we justify the issuance of higher dans to our members in the future in a basically junior program alone? Only those of us who have had a history in senior judo in the past will better qualify for high ranks. Unfortunately, the number of former senior champions are diminishing now. Are we to then begin awarding high ranks for developing junior judo, and a mediocre seniors judo program?

You are all welcome to chime in on these thoughts. I have probably painted a gloomier picture than what may occur, but for those who are concerned about the gas that drives our organization forward is running low, should we not think of how to have a complete program. These are just some issues we will be dealing with.

3. Consideration - Technical Expertise

How do we test for technical expertise? The problem is we don't! Then how do we know what a candidate is capable of? Of course many will point to the most common test, the test for shodan, where the candidate must be able to demonstrate the "Nage no kata. This involves only 15 throws executed on the right and left side, but what of higher dans? While we ask for technical ability do we ever conduct a test for it? As with many of the kata's, for which many receive a certification of completion, why isn't there one for techniques beyond nage no kata and katame no kata, why not a certificate for being able to demonstrate the gokyo no waza or the 67 recognized throws of the Kodokan? And for what rank would you make this a requirement? Then again who will be administering such a lengthily examination, much less how would it be scored, and by whom? For that matter is it important that we actually know that a person going for high rank can adequately perform at a technically proficient level? Whatever technical proficiency means. After all, you are signing your name stating that the candidate can perform at a technically proficient level. Is this not important to knowing that our high ranks can demonstrate these techniques correctly to our member/students in the USJF?

In France the "gateway test" to higher rank is the rokudan examination. Those passing this test are assuredly technically proficient, it is a grueling test that none of our candidates would be able to pass without at least one year of preparation. Just the number of throws executed would render most unable to get out of bed the following morning, and that's not even thinking about the uke being slammed to the mat continuously for over a hundred throws. Each candidate is there for at least 3 to 4 hours of examination. Imagine executing 15 to 30 throws in a kata of your choice, and demonstrating 20 to 30 different ways to do just one throw, let's say an osotogari or a taiotoshi. Then demonstrate one newaza technique and the various ways you know how to execute it as well as the various ways to escape from kit: How about 10 ways to get into tateshiho gatame, than 10 more ways of getting out of it. All the while the examiners are not just looking for how many ways you can execute a technique but how you position yourself and your opponent for the technique, how you skillfully pull or push the opponent into a disadvantageous situation before positioning your body and finally finish the technique. Oh, and differing from anything we may test for they must also demonstrate a self-defense situation using a judo technique. Anyone having passed the French rokudan test deserves to wear the red and white belt, at least from the perspective of having technical expertise. Each rokudan can explain the differences in deashibarai, okuriashibarai, sasaetsurikomiashi, and haraitsurikomiashi. They can even tell you which of the techniques in the list of shinmeisho no waza are illegal moves in competition. Some can even demonstrate the habukareta waza.

I only mention the French examination for through its excellence the French Judo Federation has been able to grow both in quality and quantity of judo instructors and members. They have over 600,000 paid members in a population of 67 million people. We have only 10,000 members in a population of 322 million people. Do you think that if we were to test those seeking higher dans, as the French do that it could result in a more meaningful promotion? Would this type of test truly demonstrate a higher level of proficiency than what we currently have? Could we then say that our candidate truly has technical proficiency?

I mention the French system for several reasons: The main reason is that wherever there is a quality test given, the result is a quality product. The three areas where quality tests are administered have yielded good results. Three areas that come to mind are kata, coaching, and teaching where certificates are issued only after having completed the course and taken the test. Our best and forth area of course is that of refereeing where there is a course, a test, and continuing education and testing. If a referee doesn't meet the standard required he or she may even be demoted in ranking. This may seem harsh for a volunteer situation but if we value the efforts of those we train and work hard to excel should they not get the best that we can produce?

Beside benefit of the production of a quality product we should not discount that it requires the training of examiners, renting of a place to give the test plus a little profit for the organization to run and issue the certification. It can also be a money maker as well as a product maker.

4 Considerations - Past Performance as a Regional, National, or International Competitor

In the book "Jigoro Kano and the Kodokan" published by the Kodokan, Otsubo Kazukatsu, who joined the Kodokan in 1884 writes in 1916,

"Black belts first appeared when the Kodokan was based in Fujinami cho. There were no other schools using black belts at the time so it must have been a Kodokan innovation. When Kodokan members wearing black belts participated in the Keischo Bujutsu Taikai, they stood out from skilled fighters from other schools."

The book also states that while dan certificates were issued, colored belt designations were conservatively adopted and permitted by Dr. Kano as he most likely became more aware of his systems dominance over other schools, and the need to differentiate judo from jujitsu. There is a certain amount of pride that develops with success. Most certainly the elimination of the more dangerous

techniques that required prearranged attack and defense practice in jujitsu enabled judo practitioners to more safely practice randori, a superior method of honing the body for contesting purposes. It was these wins at the Keischo sponsored tournament in 1886 that propelled judo's popularity over other forms of jujitsu. "Everybody loves a winner." For Dr. Kano, however, this was a double edged sword. Something to be discussed later .

For us modernly, in a sports dominated mindset, the efficacy of judo is found in the winner. Although it is not stated in the actual promotional requirements of the USJF, competitors who have done well and competed in international tournaments are given special attention, especially if they have made it to the World or Olympic level. Even for those who have competed and won in Regional or National events find favor when it comes to TIG.

What is of concern here is that with less and less senior players even at the National level we may eventually have more and more applicants submitting their wins as juniors as their best performance. Moreover, what of our dwindling ability to conduct a senior program because there are less seniors; with kids we more or less tell them what they are to do. With seniors it take a bit more sophisticated conferencing, reasoning and accountability. Of course this does not seem to be the problem of the promotion committee; that of fulfilling our organizational goals and programs. We are here basically to monitor the give credits or points necessary towards the next higher rank. It is something that we have to consider perhaps not in our committee but as we make decisions at the BOE and BOD level. How do we give credit for programs that we do not wholeheartedly hold nor somehow are losing the ability to conduct? How do we give credit to senior athletes when they defect to another organization that has a senior program? Albeit, with less support than in the past.

Up until the mid 1980 there were many dojos that could claim to have in their membership past or present National Champions. Many of you can remember those days. As we venture towards 2020, how many of our dojos will be able to boast of having a National Champion or someone on a US International Team coming to practice? This is not to discount the need for junior programs for they are the bread and butter of most dojos but like with the successes of Dr. Kano's seniors, they were the ones that everyone wanted to be like. They were the role models. Who will our senior role models be? What will represent our measure of excellence in the USJF? Is this a question we should discuss? Is this a question for us to ponder? Whose questions are these anyway, for surely they will end up at our doorstep sometime soon? I would like to say that at least we did wrestle with this future problem.

5 Considerations Regional, National, and International Leadership.

It is difficult to think of any area so basic to the development of judo as the leadership position of being the Chief Instructor at a local judo dojo. This is where judo really starts and is developed. Unfortunately, this frontline soldier usually doesn't get the accolades of the colonels and generals in the board rooms. Many of these *sensei's* are unknown nationally, unless they attend our National events, e.g. Junior/Senior Nationals or meetings. So how do we reward our unknown instructors who are so necessary and effective at the local or regional level but are invisible to the top command?

Here is something else to think about. If one works on *seoinage* a lot and disregards *kouchigari*, which technique do you think will improve, naturally the *Seoinage*. It's pretty much the same with where we put our largest amount of effort, that's where we will most likely yield the best results. If we look at the way Competitors get a reduction in TIG as opposed to sensei's it seems far better to stay in the competitor's realm. Instructors and coaches fall into that slower other area, called non-competitors when it comes to TIG. These are the people we rely on to develop and provide a program to make competitors. Should we not make a separate category for teachers and coaches when it comes to TIG? Considering that since 2006 we are getting fewer senior competitors who would become our next future instructors, would it make sense to put more support into the area that can best continue to build up our membership? While we have been supporting junior judo fairly well, it's the senior program that needs help. That's where we get our next leaders from, isn't it?

A quick glance at our board meetings will tell you that there are very few young adults attending. So what are we talking about when we are suggesting giving consideration for leadership? What type of leadership are we speaking of as far as National leadership? So how can we incentivize younger people to take the step towards a judo leadership positions when spouses may be asking you to make sure the bills are paid and that the kids need attention, as does your spouse?

The above are questions we pose not only at the dojo level, but at the National level, and possibly international level. Off hand we could consider TIG since that is within our purview. Another is financial incentive, but this is still looked upon with down turned lips. It may be that we have a systemic problem. We may need another system other than what we are doing now. One in which various programs are developed that can be digested in small bites, which when added together ends up a feast. Something like what the Boy Scouts do with Merit Badges, once the right ones are collected, he becomes a Star, or an Eagle Scout. More than that, he gains confidence in his knowledge base, first on a smaller scale, then adds information for further study. After all, should we not

give information on how to be a good leader before we give an examination or points for leadership? Usually, that's how it's done in an educational setting. We first tell them what is to be learned, then, we test and grade them on the subject matter, then they participate in the process. Its not just pass or fail a person without any preparation.

Like the Boy Scouts Merit badge programs aimed at survival in the wilderness, why could we not have programs, clinics, or certification towards our own better understanding how to build for a better organization? These could be two or three hour clinics on an array of subjects, such topics as leadership, *tachiwaza* or *newaza* techniques, building membership, running a dojo on very little money, grant writing, Roberts rules of order, tournament directing, judo announcing, story telling for judoka, judo camp directing, hosting a judo forum, running a committee meeting, creating a manual for a judo program, or any number of topics that would aid in the development of judo. These topic areas, if a curriculum, manual, and tests are provided for and passed by the BoE and the BoD, could be used as credit towards high dan rank. We might also require certain certifications that truly make for a better USJF. For example wouldn't it be nice if we had someone applying for 9th or 10th to have run a committee or at least attending and being part of the process? Moreover, could it be our fault that we do not provide a program to create future leaders? Could it be our fault that we will lessen the chances of having quality higher ranking people as viable visible role models doing the things that could make judo grow because we don't provide the proper training programs or incentives?

6 Considerations – Eminence in Judo, # 8 Iconic Role Model, #9 Unquestioned Moral Character, # 10 Mastery of the Principles and Philosophy of Judo.

For the sake of expediency and the relatedness of the topic matter, #6, 8, 9, and 10 considerations have been added together. Again these are only some thoughts on how we might make better decisions when considering higher dan ranks. I have received some very good input from many of you and these thoughts have been the basis for these papers so that we might all contribute wisely and continue to create the legacy of excellence the USJF has come to represent in the United States.

When we think of eminent persons in judo our thoughts immediately go to those who were champions, because they stood out above the rest in judo competition. Names like Saigo Shiro, Kyuzo Mifune, Yoshitsugu Yamashita, no doubt hold eminence in traditional Japanese judo. Why should they hold eminence? It is because they all helped to hold up the reputation of the Kodokan

in its early days. Of Saigo Shiro (Sugata san Shiro), Kano said at that time, “there was no better technician” and when there was a contest to be won he was the one to be called. The second youngest 10th dan ever was Mifune Kyuzo at age 62. He still represents Kodokan judo as his black and white likeness skillfully moves with the ease of a dancer and the deadly quickness of a cobra, throwing his larger opponents on YouTube. Yoshitsugu Yamashita was the very first 10th dan posthumously. While he was very skillful in judo, he was also a diplomat. He was the first foreign emissary for the Kodokan, traveling to the United States where he was the instructor to President Theodore Roosevelt, who eventually became a brown belt. While all three persons represented the efficacy of judo, none better represented the principles and philosophy of judo as did Yoshitsugu Yamashita.

Judo for Jigoro Kano was not just a show of who carried the bigger stick. It was an avenue by which one could become a better person, not just a tough person. One can only sit open mouthed and mesmerized at the almost Newtonian simplicity and profoundness of his ideas placed on paper. “The body is the instrument for the purpose of life, without which there is nothing.” Or the three maxims, the first one eliminated sometime after WWII since it could be inferred in the mutual welfare maxim, *jiko no kansei* (self perfection), *jita kyoe* (mutual welfare and benefit), and *seiryoku zenryo* (maximum efficiency with minimum effort). For Kano, judo was a vehicle by which to improve the human condition, and that through its practice one could gain a better understanding of how to improve himself or herself and others around him or her. As an educator he understood that through the mass practice of judo it’s participants could improve not only their physical health but also gain confidence, discipline, courage, an appreciation for skillfulness, hard work, determination, focus, and many other positive qualities that could contribute to the betterment of society as a whole.

Today’s ‘win at all cost’ nature sometimes found in the “sportification” of judo can alter the originally intended purpose of judo. Judo in its early days was unique as it differed from other bujitsu activities, which were originally invented for the warrior class to be able to maim or kill enemy combatants. The original purpose of judo in the time of the Meiji modernization era was to look at the positive qualities that may be gleaned from the practice of judo, and not necessarily to determine a win or a loss in a contest or a battle. This was also a theme he passed on to his fellow leaders in many of the other Japanese martial arts as well.

It was Dr. Jigoro Kano who is credited with saving what the Meiji Restoration program was planning to eliminate in the old feudal system and along with it the Japanese martial arts. What was thought to be an antiquated

system of warfare by the Meiji administration was transformed into an educational tool to create productive citizens. Formerly referred to as bujitsu or (martial art) was changed to budo or (martial way), just as the term jujitsu was changed to judo. It implied a higher purpose, and it led to the formation of the Japanese Budo Association (JBA) which includes Judo, Karate-do, Aikido, Sumo, Shorinji Kempo, Kendo, Naginata, Kyudo, and Jukendo. The JBA also had a philosophical basis for its existence beyond prevailing in a physical conflict. Here too Kano sensei played a large part in introducing these, at the time for Japan, revolutionary Western ideals learned at Tokyo University but needed for the survival of the martial arts.

It is in the JBA as well as in the Kodokan that part of our alter ego is set up in a conflict that we must struggle with now. What type of person do we want to award our highest dans to? One that is a winner of major contests or one who through his practice now has character and contributes to the betterment of society? Of course we would hope that the individual who we award this high honor will by the time he is a candidate, have some eminence if not gravitas and act as a role model for others to follow. Of course Champions with a capital C add to the efficacy of judo. It is also through this type of competition that we are able to build “that better mouse trap,” in judo and we honor the efforts of those who worked so hard to demonstrate judo at its best.

When we think of judo at it's best, what names pop up in our minds? Its mostly the 9th and 10th dans of the Kodokan. But wait, what about the IJF 9th and 10th dans? Or what about our own 9th and 10th dans? What are other countries doing? Is there an international measuring stick by which we can measure our 9th and 10th dans to those of other countries? Should we even try? The IJF doesn't. Basic to Kano's idea, and later the Kodokan's idea was the fact that those who best promoted Kodokan judo were elevated in rank. There are a lot of tough guy name's in the history of judo that didn't make it to *kudan*, much less *judan*; Saigo Shiro, Sakujiro Yokoyama, Mitsuyo Maeda, Toku Sambo, Masahiko Kimura, why?

Now however, we add to the idea of being a champion the qualities that reach beyond and ask, “What of the persons character?” Here is where we can get into trouble since we are asked to “cast the first stone.” Does he have **moral character beyond reproach**? Here are a few more questions we should be asking as well? How much character is enough? What kind of character are we talking about? Do we even have a test for character? In what context is this test made? Who administers this test? Can a person bring a case against us for having failed this test? One in which there seems to be no defined criteria? Unless defined, can we not at the slightest negative comment be swayed to cast an invisible stone?

Lastly looking at the mastery of the principles of judo and using them in his everyday life, I can think of no other 10th dan better than Matsutaro Shoriki. By far he was one of the most influential of all of the 10th dans Japan has produced. In his youth he was an ardent athlete in a country that was just starting to include the Western concepts of Sports as a positive force for social structure. He was also a lover of baseball as well as judo, mostly due to his sponsorship through his contacts in the broadcasting industry helped to popularize both. In Japan he is known as the Father of baseball in Japan. At first working as an editor he eventually became the owner of the Yomiuri Shinbun, the most well known Newspaper in Japan. He was also a member of the Upper House and later the Lower House of Japanese Government. While in office he advocated the use of nuclear power and is also known as the father of Nuclear Energy in Japan. Not a bad record of accomplishments for a judoka who was no slouch on the mat or in life.

7 Considerations – Lifetime of service

We have come to the last of the Kudan and Judan considerations that have been submitted for our consideration. As you can see there is a lot to consider since this is one of the most important committees in the USJF. In a sense it is the heart of the organization and serves to honor as well as inspire all of us to action. Because of its importance we all share a responsibility to vigilantly maintain its high standards. We can best do this by being aware of our regulations and why they may exist, and if needed, from time to time tweak them to fit “our” needs, in “our country”, under the conditions necessary for the proper functioning of “our” United States Judo Federation.

Out of the fifteen 10th dans issued in Japan only three were actually awarded by Jigoro Kano, Yoshitsugu Yamashita in 1935 posthumously at age 70, Hagime Isogai at age 66 was promoted to 10th dan in 1937 and lived another 10 years. Shuichi Nagaoka is the youngest 10th dan ever was promoted in 1937 at age 61 and lived to be 76 years old, another 15 years. All three had a lifetime of dedication to judo as did the other twelve 10th dans issued by the promotion committee of the Kodokan. Unfortunately five of the 15 individuals to eventually receive Judan received this great honor but never knew they had.

The reason I start out this last section on the idea of a lifetime of continued involvement in judo is that we have missed the boat on some promotions. For one thing, some of us believe that a 10th dan is an award something akin to a lifetime achievement award given at the end of ones life. This perhaps may be so in some cases. What of this idea however, to have a 10th dan who is still vital and can get on the mat. Would this be a better representation of judo spirit than one in which we point to an infirm person on the sidelines in his late 80's and have to

explain how tough he once was? Worse yet, to award it so late that he wasn't even able to make the sidelines and didn't even know he had so been honored. From the standpoint of pointing to a role model, would it not be wiser to promote some of our more stellar candidates sooner and have them around for longer as a positive role model?

In looking at the rubric on TIG for some of the real old timers in Japanese judo. I could not help but think that Dr. Kano thought he didn't promote quite fast enough with Yashitsugu Yamashita, so on the next promotional round promoted his next two 10th dans with very little TIG between. In fact if you look at most TIG many were many times less than what we require. Granted these pioneer judoka who were breathing thinking and practicing judo 24/7 since they were in professional position promoting judo as a business or in an educational institution, and with greater intensity, still this is a consideration for our system. What if we had such judoka?

Chart "A"

Name	life span	entry date/age	promo10 th	6 th to 7 th	7 th to 8 th	8 th to 9 th	9 th to 10 th	yrs to/age prom
Yamashita, Yoshitsugu	1865-1935	1884@19	1935 psthm	6yr 10m	15yr 7m	9yr 11m	5yr 6m	51 @ 70
Isogai, Hajime	1871-1947	1891@20	1937	7yr 8m	8yr 3m	10yr 1m	7yr 7m	46 @ 66
Nagaoka, Shuichi	1876-1952	1893@17	1937	7yr 3m	8yr 2m	10yr 1m	7yr 7m	44 @ 61
Mifune, Kyuzo	1883-1965	1903@17	1945	6yr	8yr	5yr 1m	7yr 7m	43 @ 62
Iizuka, Kunisaburo	1875-1958	1891@16	1946	7yr 5m	6yr 1m	14yr 10m	10yr 5m	55 @ 72
Samura, Kaichiro	1880-1964	1898@18	1948	6yr 9m	10yr 10m	5yr 11m	10yr 6m	50 @ 68
Tabata, Shotaro	1884-1950	1900@16	1948	7	6	5yr 1m	10yr 6mo	48 @ 64

Actually we do. We promoted him to 9th dan, and a couple of months later we were trumped when another organization promoted him to 10th dan, and why not? He did judo all his life. He created an environment conducive to developing champions, which he did. He coached at the "A" level, served on many judo committees and was president of the USJF and later USA Judo. About the only things he didn't do was to compete or referee as an "A" level athlete or referee. SJS University even named a building in his honor. At 96 years of age he is still active and while our view of judo is sometimes 180 degree in opposite direction, in my mind he is a 10th dan, albeit, a USA Judo 10th dan.

The reason Yosh Uchida is being mentioned here is that he is an American Icon in judo. He is home spun. He is the best example of a person who has a lifetime of judo service to his credit. We have a few within our ranks who are like that as well but because we are so close to them we can't see them very well. It's like running your hand a couple of inches past your face. It's just a blur. Pardon me for naming a couple here. More than anyone else I can think of no one has modernly changed the USJF more than Bob Brink. For 6 terms he has led the USJF as the BOE chairperson. Before that he was the president of USJF.

He has donated his services and his knowledge in ways that no other has or can. The endowment process, of which we so proudly speak of as our “million dollar” baby, was born from his brain. Surprising was his humility as you would think a person with so much clout would just push any issue through, but no, he actually had to argue and convince the board into accepting the endowment plan. Go figure?

Another is Mitchell Palacio, also a former president. His life is judo, he couldn't help it his father was Ben. He was born into a judo family, but where some try to escape this fate, he has jumped into it. He like Yosh Uchida is a physical educator. He chose to be a professional judoka on the 24/7 path. He is a full-fledged college professor with one of finest dojos in the nation at his college. He also runs two tournaments a year. The tournament is pretty much a self-contained deal, except for the referees who gladly come to help, but it's his students who learn to conduct a major event for college credit. Mitchell uses judo as a vehicle for character development and social involvement. The end of the semester tournament is a class project that brings together the elements of leadership, cooperation, appreciation, involvement and a sense of belonging. I should think, in time, both should be considered for our highest ranks.

Our committees charge is to honor those who have contributed to the development of themselves, their fellow judoka, and our organization. What we have to do is figure out a few questions. How long is a lifetime? Is the quality of what the person contributes a mitigating factor in TIG? Is there a quantifiable point at which say yes or no to a kudan or a judan promotion? Is there a fear on our part to say yes or no to promoting to judan? Would the fear be because we have not adequately defined what a judan is? What is the point at which we say yes or no? Even if kudan is ground that we have walked on it is still not a trail, nor should it be. Its markers still are a direction finder toward judan. So what's a judan? We need to know or we will either have a few more Yoshitsugu Yamashita's or worse yet an over inflated USJF kudan or judan rank.

