

The 2024 European Kudo Championships were held on June 15 in Rome, Italy, and I, Watanabe, was there as a referee.

This year's championships consisted of 10 European countries (Armenia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Italy, Lithuania, Spain, UK, and Ukraine), plus Japan as a special participant, for a total of 11 countries with about 80 competitors.

My impressions of the matches are as follows,

The stars of the competition, such as Ilaria Agresta (Italy, women-220), Marco Di Zazzo (Italy, men-230), and Vilius Tarasevičius (Lithuania, men-250), all of whom won prizes at last year's World Championship and were predicted to win this year's competition, lost in the semi-finals or the finals, respectively.

In other words, I got the impression that the next generation is definitely growing up, and each match in the U19 category was of a high level.

In terms of countries, Georgia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Armenia, and other countries of the former Soviet Union were the most active.

A unique fighting style was displayed by a Bulgarian competitor in the men's -270. He won all three bouts by "ippon" in a short time with a knee-bar from an "Imanari Roll" to win the championship in his weight class.

The current Kudo rules allow the counter attack with a kick against a tackle, but not against an Imanari-roll. I personally felt that the rules maybe need to be reviewed in the future.

There was some confusion regarding the operation. However, I am sure that the experience gained from this year's event will help to make next year's Kudo World Cup an even better event. It might be good if Japan, with its wealth of experience, could provide some kind of checklist of things to keep in mind when organizing a convention.

I also felt that live streaming on YouTube or other media would have been desirable. It would contribute greatly to the recognition and popularity of Kudo, and I am sure it would increase the satisfaction of the participating athletes.

Finally, on a personal note, this is the second time I have been to Rome.

The last time was in 2006, when I accompanied Azuma Sensei when he came to Rome. At that time, there was no Kudo Daido-Juku dojo in Rome. So, Azuma Sensei met with an editor of a magazine and promised to be introduced to a karate sensei who had expressed an interest in Kudo.

After that, I heard that Kudo Daido Juku started its activities in Rome in 2007.

Since then 18 years have passed. I was deeply moved by the passing of time, and at the same time, I was also deeply moved by the fact that the seed Azuma Sensei planted at that time has now become a tree that bears such a big fruit.

I am very honored to be a part of this historic event.

I wish for the further development of Kudo Italia, and even more so, of Kudo Europe as a whole.

Watanabe Shinji

Kudo Daido-Juku Shihan 6th dan

S-class Referee



“Palatorrino” at the convention center



Tournament Trophies



Men's -230 Commendation Ceremony