

Obituary: Anton Geesink

Anton Geesink, recently passed away leaving the judo world mourning one of our greatest legends.



Anton Geesink, who died on August 27th, was the man who

showed the world it was possible.

Just when it seemed nobody could hold a candle to the Japanese, the imposing Dutchman changed the face of the sport as he beat them at their own game.

Geesink broke the country's stranglehold over judo's world crowns in 1961 as he beat defending title holder Koji Sone of Japan to become the first Western judoka to win the World Championships.

His coaching team rushed onto the mat amid euphoric scenes which were replicated when he returned home to Utrecht as a national hero.

That landmark achievement, which was only as immense as his towering frame – standing at a 6-foot-6 and 245 pounds, saw him become a worldwide star and

continue to cultivate one of the sport's greatest and most memorable careers.

The former open-weight king would go on to achieve arguably his most celebrated feat three years later as the world bared witness.

Judo's Olympic debut in 1964 coincided with the first satellite broadcast of the world's greatest sporting spectacle. Geesink ensured hosts Japan wouldn't register a clean sweep as he defeated Akio Kaminaga to claim open-weight gold.

On the European stage Geesink also ruled, winning the European Championships on 21 occasions before retiring in 1967.

In 1973 the venerated 10th Dan embarked on a part-time pro wrestling career after being recruited by Giant Baba, the founder and poster boy of the flourishing All Japan promotion.



Geesink became one of the promotion's original stars and, given his level of stardom and previous exploits in the country, he attracted mainstream media coverage.

In 1986, Geesink, who had already changed the face of the sport, paved the way for a change of colour as he recommended the introduction of the blue judogi at the IJF Directing Committee meeting in the Netherlands city of Maastricht.

A year later he joined the Dutch National Olympic Committee and the International Olympic Committee.

The 2003 IJF Hall of Fame inductee, a four-time national sportsman of the year in the Netherlands, was also honoured with a statue by his home city of Utrecht.

He is survived by his wife Jans; his sons, Willy and Anton; and his daughter, Leni.

Obituary: Senta Yamada

Senta Yamada, one of the Japanese judo pioneers who helped established judo in Great Britain, died on August 8th 2010.



Senta Yamada, who was one of the most influential Japanese judo instructors in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, died from pancreatic cancer in his home town of Fukuoka on August 8. He was 86 years-old.

Graded 6th Dan at both judo and aikido, he taught mainly in London and also at Cambridge University, where he instructed from 1962 until his return to Japan in 1965. Yamada began judo aged 10 and was educated at the Kobe Merchant Marine University. Arguably the highlight of his competitive career was when he represented eastern

Japan against western Japan in a tournament in 1951. He coached widely in his home country, including advising police forces and also the United States Security Forces Headquarters. He was promoted to 6th Dan in 1959.

That year, he was given a two year contract to teach at the London Judo Society near Vauxhall, where he was renowned for his technical excellence, especially his fluent tsuru-komi-goshi. In September 1963, he officially opened his own club, the Regency Judo Aikido Kai in Stoke Newington. This event included a match between

members of the club and a visiting team from the Japanese Navy. This was narrowly won by the club of Yamada, who then did a line-up of the five Britons, whom he threw in a total of 105 seconds.

Simultaneously to instructing in London, he began teaching at Cambridge University with Yamada making a big impact in the short time he was with the club. Despite returning to Japan, he made frequent trips abroad to teach judo or, particularly, aikido. His last visit to Cambridge was in 2006, where he attended a dinner at Churchill College.