



Nuno Delgado: Anyone can be a champion

Nuno Delgado, Portugal's judo ace, believes that his sport is not just about pushing the body to its limits but overcoming obstacles in the mind.



“The best thing about judo is that you are fighting against yourself,” he says. “With this sort of competition, it is not only the physical challenge but also the mental challenge. We have a word in judo, a Japanese word, which is ‘mushin’. It comes from the samurai. It means having an empty mind. This is the greatest challenge for a judoka.”

As Delgado points out, every judo bout starts and ends with a ritual bow to the opponent, which is a sign of respect. It shows, he says, that both combatants believe in the power of sport and competition. “Nowadays, I see the importance of sports for all,” he says. “Everyone has in themselves an Olympic spirit and the

chance of being a champion. So, it's very important seeing people using our example to do sports and to have a good life.”

Now 43, Delgado, says his personal inspiration came from a champion in a completely different sport: he cites Carlos Lopes, who won Portugal's first-ever Olympic gold medal at the 1984 games in Los Angeles, with his victory in the marathon race. “This was the first time I dreamt of becoming an Olympic champion. It became love at first sight,” he says.

As a boy, Delgado was hyperactive, dyslexic, and had postural deficiency syndrome (PDS), giving him what he describes as “uncontrollable energy pulling me.” His sporting potential was not discovered by a coach nor scout, but rather by a psychologist who suggested he try judo to channel his energy. The then six-year-old had never even heard of judo, but he remembers his first judo class – in a barn transformed into a dojo – as a transformational moment. By the time he was 11, he had made his competitive debut.

A. Read the first part of the text and find the equivalents for the following words / expressions in English:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Desafio = _____ | 4. Hoje em dia = _____ |
| 2. Significa = _____ | 5. Amor à primeira vista = _____ |
| 3. Vénia = _____ | 6. Celeiro = _____ |

B. Now that you understand the text better, answer the following questions:

1. What is the greatest challenge for a judoka? → _____
2. Why do judokas bow to the opponent at the start and end of a judo bout?

3. In the text, Delgado mentions 2 important people in his life as a sportsman. Identify them and say why they were important. → _____

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C. Read the second part of the text and find the equivalents for the following words / expressions in English:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Conquistas = _____ | 4. Tiveram dificuldade = _____ |
| 2. Reformar-se = _____ | 5. Conseguir = _____ |
| 3. Bateu um recorde = _____ | 6. Tarefa = _____ |

D. And now, answer the following questions:

1. What amazing event did Delgado organise in 2011? → _____
2. In Delgado's opinion, what is the most difficult thing for a judoka? Why is it so hard to achieve that? → _____

3. Delgado gives us 2 great pieces of advice. What are they? → _____
→ _____

Since then, Delgado has gone on to major achievements including the bronze medal in the under-81kg category at the 2000 Summer Olympics, in Sydney, Australia and winning gold at the European Judo Championships in Bratislava in 1999. Although he was Portugal's flag bearer at the 2004 Athens Olympics, he broke his finger in training before his first bout and was unable to defend his title.

After retiring from competition, he set up the Judo School Nuno Delgado and the Forming Champions for Life programme. He also has a degree in Sports Science from the University of Bath in the UK. In Lisbon's Terreiro do Paço, in 2011, he set a record by leading more than 4,000 children in the largest judo class in the world.

Delgado rates Japan's Yasuhiro Yamashita as the greatest judoka of all time: he retired in 1985 after a run of 203 consecutive victories. As for today, he says France's Teddy Riner - winner of ten World Championships gold medals and two Olympic gold medals - is the man to beat. Like Delgado, they both struggled with meeting the weight requirements of the judo categories. "That is the toughest thing," he says. "We have to fight against our weight, and it is by grams. This is quite tough to manage. It's like Formula 1 racing: the lowest weight with the maximum power."

Delgado recognises that sport is not always easy, and people need motivation. His first tip for anyone beginning is simple. "You should start by breathing," he says. "Breathing is the body's most important task – and it is the main thing we do when we do sport. Enjoy breathing the open air and nature."

His second tip is to set goals. "You should always try to strive to do a little more than you did yesterday, and to gain confidence by achieving these small steps. The biggest secret about being a champion is to know how to take these small steps. You should not expect great changes at the beginning – have patience and enjoy the ride!" he says.

Those two pieces of advice should already take you far, Delgado says, who still keeps himself fit. "I tend to say that I am always competing! This is an attitude in life. But competing is not against anyone – it is competing against myself," he says. "Being active is being more as a person. The biggest challenge is just to start – why not start today?"

Need some motivation? Get inspired with our #BeActive tips.



Hold that squat!

This is probably our toughest tip yet. We tried, and we were not that good. Sit at your desk. Easy right? Well now push away the chair and hold on as long as you can. 10, 20, 30 seconds, 1 minute. Who will win in the office?



Take that bin out and work those biceps!

It smells bad, it's painful and most of the time you don't really want to go. Yes, taking the bins out sounds a lot like going to the gym. So make the most of it! Use those bin bags and go up and down, up and down.

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