

THE 1ST IJF WOMEN'S COACHING SEMINAR
FUKUOKA, JAPAN
13 – 15TH Dec. 2006

My first visit to Japan! What a wonderful country and people.

Attending the first IJF Seminar for women coaches and also the final Fukuoka Championship coincided with the 50th anniversary of joining a judo club in 1956, where I met my husband Brian. Neither of us had been to Japan despite a lifetime of competing, coaching, refereeing and administrating judo, so Brian decided to accompany me and was privileged to be included on the course.

Naturally, to visit the Kodokan is the dream of all judoka, and it was with regret that we realized that Fukuoka was far from Tokyo. However, this visit to the home of Judo has given us an ambition of realizing this dream in the not too distant future.

On arrival at the Airport we were met by a very pleasant young man who shepherded all of us onto the bus. The welcome by Ms Mitsumoto and Kasuga Sensei on arrival at the High Performance Center put everyone at ease within a few minutes and our pleasant and comfortable accommodation was much appreciated after the 36 hour journey.

SEMINAR ACTIVITY

The practical part of the course was absorbing; detailed and easy to follow due to the excellent presentation by each instructor and the interpreters did an excellent job. It was an honour to have World and Olympic Champions demonstrate their tokui waza and explain their personal methods of defence and attack in various situations. The DVD presented to each participant at the end of the course was the icing on the cake. I feel sure that, like myself, the participants on this course will be using the DVD to instruct coaches and athletes throughout their countries.

In particular, the effortless manner that Emanuelle Pierantozzi, the two-time World Champion, demonstrated her method of blocking uchi mata is sure to be a hit with my coaches here in Zimbabwe, and the instruction by Yamashita Sensei will no doubt revive the much neglected techniques of shime waza throughout our clubs, and reinforce the necessity of practicing gripping techniques.

LEISURE TIME

The karaoke party on the 13th was a wonderful way to promote cohesion between instructors and participants and Yamashita Sensei's rendering of "I Did It My Way" was just great!

FUKUOKA TOUR

The tour of Fukuoka, though short, was a very good way of getting a feel for the City. Mr Kanohara has to be commended for managing to return without losing even one participant – they kept disappearing into various shops!

SEMINAR DISCUSSIONS

The discussions on the 15th were preceded by a lecture from Mr Yanagisawa, former Japanese National Coach, on his 6 year plan to develop a World Champion. Zimbabwe does not have the funds to send promising judoka to international training camps but the lecture has motivated me to set up a committee with regard to seeking sponsorship for future events..

One of the final discussions in the seminar centered on sexual harassment and/or favouritism of male coaches towards certain female judoka and it was recommended that the IJF give some guidelines on the subject. IJF Media Director Michel Brousse's outline of the policy in France regarding non fraternizing of coaches with female students was very interesting and would appear to be a good place to start.

My personal feeling is that every mother wishes her daughter to learn self defence and this aspect of judo is much neglected. Sexual self defence such as Rape Prevention, is a difficult subject for a man to teach. Women judo coaches are ideally equipped to emphasise this aspect of our sport.

I have been doing this both in schools and internationally for many years, and use these workshops as a means of raising funds for our Association.

The Presentation by Brigitte Deydier during which she stated that 75% of the membership of French judo is made up of judoka under 15 years, is very interesting, since the same percentage is true in Zimbabwe. To increase revenue, as well as sourcing possible talent, we want to develop more coaches able to teach young children.

The DVD's on training children, presented by Yasuhiro Yamashita Sensei, are a wonderful tool, particularly for young men with little experience of children and who tend to train children the same as adults.

FUKUOKA CHAMPIONSHIP

FINALS

Plunging the judo venue into darkness lit by a fiery backdrop and flaming torches, together with rousing music and rhythmic drum beats, worked the audience into a frenzy of anticipation as the name of the finalist rang out over the loudspeakers! The spotlight centered on the contestant descending the steps and walking to take their place on the tatami, was pure artistry. Surely a memory those finalists will never forget.

FAREWELL PARTY

We regretted not having a video camera to record the samurai-type dancing that was staged at the final party. The Fukuoka Championship organizers no doubt felt nostalgia at this the last women only Fukuoka Championship after 24 years. We felt proud that our daughter Debbie had competed in the Championship several years ago

LOST PASSPORT

During our packing I realized that my Passport was missing and I could not leave Japan without it! The warmth and kindness I encountered in the process of replacing it amazed us. In addition to the invaluable assistance we received from Keiko Mitsumoto and Mr Kanohara, the Police, Immigration, airport staff and Embassy officials in Tokyo, where I had to go to obtain a new one, all showed genuine concern and a desire to help. The Embassy produced a new Passport for me in four hours!

CONCLUSIONS

For me the course has achieved what it intended – the forming of a network of women judo coaches throughout the world and I believe the course will develop women's judo as we exchange ideas from our various continents.

Pat Warren
President
Judo Association of Zimbabwe