

Religious Head Covering Policy

Whereas, from time to time Judo Canada receives questions as to what is acceptable and what is not acceptable to be worn during a judo contest and;

Whereas, Judo Canada fully realizes that an individual's religious beliefs must be accommodated to the point of undue hardship;

Therefore, Judo Canada's policy with respect to the wearing of a head covering for religious reasons during a judo contest is as follows:

The International Judo Federation (IJF) Contest Rules define what a judo uniform (judogi) is and by omission, answers what is not allowed. For example, head coverings, stockings and shoes are not acceptable items of a judo uniform because they are not listed in Article 3 of the Contest Rules. Personal preferences outside of the specifications allowed by Article 3 are not permitted.

In some sports, accommodation for religious beliefs is easier than in others. By its very nature, Judo is a combative sport which involves throwing, grappling and choking. The head area is aggressively attacked and must be controlled during the application of a variety of grappling techniques (osae-waza) and choking techniques (shime-waza).

Anything that is worn on the head is therefore subject to accidental removal or may cause injuries to either contestant. Additionally, anything that is worn on the head puts the attacker at a disadvantage if he/she has to carefully work around the item being worn for fear of dislodging it. There is a potential injury to the hands or fingers of the attacker due to entanglement in the head covering and potential injury to the wearer if the attacker uses the head covering to choke the wearer or control the wearer's head.

Interruptions in the flow of the contest in order to adjust a head covering provide a further advantage to the wearer and conversely, a disadvantage to his/her opponent. For example, long hair is required to be tied so as to avoid causing an inconvenience to the other contestant. A penalty is assessed to a contestant if his/her long hair continually comes untied and causes delays in the match.

It must be noted that the IJF has 185 member countries, a number of which are primarily Muslim based countries, who all follow the IJF Contest Rules and do not allow competitors to wear such religious head coverings.

Therefore, Judo Canada, in adhering to the International Judo Federation Contest Rules as well as the reasons listed above, will not allow competitors to wear head coverings during a judo contest for either religious reasons or for personal preference.