

## COACHING: WHAT IS A QUALIFIED COACH?

*by Mark Lonsdale*

I had not planned on writing an article this month, but I have been busy reading and responding to the various comments from those with a vested interest in future USJA coaching development. But a comment by the ever-astute George Weers demanded some thought.....

*"I think Mr. Lonsdale's proposed structure is possessed of propitious potential! It is well organized and very logical. Mr. Lonsdale uses the term 'qualified Coach.' A discussion on how to quantify that term would be VERY interesting!"*

The above was in response to the following statement that I had made in the proposed coaching curriculum: "As a sporting body, we should be more concerned with developing **qualified** coaches, not just certified coaches."

So rather than define the term "qualified coach," I will allow the reader to do that for him or herself. You may begin by answering the following questions:

1. Have you had more than 100 hours training and education as a sports coach, and were you required to sit for a test for your coaching credentials?
2. Can you document 40+ hours of continued education, including reading, in athlete and coaching development in the past twelve months?
3. Do you personally own a library of books, files and DVDs on judo training, athlete development, sports physiology, resistance training, sports psychology, and coaching?
4. Do you actually coach athletes, and are you able to quantify their improved performance?
5. Have you ever had an athlete exceed their own competitive expectations, medal in a match they thought beyond their capability, thanks in part to your coaching?
6. Do you have first-hand experience (as a competitor or coach) at a level of competition above that of your athletes?
7. Have you ever written a one-year training development plan for an athlete?
8. Have you ever run a pre-training assessment or inventory on your athletes?
9. Do you know the difference between macro-cycle, meso-cycle, and micro-cycle Periodization?
10. Do you understand the age-appropriate levels associated with LTAD?

Sounds a bit harsh, but this is the reality of modern competitive coaching and athlete development. If the only coaching experience you have is sitting through a 3 to 6-hour judo coaching certification clinic, then you are probably not a qualified coach. If however, you took what you learned in that one-day clinic and used it as a starting point for additional personal research and training, then you are headed in the right direction.

At a more practical level, if you have personally taken promising athletes and trained them to be champions (in competition or in life) then you have probably learned more about coaching than anyone who is "certified" but lacking in experience.

Finally, with some agencies “certified” only takes three hours, and in some cases can be done online with no actual assessment or demonstration of skills. If the certificate reads CERTIFIED NATIONAL COACH, then you would think that one should be qualified to coach an athlete at the national level of competition. But this is currently not the case in US judo.

This is the reason that a more robust curriculum was presented in last month’s *Growing Judo* (see June 2012). The ultimate goal is that the title on any certificate accurately reflects the training that the individual has received. Two years from now it would be nice to look back and see that USJA has a national coaching curriculum and certification program that is respected by all and second to none in the United States.

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