

Out of the West: the History of the Development of Women's Judo in the West.

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Abstract

Women's judo, introduced as a demonstration sport in the 1988 Olympics and officially included in 1992, has roots tracing back to the 1890's when ~~Kano~~ Jigoro [Kano](#), judo's founder, began teaching women in Tokyo. Using a combination of primary, biographical, and scholarly sources, this paper considers three key elements of the development of women's judo in the global 'West'. The initial dissemination of judo outside ~~of~~ Japan and the cultural engagement with the Japanese fighting arts; the challenge for women to create parity with men in competition through the second half of the twentieth century; and the determination for equity in international governance. Early twentieth-century female pioneers from the global 'West' contributed significantly to the sport's expansion and visibility. In America, early engagement aligned with a cultural interest in martial arts for women's fitness. Meanwhile, European and Australian women were spreading judo's appeal and promoting female empowerment through self-defence around the world. Across continents, women used judo to challenge gender norms and advocate for strength and independence. This cultural movement continued into the 1920's and beyond, with women instructors and students ~~actively~~ promoting judo's benefits ~~actively~~, paving the way for later innovators to extend its global reach, whilst advocating opportunities for women. Despite restrictive policies through the mid-twentieth century, notable female judoka continued to break barriers, fostering judo's growth across Europe and beyond. The inclusion of women's judo ~~as a demonstration sport~~ in the 1988 Olympics, marked a milestone, giving a platform to ~~W~~western judoka and later showcasing the dominance of athletes from Austria, Belgium, Great Britain, Cuba and France. Female leaders now help to shape judo's future, championing gender equity and the values of judo.

Key words: Women's judo, history, Olympic Games,

Introduction

The first inclusion of judo for women at the Olympic Games, initially as a demonstration sport in Seoul in 1988, and then in Barcelona in 1992, belies the fact that women have been involved in practising judo since the late nineteenth century. Kano Jigoro Kano himself was teaching women in Tokyo as early as the 1890's (Sato, 2013; Spenn, 2021), and with the dissemination of judo abroad, women around the world were encouraged to learn these skills as a method of self-defence and to improve fitness. This article, using a broadly chronological approach, identifies a selection of women from the global 'West' and considers their contribution to the popularity and development of women's judo. Using local newspaper reports and contemporary publications, this paper also looks at the effects of these women's participation on cultural and societal norms in the century leading up to the acceptance of women's judo at the Olympics.

The development of judo for women can be aligned to with significant changes within the fight for women's equality and traditional cultural practices across the Western world. This paper considers these connections through three key areas. The first is the popularity and use of *jūjutsu* as self-defence in the early twentieth century amongst women either with the wealth to spend their considerable spare time indulging in a new and exotic form of physical culture, or those who used the art to generate a profession and employment and profession. The second area illustrates the determination of women to create competitive events on a par with men's events, and to compete at an international level, culminating with in the inclusion in the Olympic Games. And thirdly, the paper concludes with a brief presentation of the current development of women within international governance in the judo sphere.

Early Twentieth Century International Promotion

With the turn of the twentieth-century, Kano's dissemination of judo across the world had begun. At the same time, newspapers in the global 'West' were full of articles extolling the impressive nature of the Japanese fighting arts, as contemporary wars between Japan and their neighbours seemed to ingly demonstrate their superiority in combat ('Jiu-Jitsu', 1904; 'Port Arthur: And After', 1905; 'Jiu-Jitsu', 1905). As the popularity of what most Western countries called *jūjutsu* (spelled in various ways) grew, importantly, there was a drive for the promotion of the art to women. In many ways, this is unsurprising, given the fact that these women were, for the first time, being offered the skills and ability to defend themselves against often stronger and larger individuals. This would go on to contribute to a political movement calling for social and political equality for women, often referred to as the first wave of feminism. Initially, however, there was a crucial split within society and their engagement with judo/*jūjutsu*. Often women of the wealthier social classes would attend physical culture lessons, being taught either by Japanese immigrants or visitors, local men who had learned the art, or women who were ahead of them with their training and had become teachers themselves. However, as *jūjutsu* was also being promoted through music hall or vaudeville 'acts', women of the lower classes had access to demonstrations and some form of teaching from a distance.

In America, as the twentieth century began, the participation of women from the higher social classes is was evident. Women in the enclaves of the White House were being taught judo by Yamashita Fude. She was the wife of Yamashita Yoshitsugu, one of Kano's earliest pupils and later the recipient of the first Kodokan 10th dan (Hanako, 2009). In 1903, The Yamashitas were invited to the U.S. by Samuel Hill, a wealthy railroad executive, to teach his son the skills and philosophy of judo. He paid for their first-class travel, initially by the ship the Shinano Maru, from Yokohama to Seattle where he was based, then onwards by rail to the east of the country where his son lived (Hill, 1903). They were accompanied by an assistant, Kawaguchi Subaru who paid his own fare. Once in Washington, Yoshitsugu was engaged by President Theodore Roosevelt for his own tuition, followed by a post teaching the United States Navy, while Fude taught Washington women and their children.

The American press enjoyed this idea, “With the two Japanese is a woman who is teaching *jiu-jitsu* to a large class of Washington society women, whose husbands are in a panic.” (Roosevelt is learning the jiu-jitsu game, 1904, p. 5). Teaching Roosevelt was short lived, ending after just a few months, but Fude continued to teach her own classes.

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Prof. Yamashita, Mrs. Yamashita, and Samuel Hill, ca. 1904. Yoshiaki Yamashita Photograph Album (PH 006). Special Collections and University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

The Yamashitas’ arrival in Washington coincided with the release and promotion of Harry Irving Hancock’s book, *Physical Training for Women by Japanese Methods* (1904). This publication, accompanied others by Hancock, aimed at men and children, all extolling the virtues of *jiu-jitsu* training, alongside his seminal work written with Higashi Katsukuma titled *The Complete Kano Jiu-Jitsu*, first published in 1905. In *Physical Training for Women*, Hancock claims to have studied under Matsuda, Yako and Inouye, and the book is aimed at producing strong women through *jūjutsu* exercises. It begins with a treatise on ‘The Absurdity of the Existence of the Weaker Sex.’ The press promoted this idea with the *San Francisco Examiner* running a full-page article titled ‘How to Be as Strong as Your Husband or Your Brother’ (1904, p. 46). So, the path was smoothed for Fude’s arrival, and women were interested in how these Japanese skills might help with their strength and fitness.

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The dedication in Hancock’s book was ‘To the American woman and her English cousin’ and it was simultaneously released in the United States and Great Britain. Two notable women across the Atlantic who already knew about the advantages of *jūjutsu* training were Phoebe Roberts and Emily Watts. Phoebe Roberts was born in 1887 in Monmouthshire, Wales, the daughter of Thomas Parry. She moved to London to live with a woman of Welsh descent and her husband, a chemist named Roberts, and she adopted their name (Callan, Heffernan & Spenn, 2018).

The *Evening Express*, a daily English language newspaper distributed in Cardiff ran an article on 1st September 1905 (‘Welsh lady professor of ju-jitsu’ p. 2) on how ‘Miss Parry’ was teaching ‘the Japanese art of self-defence’ in London at the ‘Japanese School of JuJitsu’ in Oxford Street. This was

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the school founded by [Tani Yukio Tani](#) and [Taruji Miyaki Taruji](#) (also known as Taro). Phoebe [Roberts](#) had trained with Tani and Miyaki as well as [Sadakazu Uyenishi Sadakazu](#) (also known as Raku). These men were instrumental in popularising *jūjutsu* in Britain from 1900 onwards through their dedication to teaching and demonstrations in the [mMusic hHalls](#) and other venues. Tani later went on to become the head coach at the Budokwai in London. In 1907, Phoebe [Roberts](#) married one of the Japanese teachers at the school, Hirano Juzo, and the couple embarked on a tour of Britain demonstrating the art (General Register Office, 1907). Over the next few years, they travelled across Europe following Uyenishi through Spain and then Portugal, where they settled in 1910.

Within the Portuguese press [Phoebe Roberts](#) was noted as being slight and fragile, unlike the strong women who had been seen in circuses previously, but extremely effective in self-defence. The *Ilustração Portuguesa* ran a two-page article with images, describing how [Phoebe Roberts](#) made her start in *jūjutsu* and had performed in Lisbon (J.S., 1910). Along with her husband, she continued to teach and promote *jūjutsu* in Portugal until Hirano is thought to have drowned in 1915, although his body was never found. [Phoebe She](#) married the wealthy Don Carlos de Castro Henriques in 1916 and continued to live in Portugal until her death in 1936.

[Phoebe's Roberts'](#) earlier training partner, Emily Watts, also took up *jūjutsu* around the turn of the twentieth century under the tutelage of Tani, Miyake and Uyenishi. [Emily Watts](#) also toured the U.K. and around the world, but was more interested in lecturing about health and strength through the art (Royal Sanitary Institute, 1908), than the demonstrations where [Phoebe Roberts](#) was seen to be defending herself against 'hooligans' ('Clifton Society Talk', 1906, p. 8). [Emily Watts](#) put her training into the form of a book titled *The Fine Art of Jujutsu*, published by Heinemann in 1906, ~~where for~~ [which](#) she was assisted by Uyenishi, and she devoted a chapter to what she termed ~~as~~ the Kano School. This was the first English language book on the Japanese martial arts written by a woman.

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H. Irving Hancock. (1906). *Le Jiu-Jitsu et la femme*. Berger-Levrault & Cie.

On the other side of the world, a young woman from Australia known as Florence Le Mar, was performing and teaching her skills in both her home country and in New Zealand. Born Florence Robertson in Melbourne, she ~~is was~~ one of the few women ~~who were to be~~ successful in *jūjutsu* or judo in ~~this the~~ period who was not taught by a Japanese teacher. Her husband, August Gertenheyer, known as Joe Gardiner, was an actor and wrestler originally from Germany; ~~and~~ they married in Wellington, New Zealand in 1911 (Registrar General, 1911). Joe had arrived in Australia in 1909 and was wrestling professionally. The evidence shows that in that year, Fukushima Ryugoro, who was famous for the early promotion of *jūjutsu* in Australia, had accepted a challenge from Joe to a fight for £100 (‘Shima Willing’, 1909, p. 7). Joe taught his wife, who became a sensation, performing the techniques to eager audiences in shows called ‘Hooligan and the Lady’ (‘Vaudeville Company’, 1912, p. 5). Florence and Joe also produced a book titled *The Life and Adventures of Miss Florence Le Mar: The World-Famous World-Famous Ju-Jitsu Girl*, published in 1913. The book described fanciful situations where she had used *jūjutsu* to great effect to save the day, in addition to detailed information on different techniques. Here we can see an ~~un-decided~~ attempt to present women as agents of confidence and strength to members of Australian and New Zealand society. Alexander Bennett (2016, p. 195) describes the book as, “One of the earliest books on martial arts in the world that amalgamates the technique, philosophy, and holistic benefits of *jūjutsu* with feminist ideology.”

Back in Europe, in 1906, French periodical *Mémorial D’Amiens* ran a full front page cartoon image ~~entitled~~ ‘Le Jiu-Jitsu Partout’ (Nézière, 1906, p. 1). The first vignette held the caption, “L’année

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dernière, c'était le cake walk, Cette année, c'est le Jiu-Jitsu. Le Jiu-Jitsu est partout. On l'enseigne dans le monde." The images show different situations where 'jiu-jitsu' had become part of everyday life, among women as well as men. Although one or two of the images were stereotypical of women, reminiscent of British seaside cartoons mocking the women's suffrage movement, not all were of that nature, with elegant well-dressed women taking the upper hand too. Therefore, a nuanced view of the sections of society which might engage with *jūjutsu* is presented in spite of the comedic aspect of the article. However, despite Irving Hancock's book being published in France at this time, under the title of *Le Jiu-Jitsu et La Femme*, here *jūjutsu* was seen initially as a predominantly masculine pursuit.

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R. Nézière, (1906, April 29). *Le Jiu-Jitsu Partout*. *Mémorial d'Amiens et du département de la Somme. Supplément illustré*, p.1.

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In Germany in 1906, Erich Rahn opened a school of *jūjutsu* in Berlin and it is thought that he learnt his skills from Higashi Katsukuma (Doval, 2012). 1907 saw the debut of a comedy play titled *Jiu-Jitsu*. It was described in the press as gentle comedy where the woman is triumphant at first, but soon gets

put down again (*Jiu-Jitsu*, 1907, p. 5). It is not really about *jūjutsu* as a fighting art at all, but the fact that this was considered an apt title in this period illustrates the depth of popular culture within central Europe to which this Japanese art had reached.

In Britain, the art being was taken forward to help ~~to~~ achieve political and social autonomy for women. Edith Garrud, who had trained with Uyenishi, was teaching women of the suffrage movement to protect themselves against aggressive behaviour from anti-suffrage 'ruffians' and the police at meetings and protests. Along with her husband William, Edith had been teaching for a few years at their own school in ~~Helberne~~ ~~Holborn~~, but by late November 1906 they were teaching at Uyenishi's Golden Square dojo in Picadilly, with Edith described as 'Lady Superintendent' (Advertisement, 1906, p. v). By 1913, the Women's Social and Political Union (W.S.P.U.), organised chiefly by the Pankhurst family, had set up a 'bodyguard' group of women who were being trained by Edith (Callan, Spenn and Heffernan, (2018). At this point, Edith had moved away from William and was teaching just off Oxford Street, concentrating mainly on the cause of the women's movement. Initially, Edith had courted the press with reports in popular newspapers such as the *Daily Mirror*, which at that time was particularly supportive of women and women's rights, running photographs of her with the headline "'Suffragettes to learn the art of Jiu-Jitsu'" (1909, p. 9). However, with the advent of the bodyguard, a more clandestine approach was necessary, and the press were kept in the dark about the training sessions.

Author Wendy Rouse (2019, p. 117) notes that, "'American suffragists took lessons, both figuratively and literally, from radical English ~~suffragettes~~ ~~Suffragettes~~.'" Although, as early as 1871, women such as Susan B. Anthony were advocating for self-protection, claiming, "I declare to you that woman must not depend on the protection of man, but must be taught to protect herself" (Rouse, 2019, p. 118). This was a sentiment echoed some forty years later by Sylvia Pankhurst, daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst, leader of the W.S.P.U. in Britain, in a more militant vein, when she gave the rallying cry, "We have not yet made ourselves a match for the police [...] The police know jiu-jitsu. I advise you to learn jiu-jitsu. Women should practice it as well as men" (*Jiu-Jitsu for Militants*, 1913, p. 4). In the ~~West~~, the ability for radical women to protect themselves had become reliant on the Japanese fighting arts.

The First World War essentially brought Edith's work with the ~~S~~suffragettes to a close ~~b~~-~~B~~ut wartime didn't prohibit women across the world in Australia from carrying on with their training. In fact, they were encouraged ~~traine de se~~. Word even reached the U.S. press that the, "Absence of men in Australia ... does not worry the women of that country. They are able to defend themselves. So declares Miss Dulcia Hall, champion jiu-jitsu wrestler." The article ~~goes-went~~ on to state that having studied the art, women were "fully prepared to repulse any bold invader" (*Jiu-Jitsu: Miss Dulcia Hall*, 1916, p. 20). The use of *jūjutsu* as a form of empowerment for women in a socio-political sense, alongside a practical form of protection from whatever forces might be encountered, can therefore be seen as ~~an~~ important framing at an international level of gendered emancipation within the pre-war period.

Interwar ~~S~~self-defence and ~~C~~cultural ~~E~~exchange

With ~~the~~ war over, in the Dominion of Canada, mother and daughter Mary and Harriet Hunter were teaching and demonstrating *jūjutsu*. They had emigrated from England in 1929 under the assisted migration scheme (Passenger Lists leaving UK, 1929). Harry Hunter was another show fighter and as he devoted more of his time to *jūjutsu* he also began to promote the art to women. Between 1923 and 1926, records have been found of his wife Mary assisting him and demonstrating, although she was unnamed (*Ju-Jitsu*, 1923; *Ju-Jitsu in Chester*, 1926). One of these demonstrations was called 'Ladies ~~V~~ersus a Ruffian' (*Self-Defence*, 1926, 1) which closely mirrors Florence Le Mar and Joe Gardiner's earlier shows some eleven and a half thousand miles away. ~~But~~ ~~However~~, it was Harry's daughter Harriet who was attractive to the press. The Lethbridge Herald ran a piece on her skills

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when she was twelve years old. “She weighed in at 84 pounds (about 38 kilos), and her father said that she could break every bone in a man’s body as easily as she eats her breakfast – and she eats her breakfast very easily.” (“World Topsy-Turvy”, 1930, p. 11). Mary and Harriet would seem to have been proficient fighters who were invested in promoting the art of self-defence for their sex.

In the same period of the 1920’s, during the Weimar Republic era, like Harry Hunter, Erich Rahn is known to have taught women. In December 1925, *Die Bosche* ran a photograph of Rahn teaching a group of young women in a class, holding the caption, “-Jiu-Jitsu-Kursus für Frauen: Durch Umlegen der Hand wird der Gegner bei einem Angriff von hinten kampfunfähig gemacht” (1925). This ties in with the new cultural initiative in the Weimar Republic for a stronger and fitter populace, and the Japanese fighting arts were being strongly promoted strongly across the country (Jensen, 2013).

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Jiu-Jitsu - Kursus für Frauen. (1925, December 20). *Die Bosche*. Accessed through Sportmuseum Berlin. Wassersportmuseum Grünau: Album Erich Rahn [PA.000194.119].

The dissemination of judo for women from Japan to the global ‘West’ however, was not entirely a one-way exercise. There have been, over the last century, a few notable, few exceptional women who have travelled to Japan to train and have influenced the culture of judo training in its home space. The first of these was Sarah Mayer who began learning judo at the Budokwai in London from in 1927 under Gunji Koizumi, Gunji the founder, and Tani Yukio Tani (Callan-Spenn, 2019; 2020). Having journeyed to Japan in late 1933 as, what might now be considered, a ‘sports tourist’, she trained with the Kobe Police Force at the local Butokukai institution, and then at the Kodokan. Sarah preferred to train with the men in Japan and was given permission by Kano Jigoro Kano to use the main, male dojo for her practice sessions. Importantly, Kano was in the process of trying to encourage more women to participate in Japan, and Mayer was put to task to promote judo to a local female audience. In an article in *Judo* published by the Kodokan, she wrote, “Dear Japanese

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ladies, why don't you try judo?" continuing with "Do you think judo is too rough and tough for ladies? Do you think judo will make ladies masculine? Do you think judo will make ladies aggressive?" Sarah was keen to stress that femininity was not affected by judo, stating that "losing charm and grace ... is definitely not true"; adding, "Judo is a really magnificent exercise. For young ladies it is a good way to keep their youth and beauty and be intellectual" (Mayer, 1934, pp. 40-41). Here we see one of the essential aspects of Kano's concept of judo, i.e. the improvement of intellect, being promoted to women in the interwar period. This potential intake of Japanese women were not expected to train with the men, like Sarah, and this is perhaps the first instance of a foreign woman training with men at the Kodokan.

Sarah returned to the UK in 1935 and as a global war loomed once again, and the Second Sino-Japanese war intensified, interactions between Japan and ~~much of many~~ Western societies became more problematic.

Postwar Developments

After the outbreak of the Second World War, in 1941 a young woman living in California, U.S.A., visited Oakland Judo School. Her name was Helen Coolidge and it was at this club that she met her future husband, Dominic Carollo. The couple set up their own school in 1946 and a later article in *Black Belt* magazine describes how they were guided by 'Mr K. Yoshida' from the Kodokan (Uyehara, 1962, p. 34). By 1950, Helen was listed in the Federal Census as a 'Judo instructor' based at the Y.W.C.A. while her husband was listed under his full-time job in 'Electrical Maintenance' (U.S.A. Bureau of the Census, 1950).

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At Helen and Dominic's judo gym in Oakland, they had sessions four nights a week with Helen instructing the women's classes. In 1952, Helen became the first woman in the US to achieve a black belt without going to Japan in 1952, finally making the pilgrimage in 1953 to train at the Kodokan. During her two-month visit she was the subject of much interest among Japanese society and received an invitation from a member of the Imperial Family to visit their home (Uyehara, 1962). As with Sarah Mayer, two decades earlier, Carollo had the opportunity to train with the legendary Kyuzō Mifune, who since 1945 had been promoted to 10th dan. She remarked on his agility and application of *maai*, commenting, "When I grabbed his uniform, I had a weird sensation that there was nothing in it, no body, just space" (Uyehara, 1962, p.36). After her own promotion to 2nd dan, Helen returned to the US along with her new friend Keiko Fukuda, a 5th dan instructor of the Kodokan Women's section.

Fukuda's grandfather Hachinosuke Fukuda Hachinosuke was the first teacher that Jigoro Kano Jigoro found to teach him *Tenjin Shin'yō-ryū jūjutsu*. Keiko had joined the Women's Division of the Kodokan in around 1935 at the personal suggestion of Kano (Spenn, 2021). The development of women's judo in Japan is outside the scope of this paper, but Keiko Fukuda's impact on women's judo across the United States and other nations was significant. Her dedication to teaching judo inspired countless women to follow the way. Her mantra, "Be strong, be gentle, be beautiful," was a call to women worldwide, and a nod to the concept of *jū*, often translated as 'gentleness'. Her pedagogical approach and emphasis on judo philosophy were instrumental in shaping attitudes toward women's involvement in judo, particularly within the United States (Fukuda, 1973).

In the post-war period, many women from overseas, including Ruth Gardner (United States, 1949) and Marie-Rose Collet (France, 1949), developed their judo having attended the women's course at the Kodokan (Darcourt, 1957).

Judo in the Performing Arts

Actors promoting judo in the West, whether intentionally or not, began back in the early twentieth century period, as soon as international society was engaging with the art. The glamorous French

star Gaby Deslys was joined by Eida-Surye Kichi Eida on the stage in London in 1906, performing the 'Jujitsu Waltz' in The New Aladdin (Gardiner, 1986, p. 19).

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Bassano Ltd. (1906) S.K. Eida and Gaby Deslys in the new Ju-Jitsu Waltz at the Gaiety, published by Andrew & George Taylor. Photographs Collection National Portrait Gallery, UK. Ax160269.

Eida was one of the teachers at the Oxford Street dojo in London, where they also taught the well-known actress Marie Studholme. Sarah Mayer was herself an actress and on her return to the U.K. from Japan she returned to the stage where, in 1940 she played in the George Bernard Shaw play The Millionairess, which Shaw had altered so that the main character was proficient in judo rather than boxing after he met with Sarah. In 1960 Twentieth Century Fox released the film The Millionairess, based on the play. The main character Epifania was a judoka (Callan, Heffernan & Spenn, 2018; Mohan & Kumar, 2018). With Sophia Loren playing the part opposite Peter Sellers, the movie was a hit with filmgoers across the world.

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Another actress presenting a positive image of judo in the 1960's was Honor Blackman (Wright, 2013), a member of the Budokwai in London, who played the character of Cathy Gale, an expert in judo in the popular TV show The Avengers from 1962 to 1964. Marie-Claire Cahen de Labzac, better known by her stage name Brigitte Auber was a French actress, best known for her role in Alfred Hitchcock's 1955 film, To Catch a Thief. As a brown belt, practising in Neuchatel, she helped promote judo in the local press (Jelmi, 1956).

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International Competition

In parallel with the pioneering work of Helen Carollo and fellow pioneers in the U.S., France saw the first women's competition in Europe, organized by Mikinosuke Kawaishi. In May 1950, the Championnats de France de Judo Tournoi Feminin was held at the Palais de la Mutualite. Brousse (2005, pp. 279-280) notes that Jeannine Levannier, a finalist in the first competition, was awarded the first female black belt in France at a gala in Lyon later that year, when she took on a line up of orange belt men. Levannier was described in Qui? Magazine, a light-hearted periodical full of puzzles and stories as, "Une femme qui vaut six hommes" or "A woman who is worth six men," in a two page spread filled with photographs (Vanker, 1951). We can see here the affirmation of women's

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judo through popular culture in post-war France [can be seen](#). Levannier continued a coaching career which increased the popularity of judo for a generation of women in the 1960's.



Raymond Vanker. (1951, June 4). Janine Levannier. *Qui-?: Le magazine de l'énigme et de l'aventure*, p. 22. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, département Droit, économie, politique, FOL-JO-3923.

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The British Judo Association, which had been formed in 1948, [first](#) elected [the a first](#) woman, Irene Edwards, to the Executive Committee, in October 1956 (Edwards and Menzies, 1956, p. 30). A meeting was convened at the Budokwai in March 1961 with around 50 women in attendance. Iris Dehnel of the Budokwai was elected as Chair (Havard, 1961, p. 16). The agenda included contest rules, a coach award and a grading syllabus. Those present expressed a wish that women's judo should be governed by the same rules as the men. However, at a joint meeting of the British Judo Executive Committee and Technical Board in October 1961, the Association Policy Concerning Judo for Women was resolved, and included the following points:

- a) Competitive judo for women in public shall not be permitted.
- b) Belts worn by women should be marked to differentiate their grades from the men's grades. NB. – The Ladies Committee are to recommend at its first meeting what the distinguishing mark shall be.
- c) As facilities become available it would be preferable to segregate women's instruction and practice from that of men.
- d) The Technical Board in consultation with the Ladies Committee shall draw up a ladies' syllabus bearing in mind various points that have been made as a result of the reports received. (Edwards and Menzies, 1961, p. 35).

At the Annual General Meeting of 12th November 1961, the Ladies Committee was formally constituted, “To advise and recommend to the Executive Committee and Technical Board any matters appertaining to or in relation with to judo for women” (Edwards and Menzies, 1961, p. 35). The first meeting of the Ladies Committee (renamed as the National Women’s Council in 1964), was held in December 1961. Just five years after the founding of the Ladies Committee, the inaugural Great Britain Women’s National Area Team and Kata Championships was held at Liverpool University. One of the early committee members was 20-year-old Margot Sathaye.

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A significant figure in British judo, Margot Sathaye, from Croydon Judo Club, was at the age of 16, the youngest woman to achieve a black belt at the age of 16. She was introduced to the audience at the Festival of Judo held at the Royal Albert Hall on 29th March 1958 (Veritas, 1958). Margot promoted judo for women through instruction and media outreach. She moved to Japan in October 1968 and was based in Tokyo for around 25 years, where she was coached by Umetsu Katsuko. ~~S~~ and she also taught in the United States, Sweden and Finland. In 1999 she became the highest graded non-Japanese woman in the world, when the Kodokan graded her to 7th Dan (Leigh, 2024).

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A contemporary of Sathaye, Rena Glickman was born in 1935 in Brooklyn, New York. Later she would become known as “The mother of women’s judo” (Lewellen, 2009). From a tough background in a gang culture, she came across judo at the age of 20 when a friend showed her a technique he learnt at the Y.M.C.A. men’s judo class. She persuaded the Y.M.C.A. to let her join the lessons and famously in 1959 she bandaged her breasts and cut her hair to conceal her gender, winning the Y.M.C.A. state men’s judo championships in Utica, New York. She had to return the medal when she admitted she was a woman. Not until fifty years later did the Y.M.C.A. of Greater New York re-award the gold medal at an event to celebrate her life’s work. The experience cemented her determination to gain gender equality in judo and in sports, and the fight for the recognition of women as competitors began (Kanokogi and Kanokogi, 2021).

Rena trod a familiar path by moving to Japan to train in the Kodokan women’s section in 1962 but was quickly invited to train with the men. During those sessions she met her future husband Ryohei Kanokogi. As Rena ‘Rusty’ Kanokogi she made the most remarkable contribution to women’s judo across the world. Working with her friend, tennis player Billie Jean King, they advocated for the United States Congress to pass the 1972 Title IX equality legislation, which prohibits gender discrimination in high school and college sports. Rusty found another advocate for gender equity in the IJF President, Matsumae Shigeoyoshi. Together they initiated the first ~~W~~ women’s World Judo Championships, on 29th and 30th November 1980 at Madison Square Garden, New York, U.S.A. which she organised and sponsored by re-mortgaging her house (Kanokogi & Kanokogi, 2021).

The first final contested was the 66 kg and the first world champion was Edith Simon from the Austrian team which topped the medal table with three golds. The best technician of the championships was the 48 kg gold medallist Jane Bridge of Great Britain who had defeated Anna de Novellis of Italy in the final with *yoko-shiho-gatame*, winning a Tiffany’s sterling silver apple in the Big Apple, New York City. The championship was a testimony to the development of judo in the west, with all eight titles being won by Europeans. Japan gained a single silver medal through ~~Kaori~~ Kaori Yamaguchi ~~Kaori~~ at 52 kg (IJF, 2024).

The Fight for Olympic Gender Equity

For Rusty, the ~~W~~ World ~~C~~ Championship event was a stepping stone towards her mission to bring women’s judo into the Olympic Games. However, historically, the participation of women at the Games had been unwelcomed and challenged from the beginning.

The current Olympic Charter, drawn up in 2021, shows a commitment to gender equality ~~in at~~ the Games, stating that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) will “encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures with a view to implementing the

principle of equality of men and women” (International Olympic Committee, 2021). The IOC notes that the London Games of 2012 were the first where women competed in all the included sports, and that women constituted 45 percent of the competitors at Rio 2016. At the conception of the event, however, women had not been as welcome.

Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the Modern Olympics, was not generally a supporter of women in sport. Miller describes his attitude to women and sport as ‘contradictory’ (Miller, 2003) His reasons for not wanting to include women in the Olympic Games seem to have been partly due to gendered concerns still prevalent today. In 1912, the Olympique Revue, the journal produced by the IOC, laid out its issues over women participating:

Il n’y a pas que des joueuses de tennis et des nageuses. Il y a aussi des escrimeuses, il y a des cavalières et, en Amérique, il y a eu des rameuses. Demain il y aura peut-être des coureuses ou même des footballeuses? De tels sports pratiqués par des femmes constitueraient-ils donc un spectacle recommandable devant les foules qu’assemble une Olympiade? Nous ne pensons pas qu’on puisse le prétendre. Mais il y a un autre motif d’ordre pratique celui-là. Organiserait-on des épreuves séparées pour les femmes ou bien accepterait-on les engagements pêle-mêle sans distinction de sexe.

“There are not just tennis players and swimmers. There are also women fencers, there are horsewomen and, in America, there have been rowers. Tomorrow there will perhaps be runners or even footballers? Would such sports practiced by women therefore constitute a commendable spectacle in front of the crowds assembled at an Olympiad? We don't think we can claim that. But there is another practical reason for this. Would we organize separate events for women or would we accept mixed entries without distinction of sex.” (International Olympic Committee, 1912)

This decision over whether men and women should compete together or if there should be separate events for each, caused much debate. However, this was not Coubertin’s only concern, and the well-known quote about women’s sport being ‘impractical, uninteresting, [et] inesthétique’ (“Impractical, uninteresting, [and] unsightly”) comes from this same article in consideration of a separate but connected ‘half-Olympiad’ for women. Over the coming years, with new governance, the acceptance of women participating within the event improved, but this was partly down to women who fought the establishment.

As we have seen, Rusty Kanokogi was one of these women. In order to bring gender equity to judo in the Olympics, she sued the International Olympic Committee for discrimination, and finally the IOC agreed, and in the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, judo for women was introduced as an official demonstration sport. With two gold medals in 1988, from Sharon Rendle and Diane Bell, it was the British Team, coached by Rusty’s good friend, Roy Inman, who were the most successful.

Roy Inman had started judo at the age of 23, joining the Budokwai beginners’ class in 1968 as a yellow belt, and very quickly progressing quickly to win two British Open titles before a training period in Japan, living with Isao Okano Isao at the iconic Seikijuku. By 1974 Roy Inman had become the Great Britain national coach for the 1st-First Women’s European Tournament in Genoa, where the team won two gold medals with Lynn Tilley and Christine Child (better known as Cyd Child, stunt double to-for Diana Rigg’s Emma Peel in the TV show The Avengers). Roy’s coaching expertise continued over 30 years, the British judoka under his charge included 4-time world champion Karen Briggs, and won six Olympic medals, 14 World Championship and 26 European Championship Gold medals.

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The only person to win gold medals at both the 1980 World Championships and the 1988 Olympic Games event was the Belgian *judoka*, Ingrid Berghmans (IJF, 2024). Six-time world champion, with 11 world championship medals, the seven-times European cChampion, Berghmans from Koersel, was awarded the Belgian Sportswoman of the Century in 1999, before later becoming the first woman to be inducted into the IJF Hall of Fame, in 2013. Preferring to practise with men, she set a high standard for women in judo. Her successes showcased the competitiveness of women's judo and increased its popularity in Europe, contributing to a broader acceptance of elite female *judoka* and providing a benchmark for aspiring women.

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With these role models, female *judoka* could begin to see themselves recognised as serious competitors and women's judo achieved full Olympic status at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. The two gold and two bronze medals achieved by their female *judoka* catapulted France to second in the medal standings, marking the beginning of a strong tradition of French female *judoka* (IOC, 2024). A five-medal haul in Barcelona saw the emergence of a Cuban team led by the charismatic coach Ronaldo Vietia Valdivie, that would set a benchmark in standards for the next two decades. Across six Olympic Games the Cuban women won 24 Olympic medals including five gold. Hailing from the city of Havana, Vietia Valdivie made a significant contribution to the development of women's judo outside Japan since-after taking the reins of the Cuban national team in 1986. Incredibly, between 1993 and 2009, each year, Cuban women won at least one gold medal in-at wWorld cChampionships or Olympic Games. However, France was set to become one of the highest achievers in women's judo in the early twenty-first century.

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Born in 1992 in Rennes, France, Clarisse Agbegnenou was to come to symbolise the strength of women's judo in France, from winning the Junior European Championship in 2008 to the mMixed tTeam gGold in-at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. A flag bearer who led out-her nation out at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, at her home Ggames four years later in Paris she had the honour to-of carrying the Olympic torch up the Eiffel Tower. Including team events, Agbegnenou has three Olympic, eight wWorld cChampionship and seven European cChampionship gold medals. The six-time individual world champion ranks as one of the most decorated *judoka* of all time.

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Leading to Eequity in Ggovernance

Since the fight began for women's competition to be presented on a par with men's, excellence in skill and determination has become a standard for women's judo. However, the aim is now to achieve equity in international governance, and progress towards that aim continues. Born into a Scottish judo family, Dr Lisa Allan took the reins as the event manager for judo at the 2012 London Olympic Games and then stepped into the role as IJF Events Director, leading the organisation of the IJF World Judo Tour for a decade. In 2017 at the request of IJF President Marius Vizer she became the first female member of the IJF Executive Committee before succeeding former world champion Jean-Luc Rouge as IJF General Secretary in 2023.

Joining Lisa as a member of the International Judo Federation Executive committee in June 2021, Croatian, Dr Sanda Corak, has worked to promote and develop both gender equity and research in judo. Winner of the Olympic Laurel Award from the European Olympic Committee, the Vice-President of the Croatian Olympic Committee and President of the Croatian Judo Federation has held a beacon for female leaders within the judo family.

The development of women's judo in the West has been a testament to the resilience and commitment of the female *judoka* who overcame cultural and social barriers. The efforts of pioneers such as Fude, Yamashita, Edith Garrud, Jeannine Levannier, Keiko Fukuda and Rusty Kanokogi, laid the foundation for future generations of women in judo, ultimately leading to international recognition and inclusion in the Olympic Games. These pioneers not only expanded opportunities for women in judo but also reshaped perceptions of women's capabilities in society. Today, women's judo continues to thrive, thanks to the legacy of these remarkable individuals.

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