



AMERICAN JUDO DEVELOPMENT MODEL



AMERICAN JUDO DEVELOPMENT MODEL (AJDM)

WHY THE AMERICAN JUDO DEVELOPMENT MODEL [AJDM]?

The AJDM pathway to human and Judo excellence is two-fold: age-based and skill-based. The skill-based advancement levels can accommodate entry to the sport at any age. However, the age-based Stage Model represents the core focus of the AJDM framework.

The AJDM represents an opportunity to:

- **Promote** the maxims of Judo: strive for perfection as a human being, maximize efficiency of motion and energy, and focus on mutual welfare and benefit.
- **Introduce** Judo as a foundational development sport in and of itself and/or as a cross training activity.
- **Grow** the sport by making it more accessible, appealing and participant friendly, regardless of age.
- **Contribute** to increasing Americans' physical fitness, mental/emotional resilience and building life skills such as respect, courage, leadership and working with others.
- **Align** better with research-based, age-appropriate development recommendations.
- **Support** and reinforce a longer-term view of participation, a "Judo for life" philosophy, which in turn can drive recruitment and retention.
- **Collaborate** with the American Judo Alliance organizations and local dojos to provide a consistent, positive experience and streamlined transition across the development spectrum - from youth to adult, from beginner to advanced.
- **Clarify** expectations and satisfy the question "why Judo?" with a well-articulated, data-supported, and holistic pathway to learn, grow and achieve one's personal best.
- **Elevate** the proficiency and effectiveness of the American Judo Alliance infrastructure and core stakeholders: participants, dojo owners, coaches, tournament directors, referees, parents, volunteers, and paid staff.
- **Exemplify** a deep commitment to excellence in mind, body and spirit.

AJDM FRAMEWORK

CORE PRINCIPLES

The ultimate goal is to cultivate a positive experience with lasting, lifelong benefits for all participants by creating pathways that emphasize an active, healthy and well-rounded lifestyle both on and off the mat.

AJDM will offer experiences that are inclusive, developmentally holistic, and safe while building life skills and character consistent with its core values of Courtesy, Courage, Honesty, Honor, Modesty, Respect, Self-Control, and Friendship.

To further these aims, the AJDM embraces the following key principles:

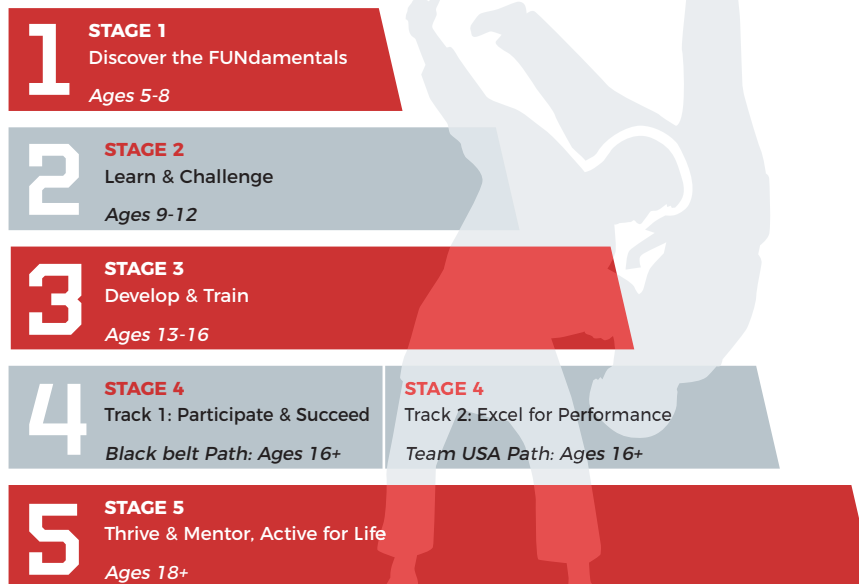
- **UNIVERSAL ACCESS** - to create inclusive opportunities for all, regardless of age, gender, physical ability, etc.
- **DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES** - that emphasize motor and foundational skills alongside character development and a sense of team/belonging
- **CROSS-TRAINING** - multi-activity participation to reduce burnout and supplement skill development
- **ENGAGEMENT** - maintain a fun and progressively challenging atmosphere
- **QUALITY TRAINING** - ensure knowledgeable coaching is offered at all levels

DEVELOPMENTAL PATHWAYS FOR JUDO

YOUTH/AGE-BASED DEVELOPMENT: STAGE MODEL

Youth sport participation in the U.S. is declining. Furthermore, youth in our society are increasingly sedentary, and lack of physical fitness is a serious health issue. Other related and significant mental health and safety issues are also increasing, including teen suicide rates, violence and bullying, harassment and abuse. Judo can play a role in reversing these trends. Establishing clear and structured pathways into Judo, providing positive and developmentally age-appropriate experiences, and extending Judo's holistic philosophy and principles can help kids be more active and physically and mentally healthy, as well as better prepare them to overcome challenges and gain confidence.

Judo recognizes the importance of the experience, particularly for younger ages, in attracting—and keeping—youth involved in sport. The concepts of fun first, well-rounded development in sport and life and a shift away from sport specialization at an early age are cornerstones of modern long-term athlete development models.



SKILL-BASED DEVELOPMENT (ALL AGES): LEVEL MODEL

Recognizing that Judo is a lifelong sport that can be started and developed at all ages, the AJDM also provides skill based-development for those wanting to pursue and master the skills of Judo competitively or recreationally as a lifelong endeavor.



FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW: STAGE MODEL

The following table offers a quick look at how Judo in America could be aligned for the growth of the programs and youth sport participation:

STAGE	AGE	FOCUS	JUDO SPECIFIC GOALS	TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS		COMPETITION REC
1 Discover the Fundamentals	5-8	Build overall motor skills, provide a FUN, engaging experience.	Introduce basic rules, work on positioning/balance, listening/comprehension, agility & coordination.	1-2 sessions/ wk 45 - 60 min ea.	Use guided activities with safety as a priority, and Judo-based games for understanding. Focus on respect & self-discipline. Keep smaller groups training together, separate from older ages.	Fun, festivals, local events; primary focus is about process rather than outcome
2 Learn & Challenge	9-12	Advance motor skill development and general fitness; learn and practice foundational Judo techniques.	Focus on technical quality and growth together with socialization, maintaining a focus on process over outcomes. Build self-confidence. Club/dojo culture & team identity is reinforced.	2-3 sessions/ wk 60 - 90 min ea.	Introduce and develop strength, fitness, & conditioning. Educate coaches and parents on maturation rates and impact.	Local and regional events
3 Develop & Train	13-16	Build the aerobic base and further develop sport-specific skills. Focus on increasing dynamic strength.	Include more emphasis on technique (consider Kata as a teaching tool) and tactics, free sparring and opportunities to develop greater mental and physical confidence on and off the mat.	2-4 sessions/ wk 60 - 90 min ea.	Increase physical intensity with appropriate rest and recovery. Athletes assist with stage 1 and 2 training to gain experience with goal setting in both sport and life.	Local, regional and national events
4-1 Participate & Succeed (Black Belt Path)	16+	Optimize overall fitness preparation and sport-specific skills.	Participate in ongoing training; outline steps to belts and promotions; encourage and support participation and personal success.	2-4 sessions/ wk 60 - 90 min ea.	Train to achieve highest belt possible. Explore opportunities to instruct and officiate the sport. Engage in mentoring others.	Local, regional, some national
4-2 Excel for Performance (Team USA Path)	16 - Team USA	Train to become an elite athlete. Focus on advanced skills, performance and competition success.	Earn black belt and train at elite level, including annual training plans, periodization, training camps, sport science and elite coaching.	5-10 sessions/ wk 60 - 120 min ea.	Peaking and tapering, periodized plans, connecting to elite coaches and the Olympic & Paralympic development pathway.	Local, regional, national and international
5 Thrive & Mentor	18+	Focus on continued growth as well as developing late entry new judokas. Find one's place in the sport to help promote, grow and sustain Judo in America.	Devote time and/or talent to infrastructure development as coaches, referees, donors, volunteers. Continue to participate - be a judoka for life.	Varied	Promote ADM philosophy and programming. Continue to grow personal and physical development.	Skill appropriate competitions, Veteran Judo, Veteran camps, organizing events for next generation

STAGE 1 DISCOVER THE FUNDAMENTALS

AGES 5-8

GOAL

Learn all fundamental sports skills (build overall motor skills).

Fundamental movement skills should be mastered before introducing sport-specific skills. Using a positive and fun games-based approach and encouraging participation in a wide-range of physical activities will help build the foundation for future athletic skills

- Introduce agility, balance, coordination, speed
- Develop flexibility and fundamental movement skills (running, jumping, throwing, swimming, etc.)
- Short duration speed/agility games and aerobic activities
- Fun through Judo-related games

JUDO-SPECIFIC GOALS:

Introduce basic rules, work on positioning/balance, listening/comprehension, agility, coordination. De-emphasize weight and competition to win; highlight values and principles of Judo philosophy, etiquette, fair play and safety.

- Introduction to:
 - Wide range of throwing and holding skills with the emphasis on multi-directional movement (uke moving back, forward, sideways, circle)
 - The concept of breaking the opponents balance
 - Falling skills - forward, back, both sides and rolling break falls
 - Basic groundwork using simple moves into holds, escapes and combinations
 - Basic transference from throwing using simple movement patterns
- Incorporation of athletic and gymnastic skills
- Basic ukemi, nage-waza, osaekomi-waza and modified ne-wazarandori

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING AND COMPETITION:

- Weekly participation in 1-2 Judo specific sessions lasting 45-60 minutes in duration
- General physical activity 3-4 times per week (cycling, gymnastics, athletics, playgrounds, tag etc.)
- Competition should be well structured and modified to emphasize development and opportunities for learning - winning is secondary
- No periodization; sessional and seasonal planning only
- Training sessions comprised of 80-90% technical training and 10-20% tactical training
- Introduction to formal competition with modified IJF rules (i.e.: no shime-waza or kansetsu-waza, no drop seoinage, etc.)
- 2-4 club tournaments per year, "round-robin" type format; emphasis on gaining experience, not on winning

SUPPLEMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- Body proportions are very different from adults
- May find it hard to focus w/ large groups in a small space
- Isolated/designated safe training spaces are important
- Older students may be joining at this early stage

STAGE **2** LEARN & CHALLENGE

AGES 9-12

GOAL

Advance motor skill development and general fitness; learn and practice early competition techniques.

This stage should focus on overall athlete development, general sport skills and physical literacy. Fundamental motor skills and flexibility should be further developed through games and activities emphasizing agility, quickness and change of direction.

- Develop strength using child's own body weight, medicine balls, and/or Swiss balls
- Develop stamina through games and relays
- Ethical behavior and fair play
- Introduce mental training (visualization, goal setting etc.)

JUDO-SPECIFIC GOALS:

Emphasize technical quality and growth together with socialization, maintaining a focus on process over outcomes. Team and travel experiences start closer to 11-12.

- Continued development of a wide range of multi-directional throwing and holding skills
- Consolidate previously learned Judo skills and ukemi
- Introduction to:
 - Uchikomi drills – standing and ground work (shadow, static and dynamic)
 - Transition from tachiwaza to newaza
 - Combination and counter techniques
 - Gripping skills – standard left and right, specific to technique
- Acquire and develop new nage-waza, osaekomi-waza and escapes
- Further develop Judo philosophy and etiquette

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING AND COMPETITION:

- Weekly participation in 2-3 Judo specific sessions lasting 60-90 minutes in duration
- General physical activity 3-4 times per week (cycling, gymnastics, athletics, playgrounds, tag etc.)
- Competition should be well structured and modified to emphasize development and opportunities for learning – winning is secondary
- No periodization; sessional and seasonal planning only
- Training sessions comprised of 80-90% technical training and 10-20% tactical training
- Introduction to formal competition with modified IJF rules (i.e.: no shime-waza or kansetsu-waza, no drop seoinage, etc.)
- 2-4 club tournaments per year, "round-robin" type format; emphasis on gaining experience, not on winning

SUPPLEMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- The optimal window of skill trainability for girls is between the ages of 8-11 and between 9-12 years for boys
- Promote and encourage overall fitness, motor control, cognitive and affective skills
- Participants at this age should be focused on sport as fun and overall athletic development

STAGE **3** DEVELOP & TRAIN - BUILDING THE ENGINE

AGES 13-16

GOAL

Build the aerobic base and further develop sport-specific skills. Focus on increasing strength in older youth in this stage.

In this stage athletes focus on the development of basic sport-specific skill and fitness with an emphasis on aerobic conditioning. The focus should be on training for fitness preparation (high intensity, low volume) and technical training.

- Consolidate and refine the basic Judo techniques
- Consolidate specific basic Judo skills, learn new skills
- Consolidation of basic motor skills in response to growth
- Identify windows of trainability and apply appropriate stimuli
- Particular attention to bilateral development
- Increase awareness of the value of fitness
- Holistic approach to training combining physical, psychological, social, and cognitive aspects

JUDO-SPECIFIC GOALS:

Include more technical and tactical emphasis, free sparring and lots of opportunity to develop and be able to handle any session or competitor. Encourage striving for personal best.

- Consolidate basic Judo-specific skills
- Acquire and develop appropriate tactical and strategic abilities
- Introduce Judo philosophy surrounding winning and losing
- Continue to place emphasis on training (not competition)
- Introduce the possibility of pursuing a career in High-Performance Judo
- Emphasize ethical behavior

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING AND COMPETITION:

- Weekly participation in 2-4 Judo specific sessions lasting 60-90 minutes in duration
- General physical activity 5-7 times per week (cycling, gymnastics, athletics, playgrounds, tag etc.)
- Competition - play to win and achieve their best - 6-8 tournaments per year with 4-5 bouts per tournament, national championships
- Introduce periodization (single)
- 60% tech training; 40% competition/competition-related training
- Rules as per IJF with consideration to "dangerous" techniques for this level (i.e. drop seoinage)

SUPPLEMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- Fluctuating emotional development
- Differentiation between girls and boys increases in this stage
- Careful to not over-compete at this stage
- Training is still the focus

STAGE **4** [1]: PARTICIPATE & SUCCEED [BLACK BELT PATH] - OPTIMIZE THE ENGINE

AGES 16+

GOAL

Optimize fitness and sport-specific skills; improve preparation and performance for personal growth

This is the age where high intensity, event-specific individual training will become a focus. Only after both basic and sport-specific skills are mastered should athletes begin to apply these skills to a variety of competitive training environments. It is in this stage that training becomes customized to the individual - personalizing fitness programs, recovery programs, psychology preparation and technical development to achieve optimum preparation.

- Optimization of fitness and sport-specific skill along with ancillary capacities and mental preparation
- Approach training holistically - combining physical, psychological, social and cognitive aspects
- Skills are mastered and new skills and techniques are developed
- Individual attention to the developmental progress of ALL physical characteristics; begin to analyze and improve weaknesses
- Increased time devoted to competition and competition-specific training

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING AND COMPETITION:

- Weekly participation in 2-4 Judo specific sessions lasting 60-90 minutes in duration
- Fitness conditioning activity 5-6 times per week
- Competition: 8-12 tournaments per year National and International Jr. and Sr. competitions
- 45 weeks per year (48 weeks for U20); off-season 3 weeks or less
- Develop approaches to tapering to peak performance
- Individualized training, competition and recovery plans
 - Strength training, energy system development, cross-training to develop weak areas, weight training, nutrition
- 40% general; 60% competition & competition-specific training
- Compete under full IJF rules

JUDO-SPECIFIC GOALS:

Ongoing training; outline steps to belts and promotions; encourage and support participation and personal success.

Introduce and implement a structured periodization program enabling a player to peak for major competitions. Identify the annual training periods, training (practice) competitions and target competitions.

- Consolidate and refine tokui-waza - techniques should be tailored to the individual
- Identification and practice of under-developed skill sets
- Development of coping with and countering opposition style and gripping
- Refined contest strategies and improved decision-making under pressure
- Higher volume of training, including strength and endurance
- Introduce, develop and refine at least 4 new techniques per year

SUPPLEMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- Added cultural and lifestyle demands of performance sport
- Beginning of technical specialization by individual
- Encourage originality and innovation
- Strength levels need to be established before strength endurance begins
- Injury prevention strategies tailored to the individual
- Introduction to weight control practices and strategy



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STAGE 4 [2]: EXCEL FOR PERFORMANCE [TEAM USA PATH]

AGES 16 - SENIOR NATIONAL ATHLETE

GOAL

Optimize fitness preparation and focus on advanced sport-specific skills, performance and competition success.

There is an increased focus, specialization and commitment to the sport of Judo. An individual's athletic and mental capacities are well established and the training shifts to maximize performance.

- High Performance focused - year-round, high intensity training
- Refine, maintain and master Judo skills
- Sustain and/or improve all physical and ancillary capacities
- Ongoing development of technical and tactical skill

JUDO-SPECIFIC GOALS:

Reach "Ideal Performance State" or maximum potential - and maintain a high-performance career

Periodization and tapering techniques for major competitions are the focus of a high intensity and high-volume training program. Cross-training and recovery training are incorporated to prevent physical and mental burnout. New pressure because of success in competition is introduced - the challenge now becomes centered on sustaining competitive excellence.

- Emphasis on maximizing speed, coordination, agility, stamina and explosive strength
- Continued refinement of
 - o Transition from tachiwaza to newaza
 - o Multi-directional combination and counter techniques
 - o Coping with and countering opposition style and gripping
 - o Tokui-waza for all grips, positions and styles
- Specialization of individual techniques with emphasis on competition specific skills and tactics
- Further develop competition strategies to combat different styles of opponent

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING AND COMPETITION:

- Weekly participation in 5-10 Judo specific sessions lasting 60-120 minutes in duration
- Judo-specific conditioning activity 4-6 times per week (including weight training, endurance training etc.)
- Competition: Min. 10 tournaments (40 bouts) per year National and International Jr. and Sr. competitions
- Multiple periodization as needed - focus on peaking for major comp.
- Maintain high volume and increase intensity
- Conditioning is Judo specific; off mat sessions tie in with Judo sessions
- 48 weeks of 5-6 sessions per week; off-season no more than 3 weeks
- 75% competition/competition-specific training; 25% ancillary training

SUPPLEMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- Continued use of diagnostics tools
- Weight control and nutrition strategies perfected
- Physical and mental burnout is a major risk
- Injury prevention and/or injury recovery programs are key

STAGE **S** THRIVE & MENTOR

AGES ADULT [18+]

GOAL

Highlight the health and social benefits to participation. Continue to participate – be a judoka for life.

This stage is for those athletes who are no longer focused on high-level competition and would like to practice Judo for their health and enjoyment.

- Create a safe and fun environment where participants feel at ease to practice and learn with others
- Introduce the stress-reducing benefits and emotional management associated with the practice of Judo
- Continue to emphasize the maxims of Judo by making connections to mental discipline, focus, success, health and well-being, etc.
- Focus on the expectations of being a good judoka and how it applies to everyday life in the community
- Highlight Judo training as an alternative to traditional cardiovascular exercises and strength training

JUDO-SPECIFIC GOALS:

Find one's place in the sport to help promote, grow and sustain Judo in America.

Some participants at this level will move into other Judo sport roles (officiating, coaching, and administration); others may look to compete in master level divisions. Attention to the individual goals and objectives will be important to apply the appropriate training, competition and recovery programs.

- Re-emphasize Judo as a fun and enjoyable sport for all
- Content and intensity of Judo-specific training and technical development adjusted to individual learner needs
- Quick wins will generate task-specific confidence, improve self-esteem, and strengthen belonging/dojo identity, etc.
- Create opportunities to practice officiating, volunteering or engaging in administrative support – coaching and refereeing certification awareness
- Gradual exposure to basic kata techniques in progression and complexity, e.g. nage-no-kata, katame-no-kata, etc.
- Explore dimension of self-defense and decision-making through study of kata
- Encourage participation in referee certification program

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINING AND COMPETITION:

- Weekly participation in varied duration or tailored to a specific Judo program/intensity level
- Progression of training tailored to specific learner need and development objective
- Refine kata techniques already acquired and increase technical complexity as proficiency and interest increase
- Judo-specific conditioning and kinesthetic awareness need to match participant's level
- Be aware of any equipment and training site modifications required for aging learners

SUPPLEMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- Physical or emotional attributes will vary depending on the new entrant - desire to be independent or part of the group, physical limitations of aging, etc.
- Need to be aware that not all adults may possess the same level of kinesthetic awareness or physical literacy
- Sensitivity and proactivity to meet challenges associated with aging (e.g., limited range of motion, physical handicaps, injuries, etc.)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE [AJDM]

**AS A DOJO OR COMPETITION ORGANIZER:**

Dojos and other Judo organizations are a key part of both the youth and adult sport experience in the United States. By using key AJDM concepts, a sport club can focus on growing their athletes and teams into success stories. Use these 11 key recommendations to help maximize a dojo's impact on the athlete's sport experience:

1. Emphasize inclusion and participation for ages 0-12 in sport programs and focus on developing skills over competition outcomes
2. Use the AJDM development pathway to design your own club development pathway for participation and competition offerings
3. Provide physical literacy (i.e. agility, balance, coordination training) at every practice at every level
4. Periodize training and rest time for your athletes to cut down on overuse injuries and burnout
5. Encourage multi-sport activity and cross-training to keep your athletes active and developing outside of your program
6. Use developmentally-appropriate drills and practice plans at all levels
7. Provide qualified and certified coaches at all age levels
8. If you have an instructor skilled in teaching kata, consider offering kata as a supplemental way to train techniques and offer it as a competition option instead of Shiai where individuals can compete in local and international competitions
9. Keep participation/competition costs reasonable. Find ways to increase numbers and retention rates from year to year, season to season
10. Provide quality feedback and age-appropriate development benchmarks to parents and athletes
11. Operate with an athlete-focused philosophy by creating fun, engaging and challenging sport experiences across all levels of development

**AS A PARENT:**

The parent's role in the sport experience is primarily one of support and guidance. Parents can positively supplement coaching instruction by nurturing their child's growth in the sport, offering encouragement and reassurance along the way.

The AJDM is intended to be a holistic approach, and as such, empowers parents to ensure the core values and teachings of the sport are extended to their children's lives outside of the dojo. The following are recommendations for parents to help foster positive sport experiences for their children:

1. Understand your child's sport pathway and recognize where they stand in terms of age and development
2. Even though Judo is a great foundational sport, parents should also encourage other sport sampling up to age 12, at minimum, to help enhance physical literacy and to make sure their child finds sports the child enjoys
3. Promote multi-sport/activity and cross-training to keep your child from burning out or developing overuse injuries
4. Reward your child for sport development and proficiency over performance outcomes and winning
5. Enroll your child in age-appropriate activities to ensure healthy progression and skill development before increasing the volume of competition
6. Monitor the dose and duration your child is playing each week and encourage rest and recovery
7. Ask coaches for feedback on your child's development and maintain interest in your child's experience rather than focusing on wins and losses
8. Earned Not Given—remember that students are taught the value of investing in themselves, achieving success through merit and effort rather than entitlement
9. Ensure your child is having fun—don't forget it's about them!

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE [AJDM]



AS A COACH OR OFFICIAL:

Coaches hold a strong power of authority in sports. The coach's role is to maximize the potential of their athletes, while helping the athlete or team achieve the best results possible. This power of authority can make or break an athlete's sport experience.

Quality coaches need to constantly develop their tools to help athletes grow and develop. The following recommendations can be used to achieve greater success in coaching:

1. Periodize training and rest time for athletes to cut down on overuse injuries and burnout
2. Provide physical literacy (i.e. agility, balance, coordination training) at every practice at every level

3. Use developmentally-appropriate drills and practice plans at all levels
4. Operate with an athlete-focused philosophy by creating fun, engaging and challenging sport experiences across all levels of development
5. Provide quality feedback and age-appropriate development benchmarks to parents and athletes
6. Focus on effort and development over outcomes to reinforce physical, technical and tactical advancements over winning
7. Maximize athlete potential and retention at all stages of development
8. Obtain certification as a coach and continue to develop your coaching skills, including age-appropriate teaching skills

FEATURES AND BENEFITS OF JUDO

As one of the safest contact sports for children, Judo offers an ideal platform to introduce young athletes to the social, physical and mental benefits of martial arts. Judo's core values of Courtesy, Courage, Honesty, Honor, Modesty, Respect, Self-Control, and Friendship are relevant and scalable to athletes of all ages, and can help establish a firm foundation that will serve a developing child well—both in their future sport development and in life. Key benefits of the sport can be summarized as follows:

SOCIAL

- Confidence and self-esteem—Judo instructors present students with physical and mental challenges, rewarding perseverance and offering the opportunity to evaluate and learn from mistakes, encouraging students to take a positive, proactive approach to everyday life
- Respect for oneself and others—the dojo is an environment of mutual respect, where respect is earned by demonstrating maturity and accountability in both words and actions, as well as accepting feedback in a healthy manner
- Social and emotional growth—despite the individual nature of the sport, physical interaction and structured training with classmates offers ample opportunity to teach proper social interaction and self-awareness skills

PHYSICAL

- Safety first—Judo is centered on balance and awareness rather than striking ...one of the first things a student learns is how to fall properly
- Mind-Body connection—enhances the ability of the mind/body to work together to perform necessary motions, contributing to mental wellness
- Comprehensive physical benefit—Judo helps develop agility, flexibility, balance, muscular strength/endurance and hand-eye coordination

MENTAL

- Overcoming adversity—students are taught the importance of getting back on their feet (literally) and facing challenges courageously
- Thinking critically—healthy competition and evaluation promotes development of problem-solving skills and solution-based thinking
- Focus and concentration—students learn that discipline leads to positive outcomes and results, experiencing the benefits of a measured and thoughtful approach to sports, academics and life in general