

Swedish kendo – the formative years

By Hans Lundberg

Structured kendo practice was introduced in Sweden by Robert von Sandor when he started the Stockholm Kendo Club in the autumn of 1964. Initial membership was mainly many of Roberts old friends from judo. High grade guidance was provided by Roald M Knutsen 4 Dan, UK, and visiting student Akio Watanabe 5 Dan. By the end of the 1960s the first generation kendoka was replaced by younger members that better could handle the training regime of kendo.

The 1970s opened with the first world championships and Sweden as a founding member of IKF. Also, EKF in its current form was established with Mr Sandor as chairman. Club growth increased and spread mainly within Stockholm area until 1973 when Etsuko Horie Lindhberg established a dojo in Malmö. With the help of Mrs Lindhberg Sweden started to every other year receive visiting sensei from Japan with the help of ZNKR.

Swedish kendo showed quality at the first European championships 1974 primarily through the 3rd place won by Anders Markie and a strong team performance. Again, at the WKC in 1976 Mr Markie showed his skills and received a fighting spirit price in the team competition.

In 1976 Mr Sandor launched his second five-year plan for the development of Swedish kendo. A slow rise of clubs followed through to the end of the decade. At the Sapporo Taikai Swedish kendoka continued to show strong kendo qualities and Leif Svensson Sr received a fighting spirit price in the team competition.

In the 1980s clubs and membership continued to increase as well as number of tournaments. Iaido as its own sport became more and more popular. Swedish kendoka continued to show merit in the WKC's with Hans Lundberg receiving a team fighting spirit in Paris 1985 and Mats Wahlqvist an individual fighting spirit in Seoul 1988. But the biggest upset came in 1989 when Sweden beat France and became European Champions. Two years earlier Sweden had also shown the world that they could organize big events with the successful organizing of the 1987 European Championships in Malmö.

By the end of 1990s Sweden had become a fully developed kendo nation with clubs spread from north to south within its borders.

