

# 2025 AAU Karate Handbook – Kobudo Rules

## SECTION 4. AAU/USA KARATE RULES FOR KOBUDO COMPETITION

### ARTICLE 4.1 GENERAL GUIDELINE

- A. See General Rules SECTION 1 ARTICLE 1.1

### ARTICLE 4.2 COMPETITION AREA

- A. See General Rules SECTION 1 ARTICLE 1.2

### ARTICLE 4.3 OFFICIAL ATTIRE

- A. See General Rules SECTION 1 ARTICLE 1.3

### ARTICLE 4.4 ORGANIZATION OF KOBUDO COMPETITION

- A. Kobudo competition consists of long and short-weapons competition.
- B. Kobudo competition takes the form of team, family team and individual matches.
- C. Team Competition is conducted between three people in unison against each other. Teams may be coed.
- D. Family Team Competition is conducted between three or four people in unison against each other. Team may be three or four coed family members.
- E. Individual matches consist of individual performance in separate male and female divisions.
- F. In Kobudo competition the contestants must perform a traditional Kobudo kata.

### ARTICLE 4.5 AAU/USA KARATE KOBUDO WEAPONS

Only the following weapons will be allowed in AAU/USA Kobudo competition:

- A. **BO** - The Bo shall be made of hardwood. The length shall be a minimum of the competitor's height or longer. Competitors over 6 feet in height may use a standard 6 foot bo. Competitors under 5 feet in height may use a minimum diameter of 7/8 inches. Competitors over 5 feet in height must use a bo with a minimum diameter of 1 inch. Adult competitors over 6 feet in height must use bo with a minimum of 1 1/16 inches in diameter.
- B. **TONFA (pair)** - TONFA must be entirely made of hardwood with a minimum length, when grasped by the handle, to reach the end of the competitor's elbow. Two TONFA are used in AAU KOBUDO competition.
- C. **EKU (Kai-Bo)** - EKU must be made of hardwood and have a length of eye level or higher. In addition the EKU blade shall have a flat side and a rounded or beveled side, and the blade tip may not have a sharp point.
- D. **NUNCHAKU (pair)** - One pair of NUNCHAKU constitutes two hardwood handles connected by a cord. In principle a minimum handle length of 12".
- E. **SAI (pair)** - Two Sais must be used for AAU KOBUDO competitions (Sai KATAs that use one Sai or three Sais are not allowed). Sai must be made of steel and when grasped in the normal fashion, the tip shall at a minimum extend to the competitor's elbow.
- F. **KAMA (pair)** - Two Kamas are used in AAU KOBUDO competitions. Kama handles are made of hardwood and the blades of unsharpened steel. No rope, chord, string, etc. are permitted nor Kamas with holes in blades.

#### **ARTICLE 4.6 AAU/USA KARATE KOBUDO GENERAL WEAPON GUIDELINES**

- A. At the discretion of the National Committee, KOBUDO weapons may be furnished by the National Committee for use by all athletes during a competition. The use of these weapons shall be made mandatory for all competitors. Failure to use furnished KOBUDO weapons shall result in disqualification. Only KOBUDO weapons that are authorized and deemed as acceptable by the National Committee may be used during competition.
- B. All weapons shall be examined by an official prior to competition to ensure that they are of authentic design, construction and materials. Any weapon that, in the examiner's opinion, gives an unfair advantage to a competitor may not be used.
- C. An approved AAU stamp is required for all Bo competitors. The stamp is received after the bo passes inspection.
- D. Weapons must be of traditional design and any decision as to a weapon's eligibility will be made by the Chief Referee and/or the Referee Council.
- E. Grounds for rejecting a weapon include but are not limited to exceptionally lightweight, coating to improve grip, markings (including different color tones of wood) and non-standard construction.
- F. All wood weapons and wood on weapons must be hardwood. The Bo must be made of the dense hardwood (hickory, oak, ash or Purple Heart: no rat-tan), Ultra-light Bo and Eku may be disqualified from the competition upon the inspection of the referee. If a referee decides an athlete should be disqualified for the weapon being too light, this decision must be approved by the Referee Council or Tournament Director. In the event a weapon is disqualified, the competitor will have 1-minute to find a replacement weapon.
- G. In short weapons competition, the contestants must use the following traditional Okinawan weapons: Kama (2), Sai (2), Tonfa (2), or Nunchaku (1 pair or 2 pair). No variations are allowed.

#### **ARTICLE 4.7 INDIVIDUAL KOBUDO REGULATIONS**

- A. Individual and Team Competitors shall compete in the same age and skill divisions that they would for Kumite.
- B. There shall be no weight divisions as described for KOBUDO competition.

#### **ARTICLE 4.8 INDIVIDUAL KOBUDO COMPETITION**

##### **Individual Flag System**

- A. By the approval of the AAU/USA Karate Committee, the flag judgment system may be incorporated for all Kobudo divisions.
- B. The Organization of Individual Competition for the flag judgment system shall be organized into a single round.
- C. In the flag system, if sufficient personnel are available, a panel of five judges for each match shall be designated by the Referee Council. Otherwise, a panel may consist of three judges.
- D. In addition a caller/announcer and when necessary, an expeditor shall be appointed.
- E. The competitors shall be charted in the same manner as Kumite.

##### **Single Round Flag Judgment System Procedure:**

- A. The contesting athletes shall be called to ring.
- B. Following a bow to the Judging Panel, Shiro shall then step back out of the match area.
- C. After moving to the starting position and a clear announcement of the name of the Kobudo Kata that is to be performed, Aka shall begin.
- D. On completion of the Kobudo Kata, Aka shall leave the area to await the performance of Shiro. After Shiro's Kobudo Kata has been completed, both shall return to the match area perimeter and

await the decision from the Panel. The competitors shall stand side-by-side in the match area and await the decision from the Panel.

- E. The Chief Judge shall call for a decision (HANTEI) and blow a two-tone blast on the whistle. The flags shall be raised at the same time.
- F. The Chief Judge shall blow a further short blast on the whistle, whereupon the flags shall be lowered.
- G. The decision shall be for Aka or Shiro. No ties are permitted. The competitor who receives the majority of votes shall be declared the winner.
- H. The Referee will then raise the flag for the winner.
- I. The competitors will then bow to the judging panel and exit the match area.
- J. The winner shall advance and the loser shall be eliminated.
- K. The next two competitors will perform their Kobudo Kata in the same manner.
- L. The procedure outlined above will continue until there is only one competitor remaining, who will be the gold medalist.
- M. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and double 3<sup>rd</sup> medalists will be determined via the chart, where the silver medalist will be the competitor who lost to the gold medalist in the final round, and the bronze medalists will be the competitors who lost in the semi-final rounds.

#### **Individual Scoring System**

- A. Shall be conducted in the same manner as the Kata individual scoring system, please refer to Kata rules SECTION 3 ARTICLE 3.6: individual scoring system for details.

#### **Individual Scoring System Procedure:**

- A. Shall be conducted in the same manner as the Kata individual scoring system, please refer to Kata rules SECTION 3 ARTICLE 3.6: individual scoring system procedure for details.

#### **ARTICLE 4.9 TEAM KOBUDO COMPETITION**

- A. Shall be conducted in the same manner as the Team Kata competition, please refer to Kata rules SECTION 3 ARTICLE 3.7: Team Kata Competition for details.
- B. The competitors must use the same type of weapon.

#### **ARTICLE 4.10 CRITERIA FOR DECISION FOR KOBUDO COMPETITION**

- A. Shall be in the same manner as the Kata competition, please refer to Kata rules SECTION 3 ARTICLE 3.9: Criteria for Decision for Kata Competition.
- B. The contestants must properly use the body and footwork to extend the power (energy) into the weapons.
- C. The contestants must always maintain control of the weapons during the performance.
- D. Correct and consistent Kihon of the style of Kobudo being demonstrated.

#### **Additional Criteria for Team Kobudo**

- A. The Kobudo Kata must not alter in rhythm or timing for the purpose of synchronization. It must demonstrate correct dynamics of the weapon as if performed by an individual.
- B. The members of the team must demonstrate competence in all aspects of the Kobudo performance, as well as synchronization.
- C. A mistake in synchronization of Team Kobudo requires the same numerical deduction as a technical mistake in individual Kobudo.

#### **ARTICLE 4.11 BREAKING TIES FOR KOBUDO COMPETITION**

- A. Shall be conducted in the same manner as the Kata competition, please refer to Kata rules SECTION 3 ARTICLE 3.10: Breaking Ties for Kata Competition.
- B. Competitors may repeat the same Kobudo kata, except in the black belt division.
- C. In black belt division, the tie breaker kata MUST be a different kata. It may be of a different weapon, but must stay within the long or short division.

#### **ARTICLE 4.12 SCORING FOR KOBUDO COMPETITION**

- A. Shall be conducted in the same manner as the Kata competition, please refer to Kata rules SECTION 3 ARTICLE 3.11: Scoring for Kata Competition.

#### **Disqualification** - Disqualification may be imposed for the following:

- A. A contestant shall be disqualified if he/she drops a weapon during the performance.
- B. A contestant shall be disqualified if he/she uses a dangerous technique that jeopardizes the safety of the Judges or other contestants.

#### **ARTICLE 4.13 AAU/USA KARATE KOBUDO DIVISIONS**

KOBUDO competition shall be conducted as follows:

- A. Youth Divisions ages 5 - 17, Beginners, Novice, Intermediate and Advanced.
- B. Junior Divisions ages 18 - 20, Beginners, Novice, Intermediate and Advanced.
- C. Senior Divisions ages 21 - 35 - Beginners, Novice, Intermediate and Advanced.
- D. Veteran Divisions ages 36 and above- Beginners, Novice, Intermediate and Advanced.