



Karate Fundamentals

Notes from our March 2019 Clinic

By Jerry Baker



Photo courtesy of the Mid-America ISKF Facebook page

Sensei Vaughan led us in a series of combinations designed to encourage us to be mindful of the fundamental movements in karate. Positions, stances, angles, pathways of power, etc. in karate are not optional components. To move effectively with focused power and ease requires that these fundamental pieces of body dynamics and support are in place. That will only be the case after diligent study and repetitive practice. For example, when completing a jab-counter punch combination, the supporting knee position, draw hand placement, angle of the hips, relaxed position of the shoulders, and alignment of the axis around which moves travel - all fundamental pieces of effective techniques – must be in place.

Sensei Vaughan reminded us of another, critically important fundamental when he said, “The hips move the body, feet, and hands. Not the other way around.” His instruction made abundantly clear the principal that karate is a complex whole made of simple components. Progress on the whole will remain elusive until one pays attention to the parts.

The basics were practiced with special attention to posture, correct hip position, and attention to protection

of the center line. The practice of Bassai Dai and Kanku Dai were used to illustrate the above concepts.

The optional Sunday morning training continued the concept of fundamentals in kicking drills. The importance of the support leg was emphasized as well as the alignment of the hips and knees in the targeting, chambering, and recovery phases of kicking.

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Kata Training: A Priceless and Timeless Gift from Master Funakoshi

By William Hall

As a 7th Kyu, I have become fascinated by kata. While kata promotes understanding and effectiveness in our karate techniques, it also bestows on us health, strength, flexibility, endurance, discipline, concentration, strong spirit, and artistic fulfillment. This is just a partial list! It's all good.

The origins of some of our kata or various techniques in our katas may actually date back centuries. In the 1930's, Master Funakoshi drew on what had been passed down by his predecessors, and created a curriculum for Shotokan karate including many of the kata we currently practice.

I also learned that our karate style, "Shotokan," was the name of the first official dojo built in 1936 by Master Funakoshi, which was destroyed in 1945 as a result of allied bombing. "Shoto," meaning "pine-waves" (the movement of pine needles when wind blows through them), was Master Funakoshi's pen-name, which he used in his poetic and philosophical writings and messages to his students. "Kan," in this context means house or hall. In honor of their Sensei, Master Funakoshi's students created a sign reading Shoto-kan which they placed above the entrance of the hall where Master Funakoshi taught. Shotokan is one of the most widely practiced styles of karate in the world.

Some moves may have changed over the decades. For example, my Sensei told me that when he originally learned Heian Sandan, which I am now studying, the third last move was delivered in two separate moves: a slow-motion extended *shuto* (sword-hand) focusing and setting at impact, followed by a fast *oi-tsuki* (step-in punch). Now, those two moves are combined into one quick move. Some more advanced kata also may have had a change in a move or two, but the overall structure of each kata remains unchanged.



Master Gichin Funakoshi performing Tekki Shodan

Some old grainy videos of Master Funakoshi performing kata and technique almost 100 years ago are available on the internet. How fortunate we are to be able to see the Master in action, essentially doing the same katas that are part of our current training. How grateful I am that the importance of kata training, and in particular, Master Funakoshi's katas, have been transmitted from his students, many of whom became karate legends in their own right, to their students, and so on throughout the many generations since Master Funakoshi's death in 1957.

Thank you, Master Funakoshi, for what you have given us, the practitioners of Shotokan Karate-Do: discipline, integrity, and character building. Thank you for your extraordinary insight in deciding to instill your katas into the Shotokan curriculum for the preservation and betterment of this magnificent art. What would Shotokan karate be without our kata training? It is priceless and timeless.

Anderson Youth Shiai

By Kim Weber



Students compete at the Anderson Youth Shiai

Photo Courtesy of Kim Weber

Our *shiai* (contest or tournament) began in 2013. Mid-America was hosting the ISKF National Tournament that fall in Cincinnati and we wanted to give our youth competitors some tournament experience to prepare not only for the regional tournament in the Spring, but also for the national tournament in the fall. A few years ago, Sensei Vaughan encouraged us to extend the *shiai* to the region.

The tournament includes individual kata and *kumite* events as well as a team kata event. The idea of the *shiai* has always been about being more concerned with the competition process, and less concerned with the results. Each individual event (with 3 competitors or more) is run as either a round robin or a double elimination. This allows each competitor the opportunity to enter the ring more than once, giving them more experience in the ring. As they age, this experience can help them face challenges in school, in the workplace and in other endeavors. Tournaments can help kids learn to compete against each other in a friendly manner, practice managing their nerves by stepping out of their comfort zone, and learn to win and lose with dignity. A positive tournament experience can improve a youth's self-esteem by having a sense of accomplishment and recognition for their efforts. In addition, the competitors enjoy the interaction with their peers, and the opportunity to create and strengthen friendships.

In addition we have regional black belts attend the *shiai* to judge the event. This gives these volunteers the opportunity to practice their judging skills. We create two teams of judges who alternate judging the day's events. This gives the judges many opportunities to practice their skills thru out the day. Sensei Vaughan and Sensei Oberschlake oversee the *shiai*, and observe the competition and the judging. As each team of judges finishes in the ring, Sensei will evaluate their

performance and give suggestions for improvement. This instant feedback, along with the opportunity to apply the feedback right away, will help improve each judge's ability and will strengthen the judging in our region. For the certified judges, this tournament counts as one of the three events as is required by the ISKF.

Let's not forget the food! People wouldn't expect that the bake sale food would be anything special. However, Senpai Yuki Kikuchi and Senpai Erin Black, have turned the bake sale into a must have at the *shiai*! The bake sale has included quiche, chocolate mousse topped with fruit, and egg white puffs! And of course there are lots of common finger foods like pizza, cookies, and grapes. No one leaves the *shiai* hungry! Be on the lookout for Yuki to someday own a restaurant called Mimi's Kitchen :) She is a fabulous cook!

This year we also included an adult black belt demonstration of kata and *kumite*. Four competitors were chosen from the pool of judges to compete in kata and/or *kumite*. This demonstration is good for the youth students and parents & families to observe as an example for their future in karate.

Lastly, we want to thank the families that attended to watch their child compete, we value your support of your children. And to all of the volunteers, we couldn't put on a tournament without your help judging, working the ring table, the check in table, bake sale, photography and at ringside. Your time is greatly appreciated.

We hope that the Anderson Youth *Shiai* has had a positive impact on our youth students and promotes their participation not only next year, but also in our regional tournament at Ohio State University in May and our national tournament in Las Vegas in November!. Thanks to everyone for attending and we look forward to hosting again next year!



Mid-America Karate-ka help keep everyone fed

Photo Courtesy of Kim Weber

Kangeiko

By Marty Schrager

Our annual beginning of the year training camp, or, *Kangeiko*, was scheduled for January 19th-20th to be hosted by Indiana ISKF in Indianapolis, IN. As often can be the case this time of year, Mother Nature was uncooperative, bringing significant snow and ice to the region. In the interest of the safety of our members, it was determined that camp would be cancelled. This was the first time for as long as I can remember that this has happened. However, it wasn't all for nothing.

In lieu of the annual pilgrimage to Indianapolis, Sensei Vaughan requested that instructors from the regional clubs conduct their own *Kangeiko*. His instructions were simple and direct:

- 100 punches from *kibadachi*
- 50 jab, reverse punch from left leg forward front stance
- 50 jab, reverse punch from right leg forward front stance
- 50 front leg front kick, back leg front kick from left leg forward front stance
- 50 front leg front kick, back leg front kick from right leg forward front stance
- Perform your *tokui* (individual) kata 25 times

Kangeiko is typically a focus on the basics of karate. Sensei's pre-outlined training gave us exactly that. It was an opportunity for students and instructors to practice their basic stances, hip movement, and techniques.

My personal favorite component of the training was the repetitious performance of 25 *tokui* kata. This is an exceptional opportunity. Many of us, even those who self-train diligently rarely get an opportunity to perform this many kata successively. There is an ontological evolution that takes place and it is a special microcosm of our individual karate development. Even after being "warm" from the *kihon* parts of the training, you experience tremendous growth from beginning to end.

I often feel slightly rusty in my first few iterations of a kata during training. Once I get through that, I begin to get in to a groove, where movements begin to flow much more freely. My body begins to find a new level of relaxation and the techniques start take on a life of their own, without giving a thought to what's next. This is the real opportunity. I begin to analyze the movements. Which ones feel strong (why are they strong?), which ones feel weaker, and what am I doing differently that makes them weaker? What can I do to make them feel like the stronger movements? So the middle section is often the time when I can feel real development taking place.

Of course, by the time number twenty roles around, fatigue sets in and I try to maintain good technique, good stances, and focus. This time of fatigue is also an opportunity to understand relaxation - one of the most difficult things to achieve for many students.

Although we missed getting together for our annual training, Sensei Vaughan gave us all a gift in the form of this very simple outline and opportunity for growth of our karate.



Members of the Cleveland Shotokan Karate Club Before and After performing Kangeiko

Photo Courtesy of Larry Rothenberg

Legendary Karate Master Kawawada to Conduct Seminar

Kawawada Sensei from the *Hoitsugan* dojo in Tokyo is visiting June 14-16 this year in Peoria, Illinois. Kawawada Sensei kept the *Hoitsugan* tradition going after Nakayama Sensei passed away. He was the 1985 World Champion and is an internationally known and respected Shotokan instructor. This will be his only trip the USA this year. Please contact Michael Busha for pre-registration details. Text 309-363-4302 or email Michael@Busha.com



Kawawada Sensei Now and Then
Photo Courtesy of bkiireland.org

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 President of the 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.

Calendar

April 13-14, 2019 - Spring Camp

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

May 18th, 2019 - Mid-America Regional Tournament and Annual Board of Director's Meeting

Hosted by the Ohio State University Karate Club

June 7th-14th - ISKF Master Camp

Camp Green Lane in Green Lane, PA

July 19th-21st - Mid-America Summer Camp

Camp Copneconic in Fenton, MI

Contributors

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

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