

# A Tribute to Mr. Akinori Hosaka - Kodokan 8th Dan

Funeral Eulogy by Robin Otani President of the British Judo Council  
14<sup>th</sup> April 2010

My welcome to the friends and colleagues of Akinori Hosaka.

I am privileged and honoured to say a few words about this great judoman, a judoka and Master of judo. A sad loss to the whole Judo world.

I believe he would like it said that, he had the heart and mind of a Samurai.

Mr. Hosaka's life split almost equally into three parts:

His life and hard successful judo training in Japan until he was 24 years of age,  
His judo practice and coaching success with the British Judo Association for 24 years,  
and at 48 years old, his latter association with the British Judo Council.

Hosaka Sensei first met my father at the 1964 Open Olympic Judo Trials, Crystal Palace. I do recall Masutaro Otani and Gunji Kozumi sitting together in the front seats, but I do not recall seeing Hosaka Sensei there.

Something I was unaware of at the time was related to me much later by Hosaka Sensei. Apparently my father tried to make conversation with Hosaka as the group of dignitaries walked together. My father casually said in Japanese "Judo is hard isn't it"? Mr. Hosaka thought, of course judo's hard, who is this stupid old man? Thus he did not reply and ignored my father.

My father was always looking for young Japanese judomen who could show BJC student's skillful judo in randori on the mat. He once told me that he had heard Hosaka in Manchester was a very good judoman but he had a bad character and liked gambling and chasing women and so we could not use him.

My first contact with Mr. Hosaka was circa 1985 when the BJC, through our Vice-President Mr. Mealing, invited him to the Woolacombe National Course. I remember he wore trodden down domestic slippers and did not bow when he came in the dojo or on and off of the mat. I said "hallo sensei, how do you do"? he looked at me with a frown and said "you can call me Tony" so I replied "yes sensei" and that's how it stayed.

'Japanese Tony' I believe was his gambling name. Sometime soon afterwards he asked our Vice President how he should address me and he was advised that "Mr. Otani" was the correct form. This respect we had for each other cemented our relationship, I always respected his high technical judo ability and he always respected my position as President of the BJC.

During the years I have known him, Hosaka Sensei regained judo etiquette and his belief in Jigoro Kano's ideals for Judo as an education of life for everyone. By his own choice he decided he must set a good example of character to students and so he gave up gambling and smoking. In doing so he regained self-respect and dignity for himself.

What was Mr. Hosaka's uniqueness? It was not just that he was a superb contest man and vastly superior than most, on the mat. It was that he also had a very special ability to

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focus on the crux of problems. He identified a weaknesses in modern British judo and devised a system and implementation plan to resolve this problem.

I once talked to him about how I had believed judo practice should be done in open co-operation with your opponent and was about taking advantage of opportunities presented, rather than creating them.

He replied that he also used to practice judo and randori in this way to great benefit, but when he came to England he found that a different sort of approach was needed. This was because of the substantial physical difference in Japanese and European judo.

It meant that the 'action/reaction' part of his judo against strong opponents had to be used more frequently, than when he practiced in Japan. In fact his Japanese style beneficial randori practice never happened in the UK.

The use of the hands and wrist are vital in 'action/reaction' judo but very difficult to introduce into those who have established a way to fight and win in judo.

Many of our best British Champions have developed a 'knack' of throwing using subtle twitches of the hand and wrist, some may not have realised the skill they were using as it was a subconscious development, generated from serious hard training.

Therefore to make British Judo successful Hosaka Sensei decided basic hand and wrist skills must be install in children and beginners from the very start of their judo and must be fully developed before competitive judo is allowed.

Mr. Hosaka said judo people in Britain, always wanted quick results and had tried to jump from step one to step ten. He felt there was no point in teaching the higher level of judo if people could not soundly perform the basics. He therefore concentrated on the first basic principles. Unfortunately we now have lost a great deal of higher knowledge that was never revealed.

Away from Judo itself, Hosaka Sensei was a strategist in the politics of judo. He always denied he was political but every objective he tried to achieve was done with political manoeuvres.

Mr. Hosaka always reflected on the Japanese Shogunate system that successfully created peace in Japan for nearly 300 years. However this era was preceded by over 600 years of the bloodiest civil war and feuding of any nation, and often included the assassinations of enemies, friends and family.

With this in mind, Hosaka Sensei once said to me that I had to know, who in the BJC, was 'Hattamoto'. He explained further that 'Hattamoto' meant flag carrier or standard bearer and apart from holding the clan flag in battle, to the last, these men were totally trusted samurai. They were not family and some were not even of the clan but they were all considered completely loyal to the 'Daimio' or 'Lord of the Clan' and therefore completely trustworthy.

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In battle, they would guard the Daimio's back and surround and protect the Lord, with their life. They would also assassinate any enemies, behind the scenes.

He followed this by saying that he could never be my Hattamoto because I could not trust him. I never did find out exactly what he meant, but I suppose I can trust him now.

On a personal level I owe Hosaka Sensei a great debt for taking me to Japan in 2005 and helping to discover my lost relatives in Nagasaki Prefecture.

He also introduced me to, the Kodokan, Yukimitsu Kano, Abe Sensei, Matsushita Sensei and many senior judo people. I was his guest of honour at the Nihon University Reunion dinner in Fukuoka and I sat with 40-50 great and famous Japanese judoka. I am most honoured and grateful.

My biggest surprise was how important and well-respect Hosaka Sensei was in Japan.

Therefore in conclusion I say farewell to a great Judo Master and friend and the BJC will do its best to continue his work and make a real contribution to the future of British Judo.

Sayonara Hosaka Sensei.