

## **2011 National Titles in Perth: A long weekend that we will never forget!**

### **Not the official manager's report.**

In future when I look back at the 2011 National Titles in Perth, I won't remember it for the Judo as much as for being stranded there with most of the team due to volcanic ash from a volcanic eruption in Chile! I will also remember it for the good humour and the patience shown by our members that were stranded by up to a week!

While our long term manager Sandy Hollingsworth was trying to get some information out of the representatives of the Singapore owned "Big Cat" airlines she was told that this was an "Act of God", and as quick as a flash Trevor Bilney said that he had a direct line to God and dialled to see if he could get help? I think that he was put in a queue!

Once again our Victorian team was very well supported by our coaching team led by the amazing Maria Pekli. Thanks are due to Maria, Eddie Leoni and David Nabalski, as well as many others that helped in Perth.

Eddie is so versatile that he even found time to give Sophie Bensted cooking lessons back at the apartments. He even awarded her a Yellow Belt in cooking traditional Italian pasta!

This was Sandy Hollingsworth's 27<sup>th</sup> year as the state manager! This must be some sort of a record. She was well supported by Caroline Curren. Unfortunately Sandy had booked her annual holiday in Bali leaving from Perth on the Monday which put her in a terrible position. Everyone encouraged her to go, and Victoria was lucky to have a number of great parents and coaches that looked after the team for the rest of the week. It all turned out well in the end.

On Saturday night Paul Bensted was awarded a special award as the Volunteer of the Year for Victoria 2011. It was a well deserved award, but at the time Paul was off helping the team. Maria Pekli was presented with a trophy and certificate to acknowledge her recently awarded Life Membership of the JFA Inc.

#### *Judo streamed live on the internet*

The Judo was fought on four mats over two days, and all four mats were streamed live on the internet for the first time. Every time that there was a contentious refereeing decision we were told that there were dozens of messages coming in from all over the world! I hope that lots of our Victorian Judo family took up the opportunity to watch the judo live on the internet. I also hope that this initiative continues next year.

Our Victorian team was smaller than usual but had many great success stories. Our players competed with pride and great energy. They also demonstrated excellent sportsmanship, and did not engage in silly appeals that only held up the competition unlike some other states.

The 2011 Nationals were a transition year for Victoria with many of our top national champions either having retired, or choosing not to compete at this event because it had no impact on their Olympic selection points. 2011 also saw the emergence on a new wave of national players who will be the foundation of our teams in the future.

Clearly the scheduling of the first day was too long with the judo starting at 8.00 a.m. and the senior girls and boys divisions finishing after 8.30 p.m., over 12 hours after the competition started! To me the senior girls and boys looked very tired by the time they had to compete, and there seemed to be more injuries than usual.

The changes in the rules by the IJF over the past two years contributed to very exciting judo. The majority of matches were decided by big throws. There was a lot of exciting Ippon throws. This time there were too many for me to pick out individual highlights.

On the Tuesday after the tournament the members of the Victorian team that were stranded in Perth enjoyed a fun training session at Carlo Knoester's Kano Judo school. It was great to see our young judo players unwinding and making new friendships. This was the true spirit of judo.

For the next four years the national titles will be held on three mats over three days in Wollongong on the Queen's Birthday long weekend in June. Hopefully this will allow the organisers to address some of the issues raised in Perth.

### *Kata*

On the Sunday the Kata competition was on one mat while the contests continued on the other three mats. While our Victorian team dominated the Kata event medalling in all five of the Senior Kata divisions, were happy with the organisation and running of the actual event, they were not pleased with the way the kata component of the National Championships is considered overall by the JFA.

I cannot speak highly enough of the performances of our two Victorian teams that dominated the Kata. Peter White and Andrew Coatsworth medalling in four separate Kata Competitions; Naege No kata, Katame No Kata, Kime No Kata and the Kodokan Goshin Jitsu! Janet Lambert and Jenny Beaton successfully defended their title in the Ju No Kata. Victorian judo certainly dominates Australian Kata.

### *Referees*

Our Victorian referees performed with distinction. Neville Sharpe and Peter Alway were on Commission. Rodney Cox, Suzette Bezuidenhout, Natalia Kuligina, Malcolm Slade, Stan Ashley, Ian Gillies, Chris Legaud and Trudy Walker worked hard with a lot of matches and little break time.

One negative at these championships was that there were too many appeals, often for spurious reasons. All that they achieved was to hold up the competition. I am not aware of

any case when a successful appeal resulted in the contest being restarted with the player that won the appeal winning the fight! Australia is the only country that allows appeals, and it is time that the JFA Inc. reconsiders its policies.

### *Japanese visitors*

In a unique development Victoria was privileged to have three time Olympic medallist and eight time All Japan Women's champion Miss Yoko Tanabe 6<sup>th</sup> Dan, assisting on the Commission and refereeing as a Victorian referee! Yoko refereed what could have been one of the most explosive Men's finals and did a magnificent job.

It was great to have an unexpected visit from an old friend Takanakigima 6<sup>th</sup> Dan who is well known for his coaching in Tasmania, and his annual Easter Camp. When he met Frank Dando he was heard to say "you're still alive." Who says that Japanese don't have a sense of humour?

Judo Victoria is very proud of all of its referees, coaches, managers and competitors. We are also grateful for the support of all of the families that have supported all of our officials and competitors. If anyone has any great photos or video of fights from the nationals we would love to have them on our web site. Please send them in.

We would like to thank our official sponsor JOLS for their financial support to the Vic. team.