REPORT ON THE 2026 FIK ASIA ZONE REFEREE SEMINAR

World Kendo Championships Referee Selection and Continuous Development of Refereeing Skills

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By: Noriko Matsumoto sensei

1. Purpose of the Report

The FIK Asia Zone Referee Seminar, held on 7 and 8 November 2026, provided an important opportunity for referees to develop their knowledge and practical skills in preparation for international competitions.

The seminar served both as part of the referee selection process for the upcoming 2027 World Kendo Championships and as a referee development programme, including preparation for the 2029 Asia Oceania Kendo Championships (AOKC).

Participation in refereeing seminars is an important part of continuous professional development. Each seminar has provided me with opportunities to review existing knowledge, receive updates on refereeing practices and identify areas for further improvement.

This report outlines the seminar programme, key technical instruction and practical experiences, as well as my observations and learnings that may contribute to the continued improvement of refereeing standards within the Australian Kendo Renmei.

2. Overview of the Seminar

More than 90 participants attended the seminar, including four Hanshi 8th Dan instructors from Japan, as well as referees and Kendo practitioners from various countries.

The seminar was conducted across two courts, each with a different focus and purpose.

Court 1 – World Championships Refereeing: Led by Kiyono Sensei, Hanshi 8th Dan, this court focused on refereeing at World Championships level. Four referee selectors evaluated the participants in preparation for the selection of referees for the 2027 World Kendo Championships.

Court 2 – Preparation for the 2029 Asia Oceania Kendo Championships

The second court was conducted under the instruction of Honna Sensei, Hanshi 8th Dan.

This group focused on referee development for the 2029 Asia Oceania Kendo Championships (AOKC), particularly for instructors and referees dispatched from various Asian countries.

The seminar provided an opportunity for participants to improve their understanding of international refereeing standards and develop greater consistency in their refereeing practice.

3. Seminar Programme and Activities

Detailed instruction was provided on several important aspects of refereeing, including:

- Recognising and judging improper Tsubazeriai.
- Identifying strong and decisive strikes that qualify as Yuko-datotsu.
- Correctly assessing Yuko-datotsu and avoiding missed valid strikes.
- Observing whether Zanshin has been demonstrated.
- Maintaining effective communication and cooperation among the three referees.
- Appropriate positioning and maintaining a clear field of vision.
- Improving consistency and accuracy in refereeing decisions.

The instruction emphasised the importance of careful observation and comprehensive judgement, particularly at the level required for international competitions.

Following the refereeing session on Saturday, participants also attended a Kendo practice session and a welcome party. These activities provided valuable opportunities to interact with participants from different countries, exchange experiences and strengthen relationships within the international Kendo community.

4. Practical Refereeing and Video Review

All participants took part in practical refereeing exercises over the two days.

Each participant refereed three matches per day, completing a total of six matches over the two-day seminar. Participants took turns serving as Shushin and Fukushin, ensuring that everyone gained practical experience in different refereeing roles.

In Court 1, the four referee selectors assessed participants as part of the selection process for referees for the 2027 World Kendo Championships.

This provided opportunities to experience different refereeing positions and responsibilities and to practise applying the principles taught during the seminar.

Video review was also an important component of the training. On seven occasions, video footage was used to review and confirm decisions regarding Yuko-datotsu.

These reviews provided valuable opportunities to examine the validity of strikes, compare different observations and understand the reasons behind correct refereeing decisions.

They reinforced the importance of careful observation and objective assessment rather than relying solely on an initial impression.

5. Key Technical Learnings and Observations

5.1 Judgement of Yuko-datotsu

One of the most important responsibilities of a referee is to determine whether a strike qualifies as a Yuko-datotsu.

A valid strike should not be judged solely by the strength of the impact or whether the Shinai makes contact with the target. Instead, referees should assess the technique as a whole.

Particular attention should be given to:

- The sharpness, accuracy and control of the technique.
- The appropriate use of both the left and right hands.
- The position of the left hand and the maintenance of correct Kamae.
- The coordination of the entire body during the execution of the technique.
- Whether the strike is intentional and properly executed rather than accidental contact.
- The continuation of the movement and the demonstration of Zanshin.
- Whether the player demonstrates proper physical and mental readiness.

Referees should also observe the opponent's movements, particularly the position of the left hand and any changes in posture or Kamae during the match.

Where a player appears to rely excessively on the right hand, referees should carefully assess whether the technique is being executed through coordinated whole-body movement.

It is also important to distinguish between legitimate movements connected to the execution of a technique and actions that may constitute a prohibited act, such as inappropriate use of the hands against an opponent.

Ultimately, the judgement of Yuko-datotsu requires an overall assessment of the quality and effectiveness of the technique.

5.2 Timing and Procedures for Refereeing Decisions

Referees should avoid making decisions too quickly, particularly following an exchange in which the validity of a strike is uncertain.

After a potential valid strike, referees should continue observing the competitors until they have returned to their starting lines. The referees should then resume their designated positions before making any further decisions.

If the referees need to clarify a situation, they should do so calmly and follow the appropriate competition procedures.

It is important to observe the entire sequence of movements, including the actions immediately before and after the strike.

Referees should not rush to signal or make a judgement before the competitors have completed their movements.

5.3 Referees' Positioning and Cooperation

Appropriate positioning is essential for effective refereeing.

Referees should maintain a clear field of vision and remain aware of the positions of the other referees throughout the match.

When referees face each other directly, certain movements of the competitors may become difficult to observe. This can result in different interpretations of the same action.

To minimise this problem, referees should:

- Maintain appropriate distances and positioning.
- Ensure that other referees remain within their field of vision.
- Avoid creating unnecessary blind spots.
- Take a moment to adjust their positions when necessary.
- Observe the overall situation rather than concentrating on only one aspect of the match.

When moving between courts, referees should use the shortest practical route without interfering with ongoing matches.

Effective communication and cooperation among the three referees are equally important. Each referee may have a different viewing angle and may observe different aspects of an exchange. These different perspectives should be considered when making decisions.

5.4 Video Review and Confirmation

The seven video review sessions demonstrated the educational value of examining actual match situations.

Reviewing footage allows referees to reconsider their initial impressions, compare different interpretations and develop a more consistent understanding of Yuko-datotsu.

Where permitted by competition arrangements, video footage may also serve as a supplementary method of confirming decisions when there is disagreement or uncertainty.

6. Key Points to Apply in Future Refereeing

Based on the instruction, practical exercises and observations during the seminar, I believe the following three principles are particularly important for improving refereeing standards.

1. Do Not Rush Your Judgement

Allow sufficient time to observe the competitors' movements. Referees should remain calm and ensure that the action has been properly observed before making a decision.

2. Assess the Technique as a Whole

Do not judge a strike solely by its strength or the moment of contact. Consider the coordination of the hands, footwork, body movement, sharpness of the technique and Zanshin when assessing Yuko-datotsu.

3. Maintain Good Positioning and Awareness of Other Referees

Maintain a clear field of vision and remain aware of the positions of fellow referees. Avoid unnecessary blind spots and allow sufficient space to observe the entire situation.

7. Reflection and Contribution to Australian Kendo Renmei

Attending refereeing seminars is an important part of my ongoing development as a Kendo referee.

Each seminar provides opportunities to review existing knowledge, receive updates on refereeing practices and identify areas where my own refereeing skills can be improved.

The November seminar reinforced the importance of looking beyond the moment of impact and assessing the entire technique, maintaining appropriate positioning and working effectively with fellow referees.

I believe that the knowledge and experience gained through these seminars should not remain limited to individual participants. Sharing these learnings with Australian Kendo Renmei and other referees can contribute to improving the overall standard and consistency of refereeing in Australia.

In particular, the key points discussed in this report may be useful for future referee seminars, grading examinations and competitions conducted within Australia.

I hope to continue participating in refereeing seminars and international development opportunities, applying what I learn to my own refereeing practice and sharing relevant knowledge and observations with the Australian Kendo community.

8. Conclusion

The two-day FIK Asia Zone Referee Seminar provided valuable opportunities to improve technical knowledge, practical refereeing skills and understanding of the standards expected at international competitions.

The detailed instruction from experienced Hanshi instructors, assessment by designated referee selectors, practical refereeing exercises and seven video review sessions all contributed to a deeper understanding of the responsibilities of a referee.

One of the most important lessons was that good refereeing requires more than simply recognising whether a Shinai has made contact with a target. It requires a thorough understanding of Kendo techniques, careful observation, sound judgement, appropriate positioning and effective cooperation among referees.

Continuous learning and sharing knowledge are essential to maintaining and improving refereeing standards.

I hope that the knowledge and insights gained from this seminar will contribute not only to my own development but also to the continued improvement of refereeing standards within Australian Kendo Renmei.

Our common objective should be to uphold the spirit and standards of Kendo while ensuring fairness, consistency and integrity at every level of competition.