

Milica D. JOTOV\*

ECPD Faculty for peace and development of the United Nations, Belgrade

Tamara S. RATKOVIĆ\*\*

Faculty of Physical Culture and Management in Sports, Singidunum University, Belgrade

## A PROPOSAL FOR APPLYING THE KAIZEN METHOD IN YOUTH AND PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

*Abstract:* The purpose of this study is to examine the prevalence and applicability of the Kaizen approach in sports. Because it is a widespread phenomenon with great social and cultural significance, sport is prone to highly dynamic, discontinuous, non-linear, and uncertain changes. Major changes (kawar)<sup>1</sup> that affect sport as a social and economically important activity in today's unstable environment pose risks to both the management and the player. The idea behind using the Kaizen approach in sports and the sports industry is to encourage individual participation and continual improvement through a clear and detailed procedure that is tailored to the genuine requirements of every professional athlete. Globalization and socio-technological advancements have had a significant impact on sports and sports activities, and success is now solely determined by monetary value. The Kaizen method can improve the efficiency of every individual, every athlete, and even sports organizations. As a team, the management of the sports organization can accomplish the goals set before itself more quickly with the application of the appropriate Kaizen method, with the quality setting of the operational and logistics management, with gradual and continuous improvement of the makeup and organization of its operations. It is acknowledged that spreading the Kaizen method outside of its country of origin is a powerful tool that aims at the rationalization and effective utilization of all available resources. The goal of the Kaizen technique is constant improvement, which eliminates all unrealistic factors that influence how sports values, such as results, are achieved.

*Keywords:* Sport, Japan, globalisation, management

### 1. INTRODUCTION

“Globalization, the advancement of technology in society, and the informational interconnectedness that eliminates physical and temporal barriers have an unavoidable impact on language itself, which is continually evolving and expanding while also,

\* Naučni saradnik, jotovmimi@gmail.com

\*\* Docent, tamrat56@gmail.com

1 Kawari - change, one of the postulates of Japanese economy and management; without change, even the phase of progress turns into a phase of stagnation, which is necessarily followed by a decline stage. Change is, almost always, a reluctant and violent phenomenon, created under the influence of external factors, which, after resistance to its acceptance, leads to improvement, progress, and the awakening of enthusiasm for new life and professional challenges. M. Jotov, a lecture on Kaizen philosophy, subject: Japanese economics, Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade.

and most importantly, getting richer. Just as some foreign words that have been domesticated in the Japanese language cannot be easily substituted by local expressions, some Japanese words like *kaizen*, *taikun*, *judo*, *karate*, *samurai*, and *ninja* cannot be easily substituted by translation equivalents even if these should exist in other languages.”<sup>2</sup> “The characteristics of the impact of economic globalization on sport indicate the treatment of sport as a worldwide public good within the current flaws in global sport administration and the potential of anticipating a fundamental reorientation in the structure of the global sports system.”<sup>3</sup>

The phrase “Kaizen”, 改善 (ideogram, kanji script), カイゼン (the typical orthographic variant, in which only *kana* script is employed) has a fairly literal meaning of “improvement, progress,” but it also refers, in a broader sense, to the Japanese business concept of continual improvement.

By conducting additional etymological research and parsing the ideogram, Kaizen may be further explained, giving users a better understanding of its fundamental meaning. The first part of the ideogram deriving from the Japanese language, 改 “kai” means “change”, whereas 善, “zen”, means “good”. So, in the literal sense, Kaizen (改善) translates to “change for the better,” “permanent betterment,” or “improvement,” while in a more meaningful sense, it refers to the Japanese business philosophy of continuous progress, or improvement. The phrase Kaizen has permeated nearly every aspect of Japanese culture outside of sports and has come to be synonymous with advancement in any of these fields: business, government, education, or sports. Without a plan, none of these areas of development can go continuously, and since project rationalization is a critical step in this process, a comprehensive detection of all of the project’s segments is also necessary. The foundation of the Kaizen method is self-discipline, order, success, and productivity at work. According to current thinking, the key to Japanese success consists in people who can work well in teams that implement the Kaizen method, have detailed problem-detection skills, and are aware of different cultures in their surroundings. After suffering a crushing defeat in World War II, the Japanese leadership was left with a difficult challenge. Global politics made it necessary to alter the system of economic development, and up until that point, tiny businesses had joined together to form a massive cartel known as “Zaibatsu” (財閥).<sup>4</sup> The translation of the ideogram 財 “Zai” is “wealth, prosperity, money, and possession,” and the translation of the ideogram 閥 “Batsu” is “clique, association, clan, or ancestry.” Four monopolistic firms made up the big conglomerate: Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Mitsui, and Yasuda. These firms were competitive on the global market due to tightly controlled product prices, political ties with the imperial army, and the trade exchange. By losing their privileges in international competition, companies allied into an identical “Keiretsu” (系列) structure, which had a finite number of shares and protected them from unfair competition and stock market fluctuations. “Kei” (系) signifies genus or system; “recu” 列 indicates

2 Milica Jotov, “Sociolinguistic Aspects of Language in Japanese Periodicals in the Era of “Prolonged Stagnation” (2000–2010)” (doctoral diss., Faculty of Philology, Belgrade, 2012, p. 92)

3 Tamara Ratković. The Development Potential of Sport as a Component of the National Economy in the International Business Environment, doctoral thesis, Zadar 2018, p.48

4 Zaibatsu: financial conglomerates, industrial groups

order, rank, or level; and “keiretsu” (系列) designates a conglomerate, a collection of businesses joined together through cross-shareholding. The new circumstances resulted in exceptional achievements without any technological advancements and larger risks because of the Kaizen concept, which concentrated on small steps. The Kaizen concept, which, in comparison to Western management, takes a deeper and wider perspective, is the key distinction between understanding changes in Japan and the West. The essence of Kaizen is in the small steps and details of continuous improvement in all areas, from the top managers to the support staff, rejecting the stigma that something that produces quick results is preferable to continuous improvement or step-by-step improvement before it has been time-tested and has survived. The changes are gradual and do not have immediate, observable results. Although they are ongoing and have long-term benefits and results, they are imperceptible on a daily basis. These benefits and outcomes are developed on the grounds of extensive research and tested by competent managers, as well as the employees who participate in the production process. In the context of sports, this further translates to the active participation of the top sports management, coaches, athletes, as well as the entire staff who participate in the process of the organization of training (an equipment manager who takes care of locker rooms and the equipment; a hygienist; a court and sports club keeper; a coffee maker, etc.). The fundamental difference between Japanese and Western business philosophy is that the former is goal-oriented, whereas the latter is process-oriented, with a focus on every stage of the process that inevitably leads to the fulfillment of goals and excellent results, eliminating errors during each stage of the process to reduce the possibility of devastation to a minimum, with a huge saving of resources that would be an irreparable loss in the final production stage.

## 2. THE APPLICATION OF THE KAIZEN METHOD IN SPORTS

In terms of history, we find a foothold in the “universal key” during the early stages of the development and application of the Kaizen technique in youth and professional sports. The emergence of Japanese sports and the business sports environment (to link them) are consistent etymologically and structurally with the overall industrial development and global trends. Japanese sports and sports management had its origins in the development of recreational sports during World War II, and during peacetime they were reinforced by the growth of developmental activities and personal ambitions. The samurai were activated as *de facto* authorities and equivalents to dictators in ancient times with the establishment of the Takugawa Shogunate (1600–1868), when the emperor was only the *de iure* ruler of Japan. The samurai conceptual system gravitated toward Mahayana Buddhism—perfect and absolute Zen stillness—as the starting point of the intuitive body movement, not knowledge. Excellent bodily mobility was the only thing the primitive warrior had as an asset. Japanese sports disciplines, training sessions, and competitions thus started to develop under the influence of Chinese Taoism, Confucianism as a formalist theory, and Shintoism, which was proclaimed the nation’s religion in 1889. The development of Japanese sports disciplines, training sessions, and sports competitions fully met the demands of the

samurai for competitiveness as well as the samurai code of honor, a fundamental tenet of a warrior philosophy based on strict norms and regulations that were more moral than written. In other words, the philosophical movement known as Kaizen brought together Zen Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism. Kaizen received its transferability to next generations from Shintoism, its moral code from Confucianism, and its intuitive perception and logistical strategy from Zen Buddhism, which elaborated on its language expression and spiritual demands. The Deity of the Samurai, according to the Japanese phrase (*munem muso de aru*)<sup>5</sup>, symbolized the ideal warrior who, after death, leaves behind no stains and untarnished honor based on the Kaizen philosophy of constant upward trajectory. However, the Deity of the Samurai is asymmetrical because of faddism, historical conditioning, tradition, the whims of individuals, and technological innovations. This philosophy is synonymous with the development of Japan today. Based on it, the Kaizen experience started to be applied in varying aspects of life, and its underlying principles also started to knock on the doors of monasteries and other places of worship. By developing the frameworks of a logical approach and its verbal expression, this significantly contributed to the samurai philosophy, Shintoism, and Confucianism's reliance on the analytical side of the spirit and the source of intuitive awareness of the "otherworldly consciousness." On a worldwide scale, outside of sports, the Kaizen philosophy has evolved into the cornerstone of a sustained and healthy competitive strategy for every successful business, whose outcomes result from minor improvements and serve as the primary drivers of economic growth. The "5S" approach, which stands for Seiri (整, thorough sorting), Seyton (整頓, arranging, disassembling), Seiso (道道, cleaning, removing dirt), Seyketsu (慧灑, standardization), and Shitsuke (しふさ, maintenance), is one of the well-known strategies that sublimate the foundation of Kaizen, implying the standardization and implementation of the management process at all levels of decision-making. Long before it was defined in the fields of economics, business, and management, the English theorist, scientist, and naturalist Charles Darwin (1809–1882), the creator of the first modern theory on the evolution of living things, supported and applied the Kaizen philosophy, asserting that the essence of successful changes is adaptation. As a result, it eventually found its way in other spheres of life.

Just as Japanese civilization advanced incomparably faster than that of other nations due to Kaizen, so did and does Japanese sport. The first images that come to mind when thinking of Japan are likely traditional Japanese sports and kimono-clad martial artists with black belts squaring off on tatami mats. The black belt is now a household name and represents the might of Japan. Martial arts, also known as "budo" (武道, literally, "the path of the warrior"), are the embodiment of Japanese sport. Samurai, also known as the "bushi" (武士) or "aristocratic warrior class," were the forerunners of this class. The code of conduct for samurai is known as "bushido" (武士道).

In both war and peace, the samurai were expected to be highly adaptable, competent with both weapons and in bare-handed fighting. The fundamental tenet of Japanese sporting success is education. Like a samurai, an athlete needs a high level of

5 Munem muso de aru: freed from worldly and worthless thoughts, all worldly cares.

education, and an intellectual must engage in physical activity. In addition to mastering the art of combat, the ideal samurai warrior was also skilled in the arts of calligraphy, the art of arranging flowers, i.e., ikebana, the ritual of sipping traditional Japanese matcha tea, i.e., the tea ceremony, and literature, particularly poetry.

A successful athlete in today's world must also have a strong education, which he never neglects during his career in athletics. Globalization imposes new challenges and sets new demands. In addition to professional achievement, Olympic Games, Champions Cups, and international competitions demand that the athletes should know other languages, cultures, and customs with the purpose of improved communication and connection on a worldwide scale. The adage "sekai va semai" (世界は狭い)<sup>6</sup> shows a map of the world's sports and declares sportsmen to be ambassadors of harmony, development, and prosperity.

Athletes frequently unconsciously use Kaizen principles. They continually improve their abilities through exercises, training, and competitions, always aiming to surpass their previous targets and outcomes. Above all, sport is a humane and honorable social discipline that upholds the principles of the samurai code of honor.

## 2.1 Humanism and the samurai code of honor

The purpose of this chapter is to look at and demonstrate the cultural uniqueness of humanism in Japan, which dates back to Confucius and Buddha and emphasizes human dignity and humane interpersonal relations on the basis of the samurai code of honor; long before Socrates, who is regarded as the first great humanist of all time. Humanism has been discussed since the time of the Ancient Greeks in Europe, and it was described in ancient manuscripts as far back as 2-3000 years old in Asia. During the Renaissance, humanism was revived and is still a significant philosophical movement today.

The first Christian Jesuits who arrived in Japan believed they had discovered an Asian counterpart to their Christian humanism. It should be noted, though, that Christian humanism is theocentric, whereas both Buddhism and Confucianism are strong enough in their humanistic views that neither of them requires divine help to achieve liberation, enlightenment, or a good life.

The Confucian adage "It is man that can make the Way great and not the Way that can make man great" provides the best explanation for humanism in "The Way of the Warrior" (bushido). Zen Buddhism, which celebrates the beauty of transience and the transience of beauty by returning to tradition through rituals like tea ceremonies, calligraphy, or fragrance ceremonies, serves as a source of inspiration and encouragement for the samurai. "The fabric of Japanese culture is created by both the beauty of transience and the transience of beauty."<sup>7</sup> An unwritten code that refers to the moral standards of a warrior is based on the seven virtues:

6 Sekai va semai: The world is small.

7 Milica Jotov, "Sociolinguistic Aspects of Language in Japanese Periodicals in the Era of "Prolonged stagnation" (2000-2010)" (doctoral diss., Faculty of Philology, Belgrade, 2012, p. 56

1. Gi (義): sincerity, righteousness
2. Yu (勇): courage
3. Jin (仁): goodness
4. Ray (礼): politeness, civility
5. Makoto (誠) or Shin (真): truth, honesty
6. Meijo (名誉): honor
7. Chugi (忠義): faithfulness or Chu (忠): duty and loyalty

The breach of these moral principles could be redeemed solely by the ritual offering of one's own life (sepuku, harakiri 切腹、腹切り), which permanently cleared the name of the samurai and his progeny.

The renowned warrior Miyamoto Musashi excelled at sculpture, calligraphy, and painting in addition to being a brilliant swordsman. A true samurai needed to be adaptable and display his creative identity in addition to his military skills. Also, he had to receive a higher education in the humanities while neglecting his study of mathematics (spiritual values were more appreciated than material ones). "According to the teachings of the great Japanese sword masters, perfect swordsmen avoid fighting or getting into arguments. The key, though, is that the warrior should use this art to develop in and learn the Way (Tao). This type of art can advance the mind and spirit if practiced properly."<sup>8</sup>

A time when people moved back to old values rooted in the warrior's moral code, philosophy, and education, the Renaissance started in Japan in the 18th century. These ideals were the samurai's greatest support in displaying compassion and respect for a wounded opponent, as well as their most effective weapons in the battle against their own egos, next to the katana. At the start of the Renaissance, this period presented ancient Japanese poetry and history in all their magnificent beauty, like a cherry tree in full bloom, and it revived old customs, ceremonies, arts, and literature. This period also revealed the rich cultural heritage of Japan in all its fullness.

### 3. JAPANESE MARTIAL ARTS

Depending on whether they were created before or after the 19th-century abolition of feudalism and the samurai class, Japanese martial arts can be broadly separated into two major groups: the traditional "koryu" (古流武術) group and the contemporary "gendai" (经代武術) group. Traditional, ancient "Koryu" (古流武術) schools of martial arts were created specifically to serve the needs of the samurai, in contrast to contemporary "Gendai" schools, whose main goal is to develop the practitioner's character in accordance with his or her physical, mental, and spiritual preferences necessary for self-defense. When all of the Koryu schools are integrated, practitioners are prepared for both unarmed combat (jūjutsu) and the use of weapons (kendo (剣道) for swordsmanship; naginata (薙刀) for fighting with a spear and halberd; kyudo (弓道) for archery, etc.). Samurai warriors were trained by traditional martial arts schools in Japan in a variety of "specializations" and "techniques," rather than just one discipline. The greatest assurance of peace in Japan during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries and

during the rule of the shoguns, or military leaders, was the superior knowledge and proficiency in handling new weaponry that selected samurai specialists earned while serving on the front lines of defense. A new generation of samurai who could handle weapons meant for police officers was produced as a result of this focused warrior specialization. When Emperor Meiji decided to abolish the samurai class and forbid the carrying of swords, the peace that had been established during the Tokugawa shogunate and had lasted until the second half of the 19th century was broken. The samurai fiercely disagreed with such emperor's decision, and they demonstrated against it in the streets of major towns. Hence, the shogunate granted military ranks to samurai fighters, by which they became employed in state bodies in accordance with their combat merits and skills, in order to settle the situation in the land and prevent further disturbance and lawlessness. The new samurai fighters were trained on the elements of earth, water, and wind as emblems of situational battle in martial arts competitions that were set up. The foundation of the three symbols incorporates the following elements: the knowledge of the benefits of various weapons; the rhythm of warfare; the position of the body; the mentality in battle; concentration; the style of holding the weapon; height comparisons; the analysis of the opponent's movement; the combination of attack and counterattack; footwork; measuring the angles of blows and feints; the analysis of speed, accuracy, and the attack. With the advancement of technology and the types of weaponry, several of these components are still in use today. "The goal of martial arts is to perfect both the spirit and the body (kokoro, meaning heart, spirit, and soul). Most practitioners are just aware of the physical aspect of the training. But, physical power is merely an extra skill and is not required for martial arts' primary objective. The capacity to defeat an opponent through brute force is the most basic level in martial arts. The next level is the capability to beat the adversary without resorting to brute force, and the highest level is the avoidance physical force by altering the circumstances so that there is no conflict when no one desires to attack. Thus, the ultimate aim of martial arts is the development of one's own spirit, heart, and soul is."<sup>9</sup>

**Jujitsu** (柔術), a traditional Japanese martial art, is most often associated with unarmed conflict; its literal translation is "gentle skill," while its descriptive translation is "the art of yielding." However, this does not imply that it is a skill that does not involve the force of the blow and the application of force. While the ideogram "jutsu" (術) denotes art, technique, skill, magic, and trick, the ideogram "ju" (柔) really states that the purpose of the skill is softness and gentleness, i.e., "surrendering for the sake of triumph," which refers to utilizing the strength of the attacker to one's advantage. The name "jujutsu" (柔術) refers to various types of striking, including kicks and punches, throwing and knockout techniques, as well as grip, choke, and leverage control methods. The majority of traditional medieval Jujutsu schools taught its students how to use many weapons, including hidden "hibuki" and old "kobuki" weapons like a knife or short sword (tanto 短刀), a metal club (hanbo, 半棒), a chain (kusarifundo, 鎖), blades (shuriken, 手裏劍), and a metal fan (tesen, 鉄扇). A metal fan is the weapon of choice in the traditional martial art known as tesen jutsu (鉄線術).

9 Sonja Višnjić Žižović, *Introduction to Aikido: The Teachings of Morihei Ueshiba*, Liber, Belgrade, 2008, p. 13

The Japanese martial art sport of **sumo** (相撲) has endured to this day while maintaining its authenticity. Due to its Shinto religious roots, which extend back to the “Yayoi” (弥生時代) period, the rituals that precede the battle and the combat itself typically last significantly longer than the actual competition. Sumo wrestlers perform the cleansing ritual, or purification, in a symbolic manner by throwing salt or rice to honor the Shinto gods, cleanse their minds of sinful worldly thoughts and deeds, and get mentally ready for a clean, that is, fair, honest fight, while the bowing ritual known as the “ojigi” (お辞儀, greeting) shows respect to a deserving opponent. 蹲踞 (sonkyo) is the label for a formal squat made by a sumo wrestler or kendo swordsman at the beginning of a fight. Because of this, sumo has developed the reputation of a sacred sport, with the arena serving as a Shinto shrine. Fighting in the Nara period was difficult since there were no set laws and samurai were often present. The lack of rules in sports led to many fatalities, and the prizes were mostly financial, going further against the sports postulate that “it is more important to participate than to win” (a linguistic and conceptual paradox since the term “sport” itself means a set of ordered, rigid rules of sports disciplines). In a Shinto temple in Tokyo, sumo wrestlers developed as athletes and sumo wrestling as a sport took on its current form that we know today.

The primary weapons used in **kendo** (剣道, Japanese for “the way of the sword”) are a wooden bamboo sword (shinai, 竹刀), a hand protector (kote, 籠手), cotton helmets with metal face shields (men, 面), body armor, and other specialized protective gear (bogu, 鬪具). “The shinai is a bamboo stick, which is obviously far less lethal than a real katana, albeit its use may still cause significant harm.”<sup>10</sup> Kendo is an aggressive martial art built on putting the opponent under psychological pressure, giving you the chance to profit from their mistakes when the time is right. The kendoka, or kendo fighter, becomes dominant by exerting steady pressure and controls the timing and circumstances of the combat. Sonkyo, or respect for the opponent, is therefore a formality at the start and finish of the fight; it is a component of etiquette; and, practically speaking, it is a brief pause during which neither of the fighters can immediately assault the other. The reiho, or bowing greeting, is used both before and after the sonkyo. When one fighter reaches two ippons, the battle is over after five minutes. If a fighter earns another ippon before the time expires, the match also finishes early. Each team member competes in one match against an opponent who plays the same position on the other team during the five matches that make up the team battle. The team with the most individual victories wins. When there are equal numbers of victories, the ippon count is used. If the score is tied, a second match is scheduled in which each team selects a fighter to compete for one ippon in order to determine the winner. Nothing in kendo is passive, so a passive attitude is not welcomed. Aikido, however, makes more use of this strategy. Kendo is one of the martial arts that is considered to be the most violent, yet this hostility mostly manifests itself in the psychological pressure put on the opponent. In kendo equipment, the dragonfly is frequently utilized as an adornment. It represents a person who never looks back and always advances. That is the true meaning of kendo: a person who never backs down in the face of danger.

10 Milica Jotov, “Sociolinguistic Aspects of Language in Japanese Periodicals in the Era of “Prolonged Stagnation” (2000–2010)” (doctoral diss., Faculty of Philology, Belgrade, 2012, p. 180



**Judo** (柔道, Japanese pronunciation: Jūdō, worldwide and under the influence of America, the adopted name is “judo”; although the Serbian language has affricates that are phonetically equivalent to the Japanese syllables “jū” じゅう, 柔). The 1860s “meiji” (明治時代, meiji jidai) period saw the transformation of ancient and new styles in martial arts, giving rise to disciplines like judo, karate, and aikido. Judo, which means “the way of gentleness,” prepares the way for the practitioner to fully develop on all levels—spiritually, physically, and morally. Judo is a sport that not only has a profoundly positive impact on young people’s physical growth, but also shapes their personalities, hones their morals and character, and helps the current generation maintain their health and strength, which in turn fosters greater nobility, empathy, and care for other people.

Japan is the oldest country in the world. According to statistics, the average lifespan of Japanese people is 48.6 years. Thanks to the rising high-quality lifestyle habits and preventive medicine, whose fundamental tenets include constant, moderate physical exercise, life expectancy is now estimated at 84.8 years. The Japanese philosophy of life places a strong emphasis on maintaining one’s health. An individual takes care of their neighbors as well as oneself by promoting their physical and mental health, which may prevent them from being a burden due to poor health and lack of strength and, at the same time, prevents the state from having to pay for their care. Preventative medicine, or “prevention is better than cure,” refers to an individual doing everything in their ability to maintain their health and prevent the state (or, metaphorically, the parents), from having to spend a lot of money on treatment. Judo was initially intended to replace the feudal era jujutsu, and because it was added as an Olympic sport for the 1964 Tokyo Games, it generally succeeded in doing so. Since then, it has been increasingly well-known throughout the world. In this sport, technique is more significant than strength, which is not only physical, but primarily mental. Currently, judo is practiced by military and law enforcement personnel as a combative and defensive skill. As a result, it served as the foundation for systematizing the ranking of techniques and approaches using the “Kyu” and “Dan” black belt degrees. Jigaro Kano, the founder, was honored by numerous worldwide health organizations for his contributions to physical culture, recreation, and sports. Judo’s pursuit of “Jita Kyoie” (自他共栄), which can be loosely translated as “All for one, one for all,” is another key tenet.

Morihei Ueshiba, an explorer and mystic, created aikido ((合気道)) with the intention of developing the idea of uniting harmony and energy to exert control over the adversary. This martial art places more of a focus on religion and has a more spiritual and intellectual character. The fight’s credo is “give in to win,” which refers to defeating the opponent using his own strength and skill.

“Aikido practice is an act of faith, a conviction in the power of non-resistance. Aikido is not a severe, rigid discipline or merely asceticism. It is a path that follows the natural laws, which are principles that must be followed in daily life. One should practice aikido from the moment they get out of bed until they turn in for the night.

... Studying and practicing will help you advance. Aikido is the art of profound understanding and self-discovery.”<sup>11</sup>

---

11 Morihei Ueshiba, *Aikido: The Teachings of Morihei Ueshiba*, Liber, Belgrade, 2008, p. 127

Beginning in the early 1900s, **karate** ((空手) spread throughout all of Japan from Okinawa, the country's southernmost island. Its origins can be traced all the way back to the Ryukyu Empire in ancient Japan. Under the heavy influence of Chinese martial arts<sup>12</sup>, it first emerged there as a martial art of the Ryukyuan people. Karate literally translates to "empty fist."<sup>13</sup> "The Japanese are known for their unbeatable strategies for dominating the global market: learn from rivals, revise what has been adopted, adapt it to the Japanese standard, and acquire a perfect, authentic product that exceeds the original in everything (technology, vehicles, etc.)."<sup>14</sup>

Funakoshi Gichin developed karate, a martial art that combines Kon-fu and traditional Okinawan fighting techniques. Karate surpassed all expectations of the sports community, including those of its master, Gichin, when compared to the martial arts listed above. It can be identified by the "3K" model, which stands for a combination of kihon (天底), kata (型), and kumite (組手), i.e., fundamental moves, sparring, and competitive combat. "Karate can be considered as a fight inside of oneself or as a lifetime marathon that can only be won through self-control, hard training, and one's creative endeavors," remarked Shoshin Nagamine.<sup>15</sup>

Sports and sporting disciplines in Japan and around the world interact with one another due to trade, cultural, economic, political, and other connections. Nowadays, Japanese martial arts schools have opened in practically every country on every continent, just as there is not a city in Japan where football, basketball, handball, baseball, tennis, rugby, etc. are not played. This was the reason for founding the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which made the biggest contribution to the spread of Japanese sports in the world. JICA has developed the principles of the Kaizen philosophy through its many years of work, including dedication to the mission and vision of sports, community without prejudice, perspective, wisdom, and innovation, as well as the organization of a volunteer network of teachers, lecturers, and trainers. Serbia is one of the nations to have the honor of gradually implementing Kaizen development methods into its sporting venues and educational institutions through its volunteer network. These methods include Kaizen's fundamental tenets of health, recreation, amateurism, longevity, functionality, advancement, mass, voluntarism, selectivity, and professionalism. Many coaches follow the Kaizen technique, which focuses on removing and minimizing mistakes from games in order to achieve effective results and competitiveness, when planning training sessions and team formation. The Kaizen method is necessary for sports and sports success as it leads to victory, which is its main goal. On top of that, developing a clever and contemporary training method is another technique to guarantee victory.

12 A large group of Chinese families settled in Okinawa in 1392 for the purpose of cultural exchange, where they established the Kumemura community and passed on their knowledge of the arts and sciences, including Chinese martial arts.

13 In the era of Japanese militaristic politics, the original name Tang Hand or Chinese Hand was changed to Karate, or Empty Fist.

14 Milica Jotov, "Sociolinguistic Aspects of Language in Japanese Periodicals in the Age of "Prolonged Stagnation" (2000–2010)" (doctoral diss., Faculty of Philology, Belgrade, 2012), 167

15 Shoshin Nagamine, a karate master from Okinawa, as well as a soldier, police supervisor, mayor of the city of Naha, director, and author of theater plays.

The way the Kaizen method is used in sports can be characterized by a number of factors, including the team's or individual athlete's strengths and weaknesses; measurement, comparison, and monitoring of results; analysis of the data collected in order to accurately depict the current and desired state; introduction of improvements; and modification of the training routine (innovation) for the purposes of improvement and control. The significance and importance of teaching and education are receiving more and more attention. The greatest resources available to humanity are knowledge and information. Athletes can enhance their performance and skills using the Kaizen method to become better versions of themselves. The benefit of Kaizen in sports is that it enables the athlete to maintain motivation and accept themselves as imperfect individuals. At the same time, it motivates people to improve and achieve more while also understanding that learning is a process that never stands still and that there is always opportunity for advancement and breaking boundaries. Athletes that adopt the Kaizen principle in their lives experience continuous growth and dynamism in their workout, food, and training routines. Such a strategy aids in locating and maintaining the strength and will required to build one's capacities and motor abilities. Success can frequently be attained quicker by actions, reactions, composure, and wisdom. We can apply the Kaizen method to individual or group work. It is considered that every individual is a link in the system, whose success and performance affect the success of the whole team. Kaizen then becomes part of the group rather than the individual because everyone shares the same goal. This facilitates the implementation of changes through support among team members; they have a common goal and an idea of how to achieve it.

#### 4. THE RETURN IN THE GAME WITH THE KAIZEN METHOD IN PROFESSIONAL SPORTS AND THE LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT OF ATHLETES

The steps of the Kaizen approach are carefully chosen exercises and training routines that do not demand a lot of time, money, or thought after returning to the game or competition. According to the Kaizen philosophy, these are small, straightforward actions that help us to be better than we were yesterday and prepare us for tomorrow. The Kaizen method is therefore perfect for maintaining physical exercise. In contrast to the highly "individualized" and materialistic ways of thinking in the West, collectivism, which takes a more "holistic" approach to overcoming challenges, is more prevalent in Asian society. Because Asian culture views the human body and mind as one, rather than separating them, there is a higher emphasis on finding a solution as a whole. In Western society, where there is a tendency toward "individualism," there is a higher emphasis on individual components and the body is not viewed as a whole. According to the Kaizen mind training approach, every athlete should ask oneself, "What am I capable of today? What can I achieve today, without exerting excessive effort?" The road to success is one that is taken in small, steady steps. Several practices used in the training routines of elite athletes, including yoga, pilates, and body art, demonstrate the implementation of the Kaizen method. By getting into a posture where our body feels constrained, staying there for a short period of time, and concentrating on the

breath (with deep inhalations and exhalations where we act upon the CNS)<sup>16</sup>, we strive to shift the boundaries and create space for a different, more challenging exercise. The Kaizen method's advantage is not instant expectations, as Western cultures frequently advocate, owing to a quick and violent manner of life. The Kaizen technique, on the other hand, does not aim for perfection; rather, it promotes success through training that focuses on pushing the boundaries and implementing tiny adjustments in daily life. Setting manageable objectives helps us advance and realize our aspirations. "It is better to have a little than nothing."

Many coaches and instructors overlook the "inner game" method that Timothy Gallwey champions in his book "The Inner Game,"<sup>17</sup> believing that it is sufficient to only concentrate on the physical, tactical, and technical aspects. He added a new methodology element to the regulations that also adds a spiritual component to an athlete's inner peace, which is essential for both amateur and professional development. Furthermore, it produces excellence in various domains, which shows up and reflects itself in unforeseen difficulties and circumstances. His method of rationalization focuses on integrating both the internal and external realms of engagement. The athlete's internal game is reflected in their head, while the external game is represented by their external goals. In order to overcome worry, dread, self-doubt, difficulty concentrating, and lack of confidence, theorists place a high priority on inner peace. Physical prowess, skill, and other predispositions push each sport discipline to its full potential in each given sport. But without the "command" produced by the head, or without the "internal driver," there would be no mastery. The best example right now is Novak Djokovic, a tennis player who undoubtedly possesses a mental strength matched by no other athlete. Elite athletes and the world's best sports teams have understood and utilized the significance of the "inner game" from ancient civilizations to the present, even if it was not recorded in writing. This is illustrated by many characteristics, such as: unwavering character, tenacity, composure, tranquility, self-belief, optimism, spirituality, etc. As a result, the athlete's physical attributes are strengthened and his mental structure develops predispositions that become tools that enable top achievements in all categories, especially for professional athletes. In order to develop mental and emotional strength on the path to success, many great athletes exercise these tactics and talents through meditation and practices with their teams and coaches. Coaches and athletes alike are often unaware of the wealth of scientific information, useful methods, and useful instruments that are available and, at the same time, essential to the success of every sport and athlete. Because it establishes precise and unambiguous short- and long-term sustainability principles, the Kaizen technique has a significant impact on sports. For the purpose of enhancing training with high-intensity performance, the Kaizen philosophy aids in the construction of a development strategy, fosters discipline, and heightens the desire to get the best outcomes. It improves focus and concentration and also establishes behaviors that are directly related to the integration of mental and physical training. After adopting a positive mindset, the athlete and his team are put into a daily training schedule,

16 CNS: central nervous system

17 "The Inner Game," Timothy Gallwey

which in the end develops their own motivation and inspires them to pursue their dreams. The focus is on the advancements that have been accomplished and everything that may be improved when using the Kaizen technique within the sport and when returning to the game. Simple, pragmatic solutions frequently help one avoid stagnation. Having gratitude, picturing success at each small step along the way, and accomplishing the goal speed up the entire process. Every step taken to reach the goal must be documented, followed, and measured in order to have a true and accurate image of the current situation, not just in elite sports but also during recreational or rehabilitative periods. We can better understand the present and desired situations by studying, testing, measuring, and monitoring the obtained parameters. Each athlete's dynamics are chosen specifically for them based on their physiological, morphological, biomechanical, motoric, functional, and psychological readiness. Each athlete has a unique program created for them that sits behind their specific diagnostics and represents the most intricate transformation process possible, controlling their anthropological features. The Kaizen approach aims for the athlete to improve compared with the prior training day. Because it never forces the athlete to perform more than what they are capable of on any given day, it is the perfect in-session technique for conquering a fear of change. Kaizen is a philosophy of life and of its understanding and acceptance.

## 5. KAIZEN METHOD WITHIN SPORTS MANAGEMENT

This is an area of study crucial for the theoretical-scientific and teaching disciplines that deal with sports organization, study, and for the critical review of measures and activities which aim to forecast, plan, recruit, select, train, improve, reward, motivate, provide legal protection, and create conditions for all participants to evolve in sports events so that the set goals are achieved. Sport is a social and economic category with an inherent structure and a complex organization that permeates not just the sphere of sport proper but also other areas with which sport has direct or indirect connections, from tourism to economic activities at the national and international level. The positive economic effects brought by sports increase awareness in the general public and create a positive image in the general environment. "Given that sport is a function of economic effects, it is possible to conclude that the result has some kind of effect; the effects are reflected through the function, and the functions of sport are humanistic and economic. The sports dynamics is established as an activity that is in demand, that is progressing, and that has a driving effect on other activities as well, which results in a certain (limited) impact on the whole economy as well."<sup>18</sup>

In the modern world, sports organizations must ration their time, the gain and loss of energy, finances, and human resources in order to accomplish their objectives. Sport has become synonymous with the bringing together of common ideas, locations, organizations, and values. Strong links like these necessitate coordination and

---

18 Tamara Ratković. *The Development Potential of Sport as a Component of the National Economy in the International Business Environment*, doctoral thesis, Zadar 2018, p. 236

communication between all sports-related activities both inside and outside the system. In a contemporary sports organization, the term “Kaizen” refers to the organization of an activity that is managed by a highly complex, dynamic, and open system that further consists of a number of unique interrelated subsystems. Via associations, unions, and federations, sports organizations become institutionalized. They take the form of citizens’ associations established for the purposes of physical activity, competition. They are divided into a number of smaller subgroups according to activity groupings, including the training process sector, the management sector, the financing and marketing sector, and the sector for the construction and maintenance of sports facilities. Each of the abovementioned sectors is capable of operating independently, but interactions between them produce the best outcomes. The training sector is the most dominant and crucial in the entire system because without it other sectors would not exist. The success of the club’s status and operation has come to be equated with innovations in training, which were originally intended to enhance athletic performance and provide the best positioning for the club. Continuous innovation and change, advancement, and pushing the boundaries, particularly during the training process, produce consistent, improved results that open up previously unthinkable possibilities. The end result is the quickest way to please everyone involved in sports, including club members, affiliated sports staff, athletes, supporters, audience, donors, and sponsors. The application of these guidelines in sports management is a reflection of the Kaizen method or philosophy. In other words, by definition, sports entail competition. As a result, in line with the core tenet of the Kaizen concept, every club and person should strive to set a record, top the leaderboard, push the boundaries, and gradually enhance their personal capabilities. The terms “Kai” (改) and “Zen” (善), which are literally translated as “good” and “change toward improvement,” respectively, define the ongoing growth of sports and sports disciplines in all of their segments. So, although communication itself undergoes a significant transition, the communication spectrum becomes based on ever more up-to-date information transmission technologies. Because of this, the media must gradually be digitalized, and in sports the communication spectrum would be terminated without the IT sector. Athletes are constantly under pressure, whether before or after a competition or in the event of a win or loss. Due to their fame and influence garnered from the media, along with the bad aspects that follow their careers, they also aid in the development of social norms that are viewed as generally acceptable. The objectives of management have social aspects in terms of planning, getting human resources for the needs of sports organizations, assessing personnel, placing them in suitable positions, and fostering individual career development through pay, fees, rewards, benefits, security, and protection. In order to reach the goal through the improvement of working conditions and the management of the process of the outcomes obtained, the objectives must be planned, the terminological plan must be created, and the actions must be outlined.

The truth is that without the following, success is impossible: dedication to one’s club and sports organization; freedom of choice when joining or leaving a sports organization; desire to improve constantly in the sport of choice; respect for the individual accomplishments, traits, and skills of the team and, consequently, the corresponding

results. Teamwork, objectively measurable results, social and economic value, and the validation of group and individual labor are all connected across all of the stated facts.

Evident flaws can be fixed over time because the major goal of Kaizen is to eliminate observable adverse individual consequences during each activity by prompt action, ongoing management, and micro-level analysis. This is also true of the implementation of the microcycle used in training, as without it, the effects of mistakes and omissions after the annual cycle is complete would be multiplied many times over. All those involved in the cycle of evolution of human resources who define the rules that govern the corporate entity must give their absolute dedication to this. Sports and market competitiveness, media relations, and relationships with fans and the audience must always be at the center of study in this field, with an emphasis on interest. Globalization and technological advancement pose new challenges to fair market competition, making self-investment the most rewarding investment for everyone from professional athletes to top managers. With every market change, no matter how modest, the management frequently ends up on the verge of bankruptcy. If the system of values based on management, equality of athletes based on skin color or national affiliation is not changed, responsibility on all levels is endangered, such that should be manifested through compassion, honesty, wisdom, and love. The main concern is whether, under highly chaotic circumstances, sport as a socioeconomic activity can function in market conditions rationally and effectively in the process of internationalization. It is essential to link sport and economy in an interdisciplinary manner for this reason, taking into account components related to education, health, culture, recreation, social interaction, psychology, anthropology, politics, and other factors. It is vital to approach the “universal key of sport,” taking into account the invitational, interpretive, and contradictory personal paradigms that are in line with the Kaizen philosophy model, by applying the methods of description, classification, and comparison.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In order to comply with the axiom of the Kaizen philosophy, which argues that there are no ideal answers but only the aim to improve every day in every way, the goal of this article was to analyze the difficulties of adjusting to potential changes by using the Kaizen technique in sports. Studying the Japanese experience, it can be seen that sport emerged under peculiar circumstances under the Togukawa Shogunate as a systemic means of reactivating soldiers who had taken up martial arts after the conflicts but had not yet adjusted to peacetime settings. For samurai<sup>19</sup> who needed to compete, sports and training programs were developed in this manner. It was a time when, while being isolated for more than 250 years due to its geographic location and historical circumstances (a period known as Sakoku, 鎖国)<sup>20</sup>, Japan was nevertheless able

19 侍 the etymological analysis of the word samurai leads to the verb *saburau* さぶら, 侍う, which in Japanese means to serve, with a strong symbolic and metaphorical connotation because it indicates absolute devotion and respect for authority, i.e. superior

20 Sakoku 鎖国 with the establishment of the shogunate, there were major socio-historical and political-economic changes that affected the new state system. The term “sakoku” literally means “land in

to develop its unique culture and customs that were influenced by religion. Perhaps the Japanese people were inspired to maintain their nation's morale because of their isolation from other nations and the samurai Bushido code, which is centered on hard work and discipline. It was simpler for them to develop a culture of work via evolution and to mold the system through modifications on the fly than it was for other nations, and Darwin's theory of adaptation later proved this. They also had more stable foundations than other nations. The rate of adaptation is what distinguishes effective systems from less successful ones. Although the Kaizen philosophy was developed on the foundation of samurai discipline, it produced a systematization that eliminated unnecessary time consumption and resource waste and concentrated on the process, conceptual solutions, and productivity. The benefit of Kaizen is that it can be applied to many aspects of daily life, including sports, does not require significant financial outlays, and can be done in all continents and nations. With training advancements boosting their effectiveness, all martial arts function independently of one another. This claim is supported by the observation that the athletes themselves, the spectators, the audience, the contributors, the sponsors, and the wider sports community are all most instantly satisfied by sports. In order to reduce errors and potential hazards as much as possible, Kaizen applications in all of its forms must be carefully chosen and implemented. To conclude, despite all limitations, it can be argued that the time for Kaizen is yet to arrive, and sports organizations will only gain from its instruction and methods of operation for both individuals and enterprises. The sports slang phrase "a successful team should not be changed" can be used to sum up the essence of this strategy as well as its potential for improvement, as nothing is ideal. Otherwise, given time, stagnation would ensue. Finally, it should be remembered that details form the cornerstone of Kaizen. Because Kaizen depends on details, it's important to keep in mind that its central tenet—to "improve step by step"—always evolves in line with Heraclitus's maxim, "Everything flows, everything changes." Thus Kaizen is a philosophy and a way of life. Through bushido, karoshi (death due to overworking) and hara-kiri, Confucianism and its influence on the family in east Asia, the samurai code of honor, it has helped Japan "creatively adapt" so as to become economically more advanced than the countries it used to learn from and identify with. Perhaps it is time to at least partly mirror this process in the opposite direction.

#### LITERATURA

- Adžemović S. 2017, *Kaizen Japanese business philosophy*, Belgrade, Faculty of Philology, p. 2.
- Bartoluci, M. et al. (2004). *Management in sports and tourism*, Zagreb: Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb.
- Barši A. 2019. *Application of techniques to Chu Chic in self-defense*, Faculty of Sports and Physical Education, Belgrade, p. 7-153.
- Bourg, J. F., & Gouguet, J. J. (2006). *Sport and Globalization: Sport as a Global Public Good In W. &. : Andreff, Handbook on the Economics of Sport*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc.

---

chains", and refers to the almost complete self-isolation of Japan, with strictly controlled points where trade with foreigners was selectively allowed, only under the watchful supervision of the shogunate.



- Jorga I. V., 1978; Kata, Sports Book Belgrade, p. 5-31.
- Kanigen D., 2008, Samurai Weapons, Boston, Periplus Edition, p. 103-117.
- Canoe, J. 1994, Kodokan Judo, Tokyo, Kodansha International, p. 15-23.
- Cleary, T. 2006. The Bushido Code of the Samurai, Baboon Belgrade, pp. 16-28.
- Cooler, P. L. Sumo, 1987. Tokyo Weatherhill, p. 95-139.
- Prof. Dr. Marković. Lj.; Jotov, M.; Radenkovic, S.; Backović, N., 2016. Japan at the Dawn of Modernization, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology, Belgrade, p. 56.
- Imaj. M., 2017. Kaizen: The Key to Japanese Business Success, Kaizen Institute, Serbia, Belgrade
- Imaj. M., 1986. "KAIZEN: The Key to Japan's Competitive Success," by The Kaizen.
- Musashi, M. Kunemote, and J. Mishima, 2013. The Book of Samurai Belgrade, Tennessee, and Plateau, pp. 11-37.
- Nešić, M., 2014. Kaizen as a business philosophy for sports organizations, Faculty of Sport and Tourism, Novi Sad, TIMS AKTA, pp. 101-111.
- Ratković. T., Development possibilities of sport as a component of the national economy in an international business environment, doctoral thesis, Zadar, 2018.
- Rašković. M. 2016. Japanese culture and the Toyota system, Belgrade, Faculty of Philology.
- Smith, C. T. (2008). Introduction to Sport Marketing Oxford, OX: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Turšinović, Ž., Sport and Kaizen, Belgrade, 2019., Quality yesterday, today, and tomorrow, p. 10.

#### INTERNET SOURCES

- <https://www.soccerphile.com/soccerphile/archives/wc2002/fo/co/jf.html>
- <https://www.soccerphile.com/soccerphile/archives/wc2002/fo/co/jf.html>
- <https://www.tofugu.com/japan/japanese-baseball-history/>
- <http://www.oldtokyo.com/a-history-of-tennis-in-japan-c-1920/>
- <https://guidable.co/entertainment/sports/the-history-of-rugby-in-japan/>
- <https://www.jica.go.jp/english/about/mission/index.html>
- <https://www.kaizenmastery.com/sport-coaching>

Милица Д. ЈОТОВ

Тамара С. РАТКОВИЋ

#### ПРЕДЛОГ ПРИМЕНЕ КАИЗЕН МЕТОДЕ У ОМЛАДИНСКОМ И ПРОФЕСИОНАЛНОМ СПОРТУ

#### РЕЗИМЕ

Аутори овог рада имају за циљ да истразе присутност и оправданост примене Каизен методе у спорту. Спорт је феномен од великог друштвеног и културног значаја којим се бави мноштво људи, због чега је и подложен снажним динамичким, дисконтинуираним, нелинеарним и неизвесним променама. У турбулентним условима данашњице, спорт као делатност од друштвеног и привредног интереса под утицајем је великих промена (*kawari* 変化) и ризика које те промене постављају како пред сам менаџмент тако и пред самог спортисту. Предлог примене Каизен методе у спорту и спортској индустрији базира се на ангажованости и сталном усавршавању појединца, кроз темељан и очигледан процес, прилагођен аутентичним потребама сваког професионалног спортисте, а и сам спорт и спортска делатност пролазе кроз велике модификације услед глобалних светских и друштвено технолошких промена које успешност мере искључиво кроз призму валоризације. Каизен метода може побољшати ефикасност сваке индивидуе, сваког спортисте, али исто тако и спортске организације. Уз примену одговарајуће

Каизен методе сам менаџмент спортске организације тимски може да оствари брже постављене циљеве уз квалитетно постављање оперативног и логистичког менаџмента, са постепеним и континуираним побољшањем начина и организације пословања. Промовисање Каизен методе ван матице из које је потекао, препознат је као снажан алат који има за циљ рационализовање и успешно коришћење свих потенцијалних ресурса. Смисао и потреба за Каизен методом јесте континуирано унапређивање, са уклањањем свих илузорних фактора у току стварања спортских вредности односно резултата.

*Кључне речи:* Каизен, спорт, Јапан, глобализација, менаџмент.