

Sensei Says

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There is an old adage that a teacher cannot be a teacher without a student, and that a student cannot be a student without a teacher. I have enjoyed the chance to be a student of judo again over the past two years under Sergei Matveev, but now I must return to the role of teacher. Besides becoming a dear friend to many of us, Sensei introduced the Russian art of Sambo to the school. Sambo is an art that I had only read about before his arrival. Sensei Matveev shared his seemingly endless enthusiasm and expertise with many of us. On December 15, Sensei Matveev caught a flight back to Moscow, Russia for an indefinite stay in his Motherland. Hopefully we will have him back at the dojo someday, but in the meantime his judo students must forge forward without his guidance.

It's important for me to keep reminding myself what I love about martial arts, and why I have devoted my life to their study. Though I never have fully figured out my obsession, I have determined a few things: I love to train, and I love to teach; I want to know everything, and I want my students to know everything. As my teacher Shigeki Umemoto said, "Whatever the opponent's specialty is, be better at it than him!" The loss of Sensei Matveev has required some changes to the judo program; this has led me to take a closer look at what I want the school to be like. And I have made a decision.

I want more of my students to experience the vast knowledge of martial arts the school has to offer. Beginning in January, I am extending the basic membership at BMAI to include unlimited attendance in all of our programs; karate/taekwondo, judo, and hapkido! There are a few prerequisites for these programs: judo is open to all students over eight years old; hapkido is only open to students over 11 years old who have attained yellow belt in the karate/taekwondo program.

This change will lower the monthly fees for many of my dedicated students. I am hopeful that the loss of revenue will more than pay for itself by creating a deeper level of understanding and appreciation of the martial arts amongst the rest of the students.

I encourage my students who have not yet experienced another art to give one of them a try. A well-rounded martial artist should be familiar with every aspect of self-defense, now I am giving all of my students that opportunity. Success lies in the ability to take advantage of opportunity.

- Alan Best