



## USJA / USJF Grassroots Judo™ Winter Nationals® 2013

This year's event ran exceptionally smooth considering it was held in a new location and on one day as opposed to two days as in the past. Here are three separate snapshots of the event from the perspective of the USJF's official representative, the guest coach clinician, and finally through the eyes of a young player.



## 2013 Winter Nationals Hits New Heights by Neil Simon



About 8 years ago the USJA's National Tournament which was held at the Arnold Classic in Ohio and drew only a few contestants was moved to California at the request of the then USJA President Jim Bregman. He asked at that time USJA COO Gary Goltz to see what he could do to build it up with the purpose of having a national tournament where instructors and their teams can participate in good judo. In year three Gary had the opportunity to make this the first Grassroots Judo™ tournament in conjunction with its Grassroots Partner the USJF.

This tournament has grown over the years facing normal tournament growth trials and tribulations. Additionally it faced the economic challenge due to the state of the economy. Bottom line - the Winter Nationals have not only survived, it has flourished!

This year there were a total of 583 participants representing 84 different judo clubs; a new all-time high. We were in a new facility Azusa's Pacific University's Felix Event Center which was much more spacious. The stands during the morning and day were fairly filled. Even at the end of the tournament many stayed to watch the competition.

The quality of judo play was good to excellent. There were 40+ referees that watched over the matches to ensure fairness of play. This year the JudoCARE System was used which means that there was only 1 referee on the mat who was connected via earphones to the two judges who were on the side along with the juror.

There were a total of 5 A referees and several other international, national, and local players. Several mats supported a junior referees who did an excellent job of facilitating their matches - an impressive group.



The medical staff provided by judo supporter Dr. James Lally along with EMTs from Aegis Ambulance Service helped to insure quality medical coverage and treatment.

This tournament has become a standard for the Grassroots Judo™ and Southern California area. Next year's Winter Nationals is scheduled for Saturday December 6<sup>th</sup> and should be better than ever.

Neil Simon ([njsimon@aol.com](mailto:njsimon@aol.com))  
USJF Representative







Gary Wagstaff Action Photos

## **Coach Education Clinic a Huge Success** **by Ed Thibedeau**

In conjunction with the 2013 USJA/USJF Winter Nationals Tournament a coach education clinic was conducted on Friday December 6. I was asked to facilitate it by USJA President, Gary Goltz. I have been teaching and doing clinics for many years at judo camps around the country.

The clinic was held at the beautiful Alexander Hughes Community Center, home of Goltz Judo's Dojo. Time was spent in classroom discussion as well as on the mat reviewing practical applications of teaching and coaching methods. There were over 50 people in attendance and at the end of the day we certified 40 new coaches!

This was one of the largest coach education clinics in recent history. It attests to the desire of our members to learn all there is to learn, realizing that just like practicing judo; instructing, teaching, or coaching is a lifelong endeavor that requires a continuing effort to learn and improve.

Participants in this clinic ranged in age from 21 to 80 years old and from Rokyū to Rokudan in rank. While certification as a coach has minimum rank requirements of sankyū and 16 years old, anyone who is interested in exploring what is involved in judo teaching and coaching is encouraged to attend these clinics.

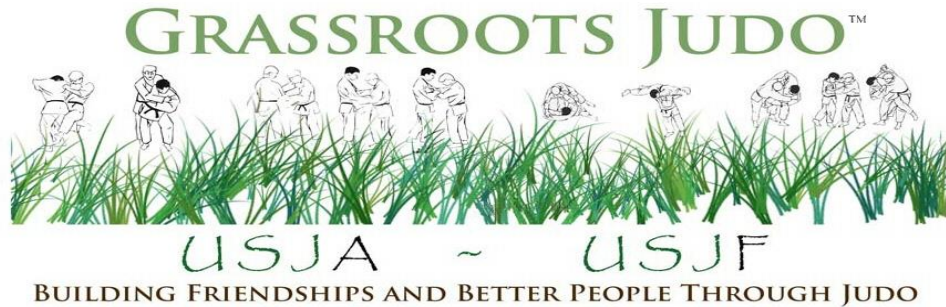
If anyone is interested in hosting a coach education clinic in their area please contact me at [ET@ArkansasGoshinkan.org](mailto:ET@ArkansasGoshinkan.org) or go to <http://www.usja-judo.org/coach-education/>. Next year's Winter Nationals Coach Clinic is scheduled for Friday December 5<sup>th</sup>.



## **The Big Mystery of the Winter Nationals**

**by Dara Woo**

Why do judoka from all over the nation come to Los Angeles to compete in a tournament during this busy season of school finals and holiday obligations? For me, it was for the learning experience and team bonding. The Winter Nationals sponsored by the USJA/USJF Grassroots Judo™ slogan is “Building friendships and better people through judo”. I believe this tournament lived up to the standard.



The Winter Nationals teaches judoka to fight with a different mindset, for the experience and not just the win. This was the first time I had ever competed in the Winter Nationals. Immediately I noticed some differences in this tournament versus others that I have fought. First of all, this tournament is a “non-point” tournament. Point tournaments are tournaments where the top three victors receive points, the 1<sup>st</sup> place winner receiving the most. The more points a judoka earns from these nationally/internationally recognized tournaments, the higher nationally ranked they are.

With the Winter Nationals being a non-point tournament there is less pressure to win. This tournament allows the judoka to go into their matches open minded and test out that new choke or throw that they have been working on. It gives them the opportunity to make and learn from their mistakes. What better way is there to grow!

In addition, the Winter Nationals taught me about the new JudoCARE system. On every mat there is one head referee. Off to the side were 2 assistant referees as well as a videographer taping every fight. Each head referee wore an ear piece to communicate with the side referees. Therefore, if the head referee missed a score, then the side referees could tell them through the ear piece. If all of the referees missed a score, then the videotape of the fight could be re-watched.

The venue for the tournament was Azusa Pacific University’s Felix Event Center, which was beautiful. There were 6 mats for the judoka to fight on with lots of seating available for all our parents and friends. I have to admit that it was probably one of the nicest venues I had ever fought at. There appeared to be about 600 competitors. I noticed that there was a large age band with some judoka as old as 70 years old!

The tournament was a great bonding experience for my dojo. Fourteen of us drove down from Northern California. Before the tournament, we all met for breakfast. Then we all headed to the tournament together. My teammates competed throughout the day but coincidentally there were four of us fighting simultaneously at the very end, around 6 o’clock that evening.



Our Senseis had to run back and forth from mat to mat to coach each of us. They were such a great support system.

Without a doubt, my team and I are competing next year at the Winter Nationals. I feel the benefits of this tournament span more than just judo. I never knew I could love a group of people so much! To me it is kind of strange how much closer I am to my judo friends than with my school friends. Nobody knows you better than somebody who has seen you truly laugh, sweat, get frustrated, cry, smile, panic, bleed, etc. Would you show these emotions to some of your school friends? This tournament increased my love for my team even more.

I never knew pizza after a tournament could taste so good, or that swimming at 10:00PM could be so fun. I never knew throwing seoinage or flying arm bars in the pool would be so funny! Judo friends are friends for a life time. You can joke around with them and tell them your deepest darkest secrets. If I did not go to the Winter Nationals, then I would have missed out on this experience of traveling with my team!

The Winter Nationals encourages one of the most important but forgotten founding pillars of judo. Judo is not just a sport. Judo is how judoka spend their free time. People that can encourage me to want to get thrown on the ground everyday must be pretty awesome people. Only a true friend can choke you out and still be able to laugh with you the next day.



Dara Woo (top row, 2<sup>nd</sup> from left) with her teammates and coaches from Cupertino Judo

#### About the Author:

Dara Woo is a 14 year old freshman at Monta Vista High School in California. She has trained in judo since she was 7 years old and is currently a purple belt. Her Dad forced her to train so she could learn to protect herself. Now she loves the sport! Besides doing judo, Dara enjoys hanging out with friends, playing field hockey and watching movies.

Well there you have it... a complete synopsis of this year's Winter Nationals which is now history. To view detailed results and photos from this event and all past ones go to [judowinternationals.com](http://judowinternationals.com). Information on the [2014 Winter Nationals & Coach Clinic](#) is also posted on that site.



Tony Mojica accepting the Winter Nationals 2013 Top Club Award

You can learn more about the USJA /USJF Grassroots Judo™ partnership including a list of all upcoming events at [grassrootsjudo.com](http://grassrootsjudo.com).

Wishing you a *Happy New Year!*

Yours in Judo,

Gary Goltz  
USJA President

