

If you're going to San Francisco, be sure to bring your Gi. I had the pleasure of visiting a number of clubs there earlier in the year.

The layout of one of the clubs was similar to our own at Creaven House-minus the sauna and the climbing ropes. A mixture of people of every age, with several very experienced Dan grades teaching. William Desmole, a French national, who teaches P.E. in a local school, was coaching. The club can be found at 2530 Taraval St, San Francisco, CA 94116.

Because of William's professional job, he had a very instructive approach in his teaching. It was about getting good body positions over conditioning. A lot of good instruction, light randori and finally some stretching at the end of class. William was ably assisted by John Bairenthone, 6th Dan, who has been coaching and refereeing on the West Coast for several years. Judo is very strong both on the East and West coasts of the USA with very little in the centre.

I also observed Jabal Miki, a Japanese National; who is also coaching young players. I have been able to persuade him to come to our Annual Summer camp-mind you he didn't need much persuasion!

The members observed Judo etiquette very well and I was impressed with the way the members all cleaned the mats, when practice was over. The standard of Judo was comparable with what we have here in Ireland-any of our members would fit in there perfectly, both juniors and seniors.

I then visited another club in San Bruno. It was named Cahill's Judo Academy, located at 635 San Mateo Avenue, San Bruno, Ca 94066.

The club couldn't have been more different. The junior class was just finishing, so the seniors were arriving. Some of the seniors arrived only arrived for randori. They dispensed with the preliminaries, such as exercises etc. One player José stood out. He simply couldn't get enough fights. He wore a perpetual smile, while executing a range of Ippon throws. This club seemed to be less about teaching, but was contest orientated.

There's a place for both. José, I was told later, had been an American Champion. He also had coached at San Jose University, where judo is very strong. There was a great mix of nationalities at both clubs, but at San Bruno, you had better be prepared and know your ukemi!

Now, you're wondering what brought me to the West Coast. I had the pleasure of attending the wedding of Oisín Heneghan, son of Frank, 1ST Dan, who are life-members of Galway Judo Club. All Frank's three sons practised Judo, while growing up in Galway. Darragh hopes to take it up again, but not at San Bruno!

John Creaven
Chairperson Judo Ireland