

BRITISH SCHOOLS JUDO CHAMPIONSHIPS

It was a long drive to the competition as the British Schools Judo Championships were taking place in Sheffield. 5 hours stuck in the car with my mum coughing and sneezing the whole way was the not the best of situations. By the time we arrived at the hotel she had shared her germs with me. I was feeling rough and not in the mood to be taking part in the biggest competition in my judo career so far. I dosed myself up with loads of vitamin C and rubbed so much vapour rub onto my chest that I thought I was going to melt.

The morning of the competition, I didn't know what to expect. The competition was taking place at Ice Sheffield, on the ice rink – how was that going to work? Who was I competing against? My nerves and cold were starting to get the better of me.

As I walked into the hall I scanned the room to see if I could recognise anybody from previous competitions, would I be in the same weight group as them, were they in the same school year as me? I looked around and could see worried faces everywhere.

There were over 525 competitors, ranging from yr groups 6 to 13.



The hall was huge and cold. The ice rink had been covered with a special floor and the judo mats sat on top. It had 7 competition areas – the biggest competition I had been to so far only had 3.

I weighed in at 10am – happy with my weight group I decided to have some breakfast – maybe this would help to settle my nerves. The morning crawled by, my friends fought but I had to wait...and wait. I watched as my friend Arek battled his way through to a bronze medal. He had forgotten to bring his competition belts – you need a blue and a white belt to compete. He told me that he had rubbed some luck onto my belts....I was hoping this was true.

Eventually I was allowed into the warm up area. This reminded me of an airport departure lounge. I had to watch for my name and mat number on the large monitors. Then I heard the announcement, “Max Gregory representing Plymstock School to mat 5”. It was time for me to start fighting.

As I stood waiting to go on I could see my first opponent. He was about 3 inches taller than me and a higher grade. The adrenalin started to kick in, making me forget about my runny nose and cough. We bowed on. After 35 seconds of competing for a dominant grip and position I moved in for a forward throw which offset by opponent’s balance and enabled me to continue my attack with a successful backward throw a waza-ari (half score) was called, I transitioned straight away into a groundwork hold. I successfully pinned my opponent for a further 15 seconds to win by Ippon (full score). This win helped to steady my nerves.

Later I had my opportunity to fight for gold. The boy I had to fight looked big and strong, I knew this was going to be a tough fight. After a drawn out contest with both myself and opponent attacking and counter attacking a penalty was given against me for a minor breach of the rules although this is very common; as the clock was running down I knew that unless I came up with something quick my opponent would win because of this. With only 15 seconds remaining I somehow drew the strength to throw him resulting in an ippon which called an end to the fight. I had won!





I was now the 2013 Yr 7 British Schools Judo Champion in my weight group.

I found out after that it had been over 20 years since a member of Plymouth Judo Club had won a National Schools title. I was very proud of myself!

MAX GREGORY

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