

2025 the 3rd European KUDO Jr. Championship Report

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On Sunday, March 9th, I had the opportunity to participate in the 3rd European KUDO Jr. Championship as a referee alongside KIF Head Director Takahashi-Shihan. The event was held in Lithuania. In this report, I will focus on two key points from the championship.

1. The Growth and Expansion of Referees

I also had the opportunity to participate in the 2nd European KUDO Junior Championship, which was held last year in Malta. The previous championship had over 160 participants and took place over two days. This year's championship had a similar number of participants - approximately 140 - but was completed in a single day across two courts. The main difference between the two competitions was the growth and expansion of the referee team. This time, there were 24 referees, 17 of whom took the grading examination. Among the examinees, one obtained the official A license, while others were promoted to B and D licenses.

As is well known, KUDO rules are sophisticated and clearly defined. However, making decisions is challenging due to the speed of the matches, which simulate real-life combat while following a point system. This is especially true in junior competitions, where the pace is even faster. Both the chief referee and the judges must make quick and accurate decisions.

What impressed me most during this championship was that all the referees had a solid understanding of KUDO rules. As a result, discussions among referees were not about who was right or wrong but rather about how to interpret the action from different perspectives.

Since refereeing carries significant responsibility, many people hesitate to take on the role. However, the increase in official referees reflects the ongoing growth and expansion of KUDO in Europe.

When I first started refereeing, KIF Chairman Takahashi-Shihan gave me two pieces of advice that have supported me throughout my career:

1. The position of the chief referee is the best place to feel the competitors' energy. If you truly want to enjoy KUDO, you should experience being a chief referee.
2. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. People learn from mistakes - just make sure not to repeat them.

These words have been a tremendous source of encouragement for me. During this championship, I shared them with other referees, and I felt that those who received this advice experienced the same reassurance I did when I first began.

2. Witnessing the Growth of Athletes

Last summer, I was invited to an international training camp in Lithuania as an instructor. Many of the athletes who participated in that camp also competed in this championship.

Watching their matches, I found myself deeply engaged and emotionally invested. It is always a pleasure to witness the growth of these athletes—not only in their physical abilities but also in their technical skills. Seeing how much they had improved since last summer was incredibly moving. KUDO is not just about competitions or training; it is also a path toward creating an ideal life.

Being involved in their journey of self-development through KUDO fills me with profound gratitude. Their dedication and progress give me confidence that the future of KUDO is bright.

KUDO is more than just BUDO (武道) - a martial art or a sport - it offers countless possibilities. People can find fulfillment as competitors, referees, coaches, staff members, family supporters, and in many other roles. Each perspective provides opportunities for deep learning, meaningful experiences, and personal satisfaction.

Because of Europe's geographical advantage, athletes and officials frequently interact and collaborate with a focus on the future of KUDO, especially for junior athletes. In contrast, Japan, as an island nation, tends to maintain its unique culture but has fewer opportunities to engage with people from other countries. To further develop and refine KUDO, it is essential for all members—not just athletes—to interact with people from different cultures and backgrounds. This international exchange allows us to appreciate both the sophistication of KUDO and the richness of Japanese culture.

As someone who was born into the KUDO community and loves it deeply, I hope that Japan, as the birthplace of KUDO, will continue to lead the global KUDO community with pride—while remaining humble and open to new possibilities.

I am committed to passing on everything I have learned from KUDO to the next generation as much as I can. I would like to conclude this report with love and gratitude.



Opening ceremony



Team Ukraine



Team Malta



Team Lithuania

