



# AJA Newsletter

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## Inside this issue:

- AJA Update 1
- Ju-jitsu and SAMBO:  
The Soviet Search for  
a "System of  
Systems" 4
- About the AJA &  
Recent Promotions 9

## AJA Update by David Boesel

*In mid-March, I sent a COVID Advisory to all senseis about criteria for suspending operations at their dojos. At the beginning of July, I followed up with this advisory about criteria for reopening. (Note: Since this letter was sent to senseis, the New York Times has changed the county-level statistics it presents. Each day it now shows the average number of daily cases in the county and the number per 100,000 population. So all you have to do to get the number of cases per million is add a zero to the number per 100,000.)*

Dear Sensei,

A month ago, I started writing an advisory on criteria for reopening dojos once the coronavirus was in check. It didn't look like that would be possible anytime soon, but I thought it would be helpful to get the information out for future reference. As of today, however, tested and confirmed coronavirus cases have exploded across the country: New cases are increasing in 39 states, and the director of the Centers for Disease Control says the virus is out of control. The cases that we see – those tested and confirmed and those hospitalized – do not reflect the much larger number of active infections that haven't registered yet and are spreading the virus. What we see now are people (cases) who were initially infected one to three weeks ago.

For now and the foreseeable future, it would be best to set aside any plans to reopen your dojo. You should also take all reasonable precautions to prevent your becoming infected and infecting others. Wherever new cases of the virus are increasing, we know that on average an infected person is infecting at least one other person, and probably more. We have a responsibility as individuals and citizens to help prevent this community spread.

Getting back to the criteria for reopening – which seem quaintly optimistic under the circumstances – here's how you might proceed, once the virus subsides:

*(continued on page 2)*

Click on [this link](#) to go to the [New York Times coronavirus database](#). Scroll down to the first map – Hot Spots in the United States. Find your county by enlarging the map (click the plus sign). Clicking on your county will give you 1) the current number of new cases per day, based on the average of the previous seven days; 2) the seven-day average two weeks ago; and 3) the 14-day trend line for new cases per day.

Dr. Scott Finley (a public health physician as well as AJA's Webmaster and Board Member) says that since distancing is practically impossible in jujitsu, it's advisable to wait until there is essentially no community spread. As a rule of thumb, the criterion number of new cases for reopening in your county should be on the order of **three to five per million population per day**. At that rate contact tracing and quarantine can generally prevent any uncontrolled outbreaks. To calculate the criterion number of new cases, just multiply your county's population by 0.000003 and 0.000005 (that's five zeroes to the right of the decimal point) and round the results up or down to the nearest whole number. Here's an example that applies these rates in three counties with different populations:

County	Population	Criterion Rate	Criterion number of cases	Rounded number of cases
Anne Arundel County	579,234	0.000003	1.74	2
		0.000005	2.90	3
Baltimore County	827,370	0.000003	2.48	2
		0.000005	4.14	4
Cook County	5,204,500	0.000003	15.61	16
		0.000005	26.02	26

In my own county, Anne Arundel, I might consider reopening when there are just two or three new cases. In Baltimore County to the north, the criterion number for reopening is between two and four. And in Cook County, which encompasses Chicago, a sensei might think about reopening when the number of cases is between 16 and 26.

Next, **look at the trend line for your county for the last two weeks. It should be going consistently downward.** Also, **click on the counties adjacent to yours** to see how they're doing. Be extra careful if it looks like there might be cross-county contamination.

Then, scroll down further on the New York Times page to see the graphs of states where numbers of new cases have been increasing, staying the same, or decreasing over the last two weeks. **Your state should be among those showing a declining number of new cases over this period.**

*(continued on page 3)*

Finally, check all the relevant state and county regulations for reopening and be sure your dojo will be in compliance.

If you'd like further advice or consultation on reopening, you can contact Scott at [webmaster@americanjujitsuassociation.org](mailto:webmaster@americanjujitsuassociation.org).

Thanks for your attention and concern,

Dave Boesel  
President

### ...and something to celebrate...

Tom Dineen, our Membership Director, received AJA's Distinguished Service Award for his many contributions to the association, including:

**AJA Membership:** Contacting and following up with members about renewals; encouraging past members to register; helping correct automated membership rolls; ordering and sending out AJA membership cards.

**New Members:** Identifying, staying in touch with, and encouraging new member dojos.

**AJA Business Cards:** Proposing that AJA provide business cards to its senseis; selecting a printing contractor; designing, ordering, and distributing cards to senseis.

**AJA's Insurance Policy:** Managing the policy effectively; responding to members' questions about it; informing AJA's Board about its provisions.

**Concussion Awareness Committee:** Helping formulate AJA policy on concussion awareness training; explaining the policy to the Board of Directors; helping to frame a section on the issue for the AJA Constitution.

**Wikipedia Webpage:** Initiating and writing a Wikipedia page on the American Jujitsu Association and shepherding it through the Wikipedia screening process to publication.

**Kodokwan Judo & Jujitsu Club:** Engaging with and supporting this AJA dojo in Zambia, which trains orphaned youth and has a distinguished history; working with the sensei, Jonathan Kruger, to write an article about it in the AJA Newsletter.



*Photo courtesy of Tom Dineen*

## Ju-Jitsu and SAMBO: The Soviet Search for a “System of Systems”

by Scott Anderson

This is a ju-jitsu article wrapped in SAMBO, a Soviet self-defense system based primarily upon ju-jitsu and judo, “updated” with concepts and techniques from some of the world’s most effective fighting systems. In Russian, SAMBO stands for “*SAM*ozashchita *Bez* *Oruzhiya*,” or “self-defense without weapons.” Designed in the early 20th century as hand-to-hand combat training for the Soviet Union’s Red Army, SAMBO represented an attempt to Westernize and improve two related systems: ju-jitsu and judo, so that the core techniques could be incorporated into a modern system for self-defense.

While that sounds deep, one Russian judo expert called SAMBO “a compromised system of compromises of already compromised or archaic systems.” Other Russian experts sometimes referred to SAMBO-wrestling as an emasculation of a very effective fighting system. Hmmm. Sounds like what some have said about judo in reference to ju-jitsu.

In ju-jitsu, we often talk about different *ryus* or schools where each is fundamentally different yet largely shares ownership of the same techniques. Toward that end, philosophy aside, we can speak of core techniques common among all *ryus*. We could then postulate that any “unique” techniques in one school are in fact variations of existing techniques modified to meet the philosophy of that *ryu*.

As the Soviets analyzed martial arts, they found ways to generalize techniques from ju-jitsu schools and lumped judo into this analysis as well. Ju-jitsu became a primary template for Soviet self-defense, as they considered generic ju-jitsu the best and most complete system existing in the early 1920s. However, they found it lacking for their modern uses.

They broadened their scope. For example, kicking in *savate*, a French boxing system, was sometimes more effective than in the Japanese system. The Soviets also felt that the punches in English boxing were often superior to what was found in ju-jitsu. In the end, they felt that as a form of jacket wrestling, judo (then much closer to ju-jitsu) was a good introduction to how to throw an opponent, but they determined for their uses that Georgian *chidaoba* and American catch-as-catch-can had better throwing techniques that were not jacket dependent. Lancashire wrestling from the UK had superior mat work, including wicked *ushiro jugi-gatame* variants that were at least a 1,000 years older than those found in ju-jitsu.

For all of that, the Soviets noticed that all of these systems shared a common core of techniques, although the details for execution might vary. Just as ju-jitsu’s development was rooted in a world of swordsmanship, so were the systems coming out of Western Europe. But their swords were worlds apart in design and use. The double-edged swords of Europe exploited using the sword tip, which in the world of the Renaissance led to rapiers and

lunging attacks that were adapted for unarmed techniques found in *savate* and Western wrestling.

This led the Soviets to search for the most effective core techniques that should be in any complete system. They theorized that there would be some fabled “root system” from which all modern systems descended. This would help them find the key for building their “system of systems.”

### The Struggle to Mix Martial Arts

"System of systems" is not a new idea, and modern militaries are very familiar with it. If we think of SAMBO or ju-jitsu as systems composed of elements for striking, moving, blocking, throwing, ground and standing fighting, etc., we realize that integration and coordination are very important. Watch any brand new white belt tying his belt, much less fighting, and then watch a black belt.



*Scott Anderson demonstrates a sambo leg lock at the Towson dojo. (Photo courtesy of Scott Anderson)*

The modes for striking are a system. The modes for suffocating holds are a subsystem to the modes for standing and prone wrestling. These and other ju-jitsu systemic elements are integrated into a ju-jitsu system that can be used whole cloth or, at the preference of the practitioner, used primarily for throwing, ground fighting or striking. This takes time to develop, and ju-jitsu took the time based on the needs of feudal Japan, but as a worldwide phenomenon it continues to evolve.

Now, try to merge two systems that might be complementary in actions but fundamentally different in operation. It is painful, but this was the path taken by the Soviets on their way to SAMBO. Think about a school with two classes where one class is judo and the other is taekwondo. Two different martial arts from two different countries, and the *sensei* wants his school to enter a ju-jitsu *shiai*. He is a little “stove-piped” and wants the training in taekwondo and judo conducted separately, without any combined sessions for ju-jitsu. However, his team members have to attend both classes so they can learn what he deems as the required techniques.

In his classes, when blocking, his taekwondo students step back so that they can employ their powerful kicks. But in judo, they practice blocking where they step in so that they can grapple and throw. Come the tournament, they might have absolutely no problems. Then again, a student who is schooled in taekwondo but who wants and needs to throw keeps stepping back on his block, and can't enter into the throw correctly. The judo-oriented student needs to kick

but, by instinct, she steps in on the block, and thus the only leg strike that she can employ is with her knee, which is illegal.

The “system of systems” concept might dictate that traditional ju-jitsu training might better serve a team practicing for a ju-jitsu tournament rather than practicing separately various aspects and elements from other martial arts. Then again, they might have tried “ju-jitsu” training in their school under those fighting rules to see how they could adapt what they were already doing in their core techniques from their classes.

Smooth integration would lead to smoother, better techniques and more successful scoring techniques. This integration of systems must be founded on common principles leading to a studied and careful analysis that determines which elements are best suited for the practitioner to make the full and best use of his arsenal.



Left: Women's match at the 2020 French SAMBO Championships. (Credit: CFS Sambo France. [Creative Commons License](#))

Right: Men's match at the 2015 European Games. (Credit: Office of the President of Azerbaijan. [Creative Commons License](#))

## Martial Arts Evolution Around The World

The Soviet research, right or wrong, failed in its quest to uncover any one ancient system from which all else derived. But the Soviets could say that ancient Greek boxing and wrestling, called *pankration*, itself descended from previous systems. The armies of Alexander the Great widely spread *pankration* from Europe through India. In the West, one of its descendants was a wrestling style that, when the later British Empire met the Indian styles, also descended from *pankration*. The English style had great holds, takedowns and throws, but the Indian style retained brutally effective submission holds. As the English and Indian wrestlers interacted, a new style called “catch-as-catch-can” was born and carried by the English to the Americas.

The monks of India, armed with their native martial arts, moved east into China where their fighting systems eventually evolved into *wu shu*. Chinese systems made their way to Japan where, combined with Japanese systems, the concept of ju-jitsu evolved into what we know today. There were other martial societies who fought without necessarily having *pankration* roots—the Mongols’ Golden Horde and natives of the Americas come to mind.

Ju-jitsu is universal in that it is diverse and adaptable. From its roots spring Brazilian ju-jitsu,

judo, judo-do, SAMBO, and USMC WW II hand-to-hand combat. Within these branches are sub-branches. such as *systema*—another Soviet Union style designed in the mid-20th century by Alexei Kadochnikov's, coming from a SAMBO already rooted in ju-jitsu and judo.

An instructor at the Krasnodar Institute for Rocketry and Artillery, Alexei Kadochnikov was versed in two Soviet self-defense systems—one based on ju-jitsu and the other on judo. Essentially he took an arsenal from ju-jitsu and, based upon his engineering background, re-engineered ju-jitsu biomechanically to support better transitions between techniques. Thus the core continued to evolve as human need evolved.

If a system is unrealistic, then its practitioners don't survive and further promote it. Russians considered ju-jitsu and judo too archaic, mystical and unwieldy, so there was SAMBO. From there, Kadochnikov perceived that SAMBO could be improved upon, so he developed *systema*. After a time, many *systema* practitioners found their art becoming too esoteric, so they made a case for returning to the core techniques for more judo, ju-jitsu, and SAMBO. Not everyone agreed, so those two groups parted ways, leading to another sub-branch called ROSS as envisioned by General Alexander Retuinskih.

Whatever the name, the core of ju-jitsu condensed from past systems to go forward as the heart of many newer systems in many countries. We may never know who started and improved hand-to-hand combat, but we can watch and tend one of its branches today as it grafts further branches to grow stronger, so that our children's children can grow under this ever-growing system of systems. Tomorrow's ju-jitsu may or may not keep its name, but its time-tested core will follow humans wherever they need to go.

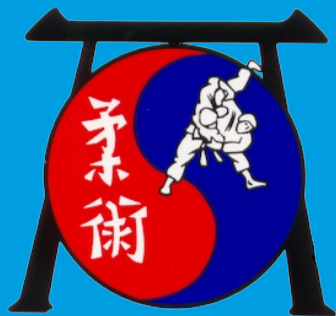
*Scott Anderson started off his mat career 50 years ago as a high school wrestler who continued on to wrestle at George Mason University. Trying to stay in shape for life after college, he earned black belts in several traditional ju-jitsu styles, American Combat Sombo, and judo. He won several titles, including the 1995 Sombo World Champion in the Masters Division at 68 Kilograms and the 149.5 pound Pan Am Sombo title in the open division. In his 50th year of training, he expects to figure out exactly what his first high school wrestling coach was trying to teach him. After that, everything else should be a piece of cake...*

## Content

If you would like to contribute content to the AJA newsletter, please send it to **Newsletter@AJA-email.org**.

We're always looking for:

- Articles about ju-jitsu, your students, or your dojo
- Upcoming events
- Promotions
- Personal interest events



## About the American Ju-Jitsu Association

The American Ju-Jitsu Association was founded in 1972 by George Kirby and William Fromm at the request of their sensei, Jack Seki, for the purpose of bringing different *ryu* of the art together in an atmosphere of mutual cooperation and respect. Since that time it has grown from two dojo to approximately 30, plus international affiliates. The AJA has established itself as a reputable organization within the martial arts community and works closely with other major ju-jitsu organizations in the United States and internationally in areas of mutual concern.

The AJA is a nonprofit amateur athletic association registered with both the state of California and the United States government [IRS code 501(c)(3)]. It is a nonprofit corporation with a charitable foundation status. Although originally recognized by the IRS as a "social club," because there was no other way to recognize the AJA as an amateur athletic association, formal recognition of the AJA as a true amateur athletic association, according to the criteria of the United States government, was secured in 1976 under the Sports Act of that year. To our knowledge, the AJA is the only martial arts organization in the U.S. that is classified by the IRS as an amateur athletic association.

### Board of Directors

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### Recent Yudansha Promotions

Carrie Lyon	Nidan	June 2020	Tiger Bear Martial Arts School
Bobby Lyon	Shodan	June 2020	Tiger Bear Martial Arts School