

# Jean-Marc Schedel

A high-performance sport coach



**Tell us about your back ground in martial arts?** I started martial arts like many kids in Europe in practicing judo and its original form -jijitsu. My first instructor was Master Kazuhiro Mikami, a highly ranked judoka closely related to the judo headquarters in Tokyo. Several years later I became recognized as a Swiss national champion in the discipline before becoming committed to sport karate where my real passion was. I had wonderful opportunities of training with several legendary grand masters in their home dojo in Japan, which developed my respect for their rich culture and their traditional educative methods. Among them was Master Yushio Shugino, descendant of the very traditional Katory-shinto-ryu kendo school, used as a mechanical ideal model for many aikido or aikijujitsu schools, or Master Minoru Mochizuki, descendant of a Samurai family with its constantly evolving jujitsu and Yoseikan school.

My interest in traditional karate gave me opportunities to regularly meet experts from the major Shotokan schools, followed by my growing appreciation of the main schools derived from Okinawa (Goju-ryu, Shito-ryu, Ryuei-ryu and Uechi-ryu). Actually besides my main focus on the sport aspect of traditional karate, I continue to look with a great admiration and passion the rich pedagogy and cultural education transmitted continuously by these authorities.

**Who did you train under and what countries?** My first real instructor of Karate was Mr C. Eriksson-Ford a kata specialist responsible for promoting kata in Switzerland. He and his wife know Australia very well as his wife is an Australian Olympic champion and multi-medallist in swimming. While she was later appointed by Lausanne University to further develop their sport department, I was lucky to be involved in her team for promoting sport karate. This experience helped me to manage two other clubs in Lausanne. With Lausanne being close to France, I was regularly welcomed in Paris to train with their national squad. This is where I met Michael Milon, the former world champion in kata. I was then appointed to work at the Fukuoka University in Japan with a team of sport specialists in physiology and biomechanics. This University is very renowned in Asia for their sport sciences department, as well as Japanese classic sports such as gymnastic, baseball, soccer, judo and karate. Mr S. Nishimura, the Japanese national coach in kumite was the head of karate there and gave me the opportunity to train with his team. I later returned to

Europe, and having an Italian nationality I improved my involvement in Karate and high-performance with my Italian coach and

mentor Mr. Mauro Rovelli. At this time Mauro was captain of the national team in kata, which had won the WKF world cup in 1997, and which included some famous athletes such as the kata world champion Luca Valdesi. The talented technician Lucio Maurino took over the work done by Mauro. My passion for quality gave me the chance to meet and then develop sincere friendships with several top awarded athletes from different countries and in particular from Japan and Italy.

**What is your academic background?** I have a strong scientific background in biochemistry. Interested in understanding the muscular activity I have pursued my studies and obtained a PhD in sport sciences where I specialized in exercise physiology.

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When I started my three levels of coaching education in Switzerland, it was in the field of Judo, and at that time nothing official was in place for karate. I then joined the Swiss Olympic educational program to become a certified high-performance sport coach. I have received several recognitions and have been involved in the Swiss Olympic educational program for all sports as well as the Olympic Solidarity International seminar, along with an academic distinction for my teaching pedagogy. My Swiss Olympic thesis has been published in Switzerland and shows the relationship between traditional education and modern sport sciences in the form of a communication toolkit for coaches working with individual athletes.

Besides, several of my scientific studies have been published in international scientific journals such as in Life Sciences, the Japanese Journal of Physiology, the

International Journal of Sport Medicine and Physical Fitness and in the Swiss Journal of Sport Medicine. I have also published a book on the karate and I am now interested in developing a coaching method for teaching the correct biomechanical use of the muscular chain for improving high-level karate activities.

**How does your academic background influence your karate training?** When I first commenced being successful as an athlete, I started to ask myself why some athletes were able to improve their performance to a high level and sustained the ability to remain at the top of their sport and made it seem so easy, while other athletes with huge commitment to their sport just never succeeded. I therefore wanted to understand how the human body responds to the stress associated with high-intensity exercise activity, such as that experienced during an international performance.

This initial interest in sport sciences in parallel to my own international experience helped me to focus more efficiently my efforts, and in return improved the quality of my athletic preparation. During my period as an international competitor I won or made the finals of many WKF competitions held across Europe, including France, Italy and Germany, as well as overseas.

Then as a coach, I started to understand that one major factor helping to reach a high skill level in sport competition was to avoid wasting time and energy on training matters unessential to reach a higher performance. This training concept is an even more important factor in highly coordinative disciplines such as karate. I have unfortunately met too many motivated and talented athletes brought to the brink of overtraining and burn out without even approaching a satisfactory international standard. Many of these athletes could've achieved their potential through some easy corrections by a coach with knowledge of advance coaching.

When I started to be involved in more high-performance coaching commitments, I realized that my investment into sport physiology of anaerobic performance in relationship with biomechanics was a very efficient and the easiest way to bring an athlete to higher standard in a shorter time and without wasting its energy.

Therefore my academic understanding of the athlete combined to the field experience allowed me to build up a clear rationale about the factors necessary for improved performance. This is very useful when you have to train athletes and explain to their coaches the scientific mechanisms, and the consequences, behind their instructions.