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More Pull - Get Lower - *The Secret of Persistence*

In the early days of this sensei's judo, there was a perpetually heard bit of advice from Japanese senseis. "More pull. Get lower." There the struggling judoka would be, sweating away at some throw or another, and the Japanese sensei would walk by and give a couple of sagacious nods and remark "More pull. Get lower." The novice would proceed to accomplish those things... Getting lower, pulling really hard. After a time, muscles screaming in agony, the student would see the sensei coming, his hopes rising that he was finally low enough and pulling hard enough. Nod, nod... "More pull. Get lower."

After some twenty plus years of judo, I had an epiphany of sorts. So, when my friend then and still, Kazuo Hirayama, a judo *nidan* and high-ranking *Shorinji Kempo* sensei (today, 7th dan) was in town from Tokyo. I asked him, "When Japanese sensei say to us, 'More pull - Get lower', by *more pull* do they mean we should pull harder, or we should pull more, as in don't stop pulling?" Kazuo ran that through his bran's translator, smiled kindly at me and said, "They mean don't stop pulling. Pull *more*.""

Don't stop pulling. My earlier persistence, admirable as it may have been, had been misguided.

While learning and developing a throw, we often stop to check our newly learned waza's form at the point where the tsukuri is done. We do off-balancing and enter into the throw, and because of it's newness, we check the architecture, the form. During that time, the pulling stops. It is a natural way to learn.

Then, when we try to continue, we must use force, because we have not blended the kuzushi, and tsukuri into kake. We learn each new throw this way, and instill in ourselves the habit of so doing. We teach ourselves to stop *pulling more / continuously*.

This carries over into randori and shiai, a stopping of the attempt at the first feeling of resistance, rather than a continuation through what is often a false obstacle.

On occasion, an unconscious competence occurs because we eventually succeed unwittingly by a continued and unbroken pulling action. We have "our throw", but not our method.

This is not Maximum Efficiency via optimum use of our efforts.

A big challenge with throw learning might best be trying to "catch up" with the pulling, which never stops from the onset and until the success of the waza. In nage komi, the pulling hand must never stop. You must "catch up" with it while fitting in in such a way as to not block its progress.

This is the principle of Persistence.

In life as well as in judo, how often do we hit the first obstacle and allow it to convince us that this attempt will fail, and we thereby stop pulling? Applying judo here, learning to pull more, not harder, is the challenge.

The *Judo Compass* is conceived, written and sent by Tom Crone. www.northstarjudo.com

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