



Coaching tips for coaching athletes with Visual impairment

General:

Coaching athletes with who are visually impaired (VI) is not much different from coaching able body athletes. Same principles apply; however, emphasis must be placed on the following:

- Know your athlete – learn about their health status. Often visual impairment is associated with number of other health issues.
- What is the level of visual perception the athlete has; the visually impaired who have certain level of visual perception will often blend into the integrated environment with a very little need for special consideration. Very significant vision impaired or blind athlete will require a one on one intervention at all time while in the dojo and often in other aspects of their life associated with sport.
- **Patience** is a key! Visually impaired athletes will not progress at the same pace as the able body judoka. Keep your **mind and heart** open.
- Educate yourself.

Specific dojo safety and operation tips:

- Assist the new VI judoka in familiarization of the dojo. Lead them all around and ensure that they touch and “feel” the space. Pay attention to potential obstacles that are obviously visible to a sighted person but may be dangerous to the visually impaired.
- If possible, ensure that the level of lighting in the dojo is always the same – this is particularly important to visually impaired judoka who have some level of light perception.
- If possible, place a sound device and a specific location in the dojo. Blind judoka will use this sound to orienteer themselves. Preferred device is i.e. Metronome which will always offer the same signal to the participants
- If possible, use tatami with two highly contrasting colours or/ plus different structure on the surface. Blind judoka will orienteer themselves based on the familiarity of where these different mats are in the dojo.

- Do not use training format during warm up or drills when judoka move simultaneously in opposing direction. Sooner or later the Paralympic judoka will collide with someone.

Judo Teaching tips

- Ensure that Visually Impaired judoka has a partner who understands their special needs and who is willing to help them. You need to find partners who demonstrate a high level of empathy.
- Emphasize safety first. Ensure that the Visually Impaired judoka has no “fear of space” before progressing to Tachi Waza techniques.
- Kinesthetic and tactile learning are the options available to visually impaired judoka. If possible, use the Paralympic judoka as uke when demonstrating techniques to able body judoka in integrated environment.
- Use as few verbal or visual prompts as possible. These become distractions rather than teaching tools.
- **Simplify judo techniques.** Focus on the large outcome of action rather than on details of particular movement. Do not correct details unless what is happening may be unsafe to participants.
- Mobility of Visually impaired judoka, in particular blind judoka, is often limited if compared to able body judoka, however, just as in able body students you will find a huge spectrum of talent. Adjust your goals and expectations to the goals of your student.
- Look for natural tendencies of the Paralympic judoka. I.e. relative ease in turning – teach rotational techniques; not easy to turn around – teach straight forward or backward techniques that do not involve rotation.
- Do not teach techniques that require a high level of eye hand/ eye leg coordination – i.e Deashi barai, especially to fully blind judoka.
- During warm up use a precise language to describe next exercise or format of the exercise – I.e. “rolling forward ukemi left and right with two steps in between”
- Adjust grading requirements for VI judoka.