



NOTICE

13/1 - 8 January 2013



High-Grade Promotions

The purpose of this Notice is to discuss the high-grade promotion of ju-jitsu practitioners in New Zealand; that is, the grading of practitioners to the grades of 8th, 9th and 10th dan.

NZJJF proposes putting in place policies and procedures for the grading of our own high kodansha grades. This is not without precedence. You will know that Jigoro Kano created the dani system of gradings that the majority of martial arts follow. Following his death in 1938, the Kodokan took control of awarding high grades in judo. However, from the late 1940s national governing bodies (NGB) were formed and these had the authority to grade their members to high grades (although few were eligible in those early days). Most countries set up national grading boards for the purpose; some of the first NGB high grades awarded were Henri Courtine and Bernard Pariset (both 6th dan in 1968) and Miconosuke Kawaishi (posthumous 10th dan in 1969), all from Fédération Française de Judo et Disciplines Associées. High-grade promotions by NGBs therefore have a 45 year history.

Currently, some ju-jitsuka in New Zealand look off-shore for promotion and grades have been awarded by the likes of the World Jiu Jitsu Federation, Jiu Jitsu International and UK Jujitsu Association International. Their heads, the late Robert Clark, Richard Morris and Allan Tattersall, all trained in the British Ju-Jitsu Association under James Blundell, a man with no direct Japanese ju-jitsu lineage.

By comparison, the founders of Kawaishi ju-jitsu in this country, Henk Fekkes and Hans van Ess both trained intensively in ju-jitsu under Jaap Nauwelaerts D'Agé at the Centraal Instituut Opleiding Sportleiders, Holland's college of physical education. D'Agé, in turn, trained directly under both Miconosuke Kawaishi and Gunji Koizumi. Likewise, the founder of Fuji Ryu, John Bonniface, studied martial arts at Kokushinkan University in Japan, learning directly from Sugawara Gesshu over a prolonged period. About three-quarters of New Zealand ju-jitsu clubs descend from these men and so have a strong lineage to authentic ju-jitsu, and in recent years other authentic styles have arrived.

The point here is that we have good ju-jitsu in this country. We are also intent on stamping out bogus grades and irregular practices. Why, then, do we choose overseas organisations with lineages less authentic than our own to grade our high-grade people?

So to this aim the NZJJF will, at the time required, establish a committee for the promotion of high-grades according to the NZJJF Policy for High-Dan Grades. It sets out the guidelines for selecting a High Dan Grades committee, measuring the qualities and achievements of high-grade candidates, and requirements of documentation in support of any decision made by the committee.

The promotion of high-grades by any means affects the whole New Zealand ju-jitsu community. Whilst NZJJF recognises the right of organisations to grade their own people it also proposes controlling high-grade promotions so that New Zealand ju-jitsuka can be confident that their role models have been thoroughly vetted by a carefully chosen panel of their peers using a consistently-applied framework.