

Tai – Otoshi By Inokuma!



ISAO INOKUMA executes tai-otoshi on Bob Miller at Luke AFB AFJA Judo Clinic.

The technical virtuosity of World Champion Isao Inokuma is the pride and wonder of the Japanese Judo world. And no wonder, for this 190 pound bundle of dynamite seems to exemplify the traits of the Judo champion, or champion of any sport. Those who have watched Inokuma over the years agree that he is the finest Judoist most of them have seen. The AFJA's Ed Alseika, himself a fighting fifth degree and a club mate of Inokuma's for many years (they both started in the fifties at the Watanabe Dojo in Yokosuka) says there is none better, as a gentleman and technician.

At the recent World Championships of Judo in Rio, Isao Inokuma took the Open Championship and with it the title of World Champion. In so doing he threw all of his opponents, for the most part, with his fabulous tai-otoshi (body drop). Although famous for several years for his seoi-nage, Inokuma from before the 1964 Olympics to his recent retirement from competition, used tai-otoshi almost exclusively. Tai-otoshi is the perfect throw for the small man against the big man, and this is the way the fights Inokuma has had must be classed. For when Inokuma threw Kibrozachvili of Russia (this is the Russian's name regardless of grossly incorrect spellings you may have seen elsewhere) in Rio, he gave away about sixty pounds, a tremendous disadvantage.

Now for the first time, in the following pages, "THE AMERICAN JUDOMAN" presents a technical analysis of this magnificent technique by the world champion. This analysis, it is hoped, will give just a few ideas about an extremely complex throw made by a very versatile champion who uses it in many ways.

These photos were taken at the AFJA Clinic Inokuma conducted at Luke AFB, Arizona. Mr. Inokuma also conducted AFJA clinics at San Diego Naval Training Station, Travis AFB, and the Sacramento Judo Club before the recurrence of an old back injury forced his return to Japan in the middle of his recent tour.

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INOKUMA DEMONSTRATES the entry for tai-otoshi with Bob Kulwin of Luke AFB.



COMPLETING THE ENTRY for tai-otoshi, the World Champion works with Russ Dobash.



USING A COMBINATION to enter for tai-otoshi, Isao Inokuma shows Russ Dobash how.

THE OFF-BALANCING

Off-balancing one's opponent to prepare him for a Judo throw is at once the most difficult and most delicate portion of the throw. However excellent entry and execution of the throw may be, if the opponent is not off balance, the technique will probably fail.

Inokuma uses many methods of off-balancing. He may get his opponent moving to the side and then intercept his movement. He sometimes urges his man backwards, then suddenly pulls his upper body back forward while the hips and legs keep going backwards, breaking the balance completely. He can swing his opponent either way and reverse to slip under for the throw. But the one he uses most is to catch his opponent flat footed and break his balance with a snap of the right hand before he can resist. In the World Championships he did this against the best in the world with amazing results.

In the upper photo Inokuma is shown in deep right natural posture ready to attack. Notice that he is holding on top of his opponent's right sleeve. Also note that his right elbow is down and slightly bent.

In the center photo the swinging action of the left foot has completed. Important here is the strong upward drive of the right wrist and arm, which is firmly set against the opponent's chest, with elbow deeply bent. There is a strong pull with the left hand, and the opponent is trapped on the toes of his right foot. One of the reasons he is trapped is because he is twisted slightly, showing that Inokuma's right hand is pushing, never pulling, which would permit the opponent to put some weight on his left foot and perhaps shift his right forward to get away.

The lower photo shows an alternate or combination method of breaking balance in which a fake is made with ouchi gari. From either the center or lower photo positions, however, Inokuma is ready to enter and throw. The fake Inokuma is using here is of course ouchi-gari.

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THE ENTRY

Here are two excellent photos of the lightning entry Inokuma uses for tai-otoshi.

It must be remembered that although it appears that Inokuma takes two separate steps or movements to enter, this is not really true in practice. What is shown on the previous page, the swinging back of the left foot, and what is shown here, the shooting of the right foot across in front of the opponent, in fact occur in one leap.

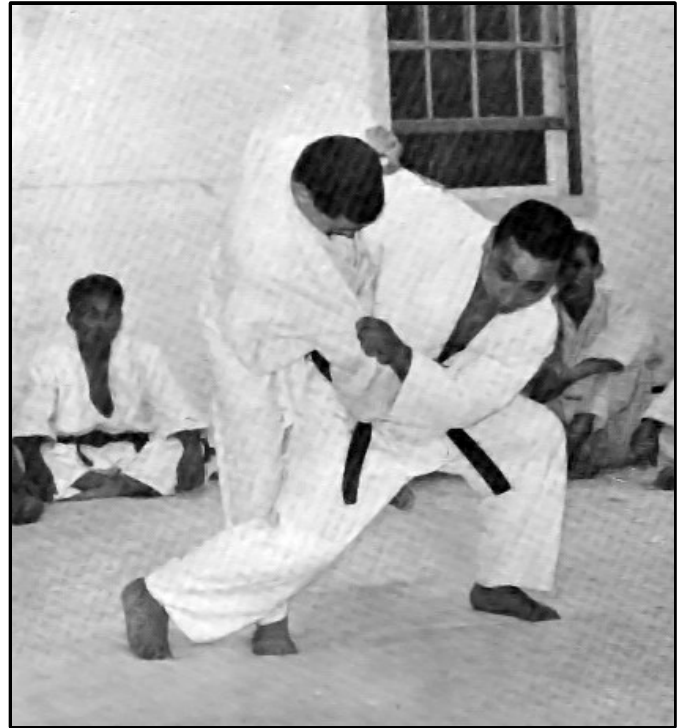
That is, from the very first photo, with the right foot forward, he leaps forward and under his opponent, switching both feet into the position seen in the upper photo on this page. In fact, it is this flash of motion that takes the opponent by surprise and gets Inokuma in and under before the opponent can resist.

Notice that the right foot just barely passes across in front of the opponent's right. The opponent's body is not blocked in any way, the lower photo in particular shows this.

The right hand is continuing its terrific upward push and drive. People who have been thrown with this say they right hand literally jacks them off their feet.

The left hand is now pulling down with tremendous force, with the elbow bent.

Especially note that the body is still not twisted, even though the opponent is completely broken. This means that the hands are still in a powerful position, the body of the thrower has not outdistanced them, the final twisting snap of the body being saved for the delivery.



RIGHT LEG DRIVES across as Isao Inokuma completes his flashing entry for tai-otoshi on Russ Dobash.



THE BODY DROP begins as Inokuma finishes tai-otoshi entry against Russ Dobash at the AFJA clinic held held at Luke AFB in Nov. Nothing blocks the opponent's leg except the thrower's right lower leg.

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THE EXECUTION of tai-otoshi by Isao Inokuma.



WHIPPING ACTION as Inokuma drives down for tai-otoshi against Russ Dobash of Luke AFB.



THE FINAL MOMENT of tai-otoshi by Isao Inokuma.

THE DELIVERY

These three execution photos of tai-otoshi are some of the finest ever made of nearly flawless technique. They show that although there may be minor variations in the favorite technique of a champion, the end is always the same: utter concentration of force.

Of special note in these shots is the attitude of Inokuma's upper body. He has snapped his right shoulder, head and upper body down and around with great force (notice how the opponent's left leg is wildly flying free – a sign of the whipping action). Note that at the end of the dropping twist the head is almost down to the level of the left knee.

The foot position has not changed, the weight being firmly divided between the feet. In the lower photo the whipping action at the end of the throw has completed the circle and pushed Inokuma's weight slightly back on his heels and the sides of his feet, a condition that sometimes happens at the very end of tai-otoshi.

The left knee is bent almost at right angles and in all photos the right leg is still straight, showing perfect form and control.

In some cases of tai-otoshi, still done by experts, there is much more twist of the body, especially when a taller man like George Harris executes this throw. Inokuma's tai-otoshi shows the influence of his seoi-nage in which the upper body is driven straight forward. As his body is short and compact, this style of tai-otoshi suits him perfectly. Others who master the technique may not execute it in exactly the same way, but considering his physique this is the best way for him. Students interested in learning tai-otoshi would do well to stress the fundamentals of the throw rather than trying to copy Inokuma's style slavishly. The masters say that when one learns a technique it becomes one's own, different than anyone else's.

"THE AMERICAN JUDOMAN" would like to offer a special note of thanks to Doug Hall and Ferenc Mercz of the Luke AFB Judo Club, Phoenix, Arizona for these fine photos.