

SKIF -USA Newsletter



A publication of
SKIF-USA

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Clay Morton
Glenn Stoddard
Lynda Crimmins
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SHOTOKAN KARATE DO INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION

2008 SKIF USA NATIONAL & OPEN TOURNAMENT

SATURDAY, SEPT. 27th.
Tournament starts at 9:00 AM
Doors open at 8:00 AM
Ransom Everglades High School
3575 Main Highway, Coconut Grove, FL 33133

**SPECIAL GUEST
World Champion**
SENSEI MANABU MURAKAMI - 7th Dan
Head SKIF of International Affairs
Seminar: Friday 26th (Kata, Kumite, Judging)

FEATURING
Youth Kata
Youth Kumite
Adult Kata
Adult Kumite
All levels and
Black Belts

Director: Sensei Jimmy Wong
Organizer: Sensei Jorge Vargas
Hosted by: SKIF Miami
Phone: 305-898-7500
email: skifmiami@hotmail.com

Tournament Deadline Registration: Sept. 20
Speclators: \$ 5.00
Under 4 years: Free



KANAZAWA 2008 TOUR A SUCCESS!

2008 --- The Best Ever !!

Mike Cook Sensei

Maine Shotokan Karate Association-SKIF

On Saturday morning, June 14th, 2008, more than 120 excited and energized Shotokan stylists stood anxiously awaiting Kanazawa Kancho's arrival into the Rochester, New Hampshire Recreation Center Gymnasium to begin two fantastic days of training. Accompanying Kancho was his eldest son, Nobuaki Kanazawa Sensei.

This seminar was co-hosted by three SKIF-USA Sensei: Jim Shea of Massachusetts, Mike Cook of Maine, and Steve Warren of New Hampshire. Attendees came from ten different states and two Canadian provinces. Also attending was Fujishima Sensei from California, accompanied by one of his senior students, Penny Karpovski, who many remember, took 1st place in Advanced Women's Kata at the 9th SKIF World Tournament in Japan in 2006.

During the two day seminar, Kancho divided the gymnasium into 2 and sometimes 3 groupings of Dan and Kyu grades, adults and children, allowing himself, Nobuaki Sensei and Fujishima Sensei greater flexibility and time to specifically train with each group in the three K's of Shotokan training...Kihon, Kata, and Kumite!

After an awesome stretching and warm-up routine by Nobuaki Sensei, everyone jumped wholeheartedly into the SKIF Kihon that was being presented to them by both Kancho and Nobuaki Sensei. Time flew by for the morning session and the aura of satisfaction showed brightly upon the faces of everyone participating. Those individuals who initially were terrified and possibly petrified by tales of Kancho's hard line training, soon observed and eventually felt the harmony that Kancho so often stresses throughout our training sessions. Kancho took the time to field many questions about technique and bunkai...and he and Nobuaki Sensei demonstrated several important aspects of the training that we had performed.

The half hour break, fast became about a 50 minute timeframe, with Kancho patiently posing

for photos with various participants and dojos and signing gi's, books, and photos. Luckily, we were able to rescue him for a quick lunchbreak of fruit, juice, and spring water...enabling Kancho, Nobuaki Sensei, Fujishima Sensei and the hosting Sensei to discuss how the morning session went and what was planned for the afternoon!

The afternoon session started a little after 1PM and continued for slightly more than two hours. Very detailed explanations of SKIF Kata and it's bunkai took up the brunt of the afternoon's session...with Kancho, Nobuaki Sensei, and Fujishima Sensei all teaching different kata to both adult and the children's groups. Kancho, personally spent a great amount of time with the children's groups, refining and polishing their technique and instilling a desire to train harder and never being satisfied with what one had done the day before..."Train for Today!!! Be better tomorrow!!!" The afternoon session ended with an extended cool down and after seiza, additional photos were taken and the signing continued! Kancho spent some time explaining how very important stretching and cool down time was to all participants.

Tai Chi testing was offered by Kancho with three of Roger Lagace's SKIF-Quebec students from Montreal and Cowensville demonstrating their 24 pattern form from the Yang Ming Shi style of Tai Chi Chuan. I am pleased again to congratulate all three gentlemen for doing such a good job and certainly, congratulations go to Roger Lagace' Sensei for teaching his students so well! Mr. Lagace' has a very large following of devoted Tai Chi students throughout the Quebec province. Oss!

Kancho was also interviewed by Mr. David Palumbo, Sensei, Shotokan Ryu of Rhode Island. This interview will appear in an upcoming edition of Shotokan Karate Magazine. Dave is a karate historian and has written several articles for Karate magazines, as well as being instrumental, in publishing Funakoshi Sensei's Karate Do Kyohan -The Master Text, once thought to have been lost in the Great Earthquake of Japan. Although Dave is associated with another Shotokan organization, he has been very supportive of SKIF events and we have known each other for many years. His good friend, Stephen Adams of New Vineyard, Maine, and Sandan with the Maine Shotokan Karate Association-SKIF, brought us together "on the tatami" in 2000 when Kanazawa Kancho first came to Maine to put on a Seminar.

Saturday night's group dinner was a sell out!

Kancho, Nobuaki Sensei and Fujishima Sensei seem to very much enjoy the ambiance and atmosphere of Warren's Lobster House in Kittery, Maine...quite possibly, one the best seafood restaurants in Maine, giving our group of 66 hungry Karate-ka, a private semi-enclosed dining room along side a tidal river and offered a multitude of meal options. Everyone had a great time, friendships were re-kindled and new bonds of friendship were made...showing "harmony" in action, amongst so many and with such a varied group!

Sunday's three hour class continued the wide eyed, opened mouth excitement of those in attendance! A unique combination of kihon, kata and kumite training regimens that we all found most interesting and challenging burned up the three hour interval almost in a blink!!! Certainly, much of what we learned has been taken back to our respective dojos and incorporated into our weekly training times.

Dan and Kyu testing was held upon completion of Sunday's training session...offering testing to a number of Brown and BlackBelt students from several Dojos in as many states and Canada. Those who tested and passed had obviously prepared well...those who need a bit more time to polish some rough spots, benefited by personal comments and suggestions from both Kancho and Nobuaki Sensei, so that their next exam will be without...flaw!

In conclusion, this year's June Training Seminar with Kancho and Nobuaki Kanazawa Sensei was overwhelmingly considered one of the best that many of those seniors in attendance had ever taken. Each seminar with Kancho gives us more light into the intricacies and depths of the Budo. All of us went away with a feeling of continued desire to become the best that we can...and as the saying goes..."More is expected of a Shotokan person!"

I wish to thank all of you who made this event a success and I enjoyed making new friends and seeing older more familiar faces out "on the tatami!"

Oss!



Kancho's Houston Seminar a Great Success

As part of their 2008 SKIF-USA Tour, Kancho Kanazawa and Nobuaki Sensei visited the dojo of Sensei Shadi Barazi where they gave an excellent weekend training camp on June 21st and 22nd, 2008. In attendance at the camp were 80 energetic karateka on Saturday June 21st, and 74 slightly less energetic karateka (from the previous day's training) on Sunday, June 22nd. In addition, 15 karateka participated in dan grading under the watchful eyes of Kancho, Nobuaki Sensei, Barazi Sensei, and Jim Shea Sensei.

Sensei Daylami, who is the co-instructor with Sensei Barazi at the SKIF-USA Houston Dojo, was promoted to Rokudan (6th Dan). This was by all accounts long overdue promotion because

Sensei Daylami has a very long history in karate-do and is a highly respected karate sensei.

According to reports by participants, the Saturday morning session included a series of basic and advanced kihon drills, as well as the SKIF sanbon kumite drills. In the afternoon, Kancho and Nobuaki Sensei taught the Sochin and Kanku Sho kata, covering many important

details of these advanced Shotokan kata. In addition, they taught

several of the SKIF jyu-ippou kumite drills plus some additional drills for use in jyu kumite.

On Sunday, Kancho and Nobuaki Sensei taught more kihon drills, some solo and some with partners from the fighting stance. In addition, they went over several of the SKIF kihon-ippou kumite and jyu-ippou kumite drills, explaining proper technique and breathing in detail. On Sunday, Kancho also taught the Jiin kata, which he said may be referred to as Jion Sho. In teaching this kata, Kancho explained in detail how it is to be performed, so the participants could fully the techniques.

When the camp was over the participants were reportedly filled with fresh ideas for their own teaching and training, and by every measure the camp was reportedly a great success! The SKIF-USA family is greatly appreciative of Sensei Barazi and Sensei Daylami for hosting this excellent training camp with Kancho and Nobuaki Sensei.

Home Made Cold Packs

We have a supply of cold packs in the Dojo in case someone dings a hand , foot, knee, shins etc during kumite...but, what happens when you get home and the cold pack stops working? We make our own! It's easy!...and quite inexpensive!

Here's the recipe:

Take 1/4 cup of rubbing alcohol, mix it with 1 1/2 cups of water, put the contents into a zip lock baggie and put them in the freezer...until needed...they work great! For those of you that have a refrigerator in the Dojo, even better...they're right there.

Remember the acronym RICE in reference
to injuries....

REST, ICE, COMPRESSION, ELEVATION or REST, IMMOBILIZE, COLD, ELEVATE...either way that you
read this acronym, injuries need cold to
reduce swelling.

Train well!

Kanazawa Training Camp, New Brighton, Minnesota

By Lori Porter

This article, written by a “newbie” to the SKIF organization, is from the perspective of someone that witnessed phenomenal karate expertise and extraordinary hospitality. What a wonderful experience it was to participate at the Summer Training Camp hosted by Peak Performance Shotokan Karate-do in Minnesota on June 17th & 18th. The camp participants, totaling nearly 50, traveled from as far away as Mississippi, Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin. To a karate-ka, I would compare the event to being a kid at the county fair and not wanting to leave at closing time. The two day event started with arriving at the dojo and instantly being welcomed by several smiling, warm martial artists. Kancho Kanazawa and Sensei Nobuaki kept us sweating by training different kihon combinations, kata, and kumite drills. Their attention to detail with each and every student is mind blowing, and they are extremely genuine and nice in every interaction! If any person was confused with any drill or technique, it did not last long. During the training camp Kancho was meticulous about correct technique, and he made the move look so easy for a student to perform as well as understand the bunkai. He didn't move on until he felt the whole class understood the technique. The patience they both exhibited toward everyone was a perfect example of what each karate-ka should strive to have.

Our ippon kumite exercises were challenging in that many of the blocks and counter attacks were advanced techniques taken from moves in the katas. At times huge light bulbs were going off in my head saying “Oh, so that's how that block is most effective”. I felt like a sponge trying to absorb every second of instruction and loving every minute of it. We rested briefly at the motel between training sessions which gave me time to digest the new material and write down some notes to remember. I, also, enjoyed how Sensei Nubuaki would teach kumite drills. After we practiced a lot and became comfortable, he would then show us how to add to them to make the drills even more effective against your opponent.

On the second day of camp, Kancho Kanazawa taught a Tai Chi class that included many of our

training camp students. Never being exposed to Tai Chi before, it appears to be a great way to continue training without straining and jarring yourself. An added bonus was getting to watch Kancho work with Clay Morton on Unsu. I have never seen a Japanese master work in detail on such a high rank kata. It was a pleasure to see and learn from.

The most memorable aspect was the genuine friendliness shown to those attending the seminar, thanks Lynda Crimmins, Chris Johnson and Glenna Burleson (to name a few). Even though this was my first SKIF event, because of so much friendliness, it felt like I had been in the organization for years. After the training on the first night, our group had the opportunity to enjoy Mongolian food at dinner with Kancho and Nobuaki Sensei which was a great experience and an adventure into trying something unique and very tasty. Great food, great company, lots of fun!

The training camp culminated with several people testing for the rank of sandan and godan and then a fabulous dinner with everyone at the Olive Garden. I was very grateful for the opportunity to be one of the testing participants, and I can honestly say that I've never been more nervous and had so much fun at the exact same time. Wow, I'll never forget what an honor it was to test in front of Kancho Kanazawa, Sensei Nobuaki, and Sensei Stoddard. It was a fantastic two days of training and camaraderie, and I am greatly looking forward to my next opportunity to attend a training camp.



SKIF Elite Karate Training Camp 2008 By Lynda Crimmins

Sand, sea, and sun are a few words you may think of when you think of the Bahamas. Here are a few other words I think of now when I think of the Bahamas: friends and fun. This is what everyone found who attended the SKIF Elite Karate Training Camp. Hosted by Sensei Patricia Ferguson of SKIF Bahamas, the camp was held at the Wyndham Nassau Resort, Nassau Bahamas, from June 24th - 26th, 2008. In addition to the SKIF Bahamas attendees, other instructors and attendees included Kancho Kanazawa, Nobuaki Kanazawa Sensei, and Murakami Sensei of SKIF Japan; Ishikawa Sensei from SKIF Mexico; Alejandro Castro Sensei of SKIF Kodukai Venezuela; Demetrios Gonzalez and Anabel Mendez from SKIF Panama; as well as Clay Morton Sensei and myself from SKIF-USA.

Everyone had arrived by Monday and the week's activities started with a quiet evening at the private home (located on Paradise Island) of one of Sensei Patricia's students. The camp started bright and early (5:00 AM) Tuesday with a walk/run over the Paradise Island Bridge, a small distance around the island and back over the bridge to Nassau. Later that morning, the youth of SKIF Bahamas (there were a few adults in attendance as well) attended a lecture on spirit and etiquette conducted by Kancho Kanazawa. Murakami Sensei followed the lecture with a session for advanced/instructor training.

After a short break, the training continued with a session on kata lead by Kancho. As this session was also for the advanced levels, the focus was on Gojushiho-Sho and Gojushiho-Dai. The class ended with demonstrations of each kata by Clay Morton (Gojushiho-Sho) and Alejandro Castro (Gojushiho-Dai).

We were able to sleep a little later on Wednesday as our morning training didn't start until 5:30 AM. This session was held in a park next to the beach which helped to make up for the early time! After a walk on the beach to the park, Sensei Nobuaki led us in a series of cardio drills followed by punching and kicking drills (in a circle).

The next session wasn't until later in the afternoon, so a few of us, including Kancho Kanazawa, spent the down time at the home on Paradise Island. We spent the time swimming in the ocean or relaxing next to the pool. Murakami Sensei even showed Kancho how to shoot a game of pool! This was before the sea urchin 'incident'. While snorkeling with Sensei Nobuaki, Murakami Sensei tried to pick up a sea urchin (for sushi). But instead of coming back with supper, he came back with three spines in two of his fingers!

After our 'fun in the sun', we returned to the camp and couple more hours of training. The focus of this class was kumite. The session started with the entire group practicing Sanbon kumite 1 and 2. We then broke into smaller groups based on levels to maximize our training. The Black/Brown belt group was lead by Ishikawa Sensei. We spent most of the time working on several turning drills so that by the time you were done, you had completed a full circle. We did these first with punching, then kicking, and ending with a punching/kicking combination. The entire session ended with a partner kicking drill.

Our final 5:30 AM session on Thursday was lead by Ishikawa Sensei and Castro Sensei. After a little stretching, much of the session focused on a variety of punching, kicking and stance drills. We ended with Heian Shodan repeating the kata several times including deep stances; the traditional start to the left and one where we started to the right. The down time was spent with a quick trip to see the Aquarium and water slides at the Atlantis. And yes, some in our group (Murakami Sensei, Clay, and several local students) went on the water slides!

The final training session of the camp was lead by Kancho and covered both kata and kumite. Once again we broke into groups based on rank. In the kata portion, each group also had to demonstrate the kata they had been working on. We were treated to displays of Heian Shodan, Nidan, Sandan, Enpi, and Chinte. In the kumite section, the brown and belts worked on Jiyu Ippon #5 for Jodan and Chudan.

Just as we started the week's activities, we ended them with a very nice dinner at a local seafood restaurant. Although the attendance may have been

lower than expected, the camp was excellent with focused training and good spirit. The smaller size also provided an added advantage of more time to get to know one another. It was a perfect opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones! So the next time you see a flyer or receive an invitation for a training camp, keep this in mind: a camp is not only about concentrated training but also a chance to make new friends and help make our international SKIF 'family' more close knit.

A closing statement from the host, Sensei Patricia Ferguson:

Hosting my SKIF family was a pleasure. The SKIF Elite Karate Training Camp is not about an individual, or a country. IT'S ABOUT US!

It's about our development individually and collectively, about us developing a stronger communication chain within our organization and it's about us moving forward as a united family. So at the end of the day everyone will be personally energized and our organization links strengthen.



The newsletter staff would like to thank all of those who have contributed to this quarters Newsletter. If you have an article that you would like to contribute please email it to: skifusa@comcast.net

SKIF-USA MEMBERS ARE REPRESENTED AT USA-NKF NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS AND TEAM TRIALS

July 2008

By Lorri Porter

The USA National Karate Federation hosted their national championships and international team trials in Houston, Texas, on July 18-20, 2008. Several SKIF members were spotted participating and earning a few medals along the way. In addition to the competition, the federation hosted many other activities for all karate-do enthusiasts to partake. There were seminars for referees, coaches, dojo owners, kata, and kumite. Some of our SKIF members participated in the Shotokan kata clinic taught by Sensei Alex Miladi, Sensei Alex Sternberg and Sensei Kyoshi Yamazaki. After the seminars ended, a fund raiser was held to help raise money to fund many different athlete programs along with international travel to tournaments. They were able to raise close to forty thousand dollars for these programs.

The competition area was enormous with 12 rings ready to go by 8:00am Friday. The kata competition started early Friday morning and culminated with the international team trial divisions. SKIF member Dr. Clay Morton competed in his elimination rounds to qualify for the grand finale that was to be held Sunday evening. He eliminated four other competitors in his quest for the gold. His opponent in the final was William Bradford of Alaska. After the last of the flags of the referees went up, Dr. Clay Morton, of Mississippi, again captured the title of Men's World Karate Federation (WKF) National Mandatory Kata Champion. With that win he secures the spot to represent the U.S. at the WKF World Championship competition in Japan in November of this year. Saturday started early and progressed through the days with all ages of kumite. It was astonishing to see so many young karate students using sweeping techniques and scoring with jodan mawashi geri's. Other SKIF members competing in the tournament included Dr. Lisa Shimmo of Houston, Texas in Kata, Kumite and Team Kumite earning Silver in Kata and Bronze in Team Kumite. Another new SKIF member participating was Lorri Porter, Nesbit, Mississippi, earning Gold in Kumite, Bronze in Kata, and Bronze in Team Kumite. Mei Yee Koh, of Houston, TX, won a silver medal in

the advanced womens international citizen division. Alex Ndem of Houston, TX, was a member of the gold medal kumite team. His son Marvin Ndem, of Houston, TX, won a silver medal in kumite in the 10 year old advanced division. Sofia El-meary of Houston, TX, won a bronze medal in kumite in the 13 year old female division. Ian Fung Quee of New York got a fourth place in advanced kata. Michael Fung Quee of New York competed very strongly in kata and kumite. What an exciting event experienced by the karate world.



Leadership: The Karate Hierarchy
By Clay Morton

Why does karate place such a value on the karate hierarchy of senseis, sempais, and kohais? Other individual activities like tennis or golf do not have a rank system and millions of people participate in these activities for a lifetime as well. What significant inherently beneficial component does this leadership system bring to all karate-ka? Some will say it is an extension of Japanese culture. It is, but what value does it bring? I believe it benefits all karate-ka in three distinctive ways. It provides organization, teaching, and a way of life.

The organization it provides is a systematic way to denote levels of classification and levels of knowledge with expertise along with experience. Karate provides a lifetime of learning like most other activities. However, this system produces a way to denote levels of advancement and progress that can be applied to any physical ability level. In sports like tennis or golf, a person can only get as good as their handicap or their 3.5/4.0 ranking. As a person ages and his knowledge out produces his physical abilities to perform, their ranking has to fall or decrease because these ranking systems are based on performance alone. In karate, as long a person has the knowledge and can perform the technique to earn the rank, he will have that rank when he is years older when his body will not allow such speed and power. So, there is no drop off or decrease in rank. The idea is that if a person has the knowledge of how to perform something and the ability to do it, when the physical ability leaves, the knowledge should still be there as well as their rank.

The second beneficial component that the karate hierarchy provides is a teaching system. How beneficial is it to have people passing on their knowledge of what works and what does not work in terms of technique and character development? Other sports like golf, tennis, or fencing all have coaches who can pass on knowledge and athletes can trade tips or pointers with each other, but their system of learning does not develop their practioners into instructors the way karate can. This is done with the accomplishment of Yondan, the instructor grade. In addition, the easily observable ranking system in karate constructs a way for its practioners to ask another more learned practioner for help. This activity is used everyday in the dojo with the sempai-kohai relationship. This relation-

ship even pervades the dan grades and instructors of different rank who continue to learn how to improve their own techniques as well as improve their teaching of how to improve others. As the years progress, karate continues to evolve and develop with more study, training, and newer technologies. The passing on of information in this hierarchy helps further this development because gradually all the errors or ways of doing a technique that are incorrect are discarded instead of each person having to figure out every aspect of every technique on his own which would lead to practioners only knowing one or two techniques.

The last beneficial component it brings which is the most important, is character development by using role models. A karate organization takes on the characteristics of its leader whether good or bad. The traits are stressed from the head instructor all the way down to the beginners traveling from sempai to kohai regardless of rank. In the SKIF, we are fortunate that our leader, Kancho Kanazawa, has stressed the traits that has created a world organization that has practioners who are humble, open to new-comers, hard-working, friendly, and character minded. This hierarchy or pyramid like organizational structure is what helps provide karate with its ability to be a way of life instead of just a sport. The other sports previously mentioned all promote fair play, discipline, and hard work. However, there is not an organized structure to demonstrate these qualities in action by role models of higher rank. Each level of sempai creates a standard or is a role model for their kohais just as the organizational head creates the standard and is a role model for the senseis. Every rank helps the next lower rank in their karate journey in terms of techniques and character development.

The hierarchy system is an inherent part of karate. It brings a system of organization, teaching, and way of life to all of its participants. So, the next time you learn something from your sempai or teach a kohai something, be thankful for this institution that has helped develop the form of karate that we do today.

Harmonizing with your opponent

By Paul Walker

The process of learning *kumite* (sparring or partner work) in Shotokan karate can be a long and arduous path. Usually a practitioner begins by learning the introductory *kihon* of our style such as punches, blocks and kicks and then basic partner work drills are introduced such as *gohon kumite* (five-step sparring) and *sanbon kumite* (three step sparring) at the beginning level and then *kihon ippon-kumite* (basic one-step sparring) at the intermediate level. By the time the practitioner has reached the brown belt level the partner work drills have progressed to *jiyu ippon-kumite* (free one-step sparring). So essentially the first two to three years of a karate-ka's practice are focused on learning set drills that progressively lead the karate-ka to a better understanding of basic technique and how those techniques can be used against an opponent.

Many instructors introduce *jiyu kumite* (free sparring) in the midst of all of this drilling of basic technique to break up the monotony of set partner work and to try to encourage the practitioner to loosen up and not be so rigid. I think this is a good idea especially at the intermediate levels of 6th – 4th kyu. I believe there is great value in systematically introducing partner work drills through set sequences that build upon one another but it is also important to encourage freedom of movement and creativity through free sparring. With a structured combination of these two methods practitioners can gradually be given the necessary tools at the beginning and intermediate levels to lay the foundations for rapid improvement in their overall *kumite* skills at the brown belt levels and beyond.

If we look at the systematic training methods that Shotokan offers we can see that *gohon kumite* and *sanbon kumite* are essentially partner work drills that focus on repetition of offensive and defensive techniques. *Kihon ippon-kumite* offers different applications of each basic technique and emphasizes the "one chance" mentality and the importance of effective counter attacks under stress. *Jiyu ippon-kumite* takes *kihon ippon-kumite* training to the next level by introducing the concepts of distance, timing, range and the element of surprise.

This article assumes that the reader has already mastered the prerequisites of basic technique along with set partner work drills and is looking to take his or her *kumite* skills to the next level through

be likened to a chess player putting his queen into play too early without adequate protection and having to backtrack on the move, thus losing a 'tempo'.

The second strategy, "*tai no sen*" (same-time attack) is much more effective but is consequently more difficult to pull off. This strategy is where the defender is able to see the attack coming and counter at the point that the attacker is most committed. For example the attacker comes in with a head punch and the defender, seeing the attack, resists the natural reaction of moving back, and instead moves in to the attack ducking the head out of the way and delivering a solid punch to the ribcage with perfect timing. The resulting effect of this defense is twice that of the counter attack because the defender is meeting the attacker in a head-on collision thereby making the impact twice as effective. This type of defense is one of the most useful because, as Kanazawa-sensei clearly explains in many of his seminars, "*tai no sen*" strategy allows a defender to conserve some of his energy by using only about 75% of his total power, but when combined with the 100% commitment of the attacker the resulting effect is far greater than a 100% counter attack against an already completed attacking technique, as in "*go no sen*" strategy. The drawback of this type of defense is that you are still betting on your superior speed, timing and technical ability against your opponent. On those occasions when you meet up with a superior opponent you will quickly see your ideas of "*tai no sen*" strategy revert back to "*go no sen*" strategy.

The final strategy of harmonizing with your opponent is called "*sen no sen*," which could be translated as "pre-emptive strike" or "advance attack". As the "*Do*" of "karate-do" suggests, we have a moral obligation to use our art as a defensive art and not as an aggressive attacking art. Master Gichin Funakoshi echoed this sentiment with his precept of "*karate ni sentenashi*", which is very often translated as "there is no first attack in karate". Quite frankly speaking though, would you stand still if someone drew a knife against your child and wait for them to strike first? Would you wait for someone who was cursing at the top of their lungs at your wife to take the first shot before you reacted? Would you allow someone with a broken bottle to take a swing at your face? I hope not! Sometimes the actions of your opponent require immediate action on your part without any

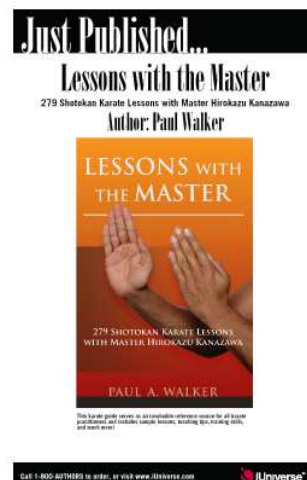
a deeper understanding of what Master Hirokazu Kanazawa, Chief Instructor and President of the Shotokan Karate International Federation, refers to as “harmonizing with your opponent.” According to Kanazawa-sensei, if you can harmonize with your opponent you will never lose an encounter, whether physical or verbal. At the highest level this concept essentially means that you will never be drawn into an encounter in the first place because you will be able to read the intentions of your opponent and appropriately diffuse the situation before any hostility and conflict can arise. From the perspective of actual *kumite* practice, however, there are several key concepts to understand.

Within the overall category of harmonizing with your opponent, which Kanazawa-sensei calls “*wa no sen*,” there are three sub-categories of defensive strategy. These are called “*go no sen*” (counter attack), “*tai no sen*” (same-time attack) and “*sen no sen*” (pre-emptive strike.)

The first of these strategies, “*go no sen*” (counter attack) is both the easiest to understand and also the easiest to execute from the practitioner’s point of view. Most beginning *kumite* drills focus on counter attacks as the main form of defense. This means that as the attacker moves in with their chosen technique the defender blocks and then counters with an appropriate technique. In the simplest form, the attacker steps in with a head punch and the defender blocks the punch with rising block and then counters with a reverse punch. This is the easiest form of defensive strategy as all the defender has to do is to get out of the way of the opponent’s attack by using footwork and an appropriate block and then counter with some kind of strike. At the beginning level there really isn’t much need for anything more advanced than this kind of strategy but when faced with a more skilled opponent the basic strategy falls apart as the counter attack is subsequently blocked and countered again by the initial attacker causing the defender to ultimately lose the initiative. Another problem with this counter attack strategy is that there is no harnessing of the attacker’s power and forward momentum by the defender as the blocking technique is aimed at nullifying the attack and then the counter attack must be delivered with 100% effort and power from the defender to be effective. Essentially a ‘tempo’ has been lost by the defender. This can

thought or second doubts. It is at this point that you are able to “read” your opponent and sense their ill-advised intentions and react both pre-emptively and appropriately. This is “*sen no sen*”. So back in the dojo this is characterized by that moment between two opponents when one is about to strike but the attack hasn’t yet happened. This moment is sometimes referred to as “the gap” between intention and action. Your job is to utilize “*yomi*” (reading of your opponent) and take decisive and immediate action before your opponent is able to follow through. If done correctly it really doesn’t matter what precise techniques you use because if you deliver them in the split second of opportunity, your opponent will be completely overwhelmed and defeated. This type of attack relies heavily on the “*ikken hissatsu*” (one strike, end of story) philosophy that is so often romanticized in our beloved karate legends, but as always you could add several additional counter strikes to make sure the job is done properly!

When you have all of the above defensive strategies in your *kumite* arsenal you are on the way to being able to fully harmonize with your opponent. Once again your ultimate goal is to avoid potentially harmful conflicts as much as possible but in the times when decisive action is necessary, your *kumite* drills should reappear as naturally as your knee-jerk reactions of bowing to your sensei, saying “*osu*” in class, or yelling out your “*kiai*” at the climax of your kata performances. The difference is that your well-honed *kumite* reactions might just save your life!



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