



*Member
United States Olympic Committee*

USA NATIONAL KARATE-DO FEDERATION

**RULES OF
KUMITE
COMPETITION**

**JANUARY 2010 rev.
Version 1.1**

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REVISION NOTES
JANUARY 2010 REVISION OF THE RULES OF KUMITE COMPETITION
AS SUPPLEMENTED IN VERSION 1.1

The January 2010 revision makes the following changes to the rules of kumite competition previously published in the revision dated March 2009.

ARTICLE
NUMBER

1.8: Location of the Arbitrator (page 4)

Language added to allow seating of Arbitrator to the right (in addition to the left) of the Referee.

2.3.1: Contestant's gi (p. 5)

Deletes parenthetical language limiting the acceptable location of manufacturer's label.

2.3.16: Head protectors (p. 7)

Adds restriction that aka may not wear blue helmet and ao may not wear red.

2 - Explanation ¶5: Groin protectors with removable cup (p. 7)

Paragraph deleted in its entirety. Subsequent paragraphs renumbered accordingly.

4 - Explanation ¶5: Finals of team matches (p. 9)

Paragraph added, requiring that officials rotate after each bout.

4 - Explanation ¶6: Referees (p. 9)

Paragraph added - official may not referee a competitor who is from the official's dojo, karate organization or Approved Sports Organization (ASO).

6 - Explanation ¶12: Scoring combination attacks (p. 12)

Paragraph deleted in its entirety. Subsequent paragraphs renumbered accordingly.

8 - Explanation ¶16: Avoiding combat (p. 17)

First sentence added, explaining that rule refers to situation where competitor attempts to prevent opponent from scoring by time-wasting behavior.

8 - Explanation ¶17: Mubobi (p. 17)

Footnote added, explaining that referee may penalize one competitor for mubobi or the other competitor for excessive contact, but not both.

10.2: Hantei when both competitors injured in deciding team match (p. 19)

Garbled language deleted from the second sentence of second paragraph.

10 - Explanation ¶6: Ten second rule (p. 20)

Final sentence added to clarify that rule applies only when a competitor has been thrown or fallen with their torso flat on the floor.

13 - Explanation ¶3: Contestants to bow at start and at end of bout (p. 26)

Paragraph added.

VERSION 1.1 of the January 2010 revision added the following changes:

I: Experience categories (p. 3)

Paragraph added, to emphasize that "At the USA-NKF Open Championships, the Junior Olympics & Master's Championships, and the National Championships, a competitor may compete as a Beginner, Novice or Intermediate during only a single calendar year and must compete in a higher category in subsequent years."

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I. USA-NKF RULES FOR KUMITE COMPETITION

The rules of Kumite competition for all tournaments, matches, and competitions sanctioned by the USA National Karate-do Federation (USA-NKF) shall be as stated herein. These rules shall be used in all sanctioned competitions, without modification or amendment except as allowed by these rules. These rules are based upon the rules adopted by the World Karate Federation for use in international competition. In any competition utilized to select junior or adult competitors for the United States National Karate Team, the international rules without modification shall be used to conduct all such team selection divisions. These rules, or any part thereof, may be modified or amended by the USA-NKF at any time.

Whenever a specific rule is in conflict with a more general rule, the specific rule takes precedence. Exceptions to these rules may be made only with the prior approval of the Referee Committee of the USA-NKF for special circumstances attendant to a particular event, tournament, match or competition. A written request for exception should be submitted no less than ten days prior to the date of the event.

Kumite competition shall be divided into appropriate categories or divisions based upon age, gender, weight and experience.

An "adult" competitor shall be any athlete who is eighteen years of age or older.

A "junior" competitor shall be any athlete under the age of eighteen years for all Kumite (sparring) competition.

The USA-NKF may elect to offer optional divisions for adult male and female athletes who are over the age of thirty-five years.

The number of divisions that may be established, and the age categories thereof, shall be determined and set at the discretion of the USA-NKF according to interest and the number of competitors who may elect to compete in such divisions. The USA-NKF reserves the right to create categories or division for physically or mentally challenged competitors, consistent with their abilities and training.

Age categories for USA-NKF adult team selection for international competitions are:

18 years and older Kumite

16 years and older Kata

Age categories for International Divisions:

12 - 13 years old Junior Cadet

14 - 15 years old Cadet

16 - 17 years old Junior

18 - 20 years old Under 21

18 years and older Senior

The experience categories for competition in Kumite shall be as follows:

Beginner 0 - 1 year of training

Novice 1 - 2 years of training

Intermediate 2 - 3 years of training

Advanced 3+ years of training

However, a contestant with the rank of brown belt or above may not compete in the Beginner or Novice category; and a black belt may compete only in the Advanced category.



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II. KUMITE RULES

ARTICLE 1: KUMITE COMPETITION AREA

- 1.1. The competition area must be flat and devoid of hazard.
- 1.2. The competition area must be a matted square in all Team Trials competitions for selection of competitors for a United States National Team; for other tournaments or events the use of mats is optional.
- 1.3. The area shall be a matted square with sides of eight meters (measured from the outside), with an additional two meters on all sides as a safety area. Where mats are not used, the competition area may be defined by marking the boundaries with colored tape of appropriate thickness. The area may be elevated to a height of up to one meter above floor level. The elevated platform should measure at least twelve meters to a side in order to include both the competition and safety area.
- 1.4. A line one-half meter long must be drawn two meters from the center of the competition area for positioning the Referee. Such lines may be laid down with colored tape of appropriate thickness.
- 1.5. Two parallel lines, each one meter long and at right angles to the Referee's line, must be drawn at a distance of one and one half meters from the center of the competition area for positioning the competitors. Such lines may be laid down with colored tape of appropriate thickness.
- 1.6. A line must be drawn one meter on the inside of the competition area. The area enclosed by this line may be a different color, or the line itself may be broken. Such lines may be laid down with colored tape of appropriate thickness.
- 1.7. The Judges shall be seated in the safety area, one directly facing the Referee, and one behind each of the fighters, and one meter towards the Referee. Each shall be equipped with a red and blue flag.
- 1.8. The Arbitrator shall be seated just outside the safety area, behind and to the left or to the right of the Referee. The Arbitrator shall be equipped with a flag and a whistle.
- 1.9. The terms and abbreviations as detailed in Appendix 4 shall be used by all scorekeepers and Arbitrators for recording the progress, points and penalties in any match conducted according to these rules.

EXPLANATION:

1. *There must be no advertising signs, signboards, walls, pillars or other physical obstructions within one meter of the outer perimeter of the competition area.*
2. *The mats used at any Team Trials competition must be substantially similar to those mats used in sanctioned international competition and should be non-slip where they contact the floor proper, but have a low coefficient of friction on the upper surface. They should not be as thick as "Judo" mats, since these impede karate movement. The Referee must ensure that mat modules do not move apart during the competition, since gaps constitute a hazard and may cause injuries.*

3. *The Coach shall be assigned a specific place by the Referee Committee in conjunction with the Tournament Organizing Officials. This area shall be close to the competition area and the Coach allowed a free and uninterrupted access to contestants between bouts. To assist the contestants, a visible scoreboard must be employed that can be viewed by Coaches and contestants.*

ARTICLE 2: OFFICIAL DRESS

- 2.1.1. All officials, contestants and their coaches must wear the official uniform as herein defined.
- 2.1.2. The Referee Committee may disbar any official or competitor who does not comply with this regulation. In cases of a minor deviation from the official uniform, the Referee Committee may allow participation of the official or competitor, provided that the deviation does not distract from the dignity of the competition or prejudice any other official or competitor.

2.2.0. REFEREES

- 2.2.1. Referees and Judges must wear the official uniform designated by the Referee Committee. This uniform must be worn at and during all tournament and courses. No person shall officiate in any competition wearing a gi or any part thereof.
- 2.2.2. The official uniform for Referees and Judges shall be as follows:
 - A single breasted navy-blue blazer bearing two silver buttons and USA-NKF patch.
 - A white shirt with short sleeves.
 - An official tie worn without tiepin.
 - Plain light gray trousers without cuffs.
 - Un-patterned dark blue or black socks and black slip on shoes for use on the match area.
 - Female Referees and Judges may wear a hairclip.

2.3.0. CONTESTANTS

- 2.3.1. All contestants must wear a white unmarked Karate gi without stripes or piping. At the USA-NKF National Championships, USA-NKF Junior Olympics, and at any United States Team Trials competitions, only the USA-NKF patch or emblem may be worn. This must be on the left breast of the jacket and shall not exceed an overall size of ten centimeters square (100mm by 100mm). Only the original manufacturer's labels may be displayed on the gi and in the normally accepted locations.

For all other tournaments and competitions, a contestant may wear a single patch or emblem identifying their respective Karate organization, school or system on the left breast pocket of the jacket. Such patch or emblem shall not exceed an overall size of ten centimeters square, and shall not be of a design or symbol that is offensive to the dignity of the match, un-sportsmanlike, or contrary to the principles of Karate-do.

In addition, an identifying number issued by the Tournament Organizing Committee may be worn on the back, sleeve or breast area of the gi jacket, as established by the Organizing Committee.

One contestant must wear a red belt and the other a blue belt. The red and blue belts must be around five centimeters wide and of a length sufficient to allow fifteen centimeters free on each side of the knot and not extend below the knees.

- 2.3.2. Notwithstanding paragraph 2.3.1 above, with the prior written approval of the USA-NKF the Tournament Organizing Committee may authorize the display of special labels or trademarks of approved sponsors.
- 2.3.3. The gi jacket, when tightened around the waist with the belt, must be of minimum length that covers the hips, but must not be more than three-quarters thigh length. Female competitors may wear a plain white T-shirt or leotard beneath the karate jacket. Male contestants may not wear any shirt of any kind or color underneath the gi jacket without the prior consent of the Referee Committee.
- 2.3.4. The maximum length of the gi jacket sleeves must be no longer than the bend of the wrist and no shorter than halfway down the forearm. Jacket sleeves may not be rolled up either on the outside or inside of the sleeve.
- 2.3.5. The gi trousers must be long enough to cover at least two thirds of the shin, must not reach below the ankle bone, and may not be rolled up either on the outside or inside of the leg.
- 2.3.6. Contestants must keep their hair clean and cut to a length that does not obstruct smooth bout conduct or present a safety hazard to competitors. Hachimaki (head band) of any kind shall not be allowed. Should the Referee consider any contestant's hair too long and/or unclean, the Referee may disqualify the contestant from the bout. Hair slides ("scrunchies") are prohibited, as are metal hair grips ("barrettes"). A discreet rubber band or pony tail retainer is permitted. Ribbons and other decorations are prohibited.
- 2.3.7. Contestants must have short fingernails and must not wear jewelry or other objects that might injure their opponents. The use of orthodontic appliances or braces must be approved by the Referee and the Official Doctor. The contestant accepts full responsibility for any injury.
- 2.3.8. Approved fist pads are compulsory in all divisions. At the USA-NKF National Championships, USA-NKF Junior Olympics, and at any United States Team Trials competitions, USA-NKF-approved fist pads must be worn; however, in team trial and international divisions WKF-approved fist pads are also permitted. Competitors shall supply one pair of fist pads in red, and one pair in blue.
- 2.3.9. Gum shields are compulsory in all divisions.
- 2.3.10. Groin protectors are compulsory in all divisions for male competitors, including international and team trial divisions.
- 2.3.11. Approved shin pads and instep protectors are compulsory in all divisions. WKF-approved red and blue shin pads and instep protectors are required in all international and team trial divisions. In all other divisions this equipment may be of either the USA-NKF-approved or WKF-approved type.

- 2.3.12. Glasses are forbidden (soft contact lenses may be worn at the contestant's own discretion). In all divisions except International and Team Trial Kumite divisions, an athlete may elect to wear shatter-proof, athletic safety goggles of an approved design.
- 2.3.13. a) Women may wear authorized protective equipment for the chest area. However, in international and team trial divisions women must wear protective equipment for the chest, which equipment must be WKF-approved.
- b) Male and female competitors age 15 years and younger also may wear USA-NKF-approved or WKF-approved face masks and protective equipment for the chest area.
- c) In team trial divisions, Cadet competitors must wear a WKF-approved face mask and WKF-approved body protector.
- 2.3.14. Any protective equipment must meet USA-NKF specifications and be of a USA-NKF approved design, except where WKF-approved equipment is permitted or required.
- 2.3.15. The use of bandages, padding, or supports because of injury must be approved by the Referee on the advice of the official Doctor. No braces that include any metallic parts shall be used. No tape shall be applied in more than a single layer on the hands or feet of any competitor, as this creates an unfair advantage and increases the risk of injury to an opponent. The Referee may disqualify any competitor who attempts to compete with excessive taping of the hands or feet.
- 2.3.16. In all divisions except advanced and international and team-trial divisions, a competitor may elect to use a soft foam head protector, provided that such protector is a solid color and of an approved design that does not impede the ability of the athlete to score or be scored upon. However, the *aka* competitor may not wear a blue head protector, and *ao* may not wear a red protector.

2.4.0. COACHES

- 2.4.1. The coach shall at all times during the tournament wear a tracksuit and display official identification.

EXPLANATION

- 1. The contestant must wear a single belt. This shall be red for "Aka" and blue for "Ao." Belts of grade should not be worn during the bout.*
- 2. Red or blue protective mitts (fist-pads) approved by the USA-NKF, with an uncovered thumb must be worn. The padding must not be capable of displacement.*
- 3. The design of any mitts must be approved by the USA-NKF Board of Directors on the recommendation of the Medical Committee and the Referee Committee, except where WKF-approved mitts are required or permitted.*
- 4. Gum shields (mouth guards) must be properly fitted by a dentist.*
- 5. If a contestant comes into the match area inappropriately dressed, he/she shall not be immediately disqualified; instead, the competitor shall be given one minute to remedy matters.*

6. *If the Referee Committee agrees, refereeing officials may be allowed to remove their blazers.*
7. *The wearing of unauthorized clothing or equipment is forbidden.*

ARTICLE 3: ORGANIZATION OF KUMITE COMPETITIONS

- 3.1. A karate tournament may comprise Kumite competition and/or Kata competition, including Kobudo divisions. The Kumite competition may be further divided into the team match and the individual match. The individual match may be further divided into weight divisions. Weight divisions are divided ultimately into bouts. The term “bout” also describes the individual Kumite competitions between opposing pairs of team members.
- 3.2. No contestant may be replaced by another in an individual match.
- 3.3. Individual contestants or teams that do not present themselves when called shall be disqualified (Kiken) from that category.
- 3.4. Male teams comprise seven members with five competing in a round. Female teams comprise four members with three competing in a round.
- 3.5. The contestants are all members of a team. There are no fixed reserves.
- 3.6. Before each match a team representative must hand into the official table an official form defining the names and fighting order of the competing team members. The fighting order may be changed for each round, but once notified it may not be changed.
- 3.7. A team shall be disqualified if any of its members or its coach changes the team's composition without submitting the written fighting order.
- 3.8. In the first round of a team match, a team shall be allowed to participate only when it presents the prescribed number of competitors.
- 3.9. Individual contestants or teams that do not arrive at the competition venue before the tournament is declared open shall be disqualified from participation in that tournament.

EXPLANATION:

1. *A “round” is a discrete stage in a competition leading to the eventual identification of finalists. In a Kumite competition, a round eliminates fifty percent of contestants within it, counting byes as contestants. In this context, the round may apply equally to a stage in either primary elimination or repechage. In a matrix, or "round robin" competition, a round allows all contestants in a pool to fight once.*
2. *The use of contestant's names causes problems of pronunciation and identification. Tournament numbers should be allotted and used.*
3. *When lining up before a match, a team shall present the actual fighters. The unused fighter(s) and the Coach shall not be included and shall sit in an area set aside for them.*
4. *In order to compete, male teams must present at least three competitors, and female teams must present at least two competitors. A team with less than the required number of competitors shall forfeit the match (Kiken).*
5. *The fighting order form must be presented by the Coach or a nominated contestant from the team. If the Coach hands in the form, she/he must be clearly identifiable as such; otherwise*

the form may be rejected. The list must include the name of the country, club, the belt color allotted to the team for that match and the fighting order of the team members. Both the fighter's names and their tournament numbers must be listed and the form signed by the Coach or nominated person.

- 6. If through an error in charting the wrong contestants compete, then regardless of the outcome that bout/match shall be declared null and void. To reduce such errors the winner of each bout/match must confirm victory with the control table before leaving the area.*

ARTICLE 4: THE REFEREE PANEL

- 4.1. The Referee Panel for each match shall consist of one Referee (Shushin), three Judges (Fukushin), and one Arbitrator (Kansa).
- 4.2. In addition, for the purpose of facilitating the operation of matches, several timekeepers, caller-announcers, and record-keepers shall be appointed.

EXPLANATION:

- 1. At the start of a Kumite match, on the outside edge of the official match area facing towards the center of the mat, starting from the left, stand Judge number 1, Judge number 2, the Referee, the Arbitrator and Judge number 3.*
- 2. After the formal exchange of bows by the contestants and Referee Panel, the Referee takes a step back and the Judges turn inward and all bow together.*
- 3. When changing the entire referee panel the departing officials take one step forward, turn around and face the incoming panel. They bow to each other on the command of the incoming Referee and in one line (facing in the same direction) leave the competition area.*
- 4. When individual Judges change, the incoming Judge goes to the outgoing Judge, they bow together and change positions.*
- 5. In the finals of team matches, the officials serving as referee, judges and arbitrator shall rotate positions after each bout.*
- 6. Officials may not referee a competitor who is from the official's dojo, karate organization or Approved Sports Organization (ASO).*

ARTICLE 5: DURATION OF A BOUT

- 5.1. Duration of the kumite bout shall be two minutes for ages 12 and over, and one and a half minutes for ages 11 and under, except in the following divisions: In adult international and team trial divisions the kumite bout shall be: three minutes for men, but four minutes in the bouts for medals; and two minutes for women, but three minutes in the bouts for medals.
Time keeping shall be by "stop time" (see Rule 5.2); however, in any beginner, novice or intermediate division, the Referee Committee may determine that "running time" be used.
- 5.2. The timing of the bout starts when the Referee gives the signal to start, and stops each time the Referee calls "Yame."
- 5.3. The timekeeper shall give signals by a clearly audible gong or buzzer indicating "10 seconds to go" or "time up." The "time up" signal marks the end of the bout.

ARTICLE 6: SCORING

- 6.1. Scores are as follows:
 - a) Sanbon - Three points
 - b) Nihon - Two points
 - c) Ippon - One point
- 6.2. A score is awarded when a technique is performed according to the following criteria to a scoring area:
 - a) Good form
 - b) Sporting attitude
 - c) Vigorous application
 - d) Awareness (Zanshin)
 - e) Good timing
 - f) Correct distance
- 6.3. Sanbon is awarded for:
 - a) Jodan kicks.
 - b) Any scoring technique delivered on a thrown or fallen opponent.
- 6.4. Nihon is awarded for:
 - a) Chudan kicks.
- 6.5. Ippon is awarded for:
 - a) Chudan or jodan-zuki
 - b) Uchi
- 6.6. Attacks are limited to the following areas:
 - a) Head
 - b) Face
 - c) Neck
 - d) Abdomen
 - e) Chest
 - f) Back
 - g) Side
- 6.7. A victory over an opponent who has been given a Hansoku or Shikkaku shall be worth Kachi. If a contestant is absent or is withdrawn, the opponent shall be credited with a win by Kiken.

- 6.8. An effective technique delivered at the same time that the end of the bout is signaled is considered valid. A technique, even if effective, delivered after an order to suspend or stop the bout shall not be scored and may result in a penalty being imposed on the offender.
- 6.9. No technique, even if technically correct, shall be scored if it is delivered when the two contestants are outside the competition area. However, if one of the contestants delivers an effective technique while still inside the competition area and before the referee calls “Yame,” the technique shall be scored.
- 6.10. Simultaneous, effective scoring techniques delivered by both contestants, the one on the other (Aiuchi), shall not score.

EXPLANATION:

<i>Vocabulary</i>	<i>Technical Criteria</i>
<i>Sanbon (3 points) is awarded for</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Jodan kicks. Jodan being defined as the face, head, and neck.</i> 2. <i>Any scoring technique that is delivered on an opponent who has been thrown, has fallen of their own accord, or who is otherwise off their feet.</i>
<i>Nihon (2 points) is awarded for</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Chudan kicks. Chudan being defined as the abdomen, chest, back, and sides.</i>
<i>Ippon (1 point) is awarded for</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Any punch (tsuki) delivered to any of the seven scoring areas.</i> 2. <i>Any strike (uchi) delivered to any of the seven scoring areas.</i>

1. *In order to score, a technique must be applied to a scoring area as defined in paragraph 6.6 above. The technique must be appropriately controlled with regard to the area being attacked and must satisfy all six scoring criteria in paragraph 6.2 above.*
2. *For reasons of safety, throws where the opponent is thrown without being held onto, or thrown dangerously, or where the pivot point is above the thrower's belt level, are prohibited and shall incur a warning or penalty. Exceptions are conventional karate leg sweeping techniques that do not require the opponent to be held while executing the sweep, such as ashi-barai, kouchi-gari, kani waza, etc.*

After a throw has been executed the referee shall allow the contestant two seconds in which to attempt a scoring technique.
3. *When a contestant is thrown according to the rules, slips, falls or is otherwise off their feet and is scored upon by the opponent, the score shall be Sanbon.*
4. *A technique with **good form** is said to have characteristics conferring probable effectiveness within the framework of traditional karate concepts.*
5. ***Sporting attitude** is a component of good form and refers to a non-malicious attitude of great concentration obvious during delivery of the scoring technique.*

6. **Vigorous application** defines the power and speed of the technique and the palpable will for it to succeed.
7. **Awareness (zanshin)** is that criteria most often missed when a score is assessed. It is the state of continued commitment in which the contestant maintains total concentration, observation, and awareness of the opponent's potential to counter-attack. The contestant does not turn his/her face away during delivery of the technique, and remains facing the opponent afterwards.
8. **Good timing** means delivering a technique when it will have the greatest potential effect.
9. **Correct distance** similarly means delivering a technique at the precise distance where it will have the greatest potential effect. If a technique is delivered on an opponent who is rapidly moving away, the potential effect of that blow is reduced.
10. Distance also relates to the point at which the completed technique comes to rest on or near the target. To score a technique must have the potential to penetrate deep into the target, so straight-arm punches are seen as having a low potential in this respect and must be evaluated accordingly. A punch or kick that comes somewhere between skin touch and 5 centimeters (1.95 inches) from the face, may be said to have correct distance. However, jodan techniques that come within a reasonable distance of the target and that the opponent makes no attempt to block or avoid shall be scored, provided the technique meets the other criteria. In 17-year old and younger competition, no contact to the head, face, or neck, (or the face mask) is allowed other than a very light touch (previously known as a "skin touch") for Jodan kicks; and the scoring distance is increased up to 10 centimeters.
11. A worthless technique is a worthless technique - regardless of where and how it is delivered. A technique that is badly deficient in good form, or lacking in power, shall score nothing.
12. Techniques that land below the belt may score, as long as they are above the pubic bone.
13. The neck is a target area and so is the throat. However, no contact to the throat is permitted, although a score may be awarded for a properly controlled technique that does not touch.
14. A technique that lands on the shoulder blades may score. The non-scoring part of the shoulder is the junction of the upper bone of the arm with the shoulder blades and collarbone.
15. The time-up bell signals the end of scoring possibilities in that bout, even though the Referee may inadvertently not halt the bout immediately. However, the time-up bell does not mean that penalties cannot be imposed. Penalties can be imposed by the Refereeing Panel up to the point where the contestants leave that area after the bout's conclusion. Penalties can be imposed after that, but then only by the Referee Committee.
16. True Aiuchis are rare. Not only must two techniques land simultaneously but both must be valid scoring techniques, each with good form, etc. Two techniques may well land simultaneously but seldom are both, if indeed either, effective scores. The Referee must not dismiss as Aiuchi a situation where only one of the simultaneous pair is actually a score. This is not Aiuchi.

ARTICLE 7: CRITERIA FOR DECISION

7.0. The result of a bout is determined by the first contestant to obtain eight points or, at time-up, having the highest number of points, or by obtaining a decision (Hantei), or by Hansoku, Shikkaku or Kiken imposed against a contestant.

In Team Trial and International Divisions the result of a bout is determined by a contestant obtaining a clear lead of eight points or, at time-up, having the highest number of points, or by obtaining a decision (Hantei), or by Hansoku, Shikkaku or Kiken imposed against a contestant.

7.1. When a bout ends with equal scores, or no scores, the Referee shall announce a tie (Hikiwake) and the start of Sai Shiai if applicable.

7.2. In individual bouts, if there is a tie, previous scores and penalties are removed from the scoreboard and an extra, deciding bout not exceeding one minute shall be fought (Sai Shiai). A Sai Shiai bout is a new bout at the end of which a winner shall be declared. In the event that at time-up there are no scores or scores are equal, the decision shall be made by a final vote of the Referee and three Judges (Hantei). A decision in favor of one or the other competitor is obligatory and is taken on the basis of the following:

- a) The attitude, fighting spirit and strength demonstrated by the contestants.
- b) The superiority of tactics and techniques displayed.
- c) Which of the contestants has initiated the majority of the action.

7.3. In team competition, there shall be no extra bout (Sai Shiai) in the event of drawn bouts except as stated in paragraph 7.5.

7.4. The winning team is the one with the most bout victories. Should the two teams have the same number of bout victories, then the winning team shall be the one with the most points, taking both winning and losing bouts into account.

7.5. If the two teams have the same number of bout victories and points, then a deciding bout shall be held. The team representatives must be nominated within one minute of the announcement of this bout. In the event of a continuing tie, there shall be an extra bout (Sai Shiai) not exceeding one minute. In the event that there is no score or scores are equal, the decision shall be made by vote (Hantei).

7.6. In male team matches, a team that obtains a lead of three bout victories shall be declared the winner at that point, or in the case of female teams, a lead of two bout victories.

EXPLANATION:

1. *When deciding the outcome of a bout by vote (Hantei) at the end of an inconclusive Sai Shiai, the referee shall move to the match area perimeter and call "Hantei," followed by a two-tone blast of the referee's whistle. The Judges shall indicate their opinions by means of their flags, and the Referee shall at the same time indicate his/her own vote by raising an arm on the side of the Referee's preferred contestant. The Referee shall give a short blast of the whistle, return to the original position and announce the majority decision.*

2. *In the event of a tied vote, the Referee shall resolve the tie by use of the referee's "casting vote." On returning to the original position, the Referee shall place one arm across his/her chest and raise a bent arm on the side of the preferred choice to show that the Referee is using the casting vote. The Referee shall then indicate the winner in the normal way.*

ARTICLE 8: PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR

8.0. There are two categories of prohibited behavior, Category 1 and Category 2.

8.1. Category 1.

1. Techniques that make excessive contact, having regard to the scoring area attacked.
2. Techniques that make contact with the throat.
3. Attacks to the arms, legs, groin, joints, or instep.
4. Attacks to the face with open hand techniques (e.g. teisho or nukite).
5. Dangerous or forbidden throwing techniques.

8.2. Category 2.

1. Feigning or exaggerating injury.
2. Repeated exits (Jogai) from the competition area.
3. Self-endangerment by indulging in behavior that exposes the contestant to injury by the opponent, or failing to take adequate measures for self-protection (Mubobi).
4. Avoiding combat as a means of preventing the opponent having the opportunity to score.
5. Clinching, wrestling, pushing, seizing, or standing chest to chest without attempting a striking technique.
6. Techniques that by their nature cannot be controlled for the safety of the opponent, and dangerous and uncontrolled attacks, whether they land or not.
7. Simulated Attacks with the head, knees, or elbows.
8. Talking to or goading the opponent, failing to obey the orders of the Referee, discourteous behavior towards the Refereeing Officials, or other breaches of etiquette.

EXPLANATION:

1. *Traditional karate techniques delivered with full power can cause extremely serious injury, even death. Karate competition is a sport; for that reason some of the most dangerous techniques are prohibited and all techniques must be controlled. Trained competitors can absorb relatively powerful blows on muscled areas such as the abdomen, but the fact remains that the head, face, neck, groin and joints are particularly susceptible to injury. **Therefore, any technique that results in injury must be penalized, unless caused by the recipient.** The contestants must perform all techniques with control and good form. If they cannot, then regardless of the technique misused, a warning or penalty must be imposed.*

2. **FACE CONTACT.**

(A) Adults (Age 18 and over)

*Non-injurious, light, controlled "touch" contact to the face, head and neck (but not to the throat) with **hand and foot** techniques is allowed. Where contact is deemed by the Referee to be too strong, but does not diminish the competitor's chances of winning, a warning (Chukoku) may be given. A second contact under the same circumstances will be penalized by Keikoku and Ippon (one point) given to the opponent. A third offense will be given Hansoku Chui and Nihon (two points) to the injured competitor. A further offense will result in disqualification by Hansoku.*

(B) Youth Age 17 and Under

No touch or contact to the head, face or neck (including the face mask and head protector) is allowed with hand techniques. Any touch or contact, no matter how light, will be penalized as in paragraph A above, unless caused by the recipient (Mubobi). Jodan kicks may make the lightest touch ("skin touch") and still score. Any more than a skin touch will require a warning or penalty unless caused by the recipient (Mubobi).

3. *The throat is a particularly vulnerable area and even the slightest contact should be warned or penalized, unless it is the recipient's own fault.*
4. *Open hand techniques to the face are forbidden due to the danger to the contestant's sight. The two open hand techniques referred to in Category 1 are merely examples of the class of prohibited techniques.*

The face is defined as an area that begins one centimeter above the eyebrows, extending down and including the temples, narrowing from the cheekbones, and finishing just under the chin.

5. *Foot sweeps that land high on the leg can cause knee injury. The Referee must assess the validity of any sweep-attack to the leg; an ineffectual but painful attack of this sort should be immediately penalized.*
6. *Throwing techniques are divided into two types:*
 - 1) *The established "conventional" Karate leg sweeping techniques such as ashi-barai, kouchi-gari, etc., where the opponent is swept off-balance or thrown without being grabbed first; and*
 - 2) *Those throws requiring that the opponent be grabbed or held as the throw is executed. The pivotal point of the throw must not be above the thrower's belt level, and the opponent must be held onto throughout so that a safe landing can be made. Over the shoulder throws such as seio-nage, kata-garuma, etc., are expressly forbidden, as are so called "sacrifice" throws such as tomoe-nage, sumi-gaeshi, etc. It is also forbidden to grab the opponent below the waist and lift and throw him/her, or to reach down to pull the legs from under the opponent. If an opponent is injured as a result of a throwing technique, the Referee Panel shall decide whether a penalty is called for.*
7. *When assessing the contact force used, the Referee must take all circumstances into account. Did the opponent exacerbate the impact of an otherwise controlled technique by an injudicious movement? This is the reason most often given for scoring what would otherwise appear to be excessive contact, but it must not be used as a justification for a bad assessment.*

The Referee must also consider the effects of a marked disparity in size between contestants - which occurs in team matches and open weight division bouts.

8. *The Referee must constantly observe the injured contestant. A short delay in giving a judgment allows injury symptoms such as a nosebleed to develop. Observation will also reveal any efforts by the contestant to aggravate slight injury for tactical advantage. Examples of this are blowing violently through an injured nose or rubbing the face roughly.*
9. *Pre-existing injury can produce symptoms out of proportion to the degree of contact used, and referees must take this into account when considering penalties for seemingly excessive contact. For example, what appears to be a relatively light contact could result in a competitor being unable to continue due to the cumulative effect of injury sustained in an earlier bout. Before the start of a match or bout, the Match Area Controller must examine the medical cards and ensure that the contestants are fit to fight. The Referee must be informed if a contestant has been treated for an injury.*
10. *Contestants who over-react to light contact in an effort to have the Referee penalize their opponent, such as holding the face and staggering about, or falling unnecessarily, shall be immediately warned or penalized.*
11. *Feigning an injury that does not exist is a serious infraction of the rules. Shikkaku shall be imposed on the contestant feigning injury (e.g., when such things as collapse and rolling about on the floor are not supported by evidence of commensurate injury as reported by a neutral doctor).*

Exaggerating the effect of an actual injury is less serious but still regarded as unacceptable behaviour and therefore the first instance of exaggeration will receive a minimum penalty of Keikoku (and Ippon to the opponent). More serious exaggeration such as staggering around, falling on the floor, standing up and falling down again and so on may receive Hansoku Chui or Hansoku depending on the severity of the offence.

12. *Competitors who receive Shikkaku for feigning injury shall be taken from the competition area and put directly into the hands of the USA-NKF Medical Committee, who shall carry out an immediate examination of the competitor. The Medical Committee shall submit its report before the end of the Championship, for the consideration of the Referee Committee. Competitors who feign injury shall be subject to the strongest penalties, up to and including suspension for life for repeated offenses.*
13. *Jogai relates to a situation where a contestant's foot, or any part of the body, touches the floor outside the match area. An exception is when the contestant is physically propelled, pushed, thrown or swept from the match area by the opponent.*
14. *The point at which "Yame" is called is helpful in determining if Jogai has occurred.*
 - a) *If Aka delivers a successful technique and then exits immediately afterwards, "Yame" should occur at the instant of score and the exit therefore occurs outside of bout time and may not be penalized.*
 - b) *If Aka's attempt to score is unsuccessful, "Yame" shall not be called and the exit shall be recorded.*
 - c) *If Ao exits just after Aka scores with a successful attack, then "Yame" will occur immediately on the score and Ao's exit shall not be recorded.*

- d) *If Ao exits, or has exited as Aka's score is made (with Aka remaining within the area), then both Aka's score shall be awarded and Ao's jogai penalty shall be imposed.*
15. *Movements that waste time include pointless circling, where one or both contestants do not engage in combat. It is expected that they will initially test each other, but within a short time deliberate and effective attack and counters should occur. If for any reason this does not happen after a reasonable interval, the referee must stop the bout and caution the offenders.*
16. *It is important to understand that "Avoiding Combat" refers to a situation where a competitor attempts to prevent the opponent having the opportunity to score by using time-wasting behavior. The contestant who constantly retreats without effective counter, who clinches unnecessarily, or who deliberately exits the match area rather than allow the opponent an opportunity to score must be warned or penalized. This often occurs during the closing seconds of a bout. If the offense occurs with ten second or more of the bout time remaining the referee shall warn the offender. If there has been a previous Category 2 offense or offenses this shall result in a penalty being imposed*
However, if there is less than ten seconds to go, the referee shall penalize the offender with Keikoku and award an Ippon to the opponent. If there has been a previous Category 2 offense or offenses, the contestant shall receive the next penalty up on the penalty scale. But the referee must ensure that the contestant is not retreating because the opponent is acting in a reckless or dangerous manner, in which case the attacker should be warned or penalized.
17. *Penalties for Mubobi can be assessed only when contact occurs. An example of Mubobi is the instance in which the contestant launches a committed attack without regard for personal safety. Some contestants throw themselves into a long reverse-punch, and are unable to block a counter. Such open attacks constitute an act of Mubobi and cannot score. As a tactical theatrical move, some fighters turn away immediately in a mock display of dominance to demonstrate a scored point. They drop their guard and lapse awareness of the opponent. The purpose of the turn-away is to draw the Referee's attention to their technique. This is also a clear act of Mubobi. Should the offender receive an excessive contact and/or sustain an injury, the referee will issue a Category 2 warning or penalty and decline to give a penalty to the opponent.¹*
18. *Any discourteous behavior from a member of an official delegation can earn the disqualification of a competitor, the entire team or delegation from the tournament.*

ARTICLE 9: PENALTIES

- Warning:** May be imposed for attendant minor infractions or the first instance of a minor
(Chukoku) infraction.
- Keikoku:** This is a penalty in which Ippon (one point) is added to the opponents score. Keikoku is imposed for minor infractions for which a warning has previously been given in that bout, or for infractions not sufficiently serious to merit Hansoku-Chui.

¹ Instead of the referee being able to penalize both contestants, there will either be a penalty for contact or for mubobi. This places the responsibility squarely on the contestants to protect themselves.

Hansoku-chui: This is a penalty in which Nihon (two points) is added to the opponent's score. Hansoku-Chui is usually imposed for infractions for which a Keikoku has previously been given in that bout although it may be imposed directly for serious infringements that do not merit Hansoku.

Hansoku: This is imposed following a very serious infraction or when a Hansoku-Chui has already been given. It results in the disqualification of the contestant. *In team matches the fouled competitor's score shall be set at eight points, and the offender's score shall be zero.*

Shikkaku: This is a disqualification from the actual tournament, competition, or match. In order to define the limit of Shikkaku, the Referee Committee must be consulted. Shikkaku may be invoked when a contestant fails to obey the orders of the referee, acts maliciously, or commits an act *that* harms the prestige and honor of Karate-do, or when other actions are considered to violate the rules and spirit of the tournament. *In team matches the fouled competitor's score shall be set at eight points, and the offender's score shall be zero.*

EXPLANATION:

1. *Category 1 and Category 2 penalties do not cross-cumulate.*
2. *A penalty can be directly imposed for a rules infraction but, once given, repeats of that category of infraction must be accompanied by an increase in severity of penalty imposed. It is not, for example, permissible to give a warning or penalty for excessive contact then give another warning (Chukoku) for a second instance of excessive contact.*
3. *When through various infractions the penalties incurred and points awarded in any one bout equal 8 points (or in international divisions a lead of 8 points), then the offender shall be declared the loser and the winner announced as "Aka/Ao No Kachi."*
4. *Warnings (Chukoku) are given where there has been a minor infraction of the rules but the contestant's potential for winning is not diminished (in the opinion of the Referee Panel) by the opponent's foul.*
5. *A Keikoku may be imposed directly, without first giving a warning. Keikoku is normally imposed where the contestant's potential for winning is slightly diminished (in the opinion of the Referee Panel) by the opponent's foul.*
6. *A Hansoku-Chui may be imposed directly, or following a warning, or Keikoku, and is used where the contestant's potential for winning has been seriously reduced (in the opinion of the Referee Panel) by the opponent's foul.*
7. *A Hansoku is imposed for cumulative penalties but can also be imposed directly for serious rules infractions. It is used when the contestant's potential for winning has been reduced virtually to zero (in the opinion of the Referee Panel) by the opponent's foul.*
8. *Any competitor who receives Hansoku for causing injury and who has in the opinion of the Referee Panel and Match Area Controller, acted recklessly or dangerously, or who is considered not to have the requisite control skills necessary for that particular experience category, shall be reported to the Referee Committee. The Referee Committee shall decide if*

that competitor shall be suspended from the rest of that competition and/or subsequent competitions.

9. *A Shikkaku can be directly imposed without warnings of any kind. The contestant need have done nothing to merit it - it is sufficient if the coach or non-combatant members of the contestant's delegation behave in such a way as to harm the prestige and honor of Karate-do. If the Referee believes that a contestant has acted maliciously, regardless of whether or not actual physical injury has been caused, Shikkaku and not Hansoku is the correct penalty. The referee panel must agree unanimously in order for a Shikkaku to be given. Once given, the referee shall write a report of the circumstances that warranted the Shikkaku. The referee panel shall sign the report and it shall be submitted to the Referee Committee.*
10. *A public announcement of Shikkaku must be made.*

ARTICLE 10: INJURIES AND ACCIDENTS IN COMPETITION

- 10.1. Kiken or forfeiture is the decision given when a contestant or contestants fail to present themselves when called, are unable to continue, abandon the bout, or are withdrawn on the order of the Referee. The grounds for abandonment may include injury not ascribable to the opponent's actions.
- 10.2. If two contestants injure each other, or are suffering from the effects of previously incurred injury, and are declared by the tournament doctor to be unable to continue, the bout is awarded to the contestant who has amassed the most points.

In individual matches, if the point score is equal, then a vote (Hantei) shall decide the outcome of the bout. In team matches, the referee shall announce a tie (Hikiwake). Should the situation occur in a deciding team match, a vote (Hantei) shall determine the outcome.
- 10.3. An injured contestant who has been declared unfit to fight by the tournament doctor may not fight again in that competition.
- 10.4. An injured contestant who wins a bout through disqualification due to injury is not allowed to fight again in the competition without permission from the tournament doctor. If he is injured, he may win a second bout in the same manner but is then immediately withdrawn from further Kumite competition in that tournament.
- 10.5. When a contestant is injured, the Referee shall at once halt the bout and call the doctor. The doctor is authorized to diagnose and treat injury only.
- 10.6. A competitor who is injured during a bout in progress and requires medical treatment shall be allowed three minutes in which to receive it. If treatment is not completed within the time allowed, the Referee shall decide if the competitor shall be declared unfit to fight (Article 13, Paragraph 13.9d.), or whether an extension of treatment time shall be given.
- 10.7. Except in divisions for ages 11 and younger, any competitor who falls, is thrown or knocked down and does not fully regain his/her feet within ten seconds is considered unfit to continue fighting and shall be automatically withdrawn from all Kumite events in that tournament. In the event that a competitor falls, is thrown or knocked down and does not regain his/her feet immediately, the Referee shall signal to the timekeeper to start the ten second count-down by a blast on the whistle, at the same time calling the doctor. The

timekeeper shall stop the clock when the Referee raises an arm. In all cases where the 10-second clock has been started, the doctor will be asked to examine the contestant.

EXPLANATION:

1. *When the doctor declares the contestant unfit, the appropriate entry must be made on the contestant's monitoring card. The extent of the unfitness must be made clear to other Referee Panels.*
2. *A contestant may win through disqualification of the opponent for accumulated minor Category 1 infractions. Perhaps the winner has sustained no significant injury. A second win on the same grounds must lead to withdrawal, even though the contestant may be physically able to continue.*
3. *Self-inflicted injury and those injuries caused by the athlete are easy to deal with, but when assessing an injury caused by the opponent's technique, the Referee Panel should consider whether the technique was valid. Was it properly applied to the proper target area at the correct time and with the correct degree of control? Consideration of this will assist the Referee Panel in deciding whether the injured contestant should be declared the loser by Kiken, or whether the opponent should be penalized for a foul.*
4. *The Referee should call the doctor when a contestant is injured and needs medical treatment.*
5. *The doctor is obliged to make safety recommendations only as they relate to the proper medical management of that particular injured contestant.*
6. *When applying the "Ten Second Rule" the time shall be kept by a timekeeper appointed for this specific purpose. A warning shall be sounded at seven seconds followed by the final bell at ten seconds. The timekeeper shall start the clock only when the Referee blows his or her whistle. The referee shall start the 10-second clock only when a competitor has been thrown or fallen with their torso flat on the floor.*

The timekeeper shall stop the clock when the competitor stands fully upright and the Referee raises his or her arm.
7. *The Referee Panel shall decide the winner on the basis of Hansoku, Kiken or Shikkaku, as the case may be.*
8. *In team matches, should a team member receive Kiken, his/her score, if any, shall be zeroed, and the opponent's score shall be set at eight points.*

ARTICLE 11: OFFICIAL PROTEST

- 11.1. No one may protest about a judgment to the members of the Refereeing Panel.
- 11.2. If a refereeing procedure appears to contravene the rules, the President of the Federation or the Official Representative is the only one allowed to make a protest.
- 11.3. The protest shall take the form of a written report submitted immediately after the bout in which the protest was generated. The sole exception is when the protest concerns an administrative malfunction. The Match Area Controller should be notified immediately when the administrative error is detected.

- 11.4. Any protest concerning application of the rules must be made in accordance with the complaints procedure defined by the USA-NKF. It must be submitted in writing on an approved form and signed by the official representative of the team or contestant(s).
- 11.5. The complainant must deposit a protest fee, in an amount as shall be established by the USA-NKF, with the Treasurer and a duplicate receipt shall be issued. The protest plus a copy of the receipt must be lodged with a member of the Referee Committee.
- 11.6. The protest must be submitted to a representative of the Referee Committee. In due course the Referee Committee shall review the circumstances leading to the protested decision. Having considered all the facts available, the Committee shall produce a report and shall be empowered to take such action as may be called for.
- 11.7. If the decision of the Referee Committee is to be appealed, the protest shall be reviewed by the Appeals Jury consisting of three senior referees appointed by the Referee Committee.

EXPLANATION:

1. *The protest must give the names of the contestants, the Referee Panel officiating, and **the precise details of what is being protested.** No general claims about overall standards shall be accepted as a legitimate protest. The burden of proving the validity of the protest lies with the complainant.*
2. *The protest shall be reviewed by the Referee Committee, and as part of this review the Referee Committee shall study the evidence submitted in support of the protest. The Referee Committee may also study videos and question officials in an effort to objectively examine the protest's validity.*
3. *If the protest is held by the Referee Committee to be valid, the appropriate action shall be taken. In addition, all such measures shall be taken to avoid a recurrence in future competitions. The Treasurer shall refund the deposit paid.*
4. *If the protest is held by the Referee Committee to be invalid, it shall be rejected and the deposit forfeited to USA-NKF.*
5. *Ensuing matches or bouts shall not be delayed even if an official protest is being prepared. It is the responsibility of the Arbitrator to ensure that the match has been conducted in accordance with the Rules of Competition.*
6. *In case of an administrative malfunction during a match in progress, the Coach may notify the Match Area Controller directly. In turn the Match Area Controller shall notify the Referee.*

ARTICLE 12: POWERS AND DUTIES

REFEREE COMMITTEE

- 12.1. The Referee Committee's powers and duties shall be as follows:
 - 12.1.1. To ensure the correct preparation for each given tournament in consultation with the Organizing Committee, with regard to competition area arrangement, the provision and deployment of all equipment and necessary facilities, match operation and supervision, safety precautions, etc.

- 12.1.2. To appoint and deploy the Match Area Controllers (Chief Referees) to their respective areas and to act upon and take such action as may be required by the reports of the Match Area Controllers.
- 12.1.3. To supervise and coordinate the overall performance of the refereeing officials.
- 12.1.4. To nominate substitute officials where such are required. The composition of a panel of officials may not be changed at the discretion of the Arbitrator, Referee, or Judge.
- 12.1.5. To investigate and render judgment on matters of official protest.
- 12.1.6. To pass the final judgment on matter of a technical nature that may arise during a given match and for which there are no stipulations in the rules.

MATCH AREA CONTROLLER

- 12.2. The Match Area Controller's powers and duties shall be as follows:
 - 12.2.1. To delegate, appoint, and supervise the Referees and Judges, for all matches in areas under their control.
 - 12.2.2. To oversee the performance of the Referees and Judges in their areas, and to ensure that the officials appointed are capable of the tasks allotted them.
 - 12.2.3. To order the Referee to halt the match when the Arbitrator signals a contravention of the Rules of Competition.
 - 12.2.4. To prepare a daily, written report on the performance of each official under their supervision, together with their recommendations, if any, to the Referee Committee.

REFEREE

- 12.3. The Referee's powers shall be as follows:
 - 12.3.1. The Referee (Shushin) shall have the power to conduct matches including announcing the start, the suspension and the end of the match.
 - 12.3.2. To award points.
 - 12.3.3. To explain to the Match Area Controller, Referee Committee or Appeals Jury, if necessary, the basis for giving a judgment.
 - 12.3.4. To impose penalties and to issue warnings before, during or after a bout.
 - 12.3.5. To obtain and act upon the opinion(s) of the Judges.
 - 12.3.6. To announce and start an extra bout (Sai Shiai).
 - 12.3.7. To conduct voting (Hantei) of the Referee Panel and announce the result.
 - 12.3.8. To announce the winner.
 - 12.3.9. The authority of the Referee is not confined to the competition area but also to all of its immediate perimeter.
 - 12.3.10. The Referee shall give all commands and make all announcements.
 - 12.3.11. When the Judges signal, the Referee must consider their opinions and render a judgment.

JUDGE

12.4. The Judge's (Fukushin) powers shall be as follows:

12.4.1. To assist the Referee by flag signals.

12.4.2. To exercise a right to vote on a decision to be taken.

The Judges shall carefully observe the actions of the contestants and signal to the Referee an opinion in the following cases:

1. When a score is observed.
2. When a contestant has committed a prohibited act and/or techniques.
3. When an injury or illness or inability of a contestant to continue is noticed.
4. When a contestant has moved out of the competition area. (Jogai)
5. In other cases when it is deemed necessary to call the attention of the referee.

ARBITRATOR

12.5. The Arbitrator (Kansa) shall assist the Match Area Controller by overseeing the match or bout in progress. Should decisions of the Referee and/or Judges not be in accordance with the Rules of Competition, the Arbitrator shall immediately raise the red flag and blow a whistle. The Match Area Controller shall instruct the Referee to halt the match or bout and correct the irregularity. Records kept of the match shall become official records subject to the approval of the Arbitrator.

SCORE SUPERVISOR

12.6. The Score Supervisor shall keep a separate record of the scores awarded by the Referee and at the same time oversee the actions of the appointed timekeepers and scorekeepers.

EXPLANATION:

1. *When three Judges give the same signal, or indicate a score for the same competitor, the Referee must stop the bout and render the majority decision. Should the Referee fail to stop the bout the Arbitrator shall raise the red flag and blow a whistle.*
2. *When two Judges give the same signal, or indicate a score for the same competitor, the Referee shall consider their opinions but may decline to stop the bout if he believes them to be mistaken. The Referee's judgment in this instance is made "on the move." Before overruling the Judge's signal, the Referee must consider whether the Judges were better sighted. Judges shall signal only by flag gesture, they shall not use whistles.*
3. *However, when the bout is halted, the majority decision shall prevail.*
4. *When the Referee decides to halt the bout she/he will call "YAME at the same time using the required hand signal. The Judges will lower their flags and await the Referee's opinion. When the Referee returns to the starting line, she/he will convey his/her reason(s) for stopping the bout by using the appropriate signal(s). The Judges will then signal their opinions and the referee will render the majority decision.*

5. *In the event of a two/two decision the Referee shall indicate with the appropriate signal why the other contestant's score is not considered to be valid and then award the score to the opponent.*
6. *In the event that two judges fail to signal and the other is in disagreement with the Referee, then the Referee shall decide what action to take.*
7. *When three Judges each have different opinions, the Referee may give a decision that is supported by one of the Judges.*
8. *At Hantei the Referee and Judges each have one vote. In the event of a tied Sai Shiai the Referee shall have a casting vote.*
9. *The Judges must only score what they actually see. If they are not sure that a technique actually reached a scoring area, they should not signal.*
10. *The role of the Arbitrator is to ensure that the match or bout is conducted in accordance with the Rules of Competition. The Arbitrator is not there as an additional Judge. The Arbitrator has no vote nor has he/she any authority in matters of judgment, such as whether a score was valid or if Jogai occurred. The Arbitrator's sole responsibility is in matters of procedure.*
11. *In the event that the Referee does not hear the time-up bell, the Score Supervisor shall blow a whistle.*
12. *The good Referee will not halt the smooth flow of the bout unless it is necessary to do so. All halts with no outcome, such as "Yame - Torimassen" must be avoided.*
11. *When explaining the basis for a Judgment after the match, the Referee Panel may speak to the Match Area Controller, the Referee Committee or the Appeals Jury. They shall explain to no one else.*

ARTICLE 13: STARTING, SUSPENDING, AND ENDING MATCHES

- 13.1. The terms and gestures to be used by the Referee and Judges in the operation of a match shall be as specified in Appendices 1, 2 and 3.
- 13.2. The Referee and Judges shall take up their prescribed positions and following an exchange of bows between the contestants, the Referee shall announce "Shobu Hajime" and the bout shall commence.
- 13.3. The referee shall stop the bout by announcing "Yame." If necessary, the Referee shall order the contestants to take up their original positions ("Moto no ichi").
- 13.4. The Referee returns to the starting position and the judges indicate their opinion by means of a signal. In the case of a score to be awarded the Referee identifies the contestant (Aka or Ao), the area attacked (chudan or jodan), the scoring technique (tsuki, uchi, keri), and then awards the relevant score using the prescribed gesture. The Referee then restarts the bout by calling "Tsuzukete Hajime."
- 13.5. In Team Trial and International Kumite divisions, when a contestant has established a clear lead of eight points during a bout, the Referee shall call "Yame" and order the contestants back to their starting lines as he/she returns to the starting position. The winner is then declared and indicated by the Referee raising a hand on the side of the

winner and declaring "Aka/Ao No Kachi." The bout is ended at this point. In all other Kumite divisions, the first contestant to accumulate eight points shall be declared the winner.

- 13.6. When time is up, the contestant who has the most points is declared the winner, indicated by the Referee raising a hand on the side of the winner, and declaring "Aka/Ao no kachi." The bout is ended at this point.
- 13.7. When time is up and scores are equal, or no scores have been awarded, the Referee shall call "Yame" and return to the starting position. The Referee shall announce a tie (Hikiwake) and start the Sai Shiai if applicable.
- 13.8. At Hantei the Referee and Judges each have one vote. In the event of a tied vote at the end of an inconclusive Sai Shiai, the Referee shall have a casting vote that shall be used to break the tie.
- 13.9. When faced with the following situations, the referee shall call "Yame" and halt the bout temporarily:
 - a) When either or both contestants are out of the match area, or when a Judge signals Jogai.
 - b) When the Referee orders a contestant to adjust the karate-gi or protective equipment.
 - c) When a contestant has contravened the rules.
 - d) When the Referee considers that one or both of the contestants cannot continue with the bout due to injuries, illness or other causes. Heeding the tournament doctor's opinion, the Referee shall decide whether the bout should be continued.
 - e) When a contestant seizes the opponent and does not perform an immediate technique or throw within two seconds.
 - f) When one or both contestants fall or are thrown and no effective techniques are made within two seconds.
 - g) When both contestants are off their feet following a fall or attempted throw and begin to wrestle.
 - h) When a score is observed.
 - i) When three Judges give the same signal or indicate a score for the same competitor.
 - j) When requested to do so by the match area controller.

EXPLANATION:

1. *When beginning a bout, the Referee first calls the contestants to their starting lines. If contestants enter the area prematurely, they must be motioned off. The contestants must bow properly to each other - a quick nod is both discourteous and insufficient. The Referee may call for a bow where none is volunteered by motioning as shown in Appendix 2 of the Rules of Kumite Competition.*
2. *When restarting the bout, the Referee should check that both contestants are on their lines and properly composed. Contestants jumping up and down or otherwise fidgeting must be*

stilled before combat may recommence. The Referee must restart the bout with the minimum of delay.

3. *Contestants shall bow to each other at the start and end of each bout.*

ARTICLE 14: MODIFICATIONS

14.0 Only the USA-NKF Referee Committee and Technical Committee with the approval of the Board of Directors may alter or modify these rules.

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United States of America National Karate-do Federation

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APPENDIX 1. THE TERMINOLOGY

SHOBU HAJIME	Start the Match or Bout	After the announcement, the Referee takes a step back.
ATOSHI BARAKU	A little more time left	An audible signal shall be given by the timekeeper 10 seconds before the actual end of the bout and the Referee shall announce “Atoshi Baraku”.
YAME	Stop	Interruption, or end of the bout. As he makes the announcement, the Referee makes a downward chopping motion with his hand.
MOTO NO ICHI	Original position	Contestants and Referee return to their starting positions.
TSUZUKETE	Fight on	Resumption of fighting ordered when an unauthorized interruption occurs.
TSUZUKETE HAJIME	Resume fighting - Begin	The Referee stands in a forward stance. As he says “Tszukete” he extends his arms, palms outwards towards the contestants. As he says “Hajime” he turns the palms and brings them rapidly towards one another, at the same time stepping back.
SHUGO	Judges called	The Referee calls the Judges at the end of the match or bout, or to recommend Shikkaku.
HANTEI	Decision	Referee calls for a decision at the end of an inconclusive Sai Shiai. After a short blast of the whistle, the Judges render their vote by flag signal and the Referee indicates his own vote at the same time by raising his arm.
HIKIWAKE	Draw	In case of a tied bout, the Referee crosses his arms, then extends them with the palms showing to the front.

TORIMASEN	Unacceptable as a scoring technique	The Referee crosses his arms then makes a cutting motion, palms downward.
SAI SHIAI	A one-minute deciding bout	The Referee re-opens the match with the command, “Shobu Hajime”.
AIUCHI	Simultaneous scoring techniques	No point is awarded to either contestant. Referee brings his fists together in front of his chest.
AKA (AO) NO KACHI	Red (Blue) wins	The Referee obliquely raises his arm on the side of the winner.
AKA (AO) SANBON	Red (Blue) scores three points	The Referee raises his arm up at 45 degrees on the side of the scorer.
AKA (AO) NIHON	Red (Blue) scores two points	The Referee extends his arm at shoulder level on the side of the scorer.
AKA (AO) IPPON	Red (Blue) scores one point	The Referee extends his arm downward at 45 degrees on the side of the scorer.
CHUKOKU	First Category 1 or Category 2 warning without penalty	For Category 1 offences, the Referee turns toward the offender and crosses his arms at chest level. For Category 2 offences, the Referee points his index finger (arm bent), at the face of the offender.
KEIKOKU	Warning with Ippon penalty	The Referee indicates a Category 1 or 2 offence then points with his index finger downwards at 45 degrees in the direction of the offender, and awards Ippon (one point) to the opponent.
HANSOKU-CHUI	Warning with Nihon penalty	The Referee indicates a Category 1 or 2 offence then points with his index finger horizontally in the direction of the offender and awards Nihon (two points) to the opponent.
HANSOKU	Disqualification	The Referee indicates a Category 1 or 2 offence then points with his index finger upwards at 45 degrees in the direction of the offender, and announces a win for the opponent.

JOGAI	Exit from the match area	The Referee points his index finger on the side of the offender to indicate to the Judges that the contestant has moved out of bounds
SHIKKAKU	Disqualification “Leave the Area”	The Referee points first upwards at 45 degrees in the direction of the offender then motions out and behind with the announcement “Aka (AO) Shikkaku!” He then announces a win for the opponent.
KIKEN	Renunciation	The Referee points downwards at 45 degrees in the direction of the contestant’s starting line.
MUBOBI	Self Endangerment	The Referee touches his face then turning his hand edge forward, moves it back and forth to indicate to the Judges that the contestant endangered himself.

**APPENDIX 2:
ANNOUNCEMENTS AND GESTURES OF THE REFEREE**

SHOMEN-NI-REI

The Referee extends his arms palms to the front.



OTAGAI-NI-REI

The Referee motions to the contestants to bow to each other.



SHOBU HAJIME

“Start the Match”

After the announcement, the Referee takes a step back.



YAME

“Stop”

Interruption or end of a match or bout. As he makes the announcement, the Referee makes a downward chopping motion with his hand.



TSUZUKETE HAJIME

“Resume fighting—Begin”

As he says “Tsuzukete”, and standing in a forward stance, the Referee extends his arms outward with his palms facing the contestants. As he says “Hajime” he turns the palms and brings them rapidly towards one another at the same time stepping back.



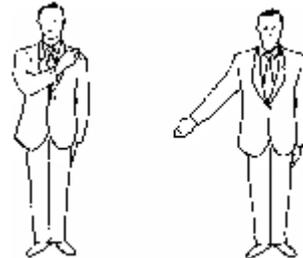
THE REFEREE’S OPINION

After calling “Yame” and using the prescribed signal the Referee indicates his preference by holding his bent arm palm upwards on the side of the scoring contestant.



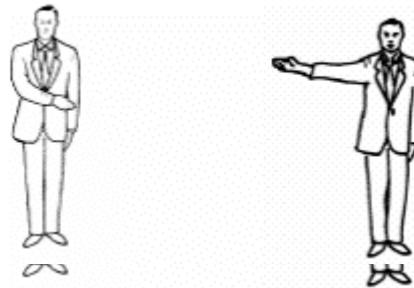
IPPON (1 point)

The Referee extends his arm downward at 45 degrees on the side of the scorer.



NIHON (Two Points)

The Referee extends his arm at shoulder level on the side of the scorer.



SANBON (Three Points)

The Referee extends his arm upward at 45 degrees on the side of the scorer.



CANCEL LAST DECISION

When an award or penalty has been given in error the Referee turns towards the contestant, announces “Aka” or “AO”, crosses his arms, then makes a cutting motion, palms downward, to indicate that the last decision has been cancelled.



NO KACHI (Win)

At the end of the match or bout, announcing “Aka (or AO) No Kachi” the Referee extends his arm upward at 45 degrees on the side of the winner.



KIKEN

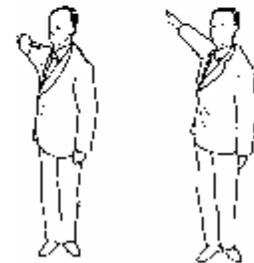
“Renunciation”

The Referee points with the index finger towards the renouncing contestant's line then announces a win to the opponent.



SHIKKAKU

“Disqualification, Leave the Area”.
The Referee points first upwards at 45 degrees in the direction of the offender then motions out and behind with the announcement “Aka (AO) Shikkaku!” He then announces a win for the opponent.



HIKIWAKE

“Draw”
When time is up and scores are equal, or no scores have been awarded the Referee crosses his arms then extends them with the palms showing to the front.



CATEGORY 1 OFFENCE

The Referee crosses his open hands with the edge of one wrist on the edge of the other at chest level.



CATEGORY 2 OFFENCE

The Referee points with a bent arm at the face of the offender.



CHUKOKU

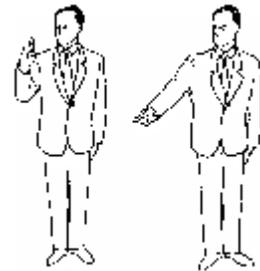
Making the appropriate signal the Referee gives a warning of a Category 1 or Category 2 offence. No penalty is issued at this time.



KEIKOKU

“Ippon Penalty”.

The Referee indicates a Category 1 or 2 offence then points with his index finger downwards at 45 degrees in the direction of the offender, and awards Ippon (one point) to the opponent.



HANSOKU CHUI

“Nihon Penalty”.

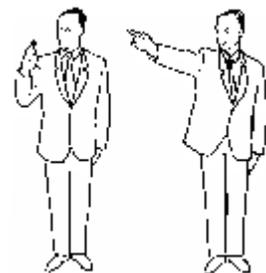
The Referee indicates a Category 1 or 2 offence then points with his index finger horizontally in the direction of the offender and awards Nihon (two points), to the opponent.



HANSOKU

“Disqualification”

The Referee indicates a Category 1 or 2 offence then points with his index finger upwards at 45 degrees in the direction of the offender, and awards a win to the opponent.



AIUCHI

“Simultaneous Scoring Techniques”.

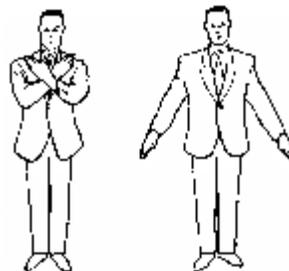
No point is awarded to either contestant. The Referee brings the fists together in front of the chest.



TORIMASEN

“Unacceptable as a Scoring Technique”

The Referee crosses his arms then makes a cutting motion, palms downward. When the Referee uses this signal to the Judges followed by the signal for reconsideration it means that the technique was deficient in one or more of the six scoring criteria. If the Referee wants to show that one of the competitor’s techniques was deficient, he should turn toward that competitor and give the torimasen signal, only with a very small hand gesture.



AKA (AO) SCORED FIRST

The Referee indicates to the Judges that Aka scored first by bringing the open right hand to the palm of the left hand. If AO was first, the left hand points into the right hand.



TECHNIQUE BLOCKED OR OFF TARGET

The Referee places an open hand over the other arm to indicate to the Judges that the technique was blocked or hit a non-scoring area.



TECHNIQUE MISSED

The Referee moves the clenched fist across the body to indicate to the Judges that the technique missed or glanced off the scoring area.



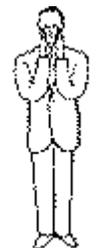
EXCESSIVE CONTACT

The Referee indicates to the Judges that there has been excessive contact or other Category 1 offence.



FEIGNING OR EXAGGERATING INJURY

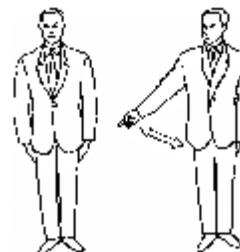
The Referee holds both hands to his face to indicate to the Judges a Category 2 offence.



JOGAI

“Exit from the Match Area”

The Referee indicates an exit to the Judges, by pointing with the index finger to the match area boundary on the side of the offender.



MUBOBI (Self Endangerment)

The Referee touches his face then turning the hand edge forward, moves it back and forth to indicate to the Judges that the contestant has endangered himself.



AVOIDING COMBAT

The Referee makes a circling motion with the down turned index finger to indicate to the Judges a Category 2 offence.



UNNECESSARY CLINCHING, WRESTLING, PUSHING OR SEIZING WITHOUT A TECHNIQUE

The Referee holds both clenched fists at shoulder level or makes a pushing motion with both open hands to indicate to the Judges a Category 2 offence.



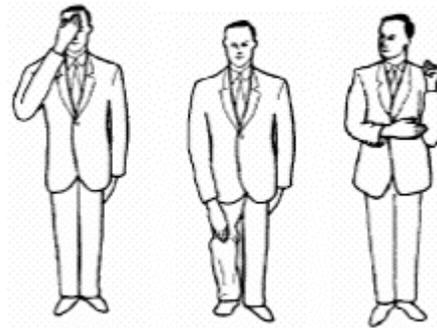
DANGEROUS AND UNCONTROLLED ATTACKS

The Referee brings his clenched fist past the side of his head to indicate to the Judges a Category 2 offence.



ATTACKS WITH THE HEAD KNEES OR ELBOWS

The Referee touches his forehead, knee, or elbow with the open hand to indicate to the Judges a Category 2 offence.



TALKING TO OR GOADING THE OPPONENT AND DISCOURTEOUS BEHAVIOUR

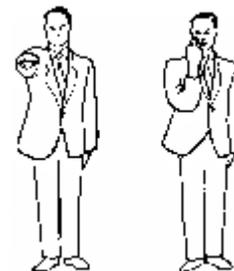
The Referee places his index finger to his lips to indicate to the Judges a Category 2 offence.



SHUGO

“Judges Called”

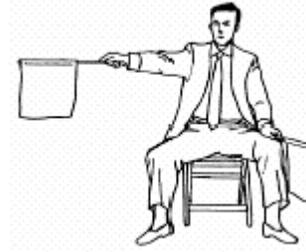
The Referee calls the Judges at the end of the match or bout: or to recommend Shikkaku.



**APPENDIX 3:
THE JUDGE'S FLAG SIGNALS**



IPPON



NIHON



SANBON



FOUL

Warning of a foul. The appropriate flag is waved in a circle, then a Category 1 or 2 signal is made.



CATEGORY 1 OFFENCE

The flags are crossed and extended with the arms straight.

CATEGORY 2
The Judge points the



OFFENCE
flag with arm bent.





JOGAI

The Judge taps the floor with the appropriate flag and then shows a category 2 offence



KEIKOKU



HANSOKU CHUI



HANSOKU



TORIMASEN





AIUCHI

The flags are moved toward each other, in front of the chest.

APPENDIX 4: SCOREKEEPER'S MARKS

●—○	Sanbon	Three Points Score
●	Nihon	Two Points Score
○	Ippon	One Point Score
□	Kachi	Winner
×	Make	Loser
△	Hikiwake	Draw (Tie)
C1W	Category 1 Foul — Warning	Warning without Penalty
C1K	Category 1 Foul — Keikoku	One Point to Opponent
C1HC	Category 1 Foul — Hansoku- Chui	Two Points to Opponent
C1H	Category 1 Foul — Hansoku	Disqualification
C2W	Category 2 Foul — Warning	
C2K	Category 2 Foul — Keikoku	One Point to Opponent
C2HC	Category 2 Foul — Hansoku- Chui	Two Points to Opponent
C2H	Category 2 Foul — Hansoku	Disqualification
KK	Kiken	Forfeiture
S	Shikkaku	Serious Disqualification

APPENDIX 5: OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR REFEREES AND JUDGES

This Appendix is intended to give assistance to Referees and Judges where there may be no obvious guidance in the Rules or Explanations.

EXCESSIVE CONTACT

When a contestant makes a scoring technique immediately followed by another that makes excessive contact the Referee Panel does not award the score and instead issues a Category 1 warning or penalty (unless it is the recipient's own fault).

EXCESSIVE CONTACT AND EXAGGERATION

When a competitor makes a pretence of having received an excessive contact and the Referee Panel decides instead that the technique in question was controlled, satisfying all six scoring criteria, then a score shall be awarded and a Category 2 penalty for feigning or exaggeration shall be issued. (Always taking into account that severe cases of feigning injury may warrant Shikakku.) More difficult situations occur when a competitor receives a stronger contact and falls to the floor, sometimes standing up (in order to stop the 10 second clock) and then falling down again. The referees and judges must remember that a jodan kick is worth 3 points, and as the number of teams and individual competitors receiving financial reward for winning medals increases, the temptation to stoop to unethical behavior becomes stronger. It is important to recognize this and apply the appropriate penalties.

MUBOBI

A warning or penalty for Mubobi is given when a competitor is hit or injured through his or her own fault or negligence. This may be caused by turning their back on the opponent, attacking with a long, low gyaku tsuki chudan without regard for the opponent's jodan counter attack, stopping fighting before the referee calls "Yame", dropping their guard or concentration and repeated failure or refusal to block the opponent's attacks. Explanation 17 of Article 8 states:

Should the offender receive an excessive contact and/or sustain an injury, the referee shall issue a Category 2 warning or penalty and decline to give a penalty to the opponent.

A contestant who is hit through their own fault and exaggerates the effect in order to mislead the Referee Panel may receive a warning or penalty for Mubobi as well as an additional penalty for exaggeration, since two offences have been committed.

It should be noted that there are no circumstances in which a technique that has made excessive contact can be given a score.

ZANSHIN

Zanshin is described as a state of continued commitment in which the contestant maintains total concentration, observation, and awareness of the opponent's potentiality to counter-attack. Some contestants after delivering a technique will turn their body partially away from the opponent but are still watching and ready to continue the action. The Referee Panel must be able to distinguish between this continued state of readiness and one where the contestant has turned away, dropped their guard and concentration, and in effect has ceased fighting.

CATCHING A CHUDAN KICK.

Should the Referee Panel award a score when a contestant delivers a chudan kick and the opponent then catches the leg before it can be withdrawn?

Provided that the kicking contestant maintains ZANSHIN there is no reason why this technique cannot score provided that it contains all six of the scoring criteria. After all in the case of two almost simultaneous gyaku tsukis it is normal practice to award a score to the contestant considered to have landed their technique first even though both might be considered effective. Theoretically, in a real fight scenario, a full power kick would be deemed to have disabled the opponent and therefore the leg would not be grabbed. Appropriate control, the target area, and satisfaction of all six criteria, are the deciding factors as to whether any technique can be awarded a score or not.

THROWING AND INJURIES.

Since grabbing hold of the opponent and throwing is allowed under certain conditions it is incumbent upon all coaches to ensure that their competitors are trained in and are able to use break-fall/safe landing techniques.

A competitor who attempts a throwing technique must comply with the conditions imposed in the Explanations in Article 6 and Article 8. If a competitor throws their opponent in full compliance with the stated requirements and an injury results due to the opponent failing to make a proper break-fall, then the injured party is responsible and the thrower should not be penalized. Self-caused injury can result when a contestant who is being thrown, instead of making a break-fall, lands on an extended arm or elbow, or holds onto the thrower and pulls them down on top of themselves.

A potentially dangerous situation occurs when a contestant grabs both legs to throw the opponent on their back, or when a contestant ducks down and bodily lifts the opponent up before throwing him/her. Article 8, Explanation 6 states “...and the opponent must be held onto throughout, so that a safe landing can be made.” Since it is difficult to ensure a safe landing, throws such as this fall into the prohibited category.

VOTING PROCEDURES

When the Referee decides to halt the bout, he/she will call “YAME”, at the same time using the required hand signal. The Judges will lower their flags and await the Referee’s opinion. When the Referee returns to the starting line, she/he will convey to the Judges by using the appropriate signal(s), his reason(s) for stopping the bout. The Judges will then signal their opinions and the referee will render the majority decision. Since the Referee is the only one able to move around the area, to directly approach the contestants, and to speak to the doctor, Judges must seriously consider what the Referee is communicating to them before giving their final decision, as no re-consideration is allowed.

In situations where there are more than one reason for stopping the match, the Referee will deal with each situation in turn. For example, where there has been a score from one contestant and a contact from the other, or where there has been a MUBOBI and an exaggeration of injury from the same contestant.

NO SIGNALS AFTER YAME

If three Judges fail to signal after the referee has stopped the bout, can the Referee give a score or penalty?

Paragraph 3 of the Explanations in Article 12 states “*However, when the bout is halted, the majority decision shall prevail.*” Since the Judges have seen nothing, they are not considered to be offering an opinion or vote, and therefore the Referee is in the majority. This situation can occur when action occurs close to the match area perimeter on the Referee's side, and where the Judges are unsighted.

TWO JUDGES SIGNAL A SCORE FOR AKA

If after Yame, two Judges signal a score for Aka and the other Judge does not signal, can the Referee give a score to Ao?

The rules state that the Referee cannot go against two Judges unless she/he has the positive support of the other Judge. Therefore, the Referee must award the score to AKA

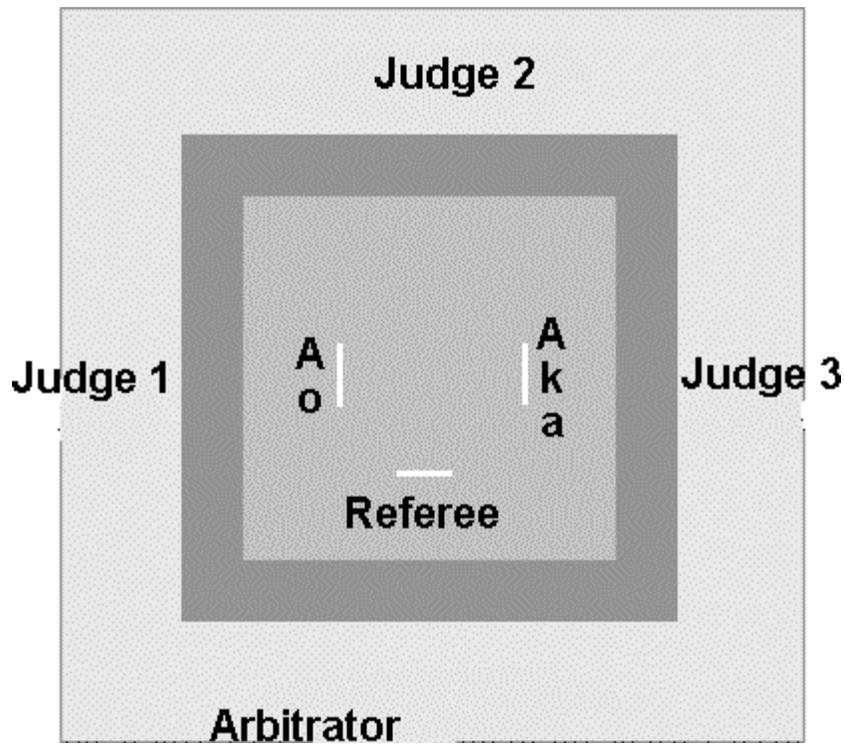
JOGAI

Judges must remember that when indicating Jogai they are required to tap the floor with the appropriate flag. When the Referee stops the bout and returns to the starting position, they should then indicate a Category 2 infringement.

INDICATION OF RULES INFRINGEMENTS

For Category 1 infringements Judges should first circle the with the appropriate colored flag, then extend the crossed flags to their left for Aka, putting the red flag in front, and to their right for AO, putting the blue flag in front. This enables the Referee to clearly see which competitor is regarded as the offender.

APPENDIX 6: LAYOUT OF THE KUMITE COMPETITION AREA



Measurements of Kumite Competition Area

