

No Borders

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“He betrayed us.” “How could he show such excitement?” “What a traitor!”

These were some of the comments I found on the Internet when I was an elementary school student. I was shocked because that was what showed up on the screen when I typed in Hwang Kyung Young, my father’s name. Today, I’d like to talk about how I came to realize what my father is trying to achieve and what I learned from it.

I found those awful comments when my father was the Korean head coach to Japan’s women’s handball team and his team had finally defeated Korea. It became big news especially in Korea because Korea had been the king of Asian handball for a long time. “My father a traitor?” “Did he do something wrong?” I knew he was working hard for his team so I was surprised and upset when I read those offensive remarks. Yet I never told my parents about it. Since then, deep in my heart, I felt sorry for my father.

However this summer, one Japanese woman helped change my attitude about my father. Her name is Yuko Fujii, a Brazilian judo coach in the Rio de Janeiro Olympics. She became famous as a coach because one of her athletes, Rafaela Silva, won the women's 57-kilogram event in the Olympics. It became big news not only because she won Brazil’s first gold medal but also because she was from a favela, or slum. Many families living in favelas are trying to improve their children’s future through judo as well as soccer. So Silva’s gold medal meant a lot to the people. She proved that dreams come true whatever the circumstances are.

A few days after Silva’s victory, I saw a TV program about Yuko Fujii. In the program she said, “There were people who were against my coming to Brazil as a coach. I also couldn’t speak any Portuguese when I began. But, I tried my best to teach not only the technique but also the spirit of judo.” She continued, “I know that there is a growing controversy over coaches working for foreign countries, but I believe that there are no borders in sport. We can grow not only as athletes but also as people by teaching and learning from each other.”

My father came from Korea before I was born so I don’t know how he started his career as a coach in Japan. I heard he couldn’t speak any Japanese at first but soon gained the trust of his team members. Now I have come to understand my father’s dedication to coaching. He is trying to contribute to international exchange through handball. He doesn’t care what people say about him. I am proud of my father, whose determination and talent silences all criticism.

The next Olympic games will be held in Tokyo in 2020. I don’t have a chance to compete for a medal, but I do have a way of participating. I now speak English, Korean and Japanese. I’m going to study more languages and be a multilingual interpreter so that I too can contribute to international exchange among nations.