

Jodo National Championships report by Harry Jones, Jodo squad coach. Photographs by David Parker

On April 14th the Jodo Nationals were held in Loughborough. For those who haven't been recently the event has expanded to encompass three different competitions. The individuals, the two man team and the Asahi cup (nothing to do with beer!)

The individuals kicked off with the combined 4th and 5th dan category, we still don't have quite enough people in those grade groups to have meaningful separate competitions but combined it was a pretty awesome group. We have included Koryu kata in the Jodo nationals for a while now and people are starting to really get into it. They did two Koryu and three Seitei including Ranai all the way through the pools and the knockouts and due to the friendly nature of everyone partnering everyone else the participants would come off the court and immediately go straight back on as tachi in the next fight. It was a real test of cardio fitness as well as technical ability in the kata and it was exciting stuff to watch. From my point of view it was the best competition I have seen at that level in the UK.

Once that senior group had finished competing they immediately had to go to the other side of the hall to become referees for the rest of the taikai and an excellent job they did too. We have had a few promotions to 4th and 5th dan recently so we had some new referees and I would like to commend them on how well they have prepared for that job. Excellent precision and observational skills. The future of Jodo in the UK is in good hands.



We proceeded quickly through the rest of the individuals including a particularly joyful combined Mudan/Shodan division as we had many brand new competitors. We were absolutely delighted to

properly meet our Jodoka from Inverness. It was their first time at the Nationals and I think their journey was worth it as they managed to head home in a car heavy with quite a lot of medals.

Next was the 2 man team. Whereas in the individuals competitors are being judged only on the jo side, in the two man taikai they are judged as a pair. We hope that dojo can enter their best two players but in order to keep the competition a little more open to newer or smaller dojo the maximum combined dan grade limit is 7. There were some strong teams this year. Ojika, Ryoshinkan and Kuro Inu all entering really strong pairings.



Lastly there is the Asahi Cup. A three man team taikai which runs by the same rules as the three man team at the Europeans with the exception that the maximum combined dan grade is only 5 dans. It is specifically intended for new dojo and junior members to get as much on-court taikai experience as possible, and boy did they! We had plenty of time and only 5 teams entered so we decided to run it as one big 5 person pool. They must have been exhausted by the end but even the newest of the newbies with only a few months practice under their belts was really getting to grips with it by the end. Well done to all of the competitors!



I would like to thank Stojanka, Mark, David and Ally from the Jodo Bu as well as the team from the lai bu for organising the event. It was a really good one.

On a different note the Bu would like to apologise for the less than beautiful changing rooms and to thank everyone for putting up with them with good humour (I won't go into details!). The location of the venue however seemed to work well though so if we go to Loughborough again we can try to find something a little more salubrious.

The Bu would also like to thank everyone who pitched in with scoring, especially Amanda Allen who worked tirelessly all day; the referees Andy Watson, Greg Drew and Lesley Drew with special thanks to Andy Watson who not only refereed but was there to advise the less experienced organisers on how to keep things running smoothly whenever a glitch came up. Thanks also to Kevin McNeil who continued to help out with good spirit even though he must have been exhausted from organising the lai the day before.

Lastly, but most importantly, thank you to our head referee Jock Hopson Sensei who guided us through the day with good humour. His ability to see details during a fast moving kata never fails to impress me and is something that we mid-ranking referees aspire to.

Harry Jones

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