

USA Judo Recap of the 2026 IJF Referee Seminar

Lima, Peru

August 25, 2026

Key clarifications and points of emphasis presented during the seminar.

1. Seminar Leadership and Accompanying Team

Clinicians:

- Armen Bagdasarov — IJF Referee Chairman
- Raul Camacho Perez — IJF Referee Director

Accompanying Team:

- Donald Ferland — IJF Veterans Referee Director
- Gary Takemoto — PJC Referee Director
- Vladimer Nutsbidze — IJF Referee Supervisor
- Andre Mariano dos Santos — IJF Referee Supervisor
- Frank Doetsch — IJF Referee Commission Secretary

2. Ducking Under — Shido

The rule remains unchanged: ducking under an opponent's grip without an immediate attack is not permitted.

- Consider whether Tori changed the grip position and, as a result, Uke ended up on the opposite side of the grip. This can create the appearance of a duck-under when none occurred. In this situation, no shido is given to either athlete.
- Pay particular attention when Tori has a far-side high-collar/lapel grip, which can create the same false appearance of a duck-under.
- If Tori uses the collar/lapel grip to crush Uke without attacking, Tori should receive shido. This situation is unlikely when Uke maintains an upright posture.
- Differentiate clearly between a crushing shido for Tori and a false-attack shido for Uke who simply drops underneath without a legitimate attack.

3. Yuko vs. No Yuko

The yuko criteria remain unchanged from the January 2026 clarification.

- No yuko when the initial landing is on the hips, both knees, belly, or both arms simultaneously.
- A landing on one knee and slightly behind the upper shoulder can be yuko.
- If Uke lands on the buttocks while leaning far forward, well beyond the 90-degree scoring threshold, there is no yuko.
- If the initial landing is on the knees, hips, or belly and Uke is then pushed onto the back/upper shoulder area above the waza-ari line, no yuko is awarded. Continue to evaluate the action as newaza.

Reference video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SYHH4XEOD8>

4. Transition Between Tachiwaza and Newaza

The seminar emphasized recognizing the precise stage at which an action changes from tachiwaza to newaza, and from newaza back to tachiwaza.

Tachiwaza → Newaza

- An athlete lowering from standing to one knee, then two knees, and then placing the hands on the mat is still in tachiwaza. Both athletes may still execute a throw.
- When both elbows touch the mat, or the athlete falls onto the stomach, the action is newaza and a tachiwaza score can no longer be considered.
- When both opponents are on their knees, the action is also considered newaza.
- If uke is on his knees and hands and tori mounts his back hooking his feet on uke's body, the athletes will be considered in newaza as tori's actions are reflective of a newaza action.

- There can not be multiple consecutive attempts at tomoe-nage. Whenever there is an interruption in the tomoe-nage attempt, subsequent attempts can only count as newaza.

Newaza → Tachiwaza

- Simply lifting an opponent from newaza into a standing position does not create a transition to tachiwaza; no tachiwaza score is considered from that lift.
- As an athlete rises from the stomach to the elbows/wrists and then lifts one knee, the action remains newaza and only newaza techniques may be considered.
- Once the athlete begins to come off the second knee, the action becomes tachiwaza and tachiwaza throws may be considered. Leg-grab rules apply at this point.
- Do not call mate solely because one athlete's back is toward the other athlete's front during a continuous newaza-to-tachiwaza transition.
- If Tori is applying juji-gatame to a standing Uke and Uke lifts Tori straight off the mat, call mate immediately.
- If Uke lifts tori off the mat with no evident control, the referee should not call mate if uke is off balance.

5. Inside vs. Outside

Dynamic edge combat is strongly encouraged.

Tachiwaza

- If either athlete is even slightly touching the contest area when the action begins, the action is considered to have started inside.
- A continuous sequence may remain valid through any number of uninterrupted exchanges, including renraku-waza and kaeshi-waza, even when the subsequent action takes place in the safety area. The seminar reviewed an example beginning with de-ashi-harai inside, continuing to osoto-otoshi outside, and then to an utsuri-goshi counter in the safety area; because the sequence was continuous, the action remained valid for scoring.
- In an extreme case where the continuous action reaches approximately the two-meter area of the safety zone, the referee should call mate for athlete safety.
- An athlete who steps outside impeding the development of good judo should be penalized with shido to encourage fighting in the center of jonai.
- Near the end of a match, an athlete with a scoring advantage who deliberately and very clearly avoids combat may receive direct hansokumake.

Newaza

- The same principle of continuity applies. Continuous exchanges between osaekomi-waza, shime-waza, kansetsu-waza, and back to osaekomi may continue outside the contest area as long as there is no interruption.
- If a valid osaekomi is maintained with control and the action reaches beyond the outer edge of the safety area toward the floor or adjacent mat, announce ippon at that moment regardless of the elapsed osaekomi time.
- An athlete who moves into the safety area to avoid positively progressing judo in newaza should receive shido.
- Near the end of a match, an athlete with a scoring advantage who deliberately and very clearly avoids newaza combat may receive direct hansokumake.

Double Shido

- If both athletes simultaneously go outside in tachiwaza or newaza while being passive or defensive without positive progression, then both receive shido.

6. Ude-Garami vs. Shoulder Lock

The key distinction is where and how the pressure is applied. Ude-garami is a valid kansetsu-waza when it produces a stretching lock on the elbow. Applying the lock to the shoulder is prohibited and results in hansokumake.

Valid Application

- Pressure must create an overstretching action at the elbow joint.
- Although the action may move toward the shoulder, Tori must allow Uke a path to rotate out and relieve shoulder pressure.
- Uke must have a way to turn out of the shoulder-pressure line. For example, when applying ude-garami from the front, Tori may need to move circularly away from Uke's head or unblock the opposite shoulder.

Invalid Application — Hansokumake

- Uke's escape path is blocked while Tori continues pushing the forearm along Uke's back toward the shoulder without allowing Uke to rotate out.
- Uke's escape path is blocked while Tori lifts the forearm vertically away from the back toward the shoulder without allowing Uke to rotate out.

Tori is responsible for applying ude-garami as an elbow lock without excessive pressure on the shoulder. Athletes are responsible for knowing and correctly applying the technique.



Illegal te-gatame. Hand is pulled towards the head of uke.



Illegal te-gatame. Arm is pulled up and towards tori that is positioned close to uke's elbow.

7. Ushiro-Sankaku

Ushiro-sankaku is an effective shime-waza or kansetsu-waza technique, and its use in those applications is encouraged.

- Using the ushiro-sankaku position to establish osaekomi by creating upward pressure on Uke's neck while applying downward upper-body control is prohibited because it overstretches the neck and results in hansokumake.
- A key indication of the illegal action is Tori lifting the buttocks and folding over Uke's body. Call mate immediately, followed by hansokumake for Tori.
- With flexible athletes, dangerous overstretching may also occur while Tori keeps the buttocks on the mat, controls Uke's leg, and brings the leg toward Uke's head to create extreme angling pressure.
- Referees must recognize the different body mechanics of ushiro-sankaku compared with regular sankaku.
- *Note on regular Kuzure Kami Shiho Gatame based on mat-side conversation with the IJF Referee Director - Raul Camacho:* to call osaekomi for this technique, it is not required to turn hips with buttocks pointing upwards. As long as the tori shows evident control with downwards pressure on uke's upper body controlling hand, leg, legs, or torso regardless angling position of tori relevant to uke, osaekomi will be called.

8. False Attack

The false-attack rule has not changed. The emphasis was on consistently distinguishing a false attack from a legitimate but failed attack.

- Evaluate whether Tori demonstrates kuzushi, tsukuri, and kake. As evidence of these components decreases, the likelihood that the action is a false attack increases.

- A false attack reflects negative judo; a failed attack reflects positive intent to progress the contest but does not succeed.
- Consider Uke's reaction. Blocking, tai-sabaki to prevent the throw, or loss of balance are indicators that Tori made a legitimate attack that failed.
- When these elements are absent, false attack should be strongly considered.
- Penalize a false attack when it occurs. Allowing it to continue unpenalized may signal to the athlete that the behavior is acceptable.
- Repeated similar poor attacks may also result in a false-attack shido.

9. Kaeshi-Waza

- A countering athlete cannot use their own landing to complete the kaeshi-waza.
- Example reviewed: if Tori attacks o-uchi-gari and Uke counters with sumi-gaeshi but relies on their own landing to complete the action, the score belongs to Tori.
- The countering athlete must execute an effective, identifiable technique with evident control.
- An athlete who has lost footing cannot demonstrate the control required for an effective counter. The seminar reviewed a 'double-leg ko-soto-gari' example in which both legs were airborne and hooking simultaneously; without control, there is no effective counter technique.

10. Wasting Time

No substantive rule change was presented. The first occurrence is a warning; the second occurrence is shido.

- This applies to the items addressed in IJF SOR Article 18.1.3, 'Untidy Attire or Hair and Wasting Time'
- Supplement clarification from USA Judo RC: intentional disarrangement of one's own or an opponent's judogi or hair is an illegal action. Such intentional actions will be penalized directly with shido without prior warning.
- Reference video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SYHH4XEOD8>

11. Direct vs. Indirect Hansokumake

Indirect Hansokumake

- The third shido results in indirect hansokumake.
- The referee returns to the initial position, points toward the offending athlete as for a shido, and announces hansokumake.

Direct Hansokumake — *New Signal Procedure

- Direct hansokumake applies when an athlete puts the opponent in danger, puts themselves in danger (for example, a head dive), or commits an act of unsportsmanship or conduct against the spirit of judo.
- ***Not in effect until SOR is updated with this change. RC will announce when this rule takes effect** - For direct hansokumake, the referee steps forward between the athletes, turns to face the offending athlete, points toward that athlete, and announces hansokumake.
- The different procedure is intended to make direct and indirect hansokumake easier for spectators and social-media audiences to distinguish.

Grand Prix Lima Examples

- Tori crossed the legs around uke's head while in osaekomi. A third shido was then given and announced as hansokumake. Not a direct hansokumake.
- Pushing the face in newaza was stopped with a mate. A third shido was then given and announced as hansokumake. Not a direct hansokumake.
- In both cases, the public interpreted the third-shido hansokumake as direct hansokumake. The revised signaling procedure is intended to prevent this confusion.
- For direct hansokumake, except in the case of a head dive, the athlete may no longer continue to compete.

12. Referee Positioning / Camera View

- In the elimination rounds, the rear camera is usually positioned right in the center of the mat. In such cases, after hajime and throughout the contest, the referee should actively avoid obstructing the rear camera. After announcing hajime, move slightly to the side to clear the camera view whenever possible.