

16th World Kendo Championship: Team Canada Trainer Manabu Ogawa Tournament Report

As the Team Canada Trainer, I went to the 16th World Kendo Championship in Japan from May 20-June 1st. This was my second time to accompany the Canadian team to the World Championship. I used my experience from the previous Kendo World Championship in Taipei, Taiwan to better meet the needs of the athletes.

From a medical point of view:

- 1) As much as possible, reduce the carryover of fatigue from one day of KEIKO to the next day.
- 2) If an emergency occurs, be readily available with treatment, first aid etc.

From a physical point of view:

- 3) Acclimatization to local conditions, time zone, climate.

From a mental point of view:

- 4) Check in with each athlete and be aware of any worries, anxiety, mood changes etc.

The above 4 points were my main considerations and goals throughout our stay in Japan.

- 1) Kendo is a martial art, not a sport, but it can benefit from some sports science research and approaches. However, Kendo athletes also need strong martial arts mentality, such as KIAI and KONJO. Keiko continues every day and the athletes worked very hard right up until their matches. That's why my focus was to keep the athletes in top condition by proper stretching, attention to warm-up and cool-down, as well as individual treatments for each athlete upon return to the hotel. Preventing injury and the buildup of fatigue as the tournament approached was very important.

- 2) I have experience myself as a martial artist. My SENSEI told me that injury is a part of KEIKO. An injury before a competition causes not only physical, but also mental damage. That's why I created guidelines and procedures to ensure speedy, smooth care to allow the athlete to feel cared for and safe in the event of an emergency.

- 3) The time schedule was prearranged, so my job was to help awaken the body and brain before each morning's KEIKO as well as to help the athletes to relax and be ready to have a good night's sleep.

- 4) For about 10 days the athletes had private rooms, but spent most of their time together in a team camp setting. Some athletes have difficulty being around people all of the time, others were participating in their first World Championship. I tried to support all of the different emotions and difficulties by talking with the athletes and trying to make them feel better. This counselling started over a year ago with the athletes who I have gotten to know and built trust with at Vancouver GASSHUKU. As much as possible, I kept talking to the athletes and we developed a good relationship so that they felt comfortable with me.

The above 4 points summarize my experiences at the 2015 World Championships.

Manabu Ogawa