

Barb Houston-Shimizu Reelection Platform

As we look ahead to the coming four years, I would like to ask for your vote so that I can continue working as your representative on the USA Judo Board of Directors.

The last four years have seen many improvements in the refereeing sphere. A **referee roster** was developed to provide accountability and transparency in the selection for tests and events. **Referee meetings were opened** for greater transparency and regular **referee town halls** have been held for questions and feedback. The **referee budget** is as high as it's been in more than a decade (allowing for more robust referee, CARE, and weigh-in stipends). We are now serving breakfast to referees at the four national events, saving time and money on game day. I have secured **more travel funds** for the commission's budget.

In spite of these improvements, we have a lot of work ahead of us. The average age of US referees is over 50 and a large number of older referees are starting to retire across the country. We need **intentional youth development** to expand the number of referees in order to support the growth of our sport. I have begun collecting materials from youth referee programs in other countries to help in this effort. At the same time, we need to **provide opportunities** for our referees **to travel** and develop. In 2019, I attended the World Championships in Tokyo for this purpose, securing three international slots for N-4 and B referees at foreign national-level events. COVID broke out immediately thereafter, so these efforts had to be put on hold, but it is clear that there are opportunities for international experience and exposure, not only for referees bound for the IJF circuit, but for national and international referees in general.

A key strategic focus of the board has been growing member benefits. USA Judo membership now includes access to **three valuable tools** at reduced rates: the **American Judo System** (comprehensive judo instruction with additions around coaching and dojo management to come), **My Studio** (dojo management software automating membership, promotions, events, and intra-club communications), and **Smoothcomp** (an affordable tournament management platform that will professionalize tournaments at all levels throughout the country). In the coming year, we need to focus on rolling out these products with trainings. In addition, I am currently working directly with the developers of Smoothcomp to incorporate kata competition management into the platform as well. Smoothcomp does not incorporate referee functions at this point, so your dialogue with me will be critical in directing development of this product. (Initial thoughts expressed to me so far include referee match assignments and tagging referees on national matches to more easily access and review performances to help with development. What else can you envision?)

In 2021, I had the opportunity to do a site visit in Kannapolis, North Carolina, where the **US Performance Center** is looking to build out a multi-sport campus hosting programs for several national governing bodies. This organization would provide free national training and venue space, housing for coaches and athletes, in-state tuition with some college scholarships, and multi-sport corporate sponsorships, thereby providing the basis of a national Cadet/Junior training program. USPC progress has been held up by COVID; as this comes back on-line, we will have to work hard to increase our budget to support such a national program. In the meantime, the board is pushing hard for development of a more robust coaching development & certification program. I have a particular interest in this work as I feel education is an important piece of **improving referee and coaching relations**.

I have engaged in a lot of work on policy and governance. Bantam players are now allowed to compete in multiple divisions, **getting players more matches** and increasing revenue for tournaments. **Policies** such as conflict-of-interest disclosure, code of conduct, whistleblower protections, and financial policies and procedures have all been **updated**, helping to build organizational integrity. **By-Laws** were also updated to incorporate these policies and increase athlete representation (as per USOPC requirement). In changing the by-laws, we sought to increase member voice by allowing the general membership to vote for what are now three at-large board positions. **Governance and operational challenges** in the coming years will **include insurance rates** that have skyrocketed and **ensuring Safe Sport compliance**. Finally, our focus on **international relations** must increase, especially in the lead up to LA 2028.

I hope this provides insight into the board work that has been happening and where my efforts will lie in the coming four years. I would greatly appreciate your vote to continue these initiatives. I would also greatly appreciate hearing from you with your questions, concerns, and ideas at barbshimizu@comcast.net. Wishing the best for you and your family!