

Scoring system

Objective

The objective of a judo match is to control the opponent. In order to do this, judokas apply principles of balance and leverage to throw the opponent on his or her back, immobilize the opponent on any part of his or her back, apply arm locks to the elbow, or choke an opponent while avoiding any action that might harm the opponent's neck or spine. Unlike taekwondo and karate, there is no kicking and punching in judo. Instead, judokas commonly use leg sweeps to knock an opponent off balance.

At the beginning of a match, the two competitors face each other at the blue or white tape on the mat, corresponding to his or her uniform color. There, the two judokas bow to each other. After the competitors have bowed and taken a step forward, the referee announces "hajime," the Japanese word for "begin," to signal the start of the match.

Duration

All judo matches last five minutes. This is a change from Sydney, where the women's matches lasted just four minutes. There are no designated breaks during a match. However, the referee stops the clock during breaks in action, such as a contestant stepping out of bounds, to make sure that the judokas compete for the entire five minutes.

Ending a Match

A match may end before the five minutes expires if one of the following occurs:

- 1) Scoring an ippon.
- 2) Scoring two waza-aris..
- 3) A penalty of "hansuko-make," which is an immediate disqualification because of a rule violation.
- 4) A combination win because a waza-ari was scored after a third shido penalty was given, or vice versa.

Winning -- regulation

If a match lasts the entire five minutes, a winner is decided by which judoka has tallied the highest quality score or the fewest penalties. For example, one waza-ari will beat 10 yukos.

Winner -- overtime

If the point totals are the same, the winner is determined by "golden score," which is sudden death overtime. The clocks are set for another five minutes and the first judoka to tally a score wins the match. In a change from Sydney, an athlete can also record a win if the opponent receives a penalty.

Winner -- decision

If the overtime passes without a victor being determined, the referee decides the winner. If the two judges agree on who fought a better match, that person is named the winner, but if they disagree, then the referee casts the deciding vote.

Positive scoring

Ippon

Equal to one full point, and a win, an ippon is a full throw in which a contestant throws the opponent to the mat with considerable force and speed so that the opponent lands on his or her back. Ippon is also awarded when a contestant immobilizes his or her opponent with a hold for 25 seconds, or when an opponent gives up or passes out. If an opponent does pass out, only a doctor or trainer is allowed to administer "katsu," or resuscitation. An ippon immediately ends a match. When signaling an ippon, the referee's hand is straight up.

Waza-ari

Equal to a half-point, a waza-ari is a throw that shows power and superiority but isn't clear enough to be an ippon, either because the opponent didn't land primarily on his or her back or because the throw lacked speed or force. Waza-ari is also awarded for immobilizing an opponent for at least 20 seconds (but less than 25). Two waza-aris end a match. For a waza-ari, the referee's hand signal is the arm out at shoulder level.

Yuko

Usually called an "almost waza-ari," a yuko is worth 1/4 of a point. A common yuko is throwing an opponent on his or her side. Yuko is given for a throw that is lacking in two of the three elements of an ippon: putting the opponent on his or her back; speed of throw; force of throw. Yuko is also given for immobilizing an opponent with a hold for 15 seconds or more, but less than 20 seconds. No number of yukos can equal a waza-ari in the final tallying of the fight's outcome. To signal a yuko, the referee's arm is raised 45 degrees out from the side.

Negative scoring

Hansoku-make

Hansoku-make is given for a serious violation, calling for the immediate disqualification of the offending athlete. This can be given for violations such as intentionally trying to injure the opponent, or for repeated violations of the rules. This penalty is the negative equivalent of an ippon.

Shido

Shido is given for a slight violation, or for any rules violation that does not require an immediate disqualification. A Shido can be called on a judoka not attacking enough, intentionally stepping out of bounds, playing too defensively, or putting a hand directly on the opponent's face. Shidos are progressive, meaning that the first one gives an opponent a koka score, a second one removes the opponent's koka and replaces it with a yuko, a third will remove a yuko and replace it with a waza-ari and the fourth will give the opponent hansoku-make, ending the match.

Referees

Typically, one referee and two judges supervise each judo match. Scorekeepers and

timekeepers are also available to assist with the competition. Usually positioned within the contest area during a match, the referee's general duties include: conducting the match, administering decisions, making sure all decisions are correctly recorded and ensuring the mat and uniforms follow the guidelines. The two judges sit opposite each other at two corners outside of the competition area. The judges must make appropriate gestures to alert the referee when their opinions on a technical evaluation or penalty differ from that of the referee. The two judges must also make sure that the scores recorded by the scorekeepers are the same as those announced by the referee.

Equipment

Uniforms

Olympic judo competitors wear judogis, which are made of a strong material, usually a heavy cotton. The sleeves of the jacket are loose and reach down to the wrist. The pant legs are also loose and reach down to the ankle. The jackets are tied together with a belt. One opponent wears a white judogi while the other wears blue. In the tournament, the player listed on the top line of the bracket wears blue.

Tatamis

Judo matches take place on rectangular mats called tatamis. These are usually made of pressed foam and are covered with a plastic material to provide good footing for the competitors. The tatamis are placed side by side on the competition platform to form a continuous surface. The tatamis measure 14 meters by 14 meters (46 feet by 46 feet), and have an eight-meter square in the center of the mat, surrounded by a three-meter "safety zone" that is marked on all sides. The safety zone is colored red to distinguish it from the rest of the surface. The area is still considered in bounds, but if both feet of a judoka are completely within the warning zone, he or she must attack the opponent within three seconds or move back into the center square. At the center of the competition area there are two strips of tape, one blue and one white, which are four meters (13 feet) apart. These mark the spots where the athletes must stand to start the match and where they must return if the referee calls time out.