

As the Tel Aviv Grand Slam came to an end, we asked Florin Daniel Lascau, IJF Head Refereeing Director, for his first impressions about the new set of refereeing rules. His answer was to deliver detailed explanations for each rule, one by one.

“So far in 2022 we had three competitions in which we applied the new refereeing rules, so we can begin to have some interesting feedback. In those three events, we brought as many IJF Supervisors and referees as possible, so everyone could be in contact with the new rules and integrate them.

The key points that we have been looking at are:

**1 - The continuity of action, 2 - The landing, 3 - The judo techniques.**

**1 - Continuity:** It is important that there is no interruption during the execution of direct throwing techniques, counter techniques or combinations.

**2 - Landing:** We are looking at the line from the shoulders to the hips. Both must be at an angle that is a minimum of 90° to the tatami to consider that there is a score.

**3 - Techniques:** We need to be able to identify a judo technique which is present in the judo accepted repertoire (gokyo). Just landing and rolling over and falling on the side/back in the process of the match, without applying a clear technique, is not enough to score. It must be within the bounds of the published list of Kodokan judo techniques.

If we look more closely at each of the new rules, we can explain why and how we made those choices.

In the first three decisions we are looking at the validity of the throwing scores.

**• Decision 1: Scoring for actions that, without stopping, are a continuation of techniques. If there is a stop in the action, there is no score.**

What is crucial is the continuity of the techniques, counters and combinations. This is essential.

**• Decision 2: Waza-ari criteria comprises landing on the whole side of the body at 90 degrees or more to the rear, or on one shoulder and the upper back. A score will be given for a whole side of the body landing even when the elbow is out. Hip and shoulder position must be considered.**

We are making sure that the shoulder line and the hip line land with a minimum angle of 90°. Everything that is out of this range won't get a score.

**• Decision 3: Waza-ari criteria comprises landing on the whole side of the body at 90 degrees or more to the rear, or on one shoulder and the upper back. A score will be given for a whole side of the body landing even when the elbow is out.**

Here we are also looking at the shoulder and the upper part of the back, which also gives waza-ari.

**• Decision 4: Landing simultaneously on 2 elbows or hands, towards the back, is waza-ari for tori and shido for uke.**

It is a matter of safety and education for the young judoka who are inspired by our champions. Using the elbows/hands to avoid the throw will receive a shido. When we teach ukemi to children, we don't show them to use the elbows/hands to avoid falling, because this is dangerous. Therefore, it is not ethical to allow competitors to use their elbows/hands in competition; they are role-models for our youth.

**• Decision 5: No score for counter techniques where the initial attack is rolled to the back, towards the counterattacking or defending judoka.**

We have to make a difference between the correctly applied counter-technique and falling on the mat and turning/rolling over the opponent. In the case of correct technique like uchi-mata-gaeshi, harai-goshi-gaeshi or hane-goshi-gaeshi, but also uchi-mata-sukashi, ura-nage, yokoguruma, tani-otoshi, ko-soto-gari and ko-soto-gake, if we can identify the technique with a proper 90° landing there will be a score. In the case of a front landing or one less than 90°, the rolling to the back will be considered as transition to ne-waza.

**• Decision 6: No score and shido for reverse seoi-nage.**

The application of seoi-nage techniques when uke can perform ukemi and tori can control is allowed. In the variation of seoi-nage techniques when tori turns away from uke, twisting their tsurite and hikite using the sake lapel of uke's judogi, without controlling uke, standing or dropping down in an unknown direction, without giving the possibility to the opponent to perform ukemi and sometimes with uke falling with the neck on the mat, is forbidden. We have to take into consideration that some of the athletes who participate in the World Judo Tour event are 15 years old. The WJT is very important for our young judoka, who want to copy what they see at the highest level. Thus, performing an action without control, in an unknown direction and falling together, is out of our judo safety frame.

**• Decision 7: Gripping under the belt in the end phase of a throwing technique is allowed if the opponent is already in ne-waza. If the throwing technique is interrupted, gripping under the belt is a ne-waza action.**

The gripping under the belt in the end phase of a throwing technique like with soto-makikomi continuing through ushiro-gesa-gatame or ura-gatame is allowed. The grip under the belt that becomes an essential part of the throw is not allowed. Judoka are still not allowed to grip under the belt to throw.

**• Decision 8: Collar and lapel grips are allowed if not negative.**

**• Decision 9: Belt grip, one side grip, cross grip, pistol grip and pocket grip are not traditional grips. If taken, time will be allowed for the preparation of an attack.**

In order to offer more chances to throw and a more attractive judo, non-classical grips are allowed. Collar and lapel, one side, cross grip, belt grip, pocket and pistol grips are allowed when the attitude of the judoka is positive, when they are looking to perform positive attacks and throws. The same grip used in a defensive way will be penalised.

**• Decision 10: Breaking the grips with one or two hands and immediately taking grips is allowed. Breaking grips with one or two hands and not taking a grip immediately is shido.**

Breaking the grip, as long as after that a grip is still there, is allowed. For example, if the judoka in blue judogi has one grip and the judoka in white judogi decides to break with one or two hands, white should keep at least one grip in their hand. Mathematically, it's simple, if blue has one grip, after breaking, white shall keep at least one grip. With this decision we would like to offer athletes the chance to change grip in order to perform techniques. On the opposite side, if after breaking the grip, white does not have any grip anymore, it is shido.

**• Decision 11: Retying and arranging judogi and hair is allowed once per judoka per contest. Further occasions are penalised with shido.**

Judogi and hair can be arranged once per judoka per match. No athlete should use the tidying or rearranging of judogi/hair in order to get time with which to interrupt the contest. The correct preparation of judogi, tying the belt and arranging hair are essential and are the responsibility of each athlete. Please note that the belt cannot be untied without the permission of the referee.

**• Decision 12: Techniques using head diving are dangerous and will be penalised with hansoku-make.**

Following the safety frame of judo, performing judo throws should be done without the head going directly to the tatami. The neck is not a very strong part of the body. Landing first on the head with the opponent behind puts athletes at risk and in a very dangerous situation. As was mentioned before, we have judoka as young as 15 years old eligible to participate in WJT events and we have millions of children who are doing judo and following their heroes. In the demonstration of judo techniques performed on video by the IJF Academy and the Kodokan, there are no techniques landing on the head.

As a conclusion I want to say that even if we are entering a new Olympic cycle that is going to be shorter than usual, we are implanting these rules because we want to offer a safe and fair sport to the judoka and to the public, in order to have the best qualification period beginning in June and the best Olympic Games in Paris 2024.

Written by Nicolas Messner on 25. Feb 2022