

Prominent visitor

Well known sensei at event

GERRY MODDEJONGE
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Canada may not be the best-known country on judo's international circuit, but it's certainly raising some attention in the land of sport's origin. Prominent eight-dan i (or teacher) Takahama, Hisakazu, is back in Edmonton for the year in a row to the Edmonton Judo Club's annual Judo Championships at West Mall's Ice Palace this



MARK HICKS
Fast friends

... officer back a way to return the favour after the way he and the half-dozen competitors he brought with

he's visited Alberta in the past. "Forty years ago, I came to teach judo in Edmonton and Lethbridge. They really looked up to me and now I want to return it."

Takahama became fast friends with tournament chairman and Edmonton Judo Society president Mark Hicks and the two are currently working on a way for local students to visit Japan and hone their skills in the cradle of judo.

Takahama sees it as





Judo tournament attracts more than 700 competitors, including a world number two and Canadian Olympian

BY SARAH PRATT

With the Edmonton International Judo Tournament happening this weekend, March 14-16, it's fascinating to take a peek back at the origins of the Olympic sport judo, a martial art actively practiced in over 200 countries by more than 20 million people worldwide, and how profoundly its creator's philosophy affects athletes to this day.

Jigoro Kano is credited with developing judo in Japan in the 1880s. He believed in maximum efficiency with minimal effort and that gentleness controls hardness. Judo actually means gentle way in Japanese, although the gentleness may not be immediately apparent. Bodies fly through the air and people are pinned to the ground, but it is the principle of gentleness on which all judo techniques are based.

More than 700 participants, along with their coaches and supporters, will be at West Edmonton Mall's Ice Palace to not only compete against one another, but also to showcase the sport of judo.

"Judo is a great sport for kids and adults, and this tournament is a good way to expose people of all ages and genders to the sport," said tournament director Mark Hicks. "There isn't a better public venue in Canada for this kind of thing than West Edmonton Mall."

The Edmonton International tournament is free to watch and attracts competitors from around the world.

Tournament organizers and competitors are excited that 8th Dan Takahama Sensei of Japan will also be attending to watch and participate.

"He brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience in our sport from Japan and we encourage competitors and coaches that they introduce themselves and query him on anything regarding judo from coaching to technique, he will be pleased to help," said Hicks.

Canadian Olympian and presently



This weekend, 8th Dan Takahama Sensei of Japan will be attending to watch and participate with students and instructors at the Edmonton International Judo Tournament.

ranked world number two Kelita Zupancic will also be at the tournament, competing as she trains for Rio in 2016.

"Kelita is an exceptional role model and an incredible athlete," said Hicks.

In addition to a few matches, her plan is to involve herself with the younger participants and encourage their long-term participation in our sport.

Along with the competition, there are events coinciding with the tournament, including a kata competition, kata camp,

referee symposium, woman's referee clinic, kata judge seminar. Judo Canada's Ewan Beaton, former Olympic competitor and Olympic team manager, will present Path to the Podium Friday night, an information session for parents, athletes and coaches.

"Nowhere has such an opportunity ever been provided interested judoka of all levels to immerse themselves in our sport like the opportunity in Edmonton," said Hicks.

Judo Canada is arranging to present this event worldwide on a Judo Canada streaming link, available at www.judocanada.org, and this is an opportunity for anyone to watch the four live active mat feeds that will be running Saturday and Sunday.

Hicks also wanted to mention there are a number of local companies supporting this event, and their signage will be visible at the venue.

"Without their participation, doing something like this would be impossible. Local companies supporting Edmonton amateur sporting events is in my mind, a key indicator of the value of a company to the community, and we hope this is recognized by those visiting the venue this weekend," he said.

Everyone is welcome to visit the mall and experience the heart of judo and the mental and physical stamina of the competitors.