

An Explanation of the aim of the new BJC Syllabus 2010

As there are radical changes in the **new BJC syllabus 2010**, a lot of new concepts have proven controversial to many established long serving Coaches and therefore the 1998 BJC Syllabus remains valid to allow, if so desired, grading at Club and Area level to continue in the previous BJC way.

The use of the old BJC Syllabus will remain valid for at **least five years** from Jan 2011 with all it's previous protocols and grading authorisations intact, whilst we establish the framework of new syllabus officers and qualifications as we are currently doing.

We shall still be promoting the New Syllabus at National Grading event but also use the old syllabus, with discretion, as we have done during 2010.

There is no current plan to withdraw the old syllabus but it is hoped this will eventually fall into natural disuse.

The new syllabus 2010 will be adopted for all BJC national grading and courses and already many are embracing this with enthusiasm, promoting the perceived benefits.

A major change in the BJC's concept of 'how to improve British Judo' has been embedded in the new syllabus.

The biggest effect covers standing practice (tachi-waza) for **seniors** in the beginner to green belt range. Previously grading was every 3 months allowing beginners to achieve green belt in 9 months (sometimes less). The new syllabus requires seniors to have a much better ability at 'judo basics' and adds extra grade stages with optional belt tabs, extending the grading period to 12 months between each belt; white to yellow, to orange and to green.

The BJC Primary and Junior system did already broadly contain these periods in their grading. But now all new beginners must go through 'judo basics' training and should enter judo at the bottom level and not jump the first grades because of age or physical contest result, unless they have the appropriate basic skills required for the grade.

The main disapproval of these new periods has come from the Coaches rather than their students.

Why such long periods?

We have to look back to before the 1964 Olympics!

In the pre-1964 era, judo was 'free flowing' with the influence of many Japanese masters and Japanese visiting judoka who provided 'on the mat' life-long inspiration to all those who practised with them.

The Japanese were the best in the World not only because they originated judo but their training system was vigorous and at a high level of skill. Elite Japanese students would train six hours a day for six days a week during their years at high school and university (4-6 years). Competitions were entered on Sundays.

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The high volume, depth and quality of skilful judoka in Japan meant many had the opportunity to practice with the best and therefore learning judo was more about becoming skilled through hard training with experienced judoka, rather than the quality of the coaching students received, which sometimes was non-existent.

In the UK if you were practising five times a week for a couple of hours a night you were considered a pretty active judo person, but this was still considerably less than the Japanese. Normal work and family commitments meant only a few could exceed these training schedules and most still fell short of the rigors of Japanese judo training. So the UK method of acquiring judo skill by discovery in practice is flawed by the quality of UK opponents. The less skill someone has the more they are reliant on fitness, strength and power.

During this era, judo learning was very much aimed at acquiring pure skilful traditional techniques. In general opponents would allow each other to grip the judogi and also allow them to attack one another, thus producing judo skills in avoidance and counters of throwing techniques.

Like many of the 'Old School', I preferred this sort of judo and always tried to emulate the skills of my teachers and impart and promote this skilful way to my students.

With the 1964 Olympics, there came a focus on 'winning' with new rules for lower score 'kinsa' followed by 'koka' enabling tactical winning without ippon scores.

Western judo prioritised tactics, fitness, stamina and strength and this was put above actual judo skill. It proved successful for a period and even the Japanese changed their training method along these lines for a number of years.

Since this change, many of us have tried to continue to promote the 'Old Ways' but the sad fact is you cannot do free-flowing ippon judo if your opponent is tactically skilled in modern judo methods and won't let you.

Grip prevention (blocking before you can even enter) means it is very difficult to develop full throwing skills. Modern randori in the UK is inevitably a mini-competition, 'cat and mouse' tactics, with very few full attacks and even less throws. Randori becomes more like training for wrestling fitness rather than a beneficial opportunity to developing judo throwing skills.

In my opinion, UK judo has been in the 'Wilderness' for forty years.

To be successful in future judo competition, the UK must adopt a different approach and not just continue in the 'Old ways'.

Britain has had some great champions in Jane Bridge, Neil Adams and Ray Stevens, who benefited from a level of skilled judoka at an earlier time, but nowadays we struggle to produce consistent champions at an International level. I believe this is because the years of tactical training has created a hostile environment to encourage and develop core grass roots and ippon judo skills.

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For new people taking up judo, the BJC require good upright standing posture from a continual sleeve and lapel grip and good performance of basic throws including all linked combinations and counter throws.

For beginner to green belt, this means no one handed throws i.e. Ogoshi, Ippon seoi Nage, no sacrifice throws, no knee-drop throws, no leg grabs, and no tactical competition judo techniques, with no Osto-gari for grades below orange belt.

The new BJC syllabus addresses these points mainly in standing judo for the range from beginner to Green belt.

It is identified that most practicing judoka do not use their hand and wrist movement when attempting to turn in for a throw. A straight pull and turn in Uchikomi and randori is all you will see on most UK mats.

We have to understand three major factors in learning judo:

Firstly, children can generally learn physical movements quickly but their concentration and understanding is often poor. Adults are slow to acquire correct physical movements but are much quicker to understand the concepts. Judo is a mental and physical activity and so the proportional balance between dexterity and intellect is judged to require equal timescale for all ages of beginners.

Secondly, those who have already learnt to compete in judo have embedded subconscious throwing routines that are very difficult to change. These will automatically be invoked in combat, without a conscious thought.

Thirdly, if new students are allowed to freely develop their own throwing methods through combat practice in the UK's current environment, they will never acquire the judo skill we all look and hope for. Beginners will substitute their lack of skill with strength and this will become embedded as a 'bad habit'. The strongest, biggest and fittest beginner will always beat the weaker physique.

Therefore we should concentrate on new beginners, as those members who have already established combat ways will have great difficulty in changing.

All new members, primary, junior and seniors, should be held back from competitive fighting and grade progression until they have good basic judo skills.

Strong stiff gripping can block entry to a throw and this can only be overcome by use of the action/re-action principle. i.e. pulling in one direction to induce the opponents re-action in the opposite direction which is then used to accelerate movement and open up a space for entry into a throw.

With beginners we use a largely exaggerated movement of pulling down and forward (Kuzushi) then with Uke's reaction we draw up and forwards (Tsukuri). Note: The BJC use the terms Kuzushi and Tsukuri in our own interpretation and some experts may have a different interpretation.

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This beginner movement gives no real practical success to throwing but it starts students developing a strong hand and wrist action with every attack that embeds the hand and wrist action into their sub-conscious combat mode.

At judo expert level, this kuzushi /tsukuri movement will be very small and often an unnoticeable 'twitch'. All champions who have developed ippon throws through extensive training will have also developed and used this sort of 'knack'. Many will not realise what they were doing sub-consciously to make their successful throw.

The actual timing of a person's reaction is almost instantaneous and therefore cannot be learned without extensive practice and training.

The first learning throw of Morote seoi nage is chosen because it contains all the elements of: Kuzushi, Tsukuri, Kake (in this case full back contact) and Nage (throw). Of course, new students cannot take a full breakfall from this throw and FPJ teaches Coaches to strongly emphasise the safety needs, by giving Uke charge of the speed and impetus of the throws, starting with a gentle step round and rotation into a breakfall. A full explanation needs to be given on the mat.

New students are taught to continually keep a sleeve and lapel grip, whereby they always have **best** control of their opponent and are able to execute kuzushi and tsukuri at any time and are shown how to link this to many combinations and counter throws.

Therefore one handed throws are not encouraged at this initial learning stage i.e. Ogoshi or Ippon seoi nage.

These are both good throws and were previously used by the BJC for beginners because they are relatively easy to pick up. However they do detract from the action/reaction use of the hands.

Osoto gari is also an 'easy to learn' throw but the BJC do not introduce it to beginners, as an early reliance on osoto gari detracts students from attempting the more difficult full turn forward throws. This has been evident in earlier BJC Junior Nationals, where this throw was seen in abundance but has now been replaced by more forward throws.

Once beginners have developed the new core skills to green belt stage, Coaches can promote all the judo skills they have taught previously and students will be well equipped to discover their own destiny in becoming an 'Ippon' judo person.

In ne-waza there has been little change except beginners must learn basic holds and escapes practiced in sequences.