



My Trip to the 2014 Judo Winter Nationals™

By Tom Gustin, 7th Dan, Stevens Point, WI

12/12/14 for Growing Judo

The USJA-USJF Grassroots Judo™ Winter Nationals was held in the great Los Angeles area at Azusa Pacific University. Sensei Os Millan, an IJF “B” referee from Madison, Wisconsin invited me to tag along with him. Once I agreed, I receive a welcome note from USJA President Gary Goltz. Gary also invited both of us to be guest coaches at his dojo Monday evening following the tournament that weekend.

We arrived at the Ontario Airport and were picked up by my niece. She drove us to the Red Roof Inn. This facility was one of the listed hotels Judokas could reserve. As we found out later, a number of referees were lodged there. After we got our room and unpacked, we called Gary and volunteered our services.

Saturday morning we got a ride from a referee leaving the hotel to attend the 7:30 a.m. referee meeting. During the meeting, it was announced anyone that does not have a CARE system radio would have buy one. It was explained that the CARE systems would be enforced 100%.

There was one caution of concern: The referee teams had to stay vigilant when working their mat. The reason? The judges with radios would be watching the referee calls and could together overrule ref's call just as if it were coming from the traditional two corner judges.

At one point, a referee working a match had problems with his radio. There was some kind of interference. I discussed this issue with an IT guy. He indicated that sometimes frequencies that are close in number and vicinity can create communication disruptions but it's rare this happens.

Vice Chair of the Referee Commission, Sensei Frank Morales, reviewed rule changes and penalties. He emphasized the word "immediately." Referees did not hesitate handing out shidos. There were over 40 referees at the meeting, and each mat had 6-9 referees working in rotation. This included Gary Takemoto who is slated to represent the US at the 2016 Olympics in Brazil.

During a match, I noticed each referee was professional in attitude and held a "stone cold" facial expression. There was no smile or roll of the eye. There was only professionalism.

Making sure competitors are taken care of, there were two EMT's Aegis Ambulance and four doctors from Chino Medial Center on hand. Most common injuries were bloody noses and cuts. With over 700 competitors fighting for top billing, only the best were mat side to mend the wounds.

The CARE system did prove valuable. At one point, there was a review by the referee, two judges, and the head referee at the mat. The correct player left the mat as the correct winner.

Some coaches were upset with a referee call. It turned out that some of the coaches had not reviewed the new rule changes that went into effect. This becomes embarrassing for coaches as well as competitors. Just to make coaches and competitors happy, even seasoned referees make errors. One referee was still using an old rule until his team of judges caught it and corrected him. It is important that everyone keep current with changes.

The entrance to the shiai area contained a number of vendors peddling their merchandise. Around the corner was Sensei Hal Sharp, and the actor Bo Svenson among the judo icons at the tournament. Sensei Sharp was selling his new junior book. His cubical was also the staging area for taking pictures of the winners.

Overall, the event ran like clockwork. The Goltz Judo team oiled all the gear and any errors or breakdowns went unnoticed. I was impressed with every element of this event, and will look forward to assisting again in some capacity. With the new CARE system, maybe I can become the computer guy that can run the computer that will help determine who the real winner is. Of course when a big ippon is scored, everyone always knows who that is!



The National Coaching Clinic with nearly 40 participants



Dr. Ronald Allan Charles presenting his National Awards Committee report during the open USJA Board of Directors meeting. Dr. Charles' received a certificate for building the USJA's first Gold Star Club with over 300 Active Members!



USJA President, Gary Goltz at opening ceremonies



Over 700 competitors from the US, Mexico, and several other countries line up





Action photos by Gary Wagstaff



OJ Soler, Os Milan, Tom Gustin, and Gary Goltz



Workout at Goltz Judo following a successful tournament

[2014 Winter Nationals Results, Photos, & Videos](#)

[2014 Sensei Gary's Aftermath Pictures on Facebook](#)