

Scoring changes in the works may take a little of that pressure off.

Over the past several years, judo has evolved into two camps - those who favor a fight that goes for broke, for the match-ending "ippon" throw or pin, and the more tactical group that is focused less on sterling technique and more on winning through points.

Many critics - especially in Japan, where the ippon style is almost a cult - see the point system as a major weakness, and have pushed hard to keep the traditional judo style from becoming just another form of wrestling.

With the games' judo now safely over, the scoring system for international competitions is likely to be redone to eliminate what many feel gives Western-style wrestlers and brawlers an advantage over traditionalists.

"We aren't moving back to the more Japanese style, we are moving forward," Marius Vizer, the president of the International Judo Federation, told The Associated Press. "We are modernizing. We must make the sport more easy to understand and more exciting to watch."

Vizer said future tournaments will not give points for several wrestling takedown moves and the "koka" point category will likely be eliminated altogether.

Judo scores are complicated and there is some room for interpretation.

An ippon ends the match - and it's what everybody wants to see. It can be a stranglehold that, if not stopped, would cause suffocation, or an armlock that would break bones, or a pin from which an opponent cannot break free. But the perfect ippon is a throw that sends its victim twisting into the air, helpless, to land squarely on his - or her - back.

Most of the time, winners are decided by "waza ari," which is a near ippon, when, for example, a throw doesn't put the opponent on his back; "yuko," which is a move that was effective but not quite good enough to qualify as a waza ari; or koka, which is not quite good enough to get a yuko.

Penalties for major fouls or stalling can also cost a competitor points - or, conversely, give his opponent the win. And since Athens, any point, even on a penalty, that is scored in overtime immediately ends the bout - as

world champion [Teddy Riner](#) of France learned when he crashed out of the heavyweight quarterfinals.

After Beijing, that system will be streamlined to make it easier for fans who are not thoroughly versed in the sport to understand more easily.

"We want to see beautiful judo," Vizer said.

Officials are generally behind the elimination of the koka point category.

"We believe that it's a done deal, and it is good for the sport," said USA judo CEO Jose Rodriguez. "It leads the sport into getting more flamboyant throws. I think it will boost the sport, not only Japan."

For the competitors, what changes the new scoring system will bring is still a matter of debate.

"I think this puts more importance on the role of the coach," said [Tuvshinbayar Naidan](#), the Mongolian gold winner, who said he has also trained in Japanese sumo and in traditional Mongolian wrestling.

His coach, Bira Pagva, said the bottom line remains the same.

"The wrestler who attacks is always going to be at an advantage," Pagva said.

Source: <http://www.nbcolympics.com/judo/news/newsid=225037.html#japan+company+mats>