

Report on Metro Orlando Judo Kai's Participation in Camp Bosei 2015

Metro Orlando Judo Kai had the great honor of being invited to attend Camp Bosei this past August in Toronto. In addition to me, Metro Orlando Judo Kai Senior Instructor Hamid Shekarchi also happily attended the camp. Hamid is a former Iranian national Judo team member, as well as having trained in Japan for almost two years. We also had the pleasure of having Naoya Haraguchi join us on our trip to the Camp, and we enjoyed every moment of his company. Naoya, a Tokai University graduate, was a guest instructor at Metro Orlando Judo Kai for almost 18 months, and was also one of the scheduled instructors at Camp Bosei. Hamid and I consider Naoya to not only be a dear friend, but also truly like a member of our own family.

From the moment we arrived it was like a dream come true. Camp Bosei co-director David Miller gave us a warm welcome on our arrival, along with a tour of the beautiful St. Georges College, and of the immediate area surrounding our hotel. Our hotel location was ideal, giving us a splendid taste of the great city that is Toronto, and an appreciation of all this is Canadian culture. After spending just 10 minutes with Sensei David Miller we knew that we had met a person of outstanding character, someone who shared our passion for Judo, and the realization that we had just made a wonderful new friend. We especially enjoyed the tour of St. Georges College, appreciating its rich history, beautiful chapel, and honorable traditions.

The next day Hamid, Naoya, and I were filled with excitement and anticipation as we knew we would finally get to meet one of our favorite Judo champions, Mr. Katsuhiko Kashiwazaki. When we arrived at the venue for the Camp, the Japanese Canadian Culture Centre (JCCC), we were surprised by its beauty and with the kindness of the JCCC staff members. Looking around the Centre gave us a chance to learn more about Japanese culture through the many great exhibits, such as the one on Japanese Kimono. We also learned about the history of Japanese immigration to Canada through the excellent photographs, videos, and documents on display.

Once we stepped onto the tatami we were immediately greeted by many of the Canadian Judoka present, and they were friendly and welcoming as we could have ever hoped for. In fact, some of the instructors from the JCCC were kind enough to take Hamid, Naoya, and me to a typical Canadian sports bar for dinner and wonderful conversation. After just an hour of conversation it felt like we had been friends for years. Regarding Mr. Kashiwazaki, all I can say is that he was everything we had imagined, and more! He was truly inspirational, and it was an honor and privilege for us to be on the same mat with him. Kashiwazaki-sensei's Judo is truly a mixture of science and art, created from the blood and sweat of years of hard and thoughtful training. The word master is often used too frequently, but it is correctly used when describing Kashiwazaki-sensei.

Even though for over 20 years Hamid and I have watched videos of Kashiwazaki-sensei,

and read all of his books, we still felt like he was showing us magic, and that we had to watch again and again to try and catch even the smallest idea as to what were the secrets of his unique style of Judo. I hope in the future to have the chance to learn from Kashiwazaki-sensei again, but even if I don't, I know I will never forget this experience.

On the following day we finally got to meet the students and parents from Matsumae Judo Juku, along with the other Camp instructors. We were so impressed by the MJJ student's wonderful behavior, not to mention their excellent Judo. Though some were shy at first, they all eventually showed their smiling faces as well as their strong and warm spirits. It was nice to meet with some of the parents, who were all friendly and fun to talk with. And after meeting Hashimoto-sensei, Terasawa-sensei, Kotera-sensei, Yamaguchi-sensei, and Asaka-sensei, it was so clear to us why the students were such fine young people...how could they be anything different than that given who they had as instructors and mentors! Sensei Haraguchi taught the class for a day while Kashiwazaki-sensei took the day off. Hamid and I were so proud of him watching him teach the class, and seeing all of the Judoka on the mat smiling, learning, and enjoying the practice.

Naoya has matured into becoming a fine teacher and coach, and it was never more clear to us as when we saw him teach at Camp Bosei. Over the next days we got to not only enjoy more classes with Kashiwazaki-sensei, but also learn Ashi Waza from Asaka-sensei, the proper way of doing uchikomi from Kotera-sensei and Yamaguchi-sensei, and even a little Renkoho waza (police arresting techniques) from Terasawa-sensei! Also we got to train on the mats with, and learn from, some former Canadian national champions, as well as the many wonderful Canadian students who were attending the Camp. In addition to that, we enjoyed training with our fellow Judoka from Florida, Sensei Gerome Baldwin, Sensei Lonnie Ross, and his student Michelle. We were also treated to an excellent lecture by Hashimoto-sensei about the history of Jigoro Kano and the founder of Tokai educational system Dr. Shigeyoshi Matsumae. Hashimoto-sensei taught us about the similarity between Kano-shihan and Matsuamae-sensei in that they were both influenced by Western philosophy and science, and how they both devoted themselves to the spread of Judo, and uniting people around the world through Judo. It was truly an inspirational presentation, and we came away with a better understanding of the history and philosophy of Judo.

Our time off the mat was as educational as our time on the mat. We had many opportunities to speak with our Canadian hosts and learn more about not only Canadian Judo, but also Canadian culture and politics. In addition to Miller-sensei, Mr. Robert Varga was particularly helpful to us in learning about all things Canadian, and we enjoyed our conversations with him, as well as the other senior Yudansha from the JCCC.

We also got to see our old friend Sensei Steven Starnes, who had visited Orlando last

year for about 1 month and had trained at Metro Orlando Judo Kai. Our dinners every night were wonderful opportunities to get to know each other better, and learn about each other's culture. Even though we didn't always speak the same language as our dinner partners, we always managed to have enjoyable and fun conversations. It was especially enjoyable when we had a chance to eat, drink, and talk with Yamaguchi-sensei, Hashimoto-sensei, Terasawa-sensei, and Kotera-sensei. Learning about their Judo lives was inspirational as well as educational. It was also wonderful to learn more about the great Tokai legendary coach Sato-sensei from Sensei David Miller, as well as from the Japanese sensei...so much history, so many experiences. Our day trip to Niagara Falls was particularly enjoyable. Though I have been there several times before, I will never remember Niagara Falls as happily as I will when I think about seeing the Falls with the MJJ group. What a fun day: students mixing with teachers, teachers mixing with parents, all sharing in a wonderful day of friendship and learning.

My final thoughts are simple. First, I have to say how very appreciative we are of Yamaguchi-sensei and Miller-sensei for creating Camp Bosei, and in helping to make our dreams come true. They both worked non-stop, and made everyone attending the camp feel important and welcome. This is no easy task, and is just another example of how extraordinary these two great teachers and leaders are. I know that Hamid and I came away having not only learned about Judo competition techniques, but more importantly of how Judo can make our lives more complete, and how we can use Judo to make other's lives more rich and complete. We are sincerely grateful to Miller-sensei and his staff, the JCCC Judo teaching staff, Kashiwazaki-sensei, Haraguchi-sensei, and of course the Matsumae Judo Juku instructors who made this truly a Camp of Dreams. We also want to thank Yamashita Yasuhiro-sensei and the NPO-Solidarity of International Judo Education for giving financial and moral support which helped to make this camp possible. We will never forget our experience and what we have learned. It has motivated us to work harder to try and help others to achieve the dreams of Kano-shihan and Matsumae-sensei in creating a peaceful and respectful global community through the shared practice of Judo. We look forward to continued cooperation with the Tokai University educational system, and the NPO-Solidarity of International Judo Education, in working towards these important goals.

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