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Judo's Unique Secret



Judo has one special element shared by no other physical activity endeavor. It is unique in the true sense of the word. It is so simple, so right up front, and always present, that it camouflages itself by being a secret everybody knows, yet few know they know. It is judo's unique secret. No other sport presents it.

When judoka are asked what physical, mental and interpersonal benefits come from judo, the replies are much the same. Fortitude, strength, courage, coordination, teamwork, self-discipline, and many of the same. True enough, yet these are not judo specific benefits.

At the core of judo lies yet another benefit, and it is not elemental to the others. Of all of judo's many benefits, this one stands alone. Yielding.

Yielding to force is the one thing that distinguishes Kano's judo from all other endeavors. Kano's *Seiryoku Zenyo*, the optimum use of one's strength, is the principle Kano spent the most time on in his writings. He considered it fundamental to successful life and judo. At the heart of *Seiryoku Zenyo* lies the principle of giving way, yielding, flexibility. Giving way, yielding, and flexibility are the opposite of blockading, pushing back, and rigidity. There are three good ways to respond to a judo attack.

1. Avoid it. (With skill, not force)
2. Go with its flow and counter it, using the attacker's force.
3. Block it, with the intent to counter it using the attacker's off-balanced position or momentum of retreat.

Kyuzo Mifune, legendary 10th dan, created *Nate Ura no Kata*, the "reverse forms of throwing", to demonstrate 2 & 3. In his randori, he demonstrates number one.

Here is a fun and challenging yielding exercise. Make up your own *Kaeshi Waza kata*, using the first three sets of *Nage no Kata*. Sets four and five are sacrifice techniques, and do not all lend themselves to counters, unless a response into *katame waza* is included. (Yes, knowledge of kata is needed. If you can't do it physically, yourself, then watch it and make up an imaginary one, write it down.) Do it all throwing one-sided, to begin with. There are various counter katas on line, but avoid them until you've established your own ideas. None (found) do it following the *Nage no Kata* theme.

The initial attack is done by the person who would have been *tori*, responded to by the person who would have been *uke*, the roles reversed. It is all still done with the *Nage no Kata* stepping action. For example, it begins with a *kata* style demonstration of *uki goshi*, which is countered by... In all instances, the disruption of the initial thrower's attempt at *kuzushi* must happen. How and *when* becomes interesting.

For bonus fun, you might want to set it up as a dojo challenge, and after a time, have a demonstration - or even a contest - to see what various ideas folks come up with. There isn't a "best" counter to each, so much as there becomes a counter you do best.

Responding to an attack with your practiced judo, not just forceful blocking, is the other side of the judo coin. It will give you the confidence to play relaxed, hence better facilitating your own throwing attempts.

All of this is accomplished by applying various yielding responses. This is judo's unique secret. It is also judo's challenge, because it is much more difficult to learn than most physical skill and most mental skills. Most sports locker rooms have slogans, maxims and mottos on their walls. Most sports claim these will become personal attributes, the rewards of sport. Judo will provide all these, the tenacity, fortitude, willpower, courage, self-discipline, and the rest. Judo will provide more, because judo's maxim and greatest benefit and secret is in its name.

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