

## Rule Proposals for USAMA 2020 Point Year

**Proposal #1: New Rule: In kumite each competitor, is allowed a coach who shall be seated in a designated chair on their competitors side of ring.**

**Rationale:** As Martial Artists numbers have grown as of recently with karate being in the Olympics this 2020, and other reasons, I have seen how the big organizations such as ITF WKF JKA etc, regulate a sparring ring, I have grown particular fond of how each of the two fighters or Competitors, are allowed one coach in a chair on their side of ring line. Only their coach can speak or "officially" coach verbally to benefit their student. I believe by adapting this rule, it would cut out many of the issues such as coaching on sidelines, speaking other languages, giving body signs, and on the flip side spectators also get angry when they are accused by another spectator from the other team or Competitor of coaching.

By having "One Coach", it would eliminate all of those issue, especially when the only talking allowed from anyone around the rings, would be the official coaches, ring judges or scorekeepers or time keepers. As the professionalism of USAMA in my opinion grows so much away from any other Martial arts Organizations I have ever known, so should we continue to strive to continue that way...and pull away from the pack, this rule change I propose could make an incredible impact in a positive manner for USAMA and all members.

---

**Proposal #2: Current rule (Proposal is to amend current rule by deleting rule portion with strikethrough and highlighted in yellow)** Ref: Current Rulebook: Section A, General Tournament Information #8

b. Beginning divisions are comprised of students who are a 7th, 8th, 9th or 10th kyu, gup, kup or grade in their system (based on a 10 kyu system) ~~or have been continuously training for 1.5 years or less, whichever is more restrictive.~~

c. Intermediate divisions are comprised of students who are a 6th, 5th, or 4th kyu, gup, kup or grade in their system ~~or who have been continuously training 1.5 – 4 years, whichever is most restrictive.~~

d. Advanced divisions are comprised of students who are a 3rd, 2nd or 1st kyu, gup, kup or grade in their system ~~or who have been continuously training for more than 4 years.~~

**Rationale:**

While I can appreciate what the current rules do to stop "career" yellow and blue belts from dominating a division, I feel that they are doing more harm than good. And I say this from the view point of a judge, instructor, and father.

The current rules, and how the question is asked on registration forms, fails to take into consideration children who may only train one day a week, children who take months off at a time for sports or other extracurricular activities, and children who suffer from learning disabilities.

Many youths I see in these advanced divisions, have natural talent and drive to exceed in the martial arts. But many of them also sign up for their instructor's black belt clubs or they take classes three or four days a week. By all accounts they have worked hard enough to be in those advanced divisions. But then comes "Little Billy" who started martial arts two years ago, but is only a yellow belt. He takes three months off a year to play basketball, and then another three months off to do soccer. Maybe he also does music classes, art classes, Boy Scouts as his parents have tried to encourage him to do as much things as possible. So he only has one day a week to take karate lessons and only for a few months a year because every other activity demands so much. Or maybe "Little Billy" would like to come down more, however, his parents are not financially able to pay for classes. So he decides to try a tournament and while filling out the registration form he sees "years in martial arts" or

"year started martial arts". Well he started two years ago, so he rightly enters that not realizing that he now put himself, as a beginner, into an intermediate division. And uh oh, there wasn't enough competitors for an intermediate division at his age. Now he is in an advanced division. A yellow belt is now having to compete in kata and sparring against brown belts and junior black belts. Not just is he almost guaranteed to lose but he is going to be severely outclassed by every other competitor.

Then you have the parents, who just paid \$50 to \$100 just to have their child demoralized. If "Little Billy" decides he wants to try another tournament, mom and dad are going to be a lot less likely to shell out the money for it. That's money they could be using on a different sport, or activity, or paying a bill. Maybe they start wondering if martial arts is really even worth it for "Little Billy". The vast majority of parents I talk to are totally fine with their child losing. It's a great learning experience. It's probably the most valuable lessons in martial arts competition, to come back even after you lost. But it's one thing to have your child lose a fair competition but something else entirely to have your kid not even stand a chance at all.

Then you have the children who learn differently. Me personally, these are the kids who I feel benefit the most from martial arts. Maybe they are just not physically gifted. For example, they do not realize that their foot is positioned wrong in a specific stance almost every time because they are focusing on their hands, or the next pattern in the kata. Maybe they have a learning disability like ADHD or high-functioning Autism, or both. So they just do not progress as fast as their classmates. They have been participating karate classes for two years, and they keep making small improvements, but they are not at that intermediate level yet. Parents and/or instructors of these non-neurotypical (nuerodiverse) students know just how important every single little improvement is. These children should have every right to go out and compete with their peers. I'm going to assume that all of us within this organization know the benefits of competition. And these children deserve the chance to be able to experience those benefits from fair competition. But if the children are not being fairly matched against children of equal level, whether neurotypical or nuerodiverse, they are not going to receive those benefits of competition.

Now of course not every school promotes students the same way. There are different technique standards, different time restrictions, different belt colors, and different ideas on what it takes for a student to be at a certain level. The current rules were meant to level that playing field, but I feel like they have missed their mark and caused a greater problem. In all my years of teaching I have never seen a student stop competing because there was one kid in their division who was just too good. But I have seen many students stop competing because they knew they were going to be put in a division above their skill level. And I have seen those same students then lose interest in martial arts and leave. I've seen parents flat out refuse to let their child compete because of the current rules.

Almost every tournament I go to, I see children moved into divisions they do not belong in. And every tournament I have to explain to a parent and/or their coach why a child is in a division they are not skilled enough to be in. And I agree with them that it is not a fair rule. I have talked to other parents whose children may not be experiencing that problem but they tend to agree it is not fair the way the rules are now.

#### Benefits to this rule change:

In a perfect world every child who tries martial arts will fall in love with it and continue doing martial arts for the rest of their lives. But that is not the reality. We are competing with other sports, other activities and other fundamentally different rule sets (kickboxing, grappling, etc) to keep children and adults interested in our sport and the benefits it provides. Anything that is perceived to unfairly place competitors in the wrong division is detrimental to our sport. Thusly, it is in our best interest to adjust our rules to offer fair competition to people of all walks of life. Whether they are at the dojo six days a week or one day a week. Rich or poor, in time or money. Naturally gifted or non-neurotypical. The more people competing in our sport, the better. This rule change will help to encourage more competitors to stick with competing.