

## Why Judo

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In the mid 1970s, when I graduated from high school and was about to enter Medical School, I was heavily involved in sports at the YMCA in Thessaloniki, Greece second largest town.

During that time, many team and individual sports were catered for at YMCA. My weekly routine included basketball, weight lifting, soccer football.

One day, I was invited to practice at the Judo session. Immediately after that, I realized that Judo was the sport that I really enjoyed. I carried on. Four years later, I managed to be a South Eastern Judo Medalist. I was then selected for the preolympic team for the 1984 Atlanta Olympic Games.

One can wonder why Judo. After all these years in the sport, I feel that I can now provide some answers. Judo taught me how to learn. Judo techniques that were



taught in a technical session were then immediately implemented during the free practice (Randori) part of the training session, and applied in contests. During this transfer process, I also realized that the more you practice well, the more effective your techniques become. I realized also the need to ask the more experienced players, especially the top players both nationally and abroad, how they perform their techniques. Finally, to practice all those techniques you need a willing partner: the more Judo players on the mat, the better you can practice: a great example of the necessity of collaboration.

Through Judo I learned and practiced the values of learning, working hard, striving for perfection, and the need for collaboration.

All the values learned from Judo were also implemented in my professional practice as a Sport and Exercise Physician.

When I stopped competing, I continued to train in Judo, and then I felt the need to pass my knowledge and experience on, so that others could learn from me.

I was involved as a Judo Coach at the beginning based on my own experiences.

To become competent, I achieved my Coaching qualifications as UKCC Level 2 Coach and as EJU Level 3 Coach. Another great experience of learning through Judo.

Running a Judo club is demanding, involving coaching management skills and safety issues. We established our club in 2001, the Aris Thessaloniki Judo Club.

The vision was to provide the best possible environment in order to practice. That includes knowledge, technical competence, coaching, management skills, safety issues. A real challenge, but the feedback from the participants is a really unique experience.

Later on, Judo played another important role to help me decide my medical specialty, Sports and Exercise Medicine. One of my main interests then was to develop an effective injury prevention strategy applied to Judo, as other sports already did it.

Being involved all those years in Judo is a lifetime experience. As an athlete as a coach as a Sensei as a Sports and Exercise Medicine Physician, Judo provides all the necessary skills for your life battle. I was lucky to be involved in Judo, and to continue to do so.

This issue of Muscles, Ligaments and Tendons Journal is dedicated to Combat Sports. It contains 10 articles on several aspects of combat arts and Judo, covering several issues in this field. It arose from the innumerable talks with Prof Nicola Maffulli: we met on a Judo mat in 1988, and we have been friends, colleagues and above all fellow Judo enthusiasts since. To him, my thanks. Enjoy.

Yours in Judo.