

## Age Is Just a Number: At 70, Mr. Kenji Aguni Wins His First International Judo Tournament

An inspiring conversation on discipline, work, and the power of never giving up

In June 2025, Kagoshima Prefecture hosted the Japan Veterans International Judo Championships 2025, where our engineer Mr. Kenji Aguni, age 70, achieved a remarkable milestone: winning the 60kg division for competitors aged 70–74—in his very first appearance.

Mr. Aguni has practiced judo for 57 years and holds a sixth-degree black belt. For over 40 years, he has also taught local children. At AEC, he is a veteran engineer supporting operations on the ground—a person who truly embodies both “softness” and “strength.”

We sat down with Mr. Aguni to learn more about his philosophy, his passion, and what drives him to keep challenging himself, no matter his age.

■ Congratulations on your incredible victory. What inspired you to enter the tournament?



▲ Higher than a black belt. Red and White belt holder.

“Thank you. Turning 70 felt like a milestone, and I wanted to do something meaningful—to be a role model for the children I teach. It’s not just about demonstrating techniques. I want to show them how to live. That’s why I’m always looking for new challenges.”

“Winning my first tournament was possible only because I never stopped practicing. Judo has kept me strong and energized over the years. It’s truly the secret to my vitality.”

■ Mr. Aguni also holds the “Third-Class Chief Electricity Engineer’s License”—a national qualification under the Electricity Business Act of Japan. This certifies him to oversee safety management, construction, maintenance, and operations of commercial electrical installations under 50,000 volts. Leveraging his years of experience and professional credentials, he continues to contribute as a specialist supporting AEC’s projects.

## ■ How do you balance judo and your work?

“I joined AEC at age 50 and retired once, just before turning 65, but decided to return to the field once again.

The secret to balancing it all is patience—and knowing when to switch gears. When work becomes overwhelming or stressful, I head to the dojo and sweat it out. “

Mr. Aguni shared this with a warm laugh.

“No matter how difficult things get, I try to channel frustration into motivation. I tell myself, “Next time, I’ll do better.” If you train both your mind and body, you naturally grow stronger.”



▲ A proud moment—Mr. Aguni with his championship medal.

## ■ Finally, what message would you like to share with younger people?

“First and foremost, whatever you choose to do—work, sports, anything—stick with it for at least three years.

At the start, it’s always hard. But if you give up too quickly, you might lose faith in yourself. The experience you gain by persevering will become a foundation you can rely on.

I truly believe that there are perspectives you can only discover by continuing, no matter how tough it gets.”

■ At 70, Mr. Aguni not only holds a prestigious sixth-degree black belt and the title of international champion—he also continues to thrive as an active engineer after briefly stepping into retirement. His quiet determination and genuine strength are qualities that can’t be fully captured in words alone.

Age doesn’t matter when it comes to taking on new challenges.

His story reminds us that it’s never too late to forge our own path. For anyone contemplating a new chapter, Mr. Aguni offers a powerful example of what’s possible when you embrace discipline, curiosity, and courage.