

It has been 7 years since I started kendo. Over these years I have met many people including teachers, seniors, juniors, my family, friends, and my kendo coaches. They all taught me something and I really appreciate it. But I started to wonder if it is enough to just appreciate them and not return my gratitude back to them. It was very hard questioning how I could return their gratitude. This question was especially difficult when considering my coaches- even though we receive many things from them, I could not come up with a way to express and show my gratitude.

This summer, I heard a comment from a high school player who was on the national high school baseball championship team. He said “we were able to return to our coaches and teachers our gratitude by winning this tournament.” From this comment, I thought that I could do the same for my supporters by demonstrating my appreciation for them by winning the tournament. This was because they are responsible for our success by teaching us so many skills and techniques to be successful.

Last year I placed third at the kendo tournament and the coaches seemed really happy about the result. At the time I was really happy because I thought I could finally demonstrate my gratitude to the coaches who worked really hard to train us. I began asking myself how those people who lost in the tournament would also be able to return their gratitude to their coaches. If returning gratitude can be expressed by only winning tournaments, then those people who lost cannot return their appreciation to their coaches in this fashion. At that time, I recognized a friend who was also participating but was not fortunate enough to win. He expressed sadness because he lost and was not able to return the coaches the appreciation, although his thoughts and feelings seemed to have been the same as mine.

Summer came and I still couldn't find an answer to my question. At the time the kendo club's senior members were practicing really hard for their final junior high school tournament. They also were practicing at home. As a result, they exhibited great skill and teamwork. The advisor said with satisfactory smile- “thank you all for working hard from the beginning of junior high, showing effort and supporting each other with great team work.” Even though the final result was not as expected, the senior kenshis' hard work touched my heart and it made our coaches happy. By looking at the advisor's expression, I think I now understood what it meant to return gratitude. The coaches in the club were not just teaching us techniques in kendo. They were also teaching us how to grow to be good, upstanding and moral citizens of the future.

I made a resolution that returning gratitude can be accomplished by achieving success, but that this is just one part of the ultimate goal. Isn't the true meaning of returning gratitude to work really hard to achieve and grow to become a good person of character?

I have learned many things about life from kendo. This includes taking things seriously and actively participating, always trying to keep promises, always performing duties as requested, working hard to accept and get along with others, contributing to the world by helping the other people, and not forgetting to show appreciation.

By looking back at myself, I think I still have a long way to go. Even though I started kendo seven years ago, I think I just now recognized what I was learning from kendo. I might make many mistakes in the future but I want to try to learn something from the mistakes. I would like to try hard to be a good person of character and return true gratitude and appreciation to those who supported me.