

# Menden Judo Judoki Vol.15

## 4,364 km Away in Myanmar

Photo 1: Practising at the Hiranuma Dojo established in Myaumba.



Background and Purpose of Establishing the Dojo	2
Current Operations of Hiranuma Dojo	4
Future Prospects	5
Overview of the Tournament I Competed In	6
Match Results and Analysis	7
Looking Ahead	8
Final Thoughts	10

Hello everyone, it's been a while.

This is Hiranuma, working to promote and develop judo in Myanmar. As we are already a few months into 2025, I hope everyone is doing well and tackling new challenges.

As for myself, the beginning of the year has been quite hectic. In January, we officially started full-scale preparations for the SEA Games scheduled for December 2025, and I have been focusing even more on strengthening the national team. Also, I will report in more detail next time, but one of my university juniors stayed in Myanmar for a month as a training partner, working hard alongside our athletes. Then, in February, I personally participated in an international tournament for the first time and managed to place in the rankings.

With so much happening, I haven't had a chance to write an activity report until now. However, in this edition, I would like to share updates on the newly established Hiranuma Dojo and my own tournament experience. I hope this article helps you gain insight into the current state and future of judo in Myanmar. I appreciate your time and hope you enjoy reading.

## **Background and Purpose of Establishing the Dojo**

My primary reason for coming to Myanmar was to coach the national team and achieve good results at the SEA Games, which are held every two years. However, rather than focusing solely on short-term success, I strongly feel that the long-term development of judo in Myanmar requires a strong foundation, which includes broader promotion of the sport.

To be specific, waiting until athletes join the national team to teach them the fundamentals of judo is too late. There needs to be an environment where they can start training from a young age. This issue became apparent to me when I first arrived in Myanmar.

Moreover, after speaking with judo coaches from other countries and reading various articles, I realized that this is a common challenge worldwide, not just in Myanmar.

In contrast, Japan's judo system and coaching environment are structured in a way that allows children to learn judo systematically from an early age, and this has a significant long-term impact on athlete development. With this in mind, I decided to establish dojos in Myanmar, where children can be exposed to judo from a young age.

I have written in detail about this initiative in a previous article, Menden Judo Journal No. 4, so please check it out for further insights. (From Myanmar: [Menden Judo Journal No.4 - JUDOs](#))

Although it has taken some time to bring this vision to life, I feel that steady progress has been made. However, a single dojo is not enough to expand judo widely. Therefore, I collaborated with former athletes I previously coached (some of whom have retired and started coaching careers) and teachers interested in promoting youth judo, leading to the establishment of new dojos

Photo 2: Students at the Hiranuma Dojo established in Yangon.



## **Current Operations of Hiranuma Dojo**

Since January 1, 2025, we have officially launched dojos in Myaumya and Yangon, operating in two locations. Each dojo now has around 30 to 40 children training daily, enthusiastically engaging in their practice.

Our coaching approach emphasizes movement and fundamental judo skills, ensuring that the children develop a solid foundation while having fun. Training mainly consists of basic exercises, fundamental judo movements, and technical drills. However, managing large groups alone is challenging, so I have been receiving support from students at sports schools and other instructors. Thanks to their help, dojo operations have been progressing smoothly.

Additionally, the judogi (judo uniforms) we use were donated by Japanese companies during their visits to Myanmar. This was made possible through a JUDOs project, which facilitates the distribution of second-hand judogi and tatami mats to countries in need. Thanks to such support, the barrier to entry for new judo practitioners has been significantly lowered, allowing more children to take up the sport.

Photo 3: Students of the established Hiranuma Dojo in Myaumya.



## Future Prospects

Until now, Myanmar has had very few opportunities for youth judo, making the establishment of these dojos a significant milestone. To further develop this initiative, we aim to continue expanding our activities.

In May and July, domestic judo tournaments are scheduled to take place in Myanmar. We expect to see competitors from judo clubs in Naypyidaw, Yangon, and Myaumba, creating opportunities for inter-dojo exchanges. I am looking forward to seeing relationships develop beyond dojo boundaries through these events.

Photo 4: Students of the Hiranuma Dojo established in Nay Pyi Taw.



Photo 5: Scene of an Ouchigari being applied to a Ukrainian player.



Adapted from European Judo Federation.

## **Overview of the Tournament I Competed In**

The tournament I participated in was the European Open in Warsaw, Poland, an international competition where ranking points for Olympic qualification are at stake. The competition level was exceptionally high, and my -66kg weight class had around 60 competitors from various countries.

For example, my bracket included:

The Italian national team athlete ranked 28th in the world (-66kg), who has faced Hifumi Abe in competition.

The Georgian national team athlete ranked 1st in the world (-60kg).

This tournament attracted many of the world's top athletes, making for an intense and highly competitive atmosphere. Simply being able to compete on such a stage, wearing the Japanese national team judogi and representing Japan, was a dream come true.

While my primary role is as a coach, returning to competition and facing some of the world's best judokas was an invaluable experience.

## **Match Results and Analysis**

As I have been focusing mainly on coaching in recent years, this was my first tournament in approximately three years. However, I have always wanted to compete at least once or twice a year to maintain my competitive spirit and enhance my coaching. I believe that experiencing judo firsthand as an athlete provides crucial insights that I can bring back to my coaching.

That said, I recognize that my preparation for this tournament was not ideal. After the matches, I reflected on how I could have made better use of my training environment and prepared more effectively. Still, achieving 7th place in my first international tournament was a significant personal achievement.

### **Match Results**

1st Round: Won against Ukraine (Golden Score, Seoi-nage "Waza-ari").

2nd Round: Won against Germany (Opponent used an illegal armlock, resulting in disqualification).

3rd Round: Won against Portugal (Two Seoi-nage "Waza-ari", total "Ippon").

Quarterfinals: Lost to Kazakhstan (Opponent scored "Waza-ari" with Ippon-seoi-nage, I countered with a hug throw but was overturned on video review).

Repechage: Lost to Ukraine (Exhausted, lost by Kosoto-gake "Ippon").

Photo 6: Combinations for this year's tournament



Adapted from European Judo Federation.

## Key Takeaways

1. European judo styles were relatively predictable, making it easier to strategize against them.
2. Kazakhstani and Ukrainian judo styles were unfamiliar, which led to uncertainty in adapting my tactics during the match.
3. Judging and match conditions can significantly impact outcomes, reinforcing the importance of mental preparation and adaptability in competition.

## Looking Ahead

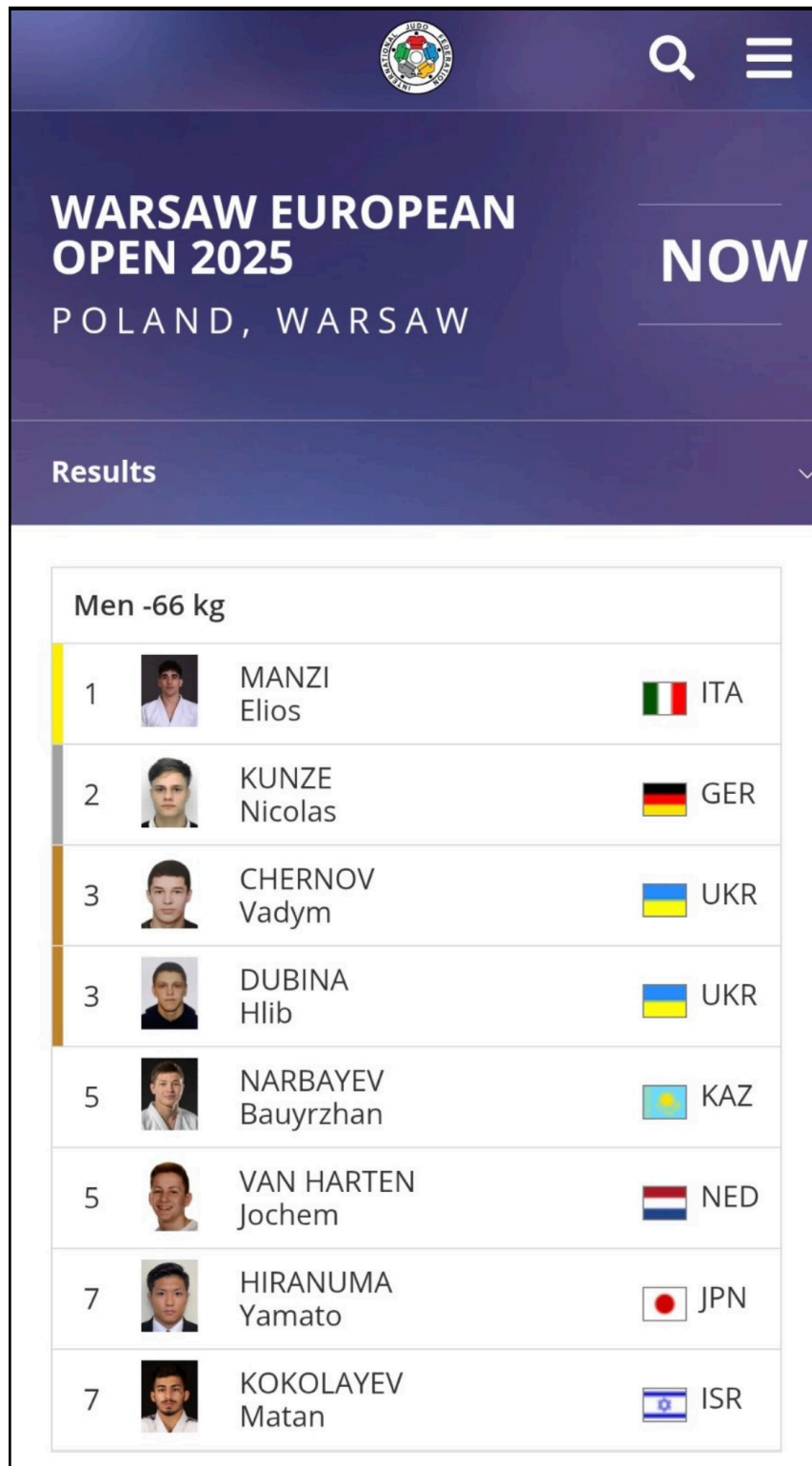
I have not yet decided whether I will enter another international tournament or focus on domestic competitions, but this experience has given me valuable insights into my judo style. I plan to refine my techniques and strategies moving forward.

At the same time, the SEA Games in December 2025 are fast approaching, and my role as a coach will become even more critical. While prioritizing the national team's development, I hope to continue competing as an athlete when possible.



















This tournament reaffirmed the value of competing firsthand, and I will use these experiences to grow as both a judoka and a coach.

Photo 7: Final results of this competition



The image shows a digital interface for the Warsaw European Open 2025. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the International Judo Federation logo, a search icon, and a menu icon. Below the header, the event title "WARSAW EUROPEAN OPEN 2025" and location "POLAND, WARSAW" are displayed in white. To the right, the word "NOW" is shown in a large, bold font. A "Results" section is visible, with a dropdown arrow. The results are listed for the Men -66 kg category. Each entry includes a rank, a small portrait photo of the athlete, the athlete's name, and their country's flag and code.

Men -66 kg			
1		MANZI Elios	 ITA
2		KUNZE Nicolas	 GER
3		CHERNOV Vadym	 UKR
3		DUBINA Hlib	 UKR
5		NARBAYEV Bauyrzhan	 KAZ
5		VAN HARTEN Jochem	 NED
7		HIRANUMA Yamato	 JPN
7		KOKOLAYEV Matan	 ISR

Adapted from International Judo Federation.

## **Final Thoughts**

In this report, I shared updates on the newly established Hiranuma Dojo and my tournament experience at the Warsaw European Open.

Looking ahead, Myanmar's national team will compete in international tournaments in Malaysia and Thailand in April, followed by domestic competitions in May and July, and another international event in Thailand in August. The year is set to be incredibly busy with training camps and strengthening programs.

Despite the ongoing political turmoil in Myanmar, young athletes and coaches continue to persevere and hold onto hope for the future. Judo is not just a sport—it is a platform for personal growth and human connection. Through judo, we aim to offer new possibilities to Myanmar's youth.

I hope you will continue to support our efforts, and I look forward to sharing more in the next report. See you next time!

## References.

1. European Judo Union/ <https://www.eju.net/> viewed 2025/03/03
2. International Judo Federation / <https://www.ijf.org/> viewed 2025/03/03
3. Authorised Non-Profit Organisation JUDOs Myanmar yori Menden Judo Ki No.4 / <https://judos.jp/myanmar4/2023年9月13日/> / viewed 2025/03/03