



Reminiscing About September's Regional Training

By Jeb Brack and Matt Madison



Advanced students practice Bassai Day under Sensei Vaughan's direction at the September Regional Training

Photos courtesy of Neil Geoppinger

Matt Madison and Jeb Brack of Ohio Valley Karate Club got together to share their impressions of the recent Regional Training event hosted by their dojo in Wyoming, Ohio, on September 15.

Matt: Remember we did that deconstruction of Bassai Dai? I thoroughly enjoy when Sensei Vaughan breaks down a kata into its component parts and shows us what each step should be, what it could be...

Jeb: Stuff you would never really consider when you're practicing by yourself or working out at the gym.

Matt: I would never do my own analysis. It's nice to see somebody's interpretation of it, then practice that and bring those elements in. It's great to take that time and stick with that focus all the way through.

Jeb: It's true. Bassai Dai is what, a 90-second kata? And we spent an hour practicing it move by move! What I like is how many people we get from all over.

Matt: It's an opportunity to train under someone else's direction, to meet other people from the region, and see how we stack up against other dojos in the way we do things.

Jeb: You mean sparring? We did some semi-free and free-sparring drills...

Matt: That, too! Don't take this the wrong way, but when we spar in the dojo against each other, you kind of know what's coming, since we've been training together from the beginning.

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**We are now accepting credit cards
at our regional events**



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Reminiscing About September's Regional Training

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Jeb: I know your style, and your reach, and what combinations you like to use.

Matt: Right, and I'm used to going against you or Mike or whatever, so sparring with a new partner means there can be some surprises. There's an element of pushing each other a little farther than usual. It puts you in a heightened sense of awareness. Yeah, I like that aspect, but I also like the social side of it, hanging out with people from all over the place.

Jeb: I was sorry to miss the cookout at Tony's.

Matt: That's what I mean. We meet there after the workout and talk about whatever, have some burgers, and get to know each other.

Jeb: One thing that surprised me was the number of members from our dojo who helped get the room ready.

Matt: Moving benches, sweeping and mopping...

Jeb: Moving dozens of toys out of the preschool room for the color belts. It was supposed to take over an hour, but so many volunteers showed up, we were done in twenty minutes.

Matt: There's a sense of pride in hosting one of these things in your dojo. It gives us a sense of teamwork that we don't often get to show.

Jeb: Plus we get to show off the room where we train!

Black Belt Testing Expectations and Requirements

By Sensei James Oberschlake and Marty Schragar

Like many martial arts, the ISKF karate tracks a student's progress through a series of exams. These exams provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their skills in front of organizational leadership. Those leaders in turn, provide feedback and grant rank based on their observations. No test is greater in magnitude or consequence than the *dan*, or black belt exam.

These exams have a number of prerequisites:

Instructor Permission - As with *kyu* testing, no one tests for black belt without permission. Testing is not a right; it is a privilege granted by those in authority recognizing the results of diligent effort. Instructor permission is a type of pledge, or promise to the examiners. It says this student has been training faithfully, that they may not be ready to pass, but they are ready to test.

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Mid-America Karate-ka taking a Dan exam at our December 2017 regional training

Photo courtesy of Marty Schragar

Black Belt Testing Expectations and Requirements

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Mandatory Waiting Periods - At most ISKF clubs, a student must wait at least one year after receiving the rank of 1st *kyu* before they are eligible to take a *dan* exam. Students taking higher level black belt tests must follow mandatory waiting periods as prescribed by the ISKF Technical Committee.

Mid-America Pretests - Before this requirement was implemented, 80 to 90% of students failed their black belt test. After instituting this requirement, 80 to 90% of students now pass their black belt test. Students perform their kata in front of ISKF examiners who look for problems that could cause them to fail. This feedback is provided to the student's instructor so they can address any issues prior to their official exam.

Kata - Bassai Dai - Most students perform Bassai Dai for their first black belt test. Bassai Dai utilizes big hip movement and strong stances to bring the power of the middle and lower body to the upper body techniques. Skidding feet and wobbly knees indicate weak stances and a lack of power. These are serious flaws that must be fixed. Mastering the correct movement of Bassai Dai is crucial to passing a black belt test. This kata demonstrates the essence of Shotokan Karate.

Testing Preparation - Testing for your black belt, whether it is for *Shodan* or *Rokudan*, should be treated with an exceptional level of importance. For those on the

path to achieving *dan* rankings, there is an expectation of training on a regular basis and attaining an in-depth understanding of karate. However, in the months leading up to an exam there is a higher expectation.



*Vince Lewis receiving his nidan certificate with his instructor, Marty Schragger
Photo courtesy of Jeb Brack*

Physical fitness is not the goal of karate training. It is a by-product. If you train properly, which includes sufficient frequency and intensity, you should be in very good physical condition and be able to handle the demands of the exam. Additionally, the various *kihon* combinations, *kata*, and sparring expectations are well-established. There is no excuse for not being prepared to demonstrate a high level of competence of all three of these sets of skills. Mistakes can happen, especially under pressure, but there are no excuses for being unprepared on the day of the exam. Preparation doesn't guarantee a passing grade, but it does maximize your chance.

Becoming a Black Belt - A black belt is something you become. The process is challenging and

life changing. You need to prepare and train so hard that even on your worst day, you would still pass.

On that day, you will no longer be the same person. You are neither average nor normal. You are something more. You are now a **Black Belt**.

Mid-America Summer Camp 2018

By *Audrey Bove*

On August 10th-12th, our 37th annual Michigan summer camp was held at the beautiful Camp Copneconic in Fenton, Michigan hosted by the Swartz Creek Karate Club. If you haven't been there, it's a beautiful campground with excellent staff. Being from this area, my children grew up going to this camp for many summers. My daughter went on to become a camp counselor there so it is a special place for me.

Our camp instructors this year were our very own Sensei Martin Vaughan and Sensei James Oberschlake from whom we always learn so much.

We covered a variety of techniques and drills, a lot of which focused on free sparing techniques, including ways to drive strongly to your opponent, shifting ideas, kicking, and various other *waza*. As always, there was also a focus on hip rotation and correct, strong, and accurate technique. One point Sensei emphasized heavily was positioning yourself with good blocks to the "outside" of your opponent, which protects you from

their attack as well as puts you in a good position for making a counter-attack. We also worked on Hangetsu and Jion *kata*, where we broke each down in to its elements and practiced them diligently.



Photo courtesy of Mid-America ISKF

Testing was held on Saturday with participants of all ranks. Saturday evening, after a day of hard training, we had dinner and then changed things up a bit from past years. Instead of our usual ice cream social, we had a karate movie party where we watched an in-depth interview with Shihan Hiroyoshi Okazaki. Of course, snacks and drinks were plentiful to help round out the evening.

The Michigan summer weather was beautiful, as it has been in the past few years and we had a wonderful time.

If you haven't attended this camp before, I highly recommend you do. I started going as a yellow belt and have learned so much through the years, and I continue to do so every camp. And of course, it is always good to reconnect with karate friends from around our region.



Mid-America karate-ka getting ready for training at Summer Camp

Photo courtesy of Mid-America ISKF

Learn to Begin

By Adam Clouser

Imagine yourself beginning to read a book. What did it look like? Most people will picture the book halfway open, well past the beginning. Why didn't you imagine yourself at the first page, with the rest of the book ahead of you? You will find it's a common theme in learning or starting anything; we often skip over the beginning.

This is largely because we don't understand how, and therefore don't like, to begin. Beginning is tedious, frustrating, and seeing the volume of what is ahead of you can be intimidating. As a result, we tend to work as fast as possible to put some of the process behind us. The danger is that when we try to remember, we don't see the beginning very clearly; sometimes because we don't like remembering it and sometimes because we moved through it too quickly to really stick. So you go back and review, then you jump around trying to remember where you were, and finally you try to make sense of the narrative out of order. If you haven't been careful, at some point, you'll realize you're so confused you've missed the whole point.

We have to learn how to begin before we do it. Most people try to "fake it till you make it" and train as though they are farther along than they are. Now, to clarify, there is nothing wrong with doing things above level; whether to challenge yourself, or for the fun of it. If you don't enjoy training, you won't do it, just don't skip the beginning.

Four Steps to Begin Something:

Step 1: BEGIN - This is the most important step. Have you ever spent months planning to start something, only to realize you never actually did? Don't spend so much time getting ready to begin, that you never do it.

Step 2: ACCEPT YOUR IGNORANCE – There's something cathartic about accepting that you don't have a clue. Don't let pride keep you from starting at the very beginning of what you're learning. Just because you are a "black-belt" now, doesn't mean the "white-belt" that you were, learned it.

Step 3: DON'T SKIP THE SMALL STUFF – There are some lessons that seem so small they get skipped over unintentionally. Do you know how to make a fist? Does

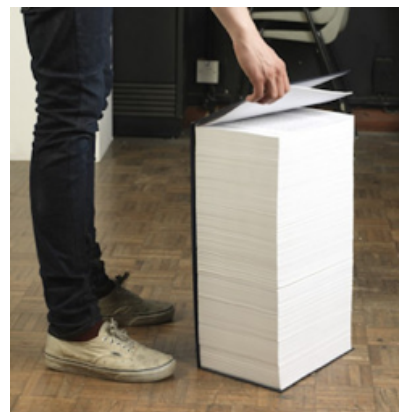


your body? Are you sure? Things that become muscle memory are coded into our muscles in a way that we perform them without thinking, and, as a result, are easy to forget. Train that small stuff.

Step 4: EMBRACE IT – Let yourself enjoy the process. Relish in the fine points and effort of it. Do basics until you are fed up with them and then do them some more. Don't think negatively about how much is left to do/learn, learn to enjoy where you're at!

The beginning of karate training teaches you how to train karate. With a lifetime of things to learn, you will find yourself beginning often. Sometimes these beginning will be a new concept, but other times, you will need to re-learn something. Time may change the way you move, while experiences may change how you think. If you skip out on those early lessons and don't give them the effort they deserve, you will have neither the foundation in your muscle-memory, nor the memory of how to train basic motion, when you need to adapt your karate. That all makes it essential that you learn how to begin and then make sure you start there.

Learn to begin, if you want to begin to learn.



Karate Begins and Ends with Courtesy

By Sensei Martin Vaughan

Gichin Funakoshi, the founder of Shotokan karate, in the first of his Twenty Guiding Principles of Karate said “do not forget that karate-do begins and ends with rei.” (1) (*Karate-do wa rei ni hajimari, rei ni owaru koto o wasuruna*)(3). This phrase is often translated as “Karate begins and ends with a bow.” While this is often true the word “rei” can also be translated as “courtesy” or as a shortened form of *reigi* which can be translated as etiquette or manners (3). Therefore, it can be said that karate training begins and ends with manners (respect), and this should be truly and sincerely maintained throughout the class.

You must respect the dojo. You should remove your shoes at the *genkan* or entry to the dojo. Shoes should never be worn on the dojo floor. Bow before you enter the dojo. This is your training area. Keep it clean and orderly. The floor should be cleaned before and/or after every class. All students should shoulder this responsibility. Only the instructor (s) are excused. Greet your instructor with a bow as well as your seniors and your friends, this is a sign of respect.

The senior student, on the signal of the instructor, will call the students to line up (*seiretsu*). Students should immediately and quickly line up according to rank in a straight line, shoulder to shoulder. If there are a large number of students a second line should be formed. In general, the senior students are on the right of the dojo and the more junior or lower ranked students are on the left. If the entrance is located on one end of the dojo or the other, lower ranked individuals are located nearest the entrance. The senior student will then shout “*seiza*.” Students should bend both knees and lower the left knee first to the floor followed by the right knee. The feet are tucked under the body sitting back on the heels, back straight, head up, shoulders back. The knees are about two fists apart for men and about one fist apart for women. Hands are open, fingers together and placed lightly on the mid-thigh with the fingers angled slightly inward. The senior student will then give the command *mokuso*, which can be translated as meditation. The student should close their eyes, directing their vision slightly upward, and breath in through the nose, hold it a second, and then breath out through the mouth. During this period of

meditation the student should clear their mind and prepare for training.

Following this short period of meditation the senior student will shout *mokuso yamae* (stop meditating and open your eyes). In most Japanese dojo there is a small wooden shrine called a *kamiza* on the front wall. A picture of the founder of the style is placed next to the *kamiza*, and according to Shinto religion, offerings of rice and sake (or other decorations) are found on the *kamiza*. In this case the senior student will shout “*shinzen ni rei*” literally meaning “bow to the Gods.” However, there are no religious connotations, it is simply a show of respect for the past masters or, in a larger sense, anyone who has made this training possible. If there is no *kamiza* at the front, but instead flags displayed, pictures of past masters, or just a blank wall, the senior will shout “*shomen ni rei*,” bow to the front. When bowing from *seiza* the left hand moves to the floor followed by the right hand each hand in front of their respective knee with fingertip pointed slightly in. The body is inclined from the waist at about a 30 degree angle. The hands are brought back to the thighs right first then left. And the body resumes its upright position. Next, the instructor will turn and face the line of students and the senior will announce “*sensei ni rei*” or bow to the instructor. Repeat the bow from *seiza* as described above. If there are other instructors in addition to the main instructor you may be asked to bow to them at the command “*sensei gata ni rei*.”

On finishing the opening “ceremony” the students will stand after the instructor, with the right knee up, right foot on the floor first followed by the left leg. When standing do not use your hands to help you stand up.

The standing bow is used in in most other situations of greeting or show of respect in the dojo. To perform the standing bow, assume attention stance (*musubi dachi*) with hands open at the sides of the legs, fingers together (heels together, toes pointed at about a 30 degree angle). Incline from the waist to about a 30 degree angle. Please note that the degree of angle of the bow increases or decreases depending on the relationship of the persons bowing.

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Karate Begins and Ends with Courtesy

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When bowing, either standing or formal sitting bow from *seiza* (with the exception of *shinzen ni rei* or *shomen ni rei*) the karate-ka will say “*oss/osu*” or “*onegaishimasu*.” *Osu* is not commonly used in Japanese language and is thought to have originated from the Japanese Imperial Naval Academy and as such considered a rough or masculine term. Karate-ka use it as a greeting, show of respect, acknowledgement, affirmation, thanks, etc. Other words to substitute for *osu* could be *hai* (yes), *arigato gozaimasu* (thank you) or *wakarimasu* (I understand.) *Onegaishimasu*, is commonly used in Japanese language, but is difficult to translate exactly. It can roughly be translated as, please help/assist me, please be kind to me, or thank you for your help.

Another phrase uttered when bowing is *otagai ni rei*, literally bow to each other. This is said before a bow by a group of people, as in in tournaments or in an informal training.

When to bow in the dojo: (3)

- Entering/leaving the dojo
- Stepping onto the dojo floor
- Greeting a fellow member
- Greeting a sensei or senior student (*sempai*)
- Saying thank you
- Facing a partner in preparation for a drill or exercise
- At the beginning and end of class
- Between exercises
- Before and after kata practice

Don't talk in class. This shows respect for your classmates. Don't waste their time by disrupting class or asking questions that could wait until the end of class and

then be addressed to the senior student. Avoid asking the sensei unless you can't get an answer from seniors. Of course you can speak when spoken to or if you have a question about a drill or exercise that you need to know to participate fully in class.

When you are told to relax during class (i.e. when another group is doing a drill and your group is resting) please do so properly. If standing, do not lean. If you are allowed to sit, sit down in *seiza* first, bow, then sit with your legs bent, feet on the floor or facing each other. Do not sit with your legs straight in front of you or expose the bottom of your feet to the front of the room. Never sit or stand directly in front of the *shomen* display. Remember to show respect to your dojo and the people that came before you that made this training possible.

At the end of class the senior student will ask students to line up. This is essentially a repeat of the opening ceremony with the exception of after bowing to *shizen ni* or *shomen ni* the students will repeat the *dojo kun* after the senior student. When finished then bow to the sensei and thank the sensei by saying “*arigato gozaimasu*.” The sensei will stand up and walk off the floor and say “*tate kudasai*,” stand up please. Wait for your seniors to stand up first. Don't forget to quickly clean the floor before leaving the dojo.

It is said that Master Funakoshi often reminded his students that, “The spirit of karate-do is lost without courtesy.” (2) The courtesy and respect of *rei* creates an atmosphere of order in the dojo and in karate training. (1) Without an understanding of *rei* the spiritual aspect of karate-do training is impossible to achieve.

References:

1. Funakoshi, G. (transl. J. Teramoto), 2003. *The Twenty Principles of Karate Training*. Kodansha International, Tokyo.
2. Nakayama, M. 1985. *Best Karate vol. 5*. Kodansha International, Tokyo.
3. Walker, P.A. 2007. *Lessons With the Master: 279 Shotokan Karate Lessons With Hirokazu Kanazawa*. iUniverse, Inc., Lincoln, NE USA

Mid-America Karate Community Outreach Program

This past Spring, Mid-America decided as a group that we want to give back to the communities in which we operate by making community outreach a part of our Regional trainings. For our upcoming clinic on December 15, 2019 with Okazaki Shihan, we will be reaching out through our host at Milton-Union schools. Please bring a hat, a coat, mittens, non-perishable food items, cash, or a toy with you to training. All donated items will be gifted through West Milton Church of Christ and the Milton-Union Schools to families in and around West Milton. We are targeting a real need in this community and your contributions will make a great difference in the lives of many local children and families during this Holiday season. Thank you for your support!

We are also here to support your local club with outreach programs or ideas. Please help us target specific needs in your local community such as coats, school supplies, non-perishable food items or donated meals, etc. Contact Michelle Randall at marandal@svsu.edu



Sensei Vaughan



Chief Instructor, ISKF Mid-America Region

Sensei Martin Vaughan trained under Sensei Golden and Master Okazaki for over 40 years and is our Regional Director. He is also the Chief Instructor of Indiana ISKF and Vice President of ISKF.

Sensei Oberschlake



President and Assistant Instructor, ISKF Mid-America Region

Sensei James Oberschlake trained under Sensei Golden and Master Okazaki starting in 1974. He is also the Chief Instructor of the Brown County Shotokan Karate Club.

Sensei Golden



Instructor Emeritus, ISKF Mid-America Region

Sensei Greer Golden graduated from the Instructor Trainee Program in 1969 and was sent to Ohio University in Athens to begin sharing his knowledge with Mid-America karate students.

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Mr. Clouser, 2nd *dan*, is the Chief Instructor of The Ohio State University Shotokan Karate Club in Columbus, OH.

Calendar

December 15 - Mid-America ISKF Regional Training and Dan Exam

Hosted by the Dayton Shotokan Karate club in West Milton, OH

January 19-20, 2019 - Kangeiko - Winter Camp

Hosted by Indiana ISKF in Indianapolis, IN

February 16, 2019 - Youth Shiai

Hosted by Shotokan Karate of Anderson in Cincinnati, OH

Editor

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Mr. Schrage, 5th *dan*, is the Chief Instructor of the Ohio Valley Karate Club in Cincinnati, OH.

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