



My First Regional Tournament Experience

By Casie Hartman



2022 Mid-America ISKF Regional Tournament

Image courtesy of Mid-America ISKF

I am new to karate and wanted to see what a tournament is like before potentially participating in one. So, when I heard that they needed volunteers I thought that would be a perfect way to see what it was like. Beforehand, I read all of the table worker guides and instructions and thought I had a pretty good understanding of how it all runs. Upon getting to the event, a couple other volunteers and I were given a short run-through of the different responsibilities for each table position. The tournament started with just one ring to get through some of the black belt competitions so they could help judge the second ring. Some of the other table workers were experienced so we all worked together for it to go smoothly. Running the table during the Kata competitions was simple enough and easy to learn and follow along.

Then the *Kumite* rounds began. My adrenaline was soaring from being in a new, fast paced experience and doing a job I had virtually no knowledge of, on top of being anxious around all new people in an unfamiliar setting. I had never seen a sparring match before so I was experiencing the whole thing from two perspectives, spectator and table worker. The two competitors were very experienced and as spectators we were all caught up in the great performance. Near the end of the match both competitors moved in at the same time and the lack of control resulted in contact. The entire gym hissed in sympathetic pain in unison. My first thought was, "well, I'm never competing in *Kumite*." From a table worker perspective, the entire

match went so fast. While the corner judges were raising white and red flags rapidly, blowing whistles, and making decisions, the other table workers and I were looking at each other in utter confusion. Then the round was over. We all had blank scoring sheets and had no clue what just happened from a scoring perspective. I was so worried that I would mess up the results of the match which would have been so unfair to the competitors.

Thankfully the ring Arbitrator was at the end of the table and able to clarify for us what had just happened and who won. It was the gentleman that got hit, in case you are curious.

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Once the black belt rounds were over, the event coordinator broke us up into two groups so we could open the second ring. He told me that I would run the other table, like learning to swim by being pushed into the deep end of a pool. I was still trying to process how fast the *Kumite* went. So, very nervously, I went over to the other ring and was joined by other volunteers.

Having learned from the other table, I asked the Judge Supervisor to help us out by letting us know when either competitor got points so we didn't miss anything. Once we got started everything ran very smoothly, it started out with the younger groups so things were at a slower pace, we learned together and were able to get the hang of it. The different flag position meanings, how

to keep score, and how to keep things going started to click for us all. I believe, overall, we all did a really great job. It was nerve-racking but so much fun, like riding a roller coaster or sky diving. Everyone was so grateful to me and the other table workers, they all said we did a great job. I am excited to run more tables at future tournaments so we can prepare for Nationals.

A good take away from this is that we need more table worker volunteers so that it can run smoothly at each tournament with experienced people teaching new people. So please volunteer as much as you can; I'll help you learn the ropes too!

A Letter From the Coach

By Carol Glenn

The ISKF National Tournament is returning this year after a two-year hiatus due to the Covid Pandemic. The 42nd Annual ISKF US Nationals & International Goodwill Karate Championships are just around the corner. The tournament will be in Philadelphia, PA, Nov 18-20, 2022, hosted by the East Coast Region.

At this year's National Tournament there are divisions for all ages and ranks and there is also an International Goodwill Tournament. In addition, a special event is planned for Friday evening prior to the start of the tournament, a Memorial Service for Teruyuki Okazaki Shihan.

Mid-America competitors have been putting in extra time training together in preparation for the National Tournament. Our most recent Team Training was held at Ohio Valley in Wyoming, Ohio on Saturday August 27. Eighteen karate-ka got together at 8am to work on their Individual and Team Katas, took a break, then regrouped again at 12:30pm to continue with Kata work and some *Kumite* work. The emphasis was on stances to build a strong foundation within our Kata. There are still a couple more opportunities for Team members to get together to sharpen their skills prior to the tournament.

Competitors are asked to register for the Tournament by October 10th, after Fall Camp, and email their registration confirmation to Mid-America HQ at

jweber@midamericaiskf.com. Hotel reservations for the tournament should be made ASAP as the tournament hotel is booking up fast.

Competitors need to make sure their ISKF Membership does not expire before November and they need to bring it with them to Philadelphia. Competitors should also bring their ISKF Passport (if required), and Collegiate competitors need to bring their current College ID Card. All attendees are asked to bring their Mid-America green jackets to wear at the tournament. Mid-America's Scholarship Fundraising Campaign is on-going. A portion of the funds generated from this fundraiser used to provide a small stipend to each student who represents our Region at the ISKF National Tournament. In order to be included in this distribution, a student must help obtain donations for the Scholarship Fund. For more information on the fundraiser contact jweber@midamericaiskf.com.

Mid-America Region is hosting the National Tournament next year, in November 2023. Please consider competing as it would be great to have a large contingent representing the "Home Team" next year. We are also in need of table-workers to run the Competition Rings, as well as other staff members to help the tournament run smoothly. So, when you are approached to help, please volunteer, and ask your family and friends if they would be willing to help and support our Region in this manner as well.

Cleveland Shotokan Karate Club's Reflections on Sensei Oberschlake's Clinic

By Larry Rothenberg

On February 13, Sensei Oberschlake presented a clinic for the Cleveland Shotokan Karate Club. As expected, his clinic was outstanding. In the two-hour clinic, he transmitted decades of acquired karate experience and overall knowledge.

At the conclusion of the clinic, I told the students they had some homework – to write and submit to me everything they could remember the clinic covered.

The students' submissions covered a remarkable array of topics from the clinic, and some of their own fascinating original thoughts too. No one came close to including everything the clinic covered, but everyone contributed multiple items no one else mentioned. By my count, the submissions included a total of 40 different topics, and only about 18 of the topics were in common with one or more other submissions. The two most-submitted topics (eyes and stance) were mentioned by only about 60% of the students.

What an interesting study of how different people retain different features presented in a class! It

highlights the immeasurable value of training with others, and reviewing and sharing ideas with fellow students.

I consolidated the students' submissions to create one list. It is a treasure trove of Shotokan wisdom. (Confession: I made my own list after the clinic and missed some important topics my students did not miss).

None of us ever had the opportunity to hear Master Funakoshi's voice. While reading this list of concepts covered in Sensei Oberschlake's clinic, imagine hearing Master Funakoshi's voice saying them directly to you.

Those of us with lengthy karate histories have been privileged to hear the voices of those connected to Master Funakoshi in a chain of tradition through the generations: Senseis Nakayama, Okazaki, Nishiyama, Mikami, Yaguchi, Takashina, Koyama, Golden, Tanaka, Field, Jones, Swain, Vaughan, Oberschlake, and many others. Their voices convey the same karate wisdom given over by Master Funakoshi.

Students' Thoughts:

- *Warm-ups: rotations of most body parts, arm and trunk flexion/extension, stretches in shiko dachi. Emphasis on the joints.*
- *Training to improve power and correct motor learning: Make this the overarching principle of practice with whatever activity you are doing.*
- *Straight punch in Shiko dachi with a stable lower body, progressing to using draw hand to generate power, from natural stance and then Kiba dachi with the addition of body vibration via pushing with the legs on the ground.*
- *Rotation in zenkutsu dachi - proper width and length of stance, proper foot and knee position to allow movement. Work on rotation along a vertical axis including tailbone under without allowing the knee to move in or out, (feet and knees same direction) while keeping eyes/head focused forward.*
- *Body movement forward and backward, with proper weight shifting to move in a linear fashion as opposed to moving up and down (front knee forward when moving forward, and bending back knee when moving backward). Focus of technique should be when the stance sets. Must learn to sink and then drive instead of falling into the position.*
- *Squeeze inner thighs together to initiate the movement: practice in left <-> right kiba dachi with overhead X-block to double down block without rising as you move (can also try to differentiate between a fast and sharp movement vs. powerful movement). Practice also in kokutsu dachi with shuto uke, zenkutsu dachi with age uke and gedan barai. Practice this in Heian shodan. The interior muscles of the stance are often neglected.*
- *Expansion and contraction.*
- *Foot placement – balance.*
- *Hangetsu kata breathing*

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Cleveland Shotokan Karate Club's Reflections on Sensei Oberschlake's Clinic

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- *Eyes on your opponent first and always. The eyes and chin guide the power. Looking away weakens the stance. Maintain eye contact with your opponent. It is important to make connections with others, and also allows you to anticipate their timing so you can eventually disrupt their timing during sparring. Also demonstrates confidence in self-defense. Training with a partner gives you the ability to know the rhythm and recognize when you have the opportunity to counter-attack.*
- *Stay the same height from technique to technique*
- *Hourglass stance – knees squeeze together.*
- *Tailbone under.*
- *Front knee approximately over big toe. Not too far forward, which affects movement. The knee follows the foot's trajectory.*
- *Stances: Connected (pushing) to floor. Build the stance from the floor up. Strong stance and posture. If the foot positions are wrong, the whole stance is ineffective. The greatest source of resistance we face in karate comes from the floor.*
- *Back foot must be solidly connected to the floor. Keep the upper body within the "box" of the stance. A small mistake in the stance will have a dramatic negative effect on the stability of the stance and mobility. Qualities of strong stances for punching/general karate: pushing into the ground, draw hand, body rotation, keeping the eye where the power should go.*
- *Rub the elbows on the body when punching. Don't curve the punch, as that is not only weak physics, it is harmful to the joint.*
- *Your head rests on the spine, which is a slight "S" curve, with the head straight on top.*
- *The four load-bearing joints (ankle, knee, hip, shoulder) in a stance must be in proper alignment: vertical, horizontal, and parallel.*
- *Full speed is how fast you can do the movement correctly. Sensei Okazaki taught slow, then half-speed, then full-speed.*
- *Too much speed/power too soon will cause you to revert to old, inferior muscle memory.*
- *Squeeze the buttocks together. (Don't get hemorrhoids).*
- *This constant learning anew of how to use our bodies continues to marvel me -- this is a thread that seems to run across the whole belt-spectrum, novice to more accomplished*
- *In calculus, we learn you can divide space endlessly. So as we examine how we move, what muscles we use, etc. we divide our belt-space ad infinitum and that's what propels us to all kinds of progress. (Editor's note: I don't think Jim said this, but it's a good one anyway)*
- *Breathing. Must be able to generate power when breathing in, out, or without breathing. For beginners, always exhale on impact. Sensei Okazaki said sometimes circumstances require that we inhale on blocks.*
- *Relax the upper body and generate power from the lower body*
- *Shift center of gravity at the start, to allow for effective movement. Using adductor/abductor muscles for movement in between stances.*
- *Re-orienting our minds methodically in our practice, examining and actualizing different viewpoints in our movements (breathing the opposite way, for instance).*
- *His statement about learning and re-learning over time was beautiful.*
- *From Sensei David Jones: When performing a Kata, start with rhythm, then apply breathing to that rhythm, and then put it all together with technique. Each kata has its own breathing pattern*
- *The human body can pull faster than it can push. The quicker your draw hand, the better your punch or block will be.*
- *After properly performing a move, relax slightly (milliseconds) before the next move.*
- *Learning to be flexible to expand one's reach.*
- *Be able to perform kata in a limited space, by adjusting stepping.*
- *Constant awareness of our surroundings, including away from the dojo.*

Editor's Note: These comments are the opinions and interpretations of the class by students and not necessarily a direct reflection of the lessons taught

Mid-America Summer Camp

By Vincent Ciola

Mid-America ISKF gathered at the Kleptz Learning Center on August 23rd and 24th for Summer Camp training. Find the Stance was the theme, which set the foundation for an amazing weekend of training! It was immediately apparent that people were excited to get together to train, and as always, the weekend had a lot to offer.

Sensei Glenn started the weekend off with a training for all those intending to participate in the 42nd Annual ISKF US Nationals & International Goodwill Karate Championships. The event will be November 18-20 in Philadelphia. Sensei Glenn will hold special trainings, sometimes on short notice, between now and November. Anyone interested in participating should contact swartzcreekshotokankc@gmail.com.

Saturday morning's main training included both an in-person and virtual option. The in-person group was fairly large and karate spirit was high. Participants got to work on kata and some challenging combination practice. The training was followed by several Dan pretests and *Kyu* tests, which were exciting to watch. It is always intriguing to see so many different levels of experience and skill at these events.

Training reconvened Saturday afternoon to include a lesson from Sensei Vaughan on the many striking techniques and their different applications. There was opportunity for all attending to practice a few and think through how we could apply these to our training in new ways.

One of the major highlights for me during the weekend was getting to learn the kata Wankan, which means "Kings Crown" because of the shape of the initial movements.

It was short but challenging, from the experience of someone knowing only the Heian kata, and was very exciting to learn. Following Saturday's training, dinner was held at Company 7 BBQ. The food and drinks were delicious and tasted even better after a hard day of training, but the most enjoyable part was all the karate discussion and stories. It turns out that the vast years of karate experience at the camp are not only good for training but make for great stories and the best possible dinner conversation.

Sunday morning brought the final training of the weekend. Sensei Vaughan led a series of drills practicing different series of techniques in 8 different directions. Kata practice and individualized instruction were opportunities to grab onto a few final insights as the weekend came to a close. Driving home after a weekend of intensive training always provides time for reflection. There's no doubt that the weekend leaves one with a sense of exhilaration to train harder, as soon as they get a good night's sleep that is. There are just so many things to be grateful for after attending a Mid-America ISKF camp. The quality of instruction available to everyone who attends is unbelievable. I am always genuinely impressed by the generosity of the Sensei and Sempai teaching technique or offering advice and in their patience with those attempting to apply the lessons. I've never left a regional training without significant learning points to immediately apply to my training. The opportunity to share our passion and excitement for karate with other karate-ka is something to cherish. Personally, I find the community that exists within the Mid-America ISKF to be a sacred thing. The intensity of the training over the weekend leaves everyone with a strong sense of belonging and camaraderie that we find absent in so many other aspects of modern life.



*2022 Mid-America ISKF Summer Camp
Image courtesy of Mid-America ISKF*

Born 13 Weeks Premature, 10-Year-Old Becomes Karate Champion

Story Reprinted from Cleveland Jewish News by Courtney Byrnes

For 10-year-old brown belt Aviya Aaron, karate started out as a form of therapy to overcome a weakness in her left side, but then she became passionate about her training to a point where she has competed on the world stage.

Last year, when her family moved to Beachwood, Aviya and her mother, Dr. Ksenia Aaron, began training with the Cleveland Shotokan Karate Club run by Larry Rothenberg at Heights Jewish Center Synagogue in University Heights. “Aviya is very determined and focused and diligent in her training,” Rothenberg, a board member of Beachwood Kehilla, told the Cleveland Jewish News. “She’s very curious and eager to learn. She’s very respectful, and she has a joyful nature that lifts the class, and she’s always thinking beyond what is being taught for other applications and a deeper meaning to the techniques.”

Born 13 weeks premature in Valhalla, N.Y., Aviya weighed 2 pounds, 5 ounces and went through extensive physical, occupational and speech therapy as a young child. At 3-years-old, she began training in Shotokan Karate in Los Angeles under the mentorship of sensei Avi Rokah and sensei Ruth Rokah as karate uses every part of your body, her mother said.

“Karate is good for anyone at any age with any ability,” said Rothenberg, a resident of Beachwood. “It’s a good experience developing mentally and physically in every way.”

The karate club is a member of the International Shotokan Karate Federation and trains men and women separately from as young as 10-year-old Aviya to those over age 70 as they train under Cary Johnson and Rothenberg. The rising fourth grader at Fuchs Mizrahi School in Beachwood was the 2022 recipient of the Youth Division of the Mid-America ISKF Scholarship Program for an essay she wrote about how karate has taught her respect and helped her overcome challenging times, Rothenberg said.

“Karate has helped me by increasing my ability to focus and gain strength,” Aviya wrote to the CJN in an email. “It means that you are part of something bigger, that you belong to a team and train with the same goal.”

While living in Los Angeles, Aviya competed in local and national competitions, and at 6-years-old was invited to compete on the world stage with Youth Team USA at the



Aviya with Senpai Cary Johnson and Sensei Larry Rothenberg
Image courtesy of Larry Rothenberg

second World BUDO Karate Championship in Traditional Shotokan Karate in Brno, Czech Republic, where she took gold in sparring and silver in kata, which are drills of various techniques. More than 1,200 worldwide competitors from ages 6 to 17 attended, Rothenberg said.

“She developed passion,” Ksenia Aaron, a physician at Cleveland Clinic and member of Beachwood Kehilla, told the CJN. “She became more serious about it as she was progressing with belts and competing more, and she realized that she’s good at it. Her weakness went away, and she liked what karate stood for, the discipline, the camaraderie.”

Aviya captured gold in kata for the purple belt level in 2021 at the U.S. National Youth Championship, which was held online due to the pandemic and, most recently she, competed in a U.S. National Championship in St. Louis May 22, winning gold for kata and bronze for sparring in the age 10 to 11 brown/black belt category.

Aaron said Aviya plans to compete on the world stage again in Poland as long as the situation with COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine allows it. Her goal is to one day compete in the Olympics, but karate isn’t her only passion as Aviya also wants to become a veterinarian.

“Competing makes not only yourself proud of accomplishments but also other people, like coaches,” Aviya wrote. “It makes me happy that I have achieved something that I worked hard for. The goal is to do my best, whether I win or not.”

This article is a reprint from the Cleveland Jewish News. The original article can be found [here](#).

Congratulations to the following Mid-America Karate-Ka for their Recent Promotions!

Dan Promotions

Name	Club Affiliation	Rank Achieved	Date
Savannah Gay	Creekside Karate	Shodan	March 2022
Marc Well	Brown County	Shodan	April 2022
Ismael Tidjani	Ohio Valley	Shodan	June 2022





Chief Instructor, ISKF Mid-America Region

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



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.

Contributors

CASIE HARTMAN

Ms. Hartman, 7b *kyu*, is a student at the Swartz Creek Karate Club in Swartz Creek, MI

CAROL GLENN

Mrs. Glenn, 6th *dan*, is the chief instructor at the Swartz Creek Karate Club in Swartz Creek, MI and Mid-America team coach.

LARRY ROTHENBERG

Mr. Rothenberg, 4th *dan*, is the Chief Instructor at the Cleveland Shotokan Karate Club in Beechwood, OH

VINCENT CIOLA

Mr. Ciola, 5th *kyu*, is a student at the Columbus Shotokan Karate Club located in Columbus, OH

Editor

MARTY SCHRAGER

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

Associate Editor

MICHELLE RANDALL

Ms. Randall, 2nd *dan*, is a student at Michigan ISKF in Holly, MI.

Calendar

September 17 - Regional Training

Location Ohio Valley Karate Club in Wyoming, OH

October 8-9 - Fall Camp

Hosted by Creekside Karate Club in Youngstown, OH

November 18-20 - ISKF US National Tournament

Hosted by the East Coast Region in Philadelphia, PA

December 3 - Regional Training and Dan Exam with Okazaki Shihan

Host and location TBD