

## **Team Canada Men 2015 - 16th World Kendo Championships in Tokyo, Japan**

The selection process and training of Team Canada 2015 began earlier than ever before. For the past two years the men have been working extremely hard in preparation for the World Kendo Championships in Tokyo, Japan. This gave the men not only the opportunity to practice longer, but also time to come closer together as a team.

The new selection process involved multiple assessors including Dean Ara and Suguru Asaoka, and so gave us access to different insights. This gave us confidence when the time came to make cuts to the candidates at different points in time, to arrive at a final team. We adopted a direction of infusing new (and younger) blood into the team. To that end Tsuyoshi Hamanaka was selected as a first time participant, and Eiji Kita was selected as a development player who would not participate in the WKC but would take part in all training and travel as part of the team to Japan.

Getting all the Team Canada candidates together regularly continued to be challenged because of Canada's geography. Nonetheless, activities we were able to accomplish included three gasshuku, regular weekly practices, seminars on strength training and injury prevention, and attending major tournaments (e.g., Steveston, University of Toronto, Washington D.C., Cleveland) as a team. From the beginning an emphasis was placed on having everyone focus on shiai effective Kendo. This approach infused everything from the types of drills that were done, to the types of waza that the men were encouraged to explore, to the way the men should position themselves and their shinai during various transitions.

The style of Kendo utilized by successful competitors at the World Championships continued to be very sport-oriented, and judges were swayed by speed and power. It was repeated often that everybody should expect to be attacked almost immediately after their own attacks made contact, and that both seme and zanshin needed to be concise and strong. However, without enough exposure to Kendo outside of our “regular circles” internalizing these points and making adjustments proved very difficult.

### **Recommendations**

- Once again, attempt to start the selection process as early as possible
- Implement standardized Team Canada practices in all three regions of the CKF so that all candidates are doing the same things
- Coach should visit all regions more regularly
- In areas where the Kendo population would be challenged to hold Team Canada practices (e.g. Quebec) have the CKF and Team Canada management step in to arrange regular sessions and get commitment from higher level individuals to attend.
- A very clear adoption of “defense through offense” was made after the draw was made and we knew we would be facing Japan in the round-robin, but this was late in the game – recommend making that the theme right from the beginning for the next time
- Explore ways to get candidates exposed to high level kendo outside of their “regular circles”
- Oldest veteran members should be encouraged to “step down” and help in making a strong push to get a new generation ready

### **Conclusions**

CKF Membership can be proud of the performance of the men. In the individual division, they showed great spirit and strength. Given a different draw in the team division, the men would have undoubtedly had a very different result. All of the candidates for Team Canada showed incredible dedication and made personal sacrifices. Support from the general CKF membership, directors, and executive was vital and very much understood and appreciated by the men of Team Canada.

- Matthew Raymond, Men's Coach