

# Judo: Youngs team up for success

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riods when it was tough for him to practice, like when he went to law school or when he endured a shoulder injury that kept him out of the sport for five years. But even the long layoff couldn't keep him away from it for long. He started to actively participate in tournaments again around 1996.

"It's a sport I like. I'm a diabetic and I need the exercise," Kevin said. "I just stayed with judo."

His first tournament back was the National Master's tournament. To prepare for the yearly events (he has participated in at least one world tournament every year since), he and Alex practice for three hours, four times a week. Being an instructor at the Clovis Judo Club doesn't allow him the competition he needs so he travels to Selma and Bakersfield for a tougher level of judo.

"In Bakersfield and Selma, they're all adults," Kevin said. "We can just thrash each other."

He says Alex goes to about half of these practices. But with the two always traveling with each other to tournaments, Alex says all the time spent together has definitely strengthened their bond.

"When I was younger, no, we didn't have this kind of relationship. This has brought us together." Alex

said. "I didn't go into the sport hoping for that, but I think if you spend that much time together, it's going to bring some kind of relationship."

Others have noticed the difference in Kevin's judo since Alex started training with him.

"I think that relationship, it's mentally reviving for him," said Ron Goode, head instructor at the Clovis Judo Club. "As an instructor, he loves being a personal trainer to them. That's where his daughter stands right now. It's given him a new vitalization."

The next obstacle for the two is to prepare for the 2006 World Championships in France in June. Kevin has been taking it easy, only instructing right now, but he will step up his training in January. He'll work out at least four times a week in heavier exercises. Alex will also be training for local tournaments and according to Kevin, she has what it takes.

"She's better at judo than me," Kevin said.

But Alex attributes all her success to her father.

"He's a great coach. He's so knowledgeable in judo and makes it easy to understand, but I'm not better than my dad," she said. "I'm just very proud of him. Not many

can say they competed on a world level."

The level of competition is as tough as it gets.

Ex-Olympians compete at the tournament, and Alex points out that judo outside of the United States is much more intense and how in other countries people compete in judo as a profession. Still, Kevin is not discouraged.

"I'm going to compete in two more championships, at least," he said. "After that I don't know."

At least he'll still have Alex to coach for the Masters when she turns 30.

"That's a little over five years away, but that would be an awesome experience," Alex said. "Right now, I'm just going to go to the tournament and be his coach. I'm his eyes and ears while he's on the mat."

But to Kevin, Alex has been much more than that.

"I compete in the world tournament and run into national tournament players, and Alex is just as good but she just doesn't have that experience," he said. "I can't think of a better coach for me. I need her there to keep me going."

Note: For information about the Clovis Judo Club, go to [www.clovisjudoclub.com](http://www.clovisjudoclub.com).