



Beyond The Secrets of Judo



It is beyond the power of the pen to explain the delicate points of Judo and the mysterious mental action it brings out. Even if these matters could be written, they would hardly be understood by any but one who has mastered the secrets of Judo. Such being the case, it is by no means easy to explain the secrets of the art. -- Sakujiro Yokoyama

“Demon” Yokoyama was one of Kano’s first disciples. Later, he co-authored *Judo Kyohan* with Eisuke Oshima. It is now a rare book, sometimes selling for as much as \$350 (2012). When Yokoyama came to the enroll in the Kodokan in the early days, when a blood oath had to be given, plus a member referral was required, it was Kyuzo Mifune’s doorstep Yokoyama camped on to get the nod. As his nickname suggests, Yokoyama was a more than formidable judo opponent. As his quote implies, his judo perspective was equally strong.

This is a man whose judo story is worth reading. His judo prowess tells us his perspective is worthwhile. And he says— There really are *secrets*. What makes them secrets is not so much that nobody is telling them, but that the telling requires a hard-won knowing. From that vantage point, the secret is private. Once a judoka has mastered the secrets of judo, then the judoka can begin to understand even more— “the delicate points of judo and the mysterious mental action it brings out.”

To the outsiders, the onlookers, all they see is a group of people walking around in now considered cool martial arts uniforms, throwing each other onto the ground, grappling, choking, arm locking. And, movie glitz aside, what strange behavior it is. To the insider, the one who stays with judo for a lifetime, who gains the benefits of the inexpressible something, and who feels judo in everyday life, what the onlooker sees is not what the judoka receives and values.

This is the beauty of the study of judo. It promises something inexplicable, yet of great value. Some who come onto the judo mat know this in the very first moment. This judoka did. Sometimes, it takes a little longer to hear the inner voice that says, “There is something special here. I don’t know exactly what it is, but I plan to find out.” The message to oneself isn’t so much made in words, but comes as a feeling. That is the gem within judo. For the same awareness is brought to light by the judo master Yokoyama, at the other end of the same long road, and he says that it is something that cannot be put into words. Such are the most secret of secrets.



The *Judo Compass* is conceived, written and sent by Tom Crone. www.northstarjudo.com

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