

*Kayla is the only American to win a gold medal at the Olympics in judo. She did this in 2012 at the London Games. In 2016 when she repeated her victory, winning a gold medal at the Rio Games. Her second victory came about a month after I had accepted the position of Chair of the US Judo Association's, National Promotion Board following my tenure as their President. Our promotion board was revamped with the additions of four former Olympians including Lynn Roethke, as Vice Chair who took a silver medal in 1988 and Jason Morris who took a silver medal in 1992. Knowing Kayla for more than a decade, I immediately thought that if she were Japanese, they would make her a godan (5<sup>th</sup> degree black belt for winning one gold medal). Since she won two, I suggested to our promotion board that we do something unprecedented and batsugun her (jump promotion) directly rokudan (6<sup>th</sup> degree black belt) a rank which the practitioner has an option to wear red and white paneled belt to signify they are the equivalent of Ph.D. in Judo. The promotion board voted in favor of my idea which was ratified unanimously by the USJA's Board of Directors where another former Olympian serves as Vice President. So, I contacted Jimmy Pedro her longtime coach with the good news. He was elated and asked for us to send it to him for presentation which he did at a rally with Nancy Kerrigan in the Boston area where they both reside.*

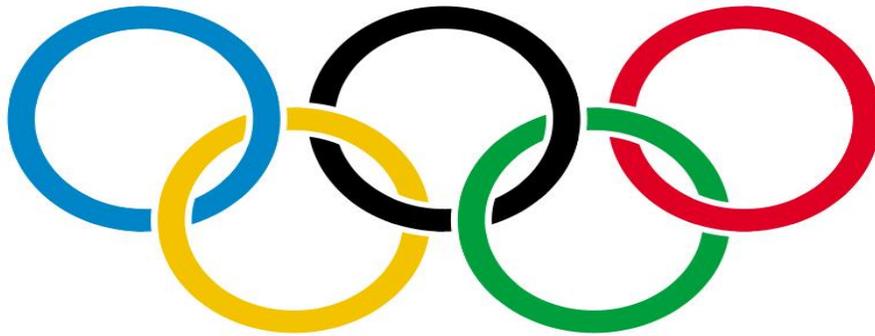
*Kayla is indeed a living example of Jigoro Kano's principals in terms of thriving to be a fine person of excellent character. She's a positive role model for all judokas as well as the embodiment of the Zen proverb, fall down 7 times and get up 8!*

**Gary Goltz for *Black Belt Magazine*, June 2017**

**August 31, 2016**

## **Kayla Harrison Promoted to 6<sup>th</sup> Degree Black Belt**





## **United States Judo Association**

# **CERTIFICATE OF BLACK BELT JUDO RANK**

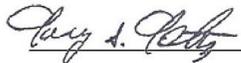
Be it known that

**Kayla Harrison**

Has met all requirements established and set forth by the  
United States Judo Association for promotion to the rank of:

**Rokudan - 6th Degree**

  
PRESIDENT

  
PROMOTION CHAIRMAN

08-31-2016

DATE

and is hereby certified at that rank by the USJA National Promotion Board.  
You are now considered to be a highly skilled Sensei, or expert teacher of Judo.  
As a national leader of Judo, we know that you will continue to improve your knowledge,  
character and Judo skills. We also expect you to be eager to teach Judo at all times. Your  
leadership of Judo affairs at the state and national level is of great importance. All  
members of the United States Judo Association expect you to exemplify the ideals,  
philosophy, and the true spirit of Judo in every aspect of your life.

Email from Kayla 9/1/2016 – Gary: *This is awesome! Thank you guys again so much!!*



[Gary Goltz](#) Terrific! Glad you liked the belt!! 7:29 pm 9/21/16

[Kayla Harrison](#) Loved it! Thank you guys so much!!!! ❤️❤️🙏 8:59 pm 9/21/16

# Two-time Olympic judo champion Harrison feted at Market Street event

By Jean DePlacido Salem News Correspondent - September 21, 2016



DAVID LE/Staff photo. Olympians Nancy Kerrigan, Kayla Harrison, Travis Stevens and coach Jimmy Pedro pose for photos before a short ceremony held at Market Street in Lynnfield on Wednesday evening. 9/21/16.



DAVID LE/Staff photo. From left, Marianne Cohen, Executive Director of the Wakefield-Lynnfield Chamber of Commerce, 2012 and 2016 Olympic Gold Medalist Kayla Harrison of Danvers, 2016 Olympic Silver Medalist Travis Stevens, Coach Jimmy Pedro and former Olympic figure skater Nancy Kerrigan. 9/21/16.



DAVID LE/Staff photo. Marianne Cohen, left, Executive Director of the Wakefield-Lynnfield Chamber of Commerce, presents Danvers resident Kayla Harrison with a gold key to congratulate her on her second gold medal at the recent Summer Olympics in Rio.



DAVID LE/Staff photo. An Olympian gold medalist in Judo in both 2012 and 2016, Danvers resident Kayla Harrison, left, talks with former Olympic figure skater Nancy Kerrigan Wednesday evening.



DAVID LE/Staff photo. Danvers' Kayla Harrison flashes a wide smile after being awarded Black Belt Judo Rank by trainer Jimmy Pedro, right, at a ceremony to honor North Shore Olympians Harrison and Travis Stevens at the Market Street in Lynnfield. 9/21/16.



DAVID LE/Staff photo. Kayla Harrison of Danvers, left, and her coach former St. John's Prep superstar Jimmy Pedro, right, laugh at an answer given by 2016 Judo silver medalist Travis Stevens at a Meet the Medalists ceremony held at Market Street in Lynnfield. Harrison repeated as women's gold medalist this summer in Rio.



DAVID LE/Staff photo. Kayla Harrison of Danvers, who won her second straight gold medal in women's judo at the Rio Olympics last month, flashes a wide smile after being awarded a red and white belt — which in judo ranks as a teacher — from her coach, former St. John's Prep athletic standout Jimmy Pedro.

## **LYNNFIELD — It was an event befitting a two-time Olympic gold medalist.**

'Meet the Medalists' took place Wednesday night at Market Street in Lynnfield and was a big hit. Two of judo's finest athletes — Danvers native Kayla Harrison, the aforementioned gold medal winner at the 2012 Summer Games in London and the recent 2016 Games in Rio — and silver medalist Travis Stevens were present along with their coach, Jimmy Pedro, met fans while former U.S Olympic ice skating medalist Nancy Kerrigan served as moderator.

Four local Olympians is something few places can brag about. Both Harrison (who is originally from Ohio) and Stevens moved to Massachusetts to train at Pedro's Judo Center in Wakefield under the former two-time bronze medal winner.

"Rio was the most amazing experience I could've ever asked for," said Pedro, a former St. John's Prep standout wrestler and current USA Olympic judo team coach who gives seminars throughout the country. "Kayla and Travis provided the proudest moments of my coaching career. I've given my life to judo, and it was truly something special.

"Kayla has done what no other man or woman has ever done in (American) judo history, winning gold. She is one of only seven US athletes to repeat, and one of nine in the history of judo to win double gold. It will never be done again; I can say that with confidence." Harrison, who lived in Marblehead before moving to Danvers, works with both Pedro and his father, Jim Pedro Sr. (a 1976 Olympian). "The Pedros are amazing people who not only changed my life but saved it," said Harrison, a survivor of sexual assault. "They made me not only a champion on the mat but off it, too. What I've been able to accomplish because of them is a dream come true."

Harrison and Stevens took questions from the crowd at Market Street and were asked if they wanted to go to the 2020 Olympics. Neither felt that's in their future, although it's too soon after the Rio Games to have a definite answer. Still, the prospect of four years of physically and mentally challenging training is a huge commitment, they admitted.

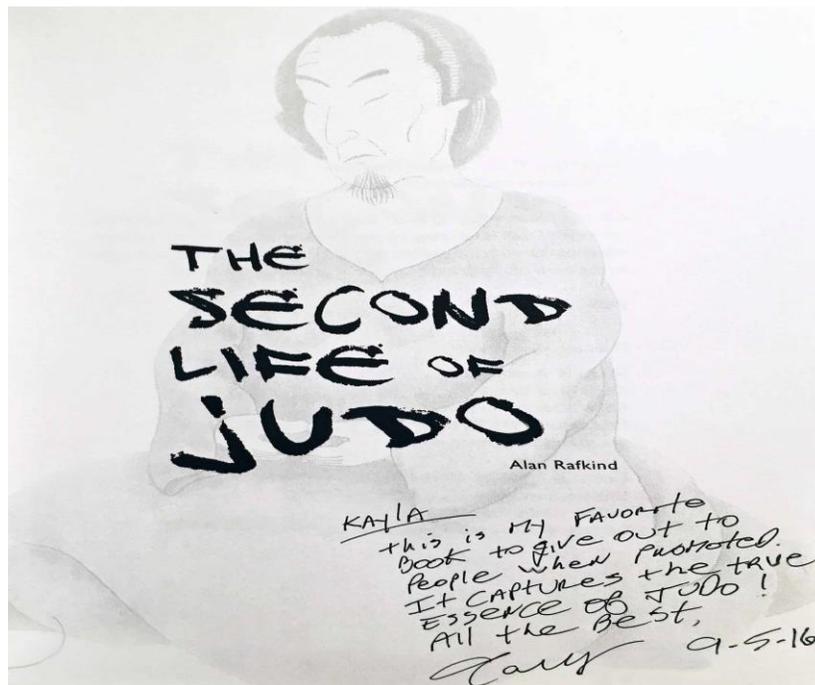
"I don't want to be too greedy; I'm satisfied with my two golds," said Harrison. "London will always be special because that was my first, and the first-ever (gold medal) for this country in judo. But Rio was a lot harder. It's always harder to stay on top in my opinion, so that gold holds a special place."

Harrison has established the Fearless Foundation to educate people about sexual abuse. She was abused by her first coach and decided to speak out about it, hoping to help others become survivors like herself. "I want to shine a light on what sexual abuse is," she said. "One in four girls and one in six boys is a victim of sexual abuse by the age of 18. The first step is education, and that's what I've been doing."

Stevens moved from Washington state 12 years ago to work with Pedro. He was ninth at the 2008 Games and fifth in 2012 before capturing silver in Rio. Pedro said he had to overcome health issues and injuries in order to go to the 2016 Games. "I want to set up gyms across the country where kids can work with high level instructors at low costs," Stevens said. "The first one will be right down the street in partnership with Jimmy and others."

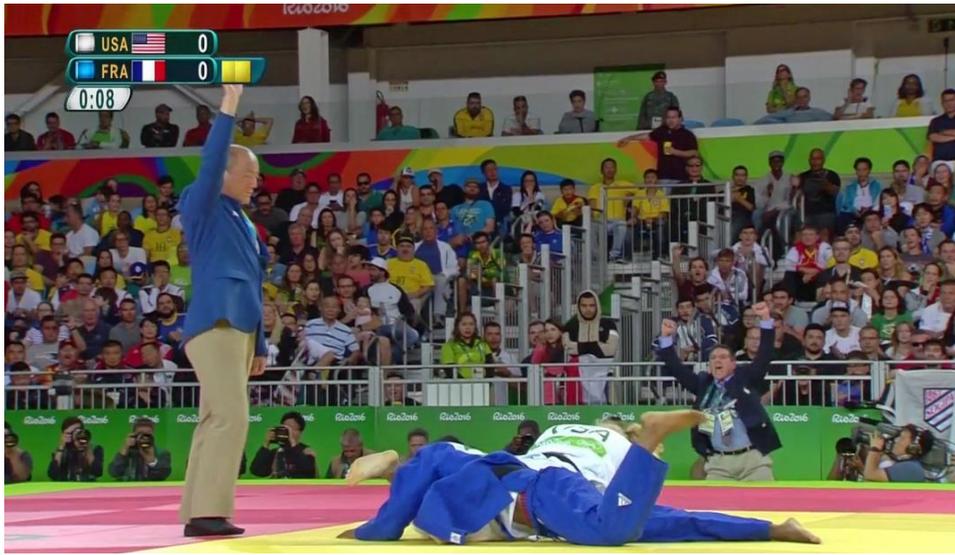
When asked about Rio de Janeiro, Stevens said it was a beautiful city. He recalled how he got out of the gym one day to spend time at a beach, even going for a swim. Many young judo students were on hand to see their heroes. Kim Minot of Lynnfield took pictures of the medal winners; her two young children, 7-year-old Victoria and 5-year-old Connor, both go to Pedro's Judo Center. "We watched Kayla and Travis at the studio," said Minot. "It is so cool to be at the Jimmy's where Olympians train. They're awesome, and my daughter loves judo more than anything."

Pedro, who is a sixth degree black belt, managed to surprise Harrison at the end of the program by promoting her to sixth degree black belt along with a certificate from US Judo Association. He wrapped the red and white belt around her blazer. "I'm super excited and completely surprised," said Harrison. "I had no idea Jimmy was going to do that; only teachers wear that belt. "I'm ready to go out and teach others, give back to what judo has done for me."



# Kayla Harrison makes judo history with another gold

Dan Wolken, USA TODAY Sports - Thursday 4:36 p.m. August 11, 2016





**RIO DE JANEIRO** — American Kayla Harrison has another gold medal. Call it one more for the road. Expected to retire following these Olympics and become the next female star in professional mixed martial arts, Harrison defeated France's Audrey Tcheumeo to win a second judo gold medal in the 78-kilogram weight class in front of a disappointed Brazilian crowd that was hoping to watch Harrison take on Mayra Aguiar.

Harrison, 26, had predicted a matchup with Aguiar more than a year ago as the two have been longtime rivals and had split their first 14 meetings. It would have recalled echoes of 2012, when she beat Britain's Gemma Gibbons in London in the gold medal match. Instead, she faced Tcheumeo and did not seem to be getting the best of the action until the final seconds when she finally got Tcheumeo on the ground for a decisive win by ippon.

Harrison rolled into the semifinals, defeating Anamari Velensek of Slovenia in 1 minute, 43 seconds with an armbar move that immediately ended the match. Her earlier matches weren't any longer, confirming her dominance in this tournament.

## U.S. strikes gold in Women's Judo at London Olympics

by Gary Goltz, U.S. Judo Association President, August 2012



For the first time ever, the United States has won a gold medal in judo at the Olympics. Kayla Harrison (78-kilogram division) beat every one of her opponents, including two by submission via arm lock, on her way to the top. In the final match against Gemma Gibbons of Great Britain - the crowd favorite Harrison, dominated the action.

Spectators included British Prime Minister David Cameron and Russian President Vladimir Putin, an accomplished judoka himself who holds an eight-degree black belt.

The reigning world champion, Harrison is a product of the Wakefield, Massachusetts, judo dojo run by Black Belt Hall of Fame member Jimmy Pedro and his father, Jim who was also a stellar competitor in his heyday. Together they have built a virtual judo factory capable of turning out world class players.





Several days earlier, Marti Malloy (57-kilogram division), who trains at San Jose State University, won a bronze medal in judo. That makes 2012 the first time the United States has received two medals at the same Olympics. Two other members of the U.S. team came close to taking the bronze with very respectable showings, a clear indication of the rising skill level of U.S. judo players.

**My Perspective:**



I first met Kayla Harrison at my dojo back in 2007 at one of the Winter Nationals my club hosted. She was there with her training partner Ronda Rousey to compete and both took 1st places. They fought against some regular grassroots players without any pomp or ceremony then did a clinic for everyone with Jim Pedro their main coach (Jimmy's dad). Both of them back then were humble, shy, a bit insecure about their judo prowess, and just a couple of nice kids.

As Kayla continued to develop, like Ronda she became a world caliber judo player who could hold her own against the Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, French, Brazilians, and Cubans. Today's judo requires a high degree of athleticism in addition to stellar judo skills both standing and on the ground. The ultimate goal of judo according to Jigoro Kano our founder is perfection of one's character. To this end Kayla and Marti are both fine people in the truest sense of judo in terms of their willingness to give back to society in order to improve the overall human condition.

One thing for sure is our team has done quite well considering we had only 5 players that qualified coming from a pool of less than 30,000 registered judokas in our country.

**Gary Goltz**

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at empowering female athletes. "My sponsor approached me to help design a line of women's clothing," she said. "I tested all the products myself, had firsthand input on design, weight, materials used, etc. I really wanted to create a line made by a female martial artist for female martial artists."

An even more positive side effect of Harrison's Olympic success lives under a similar title. "The Fearless Foundation was created to help survivors of child sexual abuse," she said. For those who don't know, when Harrison was 13, she was abused by a judo instructor. What better way to bounce back from such a traumatic experience than to help others cope with the aftermath of similar crimes.

"Right now, I am in the middle of writing a book that will come out next spring with the goal of educating our society on child sexual abuse and all the signs and symptoms," she said. "It will inspire and empower survivors to not only live and survive but to thrive!"

"Kayla is a living example of Jigoro Kano's principles," said Gary Goltz, former president of the U.S. Judo Association. "She's a positive role model for all judoka, as well as the embodiment of the Zen proverb 'Fall down seven times and get up eight.'"

After Harrison's second Olympic victory, Goltz

spearheaded an effort to get her a *batsugun*, or jump promotion. "I figured that if she were Japanese, judo authorities would make her a *godan* (fifth degree) for winning one gold medal, but she had won two," he said. "I suggested to the board that we do something unprecedented and give her a *rokudan* (sixth degree). The board [of the USJA] voted in favor of my idea."

Harrison is about to embark on the next phase of her career: the transition to mixed martial arts. Her plans call for her to do commentary for World Series of Fighting events until the end of 2017, after which she will make her debut in the cage. In the meantime, she's been bolstering her skill set with Brazilian *jiu-jitsu*, *muay Thai*, *no-gi* grappling, boxing, and strength and conditioning.

"I feel as if I have done everything I want to do in judo, but I don't feel as if my time as an athlete is over," Harrison said. "MMA is a great opportunity and outlet for that athleticism. It's a whole new challenge, and every day I get to show up and be a white belt all over again."

Kayla Harrison's first induction into the *Black Belt* Hall of Fame was in 2012 when she received a Special Achievement Award. With this induction as our 2017 Woman of the Year, she joins the elite club of two-time judo winners, which was previously occupied by just five people: Jimmy Pedro Jr., Hayward Nishioka, Pat Burris, Allen Coage and Mike Swain.



**I FEEL AS IF I HAVE DONE EVERYTHING I WANT TO DO IN JUDO, BUT I DON'T FEEL AS IF MY TIME AS AN ATHLETE IS OVER."**

— KAYLA HARRISON

# KAYLA HARRISON

## Two-Time Olympic Judo Gold Medalist



16

### FIGHTBOOK

Sometimes dreams come true. Twice. Case in point: At the 2012 London Olympics, Kayla Harrison won a gold medal in judo, which made her the first American to do so. At the 2016 Rio Olympics, she did it again. Read her take on winning and what the future might hold for this champion.

**BLACK BELT**<sup>®</sup>  
World's Leading Magazine of Martial Arts

### NEWS BITES

• *Black Belt* conducted an **unscientific poll** online, asking our audience which **martial arts movie** is most in **need of a sequel**. The most popular replies were *The Last Dragon*, *Silent Rage*, *Remo Williams: The Adventure Begins* and *The Perfect Weapon*.

• The **United States Judo Association** promoted **Kayla Harrison**, two-time Olympic gold medalist, to sixth-degree black belt.

• *Black Belt* contributor **Doug Cook**, owner of Chosun Taekwondo Academy in Warwick, New York, earned his **seventh degree** after a two-hour test.

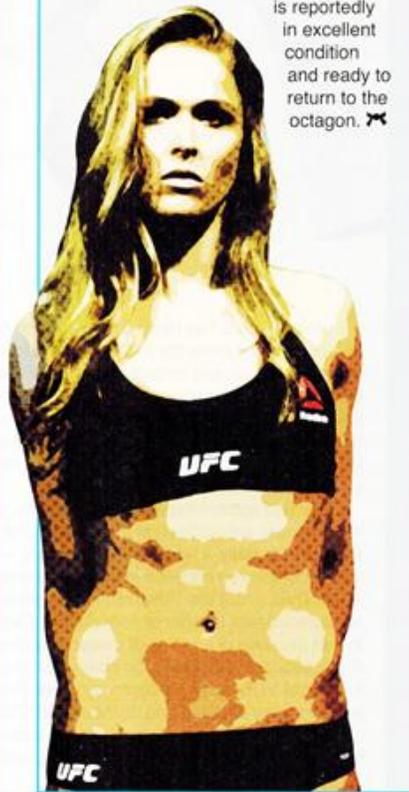
• **Alain Moussi**, star of the *Kickboxer* reboot *Kickboxer: Vengeance*, dropped by the *Black Belt* office. He was accompanied by **Dimitri Logothetis**, the film's **producer**.

• At the 2016 World Master Jiu-Jitsu IJJF Championship in Las Vegas, a *Black Belt* staffer ran into **Travis Stevens**, the *judoka* who won a **silver medal** at the **Rio Olympics**.

• The latest action flick from martial artist **Art Camacho** (writer/director) is **Assassin X**. The cast includes **Olivier Gruner**, **Sasha Mitchell**, **Martin Kove**, **Rigan Machado** and **Fabiano Iha**.

• **Former UFC champ and Black Belt Hall of Famer Ronda Rousey**

is reportedly in excellent condition and ready to return to the octagon. **X**



William Cheung Photo by Robert Hoff • Ronda Rousey Photo by A.RICARDO/Shutterstock.com

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## How Kayla Harrison's Judo Dreams Came True — Twice!

Kayla Harrison was just 16 seconds away from realizing her dream of back-to-back Olympic gold medals.

by Mark Jacobs

**H**olding a narrow lead on French opponent Audrey Tcheumeo via two penalties, Harrison probably could have run out the clock and played it safe to claim gold in the women's 78-kilogram division. But that's never been her style.

**INSTEAD**, Harrison went for a shoulder throw. Her taller opponent slid off, landing facedown on the mat. Instantly, Harrison stepped over Tcheumeo's back with her right leg and reached under her to seize the collar for a

choke. But the choke wasn't immediately there, so Harrison grabbed Tcheumeo's right arm, slipping her left leg under the French woman's face and locking in a perfect belly-down armbar for the submission.

It was a move she'd practiced literally every day for the past 10 years.

"It's actually a drill we do at our gym," Harrison said. "If you're going for a choke and the collar is across her face, they will call *mate* (stop) quickly, so we transition to the armbar. I just transitioned for the arm and didn't even have to roll her over.

I've done it so many times now it's just muscle memory."

**IT HAD BEEN** a long, difficult road since the 2012 London Olympics, where Harrison became the first American to ever win a gold medal in judo. She thought about retiring immediately after those Games, but her coaches — the renowned father-and-son duo of James Pedro Sr. and Jimmy Pedro Jr. — convinced her she could do what few other *judoka* have done: win a gold medal in two consecutive Olympic events.

During the intervening four years, Harrison found herself battling through knee surgery and the pressures that stem from being an Olympic gold medalist everyone is looking to knock off.

"I had some mini-meltdowns along the way, but the Pedros always just told me [to] shut up and keep going, so I did," she said.

Through it all, they treated her not like an Olympic champion but like someone who still had something to prove. That attitude paid off as Harrison came into the 2016 Rio Olympics in the best shape of her life, she said. Her experience in London gave her a confidence that made her as poised as she'd ever been.

**FOR HARRISON**, who spends a great deal of time doing visualization exercises in which she pictures how her matches will go — with herself always winning, of course — the Rio tournament was almost a formality. Unlike London, where she had some close calls, the 2016 Games saw her storming through her bouts, winning every one by *ippon*, the judo equivalent of a knockout.

She overwhelmed Chinese opponent Zhang Zhehui in her first match thanks to a pin. Harrison's second-round match against Hungary's Abigel Joo threatened to be her most difficult. Although she'd beaten Joo in London, the Hungarian had defeated her three times since then. Harrison called Joo her bogeyman, saying her much-taller opponent presented some stylistic challenges. But this time, the American was not to be denied. She again got her foe to the mat and pinned her in place for the full 20 seconds to earn the victory.

"I knew I had to play smart to win," Harrison said. "Also, a lot of the girls

Photo by Robert Reiff

were used to fighting me when I'm injured or not rested, but it was a different Kayla on this day."

**IT MAY HAVE BEEN** a different Kayla, but between matches, she continued to work on her visualizations, focusing on setting the pace, on getting good grips and, ultimately, on "Kayla Harrison: two-time Olympic champion."

In the semifinals, she triumphed over Slovenia's Anamari Velensek with an armbar. The win set up her gold-medal bout with Tcheumeo. Harrison had actually envisioned herself defeating longtime opponent Mayra Aguiar for the gold. It was a match the local fans in Brazil also had apparently anticipated, which led them to boo the American through her first three bouts. But when Aguiar fell to Tcheumeo, the Brazilians finally came around and started cheering Harrison as she sunk in that armbar to claim the gold.

**THE WIN** was not just a triumph for Harrison but also a mini-victory for the

ground-heavy style of judo her coaches have instilled in her. Witness the showing of fellow Pedro-trained judoka Travis Stevens, who took home a silver medal in the men's 81-kilogram division. *Newaza*, or ground fighting, has been minimized in judo competition over the years to the point that many world-class judoka simply aren't very good at it anymore.

"We'll go to training camps around the world, and when it comes time for newaza practice, you'll see guys goofing off or just going to the sidelines," Harrison said. "I honestly don't know why that is. I mean, there are four ways to win a judo match, and three of those ways are on the ground."

**HARRISON CERTAINLY** proved that those three ways are just as effective as throws. Now, with a second gold medal in the bank, she's uncertain what the future holds — although it's likely she'll retire from judo competition. She's received several offers to go into mixed martial arts, and one of them could be financially lucrative, she said.

But the *Black Belt Hall of Famer* hasn't made any decisions yet.

Instead, Harrison is focused on finishing a book she's co-writing with a psychologist. The subject is dealing with sexual abuse, something she experienced as a youngster. Along with the organization she started after the London Olympics, the Fearless Foundation, the book ideally will provide guidance for children on how to avoid abuse and where to get help if they're ever subject to it.

While she still loves judo, she said it's time to get on with her life by not just talking about changing the world but actually doing it. That doesn't mean she'll leave judo behind, though.

"It's been a long road and a bumpy one," Harrison said. "I just want to thank everyone who's been a part of that journey. It may not seem like much, but this little girl from Middletown, Ohio, had a dream, moved to the big city and met these two grumpy guys who helped make those dreams come true. Dreams do come true, sometimes even twice." ✕

Kayla Harrison at the [Nanka Judo Winter Nationals®](#) with Ronda Rousey in 2007

