SHANNON NISHI-PATTON: FLYING HIGH
USA NATIONALS 2016

MINA YAMAZAKI: Enduring Legacy
2016 PKF JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP
Guayaquil, Ecuador

KATA BUNKAI

YOSHIMI INOUE: Remembering the Legend
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Open & Junior International Cup
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Shannon Nishi-Patton on the way to score a perfect “Ura Mawashi Geri” during the final match at 2016 US Nationals.
Photo Courtesy “Brentwood Photography”

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In Karate training, images are better than words in correcting errors and in the acquisition of new skills. However, if one is unable to watch one’s art, the reading is to be encouraged. Gichin Funakoshi believed that in order to become a man of accomplishment, one had to encompass ‘Bunbu Itchi’ (the sword and the pen). Such parallel disciplines filled the life of the Japanese nobility, whilst this ago-old doctrine was expounded by Plato in his ‘Timaeus’, in which it was argued that the balancing of activities relating to mind and body were important in the pursuit of excellence. Only when these two parts were exercised equally could one rightly be called a fully developed personality. It is a regrettable feature of the art of karate in the West that much emphasis is placed on physical attributes only, and so little on the mental development of practitioners.

On the contrary, philosophers do not, as a rule, have an easy relationship with their bodies. Descartes recognized that he had a body but insisted that it was not the same thing as himself. Plato sneered at the body’s demands and shaped his philosophy from the desire to overcome them. Berkeley’s body was a bundle of his own ideas, while Hume had great difficulties in establishing that his body existed at all—which is why he got so fat. Socrates is remembered by his body, but largely on account of its ugliness.

Nietzsche took exercise, fruitless attempting with his dumbbells to overcome the “blond beast” of his dreams. And Sartre took no more exercise than was required to get from his downtown apartment to the bar across the road. For some people both things don’t match. We, the karate practitioners, we like to train since training reminds us that the body and the thinking of the self are one and the same.

To find out what the practice of Karate means to you, what it does for you, and what it holds for you, is a deeply personal process. Each path is different and we all have to find a personal rhythm that fits us individually, according to what surrounds us.
The Implications of Karate in the 2020 Olympics

Dear Karate Enthusiasts,

As you know, we recently received exciting news that Karate has been accepted into the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan. Seeing this dream come true is an incredible achievement.

But, it also means that together—we must complete the work necessary to rise up to this amazing challenge.

Despite Karate being included in the Olympics, there is no guarantee that every country will have representation at the games – the USA will have to qualify as all other countries will, and we have a tremendous amount of work ahead of us if we want to make this a reality.

European countries have a unique advantage over the USA. Their funding is greater, and their proximity to elite international competitions makes it that much easier for them to participate from a financial, time and geographic standpoint.

These are obstacles we must, and can, overcome.

Our signature events have been excellent. We have continued to grow our USA Open, as well as our National Championships - despite the fact that we have had a weak national, and global economy.

We believe this is a direct result of our tournament staff and national office, who are consummate professionals and constantly looking to make improvements for our federation members. However, none of this would be possible without our national official corps, who work tirelessly for the benefit of our athletes. They truly deserve our admiration.

The opportunities that the Olympics afford our young karate students are limitless, but it also represents opportunities for coaches and dojo instructors. A spotlight we have never seen before will be placed on the world of Karate, and we must be ready to shine.

My hope is that this will not only elevate Karate into a world-renowned sport, but also that it will bring new youth into our schools and dojos across the world.

The Olympic games will offer our martial art a unique opportunity, but it will come with hard work and sacrifice – not only from the federation, but for every one of us who are now responsible for Karate’s future.

We must strive to work harder to support our future athletes, together. We must develop the highest level team possible, and to do this, we will need to observe, recruit, train and develop our young athletes so that they can grow into the finest examples of what Karate has to offer.

The commitment I speak of will be absolutely necessary from all phases of our organization; from administration to the coaching staff, the referee core, to parent supporters and dojo instructors.

Simply put, it is imperative that we join forces to put American karate players on the Olympic podium in 2020.

We are entering a brand new level of competition by joining the Olympics. Now is the time for us to join together and work harder than we ever have before to put American Karate on the Olympic map. USANKF

John DiPasquale
President
An Incredible Few Months

By Phil Hampel

So much has happened since our last issue. First - it's official - we are an Olympic Sport! As if that were not enough good news, we also had an amazing National Championship and then our Juniors took 1st at the PKF Championships. Congratulations to our sport and to our athletes!

Just before the start of the Rio Games, the IOC voted to accept karate and 4 other sports into the 2020 Olympic games in Tokyo Japan. Our sport will have its Olympic debut in its birthplace and competing in the same place as the 1st World Championship. You can't write a more dramatic entry to the games.

Within 20 minutes of the Olympic announcements questions started on how to be a part of the games. This is the excitement the Olympics bring. The dream to be an Olympian and represent your country in an incredible event and is very powerful. It’s time to increase your training and act like an Olympic athlete. That level of dedication, whether you make it to the games or not, will make you a better karateka and athlete. The journey starts now since the Junior International Cup and The USA Open are only 6 months away (April 14-16 at the Paris Hotel in Las Vegas). Competing at these events is a great way to measure your progress against international competitors. I wish you all the best of luck on your journey towards excellence. As an NGB, we have our own journey towards the Olympics and we are working with the USOC to take advantage of the amazing network they have created to help NGBs develop Olympic caliber athletes.

Our National Championships and Team trials were amazing and Pittsburgh was a fantastic host city. Our competitors and their families loved the area. The David Lawrence Convention Center was a beautiful facility with plenty of space and natural light, which is something we rarely see at karate tournaments. The competition was fierce across all 4 days and we selected our Senior Team Pool that will compete in early 2017 for a spot on the Senior National Team. We also selected our Para Karate Athletes for the World Championships in Linz Austria and our Junior National Team. The Pittsburgh event ran smoothly thanks to our dedicated staff that is making these events look easy. At the conclusion of the event and in an effort to improve future events, we sent out our first-ever survey to volunteer staff, volunteers and participants. We want these championships to be more than just a big karate tournament. We want this to be a great experience that you enjoy and remember for a lifetime. We are looking forward to the results.

Our Junior National Team had an incredible Pan-American Karate Federation Championship in Ecuador. The team finished 1st overall with 10 gold, 5 silver and 14 bronze medals for 29 total medals. Additionally, we had 13 5th place finishes. The juniors all worked hard and never quit. We are so proud of how they performed. This team has had more team spirit than any US Team that I can recall. While celebrating the overall championship, the team started singing the National Anthem together, which was a very emotional sight to see (there are several videos on Facebook). I am really excited to see how bright the future is for USA Karate.

Lastly, coming up at the end of October our Senior National Team will be competing in Linz Austria at the WKF World Championships. We wish them well and look forward to sharing their successes in the next edition of USA Karate Magazine. For the first time we have been able to partially fund the 1-seed Team Kata athletes and the Para Karate athletes. So now all of our 1-seed athletes are receiving some funding. It’s time to train like Olympians!! USANKF

All the best,

Phil Hampel
Chief Executive Officer
USA National Karate-do Federation
COACH’S CORNER

Motivation: The Mastery Approach

By Akira Fukuda

Coaches can utilize motivation to promote athlete growth and development. One of the greatest ways they can influence the athlete is by creating a motivational climate, referring to the learning environment that affects how athletes develop new skills, strengthen learned skills, and engage in competition.

Motivation is a central tenet of maintaining participation in youth sport and promoting improvement and development. When athletes are motivated, they are much more likely to remain engaged and interested in their sport (Martin, Dale, & Jackson, 2001). It is significant to note that a coach’s behaviors, specifically those that are positive, informational, and encouraging, are associated greater levels of motivation among youth athletes (Weiss et al., 2009). Engaging in such behaviors requires the maintenance of a task-related and mastery motivational climate as well as the employment of appropriate feedback techniques.

A motivational climate emphasizing personal improvement:

• **Positively influence athlete competence**: the athlete is motivated to invest time into learning and developing their skills. They view training as a process versus an outcome.

• **Sport enjoyment**: satisfaction and positive experiences through the personal growth.

• **Intrinsic motivation**: the athlete does not need any outside rewards to stay interested in their sport.

In contrast, a performance or ego-related climate that stresses comparison with others can:

• **Promote burnout**: athletes see mistakes and losses as learning opportunity.

• **Decrease moral functioning in sport**: because the athlete is motivated by peer comparison and outperforming others, they are more likely to use any means necessary to demonstrate dominance, including cheating and intentionally injuring teammates or opposing players.

• **Decrease team cohesion**: when athletes are in an environment in which outdoing others is promoted and coaches only praise the most talented players, it is much more likely that feelings of closeness and a sense of belongingness between team members will be reduced.

Through the use of feedback that is related to the process versus the outcome, coaches are more likely to develop athletes that have fewer tendencies to view a failure as a reflection of their own traits. In contrast, feedback that evaluates the athlete as a whole, for example labeling the athlete as a failure due to unsuccessful attempts, will foster learned helplessness. This means the athlete will experience lowered expectation, lowered persistency, and deceased performance. Ultimately the athlete begins to see outcomes as uncontrollable, meaning that they do not have faith in their own abilities. Based upon this, a coach should be careful not to attribute errors or mistakes to an athlete’s lack of ability. Instead, it is more advantageous to use the mastery approach and encourage athletes to indentify faults in their effort or strategies in order to enhance performance. **USANKF**
Have you ever sat down to watch a movie that you love, that you are passionate about, that you have watched many times before? You know it so well that you can recite the dialogue with the actors. Even though you know how the scenes will play out, you watch it as if you are seeing it for the first time. That’s passion.

Judging a match feels the same. We can almost guess what will happen, but we are excited to watch the match play out, to be on the tatami with the athletes. This describes the passion I have for officiating, passion so deep that I want others to experience it as well.

Many of you had a transition into officiating like mine. Athletes often get to the point where they do not compete any longer, but still want to experience the excitement of competition.

It didn’t take long for me to realize that officiating is more than just excitement or looking authoritative in the ring. Officiating is an invaluable service to our sport and athletes. Athletes who have trained for months and years, traveled long distances, sacrificed time and money, rely on us to ensure that competitions are fair and safe. Those of us who have made our share of mistakes and agonize over them as our head hits the pillow know how great that responsibility is.

There have been many changes to our sport over the past decades. Many of us have witnessed some unfortunate incidents within the referee corps—abuse of power, unprofessional criticism, public embarrassment. We understand that those experiences may have pushed people away from service as an official.

But I can attest to a sustained and growing sense of camaraderie among our current referee corps. Much as the responsibility of a single match is shared across the entire judging panel, so is the work of ensuring fair, safe, and exciting competition for our sport shared among us all. Officials are disciplined in our study and training so we can apply the rules correctly. Most exciting, we eagerly await joining in the glory of the sport at the 2020 Olympics! I take great pride in being an official and hope you will, too. USANKF
Master Funakoshi’s
NIJYU KUN

In karate, never attack first
By Teruyuki Okazaki

Master Funakoshi used the term “karate” in stating this principle because he was expressing this philosophy to karate students, but this principle—like all of his principles—applies to life in general.

In other words, one could say, “In life, never attack first.”

Technically, karate is a fighting art. It involves kicking, punching and blocking. But this is only the physical aspect of karate. What we are training to do, really, is to change ourselves on the inside, so that we know how to avoid violent situations. When we train, the first move we make from the ready position is a block. Also, each kata begins with a blocking technique. This reinforces the philosophy of nonviolence and never attacking first. Rather than participate in violence, it is always better to stop it, or avoid it. Rather than initiate a conflict, it is always better to be prepared to react to it, to end it.

Every student who has tournament experience in sparring will know that if you discover your opponent’s strategy, you can clearly follow his movements, and it is easy to win. This is only possible if you clear your mind, and observe what is. This way, if there is an opening for an attack—because in tournament sparring, remember, you must consider yourself already “under attack” and ready to respond—you will see it, and you will be able to see your opportunity to stop your opponent. If you practice this philosophy of never attacking first, then you have discovered the first step in understanding karate ni sente nashi. You will be able to see opportunity when it is before you.

This principle reflects an essential aspect of karate. If you are a humble karate-ka and learn from your opponent, you can appreciate the meaning of karate ni sente nashi. Humility is always necessary for a clear mind. Humility means “no ego,” for ego always clouds the mind. An “attacking” mindset is one in which the ego gets in the way. It clouds your mind, and blinds you to what is real.

We can see how this is true, through experience, during dojo training. As you execute the different techniques, do not detach them from their significance in real life. For example, if an opportunity in life arises, do not wait, but quickly take action before you lose your chance.

In addition to the premise of not attacking first, karate ni sente nashi is also about reaction, one’s ability to react to a situation. If you do not train diligently, regularly and to the best of your ability, you will never progress enough to grasp the essence of this important principle. You must not only be able to see what is around you, but you must be prepared at all times to react to it.

Adhering to this guidance will provide you with a method of training that will result in knowing your opponent, knowing yourself, seeing the situation clearly, and reacting quickly.

If you are not humble, if you have a big head, you can never understand the meaning of karate ni sente nashi, but it is there for everyone to pursue.
The Time Has Come

I remember my first tournament telling my sensei that I was nervous and scared to compete. I was only 13 years old and he told me to go and watch a tournament. He said: “I bet if you go, you’ll regret you didn’t compete.” I competed at every tournament since that day. I did pretty well in the under belt divisions until I was 17 years old, my last year of high school.

I went away to college and was able to keep up with my studies and practice karate. I remember coming home after I graduated, four years later and telling my sensei I wanted to go to the Olympics. Karate wasn’t even in the Olympics and the highest event was the Pan American Games. He said “Let’s go”!!! I couldn’t have been more excited now that I had the support from my sensei and mother. The question was: “how I was going to get there?”

I knew that I was going to do all that I could to reach the highest honor within the sport of Karate. I have had a tremendous career, I still was unable to reach my original goal, the Olympics.

As time went on and the chance of karate being in the Olympics came and went, like my retirement, my dream of being an Olympian dwindled. But here we are in 2016 and KARATE MADE THE OLYMPICS!!!! I am jealous, but in a way that fills me with joy. The karate athletes from all different styles, from traditional to “open” and every style in between will be able to represent their school, city, state and country for all the world to see. What we in the Karate world have already known, that we deserve to be an Olympic Sport.

They have the opportunity to reach a dream that I had throughout my career. And I love it!!!!

This announcement is historic for Karate in that we have been over looked and underestimated for so long. To be a karate athlete you need agility, stamina, technique, strategy, tactics, strength, fortitude and determination in order to step on that mat to prove you are the BEST match after match. Now KARATE athletes, will have the honor to showcase these abilities in the sport we LOVE. I can not wait to see what the future brings to the sport of karate. I am just glad I am able to see how it unfolds. Though I may not be on the mat at the 2020 Olympics you can bet I’ll be there. USANKF
Para Karate Athletes in the World Championships

When I began teaching para karate athletes over 40 years ago, I never dreamed that one day the athletes with disabilities would be included in the World Championships of Karate. And now with the inclusion of karate in the Olympics, life is changing in a way that I never would’ve dreamed possible.

And now here we are, having had the first ever para karate team trials in Pittsburgh this last summer, taking a team of three adult males to compete in the World Championships in Linz, Austria.

People often ask me, “How do you train para karate athletes?” and my answer is simple “exactly the same way I have trained every athlete for the last 40 years.” Para karate athletes are not different, they are the same. More the same than most people realize. They have specific challenges to work on – maybe their left side is stronger than their right side, or their jab is weaker than their reverse, or their jumps need height, etc, and we work on those things. Daily. Just like my typical athletes and all the junior and senior national karate team members I’ve coached over the years.

In addition to their strength training, conditioning and kata sequence training, we also enlist the help of a few “non” karate people. For example, we bring in an acting coach who helps the athletes work on stage presence, confidence and poise. Both in the ring and when talking to the public. These are extremely important skills for all team members and some para karate athletes have not been given that training. Additionally, we have brought in therapists and sport psychologists to work on dealing with the very real emotions that go along with being a competitive athlete at the world championship level.

In my experience, the para karate athletes worked harder, stronger and are hungrier than most of my typical athletes. It means so much to them to be included, to be given an opportunity to do what their typical peers are doing, and as a result they work above and beyond to achieve their goals. It’s a true pleasure to be a part of their journey.

My whole life I’ve tried to be an advocate for the under-dog, as many of us in karate have done. We start as the guys who will stand up for the smaller kid in the play-ground, and end up fighting for what’s just and right in the adult world. This is an extension of that desire to help. But over the years, these para karate athletes have taught me more about life than I ever expected. They have taught me about fight, about strength, about perseverance in a way I didn’t know was possible. To see what they can and have accomplished is truly life changing.
Kevin Kucbor
Age 22, 1st degree black belt

Born in the United States and grew up in Chicago, Illinois. He has been studying Shotokan karate for 16 years, as a student of Sensei Jeff Kohn at North Shore Dojo. Kevin recently earned his degree in Special Education from Northeastern Illinois University, and has been a mentor with the Karate Can-Do program, which helps children with disabilities study the art of karate. His work with the Karate-Can-Do program is what inspired him to take his passions and interests into the classroom. Through his dedication, Kevin has medaled in numerous national karate tournaments over the years.

When asked what karate means to him, Kevin says, “Karate is how I stay fit, both mentally and physically. When I first started karate, I had great difficulty with tasks that involved both fine and gross motor movement. Running was hard, jumping was hard, and maintaining my balance on the balance beam was also a difficult task. All of those things were something that my physical therapists never believed I could do with a high level of ability. Karate has helped my mobility in ways that physical and occupational therapies never could. I can state with confidence that studying karate at North Shore Dojo has developed me into the motivated, and self disciplined individual that I am today. I am very fortunate to be studying karate at a martial arts school that is unlike any other in the country.” - USANKF
Ryan Rogers  
Age 28, 1st degree black belt  
Born and raised in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He started traditional karate at age 14 at a YMCA and earned his black belt in Shito-Ryu. After training for 10 years he found Sensei Green of Green’s Karate and started practicing with Green to advance his martial arts. Ryan started over, learning a certified worldwide version of Shito-Ryu under Green. Since changing over, Rogers made U.S. karate history 8 times with highlights of him being the first athlete with autism to win silver and bronze in kumite and kata in the novice (2012) and intermediate (2013) non-handicap divisions. He was the first person with autism to have officiated the U.S. Karate (usankf.org) Nationals in 2012. He performed in 2 weapons divisions in 2015 and won double gold in the disabled weapons and disabled kata division. He won silver in the disabled Kata division in 2016. Rogers has several hobbies including: Drawing, writing, reading, and working out.  

When asked what his feelings are in regards to competing at the World Karate Championship for the first time Rogers said, “it is like going to a huge concert to perform with some of the best performers in the world. Reality is now setting in”. USANKF

Sabahudin Tricic 
Age 47, 3rd degree black belt  
Born and raised in Rudo, Bosnia. He started practicing Karate at the age of 15 in a local school club. He trained there for two years, and was invited to Karate Club Prijob, where he practiced and competed in local tournaments in Kumite for another two years. Upon enrolling in college in Sarajevo, Bosnia, Sabahudin was invited to join Karate Club “Bosna,” university club at Faculty of Sarajevo, where he competed as U-21. There, he won first place in Kumite, and third place in Elite Team Kumite at the Balkan Championship. However, Sabahudin’s Kumite career was cut short by war in 1992, when he was blinded by shrapnel. Sabahudin was evacuated to the US for medical treatment, where he continued his Karate career, training his children at the same time. He has competed in numerous local tournaments in Kata, and has been a National champion in Disabled Kata category since 2010. 

Sabahudin has also hosted Bosnian team for USA Open since 2011, providing the opportunity to the youth born during war to compete on an international level. Sabahudin has obtained a 3rd Dan in Shotokan in 2014, and is brown belt in Yamani Ryu Kobudo. He has additionally practiced Daito Ryu Aiki jitsu and Judo. USANKF
Shannon Nishi-Patton’s amazing journey in the art of karate started 22 years ago. Her dedication and competitive spirit carried her through hard times when things weren’t quite like she expected. Currently focused on competing at an elite level again, Shannon still finds time to coach new karate talent for the sport. Her work as a karate coach is already recognized worldwide and her reputation in the international community is second to none.

Nishi-Patton advocates proper training to get the right state of mind for elite competition: “Practice makes you feel confident in your abilities and this confidence will put you in the proper gear to fight. There is no other way you can step onto the competition mat with the right attitude if you haven’t done your homework.” Her knowledge and understanding of the sport, make her one of the best coaches and athletes and she brings hope to young competitors when she says, “With Tokyo 2020 ahead of us, the best is yet to come.”
How long have you been practicing Karate?

I have been a karate practitioner for 22 years. I was in and out of training throughout my life due to 4 ACL surgeries. I started Karate under the International Karate Federation. My original karate instructor was Sensei Glenn West. Throughout the years I have been supported by numerous IKF instructors including: Sensei Chuzo Kotaka, Sensei Mari Kaneshiro, Sensei John Limcaco, Sensei Jolynn, Sensei Maile Koncal, and Sensei George Kotaka. I am now with Kachi Karate. The head instructors of the dojo are Sensei Robert Koncal and Maile Koncal. I believe I was a natural at the sport. Nonetheless, my innate competitiveness also drove me to always be the best I could be.

Would you tell us some interesting stories of your early days in training?

For me, karate was love at first sight. I fell in love with the art and the sport immediately. My nickname growing up was “Smiley.” I was never your “typical” student. I was kicked out of many practices for smiling too much in the dojo. I was the epitome of a rascal child. Karate definitely kept me focused and on the right path in life.

As far as a story goes… My father had shared with me a story that will forever stick. I went to compete at my very first tournament when I was six years old and there were only three other girls in my Kobudo division. I ended up losing and was the only athlete sitting on the side that did not receive a trophy. My dad explained that he was up in the stands tearing up and felt so bad for me. He then came up to me after the division was dismissed to console me, however, I looked at him and said: “this will never happen again dad! Don't worry!” I then went on to win my next two divisions.
What made you enter in the competition world?

My original dojo was a very competition-based dojo. You train, compete, and repeat. Competition was a way to test your training and your growth as an athlete, and I always absolutely loved competing.

As an elite coach, what are the most important points in your current training methods?

Teaching the soul of an individual is not a simple “XYZ” answer. Every athlete, old or young, requires different approaches to get the best out of them. To try to simplify a not so simple question: For the younger elite athletes, it is teaching them to fall in love with the sport and the art. I want them to want to be there, I want them yearning to be better, and I want them feeling that they can never get enough karate in their lives. Once that is established teaching them that there is no substitute for hard work. Teaching them that if you want something in life you need to work for it. Learning to have the right attitude and mindset is fundamental to their karate success as well as success in life. Everyone wants to be a winner in this world, however, what are you willing to sacrifice to get what you want? I truly believe that the attitude you bring to life is what life gives back to you. Therefore, elite athletes need to learn to love the process of improvement. Training, on the other hand, can be approached in a simpler manner. It is about creating an environment and opportunity for my athletes to master their skills - technically, physically, and emotionally.

How has your understanding and perception of karate developed over the years?

Being an athlete and being a coach are two entirely different roles. I am still learning and always looking for ways to be better and do better by the athletes. Learning never ends. Nonetheless, it was a process of developing a methodology in my approach with the athletes; a methodology that is always changing and always adjusting to whom I am working with. I truly believe support and trust is the foundation to a positive working relationship. Getting to know my athletes and not just as an athletes but as human beings, is essential. Once that is established... the real work can begin.

What do you think are the most important attributes of a student?

Humility, respect, discipline, perseverance, determination, the desire for improvement, work ethic, intrinsic competitiveness, and GRIT.

Are there any mental exercises or meditations you would recommend to strengthen the mind for strategy and creativity in karate?

There are always tasks that can be done to strengthen one's mind. At the highest level of competition, mental fortitude is the strongest attribute an athlete has in imposing his/her will onto an opponent. Understanding and probing an athlete with questions to understand what their internal dialogue sounds like is always a good start.

Karate is nowadays often defined as sport... Do you agree with this definition?

Through time Karate has definitely evolved and progressed. Karate practitioners have options that were not necessarily available to the older generations - for example being apart of the Olympics. There is obviously the traditional side of karate and the sport side of the art. I truly believe Karate is what the person makes of it and what they want out of it. Nevertheless, for sport karate practitioners, I do not feel the pursuit of the sport should allow athletes to negate the principles and the foundation that karate was built on; respect, discipline, humility, etc.
Also as a human being you should never be content with what you know. Learning is an ongoing process because life never stops teaching. This is no different when it comes to Karate.

_Do you have any general advice you would care to pass onto young competitors?_

Do what you love and love what you do. Be a leader in life. Be able to look in the mirror and be proud of who you are. The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is in the small details. Train while no one is watching. Be the person that you would want your child to look up to one day. Be so good they cannot deny you. You have one shot at this thing called life - MAKE YOURS COUNT- and most importantly, have FUN with it!

_Who would you like to have trained with that you have not (dead or alive)?_

My husband’s grandfather, Sensei Joseph Bunch. He passed away. He had an unprecedented love for the art, for his students, and for life. He never looked at his students with a dollar sign. He truly saw who they were as people and supported them in their life’s endeavors. He was genuine and sincere with all.

_What would you say to someone who is interested in starting to learn karate?_

Do it! Typically, people do not regret the things they do, they regret the things they don’t do. At the very least you gave it a shot. As an athlete, be humble, technically proficient, athletic, gritty, and be mentally tough. Karate has forever changed my life.

_What has been your biggest challenge as a competitive athlete?_

Injury! As stated earlier- I have had 4 ACL reconstructive surgeries throughout the course of my competition years. Nonetheless, everything happens for a reason and what does not kill you will only make you stronger.

_How did your coaches help your game and what do you focus on to improve the athletes nowadays as a coach?_

For the most part, I struggled with staying focused as an athlete. The coaches that knew me helped me harness my energy and yield productivity. As a coach, I try to do the same while helping athletes to be the best they can be. My goal is to help my athletes perfect their craft and be so good at what they do that if they execute, they will control their own destiny.

_As an athlete, what specific drills do you like and dislike [but still need to do]?_

Dislike - NONE! There is absolutely nothing like being barefoot on the mat at the dojo- it feels like home. All drills that are thrown my way are opportunities to get better. If there is a drill I am not immediately successful with,
my job is to turn that weakness into a strength. What I enjoy specifically... I love any type of evasive drill when my partner's job is to try and score and my job is not to get scored on. Probably, because it feels like a big game of tag and I loved being chased [laughs].

Could you explain the most thrilling moment you've experienced?

I truly cannot say that I have had a moment. I go into every tournament expecting to win and I honestly believe it is about the journey, not the destination.

What do you feel was your biggest loss, and what did you learn from it?

The World Championships semi-finals against Italy. It was overtime and I was winning. With literally one second left she scored a beautiful head kick that sealed her fate to the finals. I learned a match is two minutes long and not a minute and fifty nine seconds. I literally lost my focus and fell asleep for one second. A lot can happen in one second.

What do you think is important for young athletes to know when they first begin to compete?

Tournaments are opportunities for athletes to test their preparation. Champions are made at home. They are created through hard work, sacrifice, dedication, and determination that is endured day in and day out. Never lose sight of why you fell in love with karate. Always have fun and enjoy the process. It is never work if you love what you do!

Have there been times when you had doubts about your karate training?

Life is never perfect nor fair. More than often there will always be circumstances that are out of your control. Therefore, the only job you have and the only thing you can control is your reaction to these circumstances. There were times where doubt tried to creep its way into my head. Then you remind yourself of all the reasons why you should succeed, all the people that support you, and all the reasons why you should stay the path.

What keeps you motivated to continue teaching and coaching after all these years?

Showing up to the dojo and seeing the smiles on my athletes’ faces. Knowing that I can make a difference in their lives. Being a part of a process that literally brings the best out of people. In return, I am truly filled with joy.

Karate is finally part of the Olympic Games, what is your opinion about it?

It's about time!

Finally, what are your plans for the future?

“To live, love, and laugh”... USANKF
USA Karate stopped in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for the first time this past summer landing strong competition on every tatami on the floor at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. Over 1,400 competitors from across the country were brought together July 14 – 17 to compete in five divisions throughout the four day event.
The 2016 Adidas Karate - USA Karate National Championships and Team Trials, led by Chief Executive Officer, Phil Hampel and his National Office Staff, was one of the best in history. “This years nationals were amazing, Pittsburgh was a great city with a wonderful venue, our families really enjoyed the experience.” Says Hampel. “Dustin Baldis encouraged us to consider Pittsburgh as a host city and he was right. Dustin was an excellent host, and was enthusiastic about having the Nationals in his city.” “Year after year I’m impressed with the rise in the level of the competitors at our Signature Events, we have great competition throughout the entire event.”

During the four days of intense competition, the athletes competed in multiple disciplines including kata, team kata, kumite, team kumite and weapons.

Day one started with the Elite Kata divisions and the Para Karate divisions with those athletes competing to make Finals and Team Trials. The Para Karate athletes excited the room as they competed and inspired the crowd. The Long and Short Weapons divisions took up the afternoon alongside team kata. Spectators were able to watch another full day of competition on day two and three with the addition of senior Team Trials divisions for ages 18 – 34. Sunday wrapped up day four with all team kumite divisions.
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS & TEAM TRIALS

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The staging area was then transformed into a two-ring arena as both the men and women competed for a spot on the US Karate Team. New this year was the opportunity for the 12-13 year old elite competitors to be featured in the finals. USA Karate was able to live stream the competition worldwide and hundreds watched the finalists battle it out for gold.

The National Champions that earned their spots on this year’s Junior US Karate team looked forward to representing the USA at the Junior Pan American Karate Federation (PKF) Championships in Guayaquil, Ecuador August 22 -28. This team went on to win 1st place. Para Karate athletes from this championship will represent the United States at the WKF Senior World Championships in Linz, Austria on October 25.

During finals, various members of the USA Karate Board of Directors gave out awards to the following recipients who have excelled their dedication to Karate.

2016 Female Junior Athlete of the Year: Sabrina Martinez
2016 Male Junior Athlete of the Year: Kevin Stevens
2016 Coach of the Year: Shannon Nishi-Patton
2016 Official of the Year: Jay Farrell
2016 Female Athlete of the Year: Sakura Kokumai
2016 Male Athlete of the Year: Tom Scott
2016 Person of the Year: George Aschkar
For the first time USA Karate held a reception prior to the start of the Championships to recognize those club owners who support the federation by bringing a large number of competitors from their local school to the national championships. This year's Top 10 participating clubs (with a few ties) were:

- Illinois Shotokan Karate Clubs – Illinois - John DiPasquale
- Pennsylvania Shotokan Karate Club – Pennsylvania – Dustin Baldis
- North Shore Dojo – Illinois – Jeff Kohn
- Lynbrook Ultimate Martial Arts and Fitness – New York – Mamdouh Ibrahim
- Goshin Ryu Shotokan Karate-do - New York – Luis Ruiz
- USA Martial Arts – Florida – Felix Puga
- Kanmuri Dojo – Florida – Carlos Riobo
- Champion Karate Academy – Texas – Senthil Thiyagarajan
- NKD Martial Arts – California – Bruce Nguyen
- Kanku-Dai Zanshin Dojo – New York - Hommy Penna
- Okinawan Karate Kobudo Kai - New York – Serge Clark
- Turkish American Eyup Sultan Karate Team – New York – Meral Olmez

USA Karate is extremely proud of gaining major sponsors for the 2016 championships. Adidas Karate came on as the title sponsor. Highmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Vista Pointe Wealth Solutions, DTGruelle Specialty Logistics were Silver Medal Sponsors and GNC and Dick’s Sporting Goods were also major sponsors for the event. “Sponsorship is extremely important as karate starts it journey to our first Olympic Games” said Phil Hampel. Introduced this year was a photographer who was able to capture all the big moments during the four-day event as well as images of our athletes on the medal podium. Pictures are available for purchase at USANKF.org.

USA Karate would like to express their appreciation to all Event Staff, Volunteers, Officials, Medical Staff and Participants, without whom this event could not be possible. A special thanks to USA Karate Board President, John DiPasquale and the USA Karate Board of Directors who make Nationals bigger and better each year, as well as the 100+ certified Referees who maintain fair competition. Train hard and we will see you in Greenville, South Carolina next year!
Karate has no understanding of gender. Spirit and character are spirit and character, regardless of the flesh and bone in which they are clothed.

With a father involved in the art of karate for his whole life, who trained under one of the legendary masters, Yasuhiro Konishi, it seemed natural that daughter Mina would follow in his footsteps as karateka—and that’s just what happened. Maybe it wasn’t as much what she learned, but rather how she was taught that made the biggest impact. With her feet firmly planted in her solid Japanese belief system of hard work, loyalty, and self-reliance, Mina Yamazaki is likely to be counted among the Karate elite for years to come.

“You are always going to make mistakes in life,” she says with a smile, “but you always have to look at and face up to them. When you stop doing it, then your weaknesses are exposed. Don’t look for affirmation from someone else, because that means that you have no self-belief inside yourself…and in that case, no amount of empty praise will change that.”

“A great thing about starting young was that karate really helped me with my coordination and motor skills.”
How long have you been practicing Karate and who is your teacher?

I started when I was three, so for about 18 years. My father owned a dojo so I was there all the time. I don’t think I knew I was doing “karate”; it was just a fun activity and I didn’t know any better. I’ve only seriously studied and practiced one style, Shindo Jinen Ryu. I always found it interesting when we would be reminiscing about training as kids. From the outside looking in, they sound like horrible times of torture and pain. But they were the best times of our lives. The training was hard but fun. I don’t think I was ‘natural” at karate, but a great thing about starting young was that karate really helped me with my coordination and motor skills. It kind of grew up with me.

As the daughter of Yamazaki Sensei you have a heavy responsibility on your shoulders...How do you deal with it?

I deal with it by accepting the fact that I will never be him, and honestly being okay with that. I can never be him, and even the closest version of him would still be a sub-par version. After struggling with this for quite some time, I realized that I can only be the best version of me. The best version of me is a mixture of my experience plus karate training under my father.

Coming from a traditional Japanese family, how do you see the level of the art in America compared to Japan?

This is a tough question because of my bias. I grew up in a house where being Japanese was a badge of honor and really meant something. I can’t really say yes or no because it wouldn’t be fair to make such a strong statement with so little research.

On the other hand, I don’t think it’s necessary to go to Japan for training, but it’s definitely an amazing experience, and one should go if given the opportunity. You can learn a lot about the roots of the art. If you practice karate as a sport only, then Japan won’t mean more to you than going to England for a soccer player. But if you train and practice karate as an art form, then Japan can give you an “inner feeling” about the culture and traditions that you’ll never get if you don’t go there.

Self defense, health or tradition: what it is karate for you?

I think whatever you think is the most important element, then that is the element that is important to you. Karate is whatever you make of it and that’s the great part about it. It is very interesting to see a room full of students practicing the same art, but getting entirely different things out of it. The way I train for most of the year would very much parallel the definition of your more traditional sport. I don’t train
with my main focus being self-defense. But it is important to remember that aspect, along with bunkai/oyo, in order to be well-rounded and understand what you are doing. At the end, I think the most important part of teaching is one's willingness to share information. I try to emulate my dad in that sense. You work hard for so many years to learn something new beyond the moves of a kata, and you have to be willing to share it without thinking twice.

You are a member of the USA Team which mainly focuses on the sportive aspect of karate and your father, Yamazaki Sensei is one of the traditional Budo masters who helped to establish the art in this country. How do you make compatible these two elements?

My father has a deep respect for the type of training he received and what it means to the martial arts community, but he also has an equal amount of appreciation for sport karate. He has shown us that the athleticism displayed in modern day karate is from athletes pushing the limit of what our bodies are capable of doing. I think that knowing the origin of a kata helps you understand why techniques are executed a certain way, makes your techniques more realistic, making your performance more authentic and ultimately better.

Who would be the master you always wanted to train under?

I would have loved to train under the guide of our current Soke's father, Yasuhiro Konishi. I've only heard stories of how amazing he was, and when I look at his pictures at our dojo, I get chills thinking about training from the absolute source of our style. I think those old times were when all the arts and styles were developed, so training under the masters during these times could have been a great experience. The great old master shared many ideas and training principles. For instance,
Konishi Sensei was very close to Mabuni Kenwa from Shito Ryu. They trained and experimented together, although they followed different paths. It would be great to see modern teachers do the same.

You started training at a very early age, so karate is a natural thing for you to do. Do you get bored of training, and what is it that keeps you motivated?

Karate is fun and it shows me what I’m made of. It’s fun to test yourself…to see how far you can go. It’s fun to see kids who are terribly shy when they first start out, to getting notes from their school teachers who are astounded by their change in demeanor and confidence. It’s fun to watch kids help each other learn new katas. It’s just fun. I try to keep learning so that one can continue learning with others. I take comfort in the fact that this is something that I will always be studying and that I may never fully understand.

You travel often to Japan to train with some of the best coaches and Sensei there. What can you tell us about these experiences?

All of the training I’ve done in Japan has made me realize how lucky I am. I have trained with Sensei and their athletes that I had no business training with. I’ve stood in a dojo where everyone practicing at one point has held a world title and I had nothing. I remember being so embarrassed, because I knew right then and there that the only reason why I was allowed in that dojo was because of my last name. My father had pulled strings to get me in. I took solace in the fact that anyone that
trained with my father also had this opportunity open to them. I’m just the only one who took him up on it. Training in Japan has always been brutal. 6-10 hours a day of training really puts things in perspective. I found myself at a crossroads - I could shy away because I didn’t “deserve” to be there, or I could stop comparing myself to everyone around me and use them as inspiration. I went with the latter and haven’t looked back.

**How important do you think is the supplementary training: running, weight lifting, etc… for a practitioner of Karate?**

It is necessary for competition at the international level. It is different to train three days per week than prepare oneself to compete and face other elite athletes. At that stage, you need all the training you can have, and the supplementary training like running, weight training, etc…definitely helps in the overall physical conditioning of the competitor. You won’t improve your basic techniques running, but you’ll be able to endure a long competition.

**What do you see as the most important attributes of a martial arts student?**

Getting a person to walk into a dojo is half the battle; he or she has chosen karate for a certain reason, even though one may not be entirely sure what the reason is. The other half of that battle is for the instructor to find that something that makes the student want to stay. It is important to carry over the bits of knowledge you acquire from karate into your everyday life. I’m not saying one should run out and fight the next person you see on the street. For example, you learn patience from training and teaching. Try channeling that into your work life or while stuck in traffic.

“There are times when your Karate will be the only yardstick of progress in your life.”
What advice would you give to those who wish to start training, especially women?

I would like people who start training to think about the benefits, and how it can only enrich their lives. If they do, I am sure they will never stop training.

It is a fact that in violent situations, a man can expect some grace in this world; a woman should expect no quarter. Therefore when a woman gets into a Karate class, she must actively seek the strongest man with the hardest arms and legs, and must learn ways to overcome him. There are times when your Karate will be the only yardstick of progress in your life. You might be in the winter of your discontent. There may seem to be no light at the end of the tunnel, and no one to hear your scream. Your Karate training will help you to turn from such trials and rise above them. Many things can be taken from you, but not your Karate.

You suffered a serious knee injury in the last PKF championships in Rio de Janeiro. What went through your mind when you felt the “pop” in your knee?

“FINISH”. That was literally the thought that went through my mind. There was a split second where I was shocked that this was really happening, but I got over that immediately. Stopping was not an option.

How is the recovery coming along and when do you think we’ll see you again on a competition mat?

Recovery is going incredibly well. I’m currently around 12 weeks post op and back to practicing kata. Again, my last name has opened so many doors giving me access to the best surgeons and physical therapists in the world. It’s amazing to literally be in the hands of the same people that helped pro athletes get back to their sport.

Karate and Tokyo 2020, what are your thoughts about it and are you planning to fight for a place in this historical event for the art and sport of karate?

This is so amazing. We have been so close for so long that it was getting difficult to get your hopes up because they have been shattered so many times. It’s going to be interesting to see what the qualifying process will be.

What are your plans for the future?

I have a new dojo that is a non-profit. My goal is to have a dojo that supports its community by teaching kids life skills for a successful future. For example, one of the things my dojo is really strict about is being on time. “When you’re early you’re on time, and when you’re on time you’re late.” Sometimes I think that teaching kids to be on time already puts them ahead of the competition.

I see myself taking on a more active role in my organization, Japan Karate Do Ryobu-Kai. There are senior members in Ryobu-Kai that have a lot of experience outside of karate that they bring to their karate. It’s been a great learning experience getting the opportunity to sit in meetings with them and watch them interact with other members. USANKF
Mr. Angelo Collado has a very interesting combination of experience that makes him especially right for this particular rehabilitation of Sensei Mina Yamazaki. Not only is Angelo a very experienced and accomplished Sports Orthopedic Rehabilitation Specialist/Athletic Trainer. Angelo Collado is an accomplished Kenpo Karate Instructor, several times World Kenpo Karate Black Belt Kata Champion, who has undergone several major orthopedic reconstructions himself and has successfully rehabilitated himself back to World Champion status. Angelo has a good idea of what is involved and what it takes to not only become a champion but to rehabilitate to return to International Kata Competition.

He has coached and rehabilitated over 2000 ACL athletes and thousands of shoulder/elbow and other injuries in Southern California. Angelo ran one of the largest successful Sports Medicine Rehab programs in Southern California under the direction of Orthopedic Specialist Tadashi Funahashi MD. Together they formed a team that successfully returned a spectrum of Professional, MMA, Olympic, NCAA Div I and High School athletes back to their prospective sports. Many National Champions, State Champions, Olympians and Professional Athletes have gone through the paces in rehabilitation with Angelo. Angelo was the head Professional Athletic Trainer for two seasons with the Professional NLL league ANAHEIM STORM based out of the former Anahiem Pond. Angelo has been published in Muscle and Fitness Magazine and has several publications on ACL Rehabilitation. Angelo has written a book entitled “ACL Rehab...it’s an Attitude!”
What can you tell us about the balance of the opposites [soft and hard] in Karate technique?

In the Universe, all is based on the balance of opposites: day and night, cold and hot, etc. Karate is the same: relaxation and tension, hard and soft, body and mind ... it is all in there. No Karate style is “hard” or “soft” per se if you truly understand Karate. Some people say Goju is “soft,” Shotokan is “hard,” etc… that makes no sense. All Karate styles use the principle of balancing the “hard” and “soft”. It is just a matter of the level of understanding and knowledge of the person or karateka who is talking.

What is your opinion about trying to make [in Kata] the external technique perfect from a visual point of view?

With the possibility of including Karate in the Olympics, there has been an attempt to standardize not only the actual kata but also make the physical movements “prettier,” to say the least. The idea of a perfect “outside” visual form has become the goal. But there is a big problem here because Karate kata is not gymnastics. Kata is not about the external technique only but about the “philosophy” and “meaning” of the actual technique. If we change the outside form to make it look better but lose elements that “show” the real meaning of the technique, we are losing a great deal of understanding. If we don’t maintain the “function” of the technical movement, then it is no longer kata. It’s gymnastics. Once kata is only visual (as we see these days), it has no point. The visual of the kata must represent technically the “bunkai application” of the movement. We have to consider the “bunkai” when we do kata.

Can you give us an example?

For instance, in some kata when performed in competition, the karateka jumps higher than what the actual technique requires; they slow down the techniques...
breaking the actual rhythm of the form, etc. Why? To impress judges. Every movement can be used and it has to be performed as it works. That is a choice you have to make: perform kata for looks or for true Karate. Real Karate kata may not be more beautiful but certainly is way more meaningful.

**What about Kihon training?**

Kihon training, although it may be boring is extremely important. If the foundations of a house are weak, as the house gets older, problems will arise. This is the same for all Karate styles, no matter their origins. A lot of people spend many years training to realize later on, after 30 years of karate practice, that they don’t have a solid foundation and their technique is not “polished” at all — that they lack solid basic, clean Karate technique and they feel embarrassed because they have a high rank. You find this situation mainly among karateka who have devoted their training mainly to kumite. Don’t misunderstand my words; kumite is not easy but it is not what makes a good karateka. Kihon and kata are the foundation for Karate. Kumite is a “personalized” way of using Karate techniques. But you should get that [technique] first. Unfortunately, you see high ranks who lack good Karate basics and they try to cover it up focusing on kumite. This shows what kind of “attitude” and “personality” these practitioners have.

**How can these practitioners who focus mainly on kumite correct that?**

Well, that is a little bit difficult. They will realize this problem later on in their Karate training; they may be 5th, 6th or 7th Dan already. They have a reputation at stake [some may be Asian, European, American or world champions] and it is hard for them to acknowledge what they truly lack in their Karate. They never had the motivation, patience, and sense of detail to begin with and that is why their Karate is like it is. So, it is very hard for them to accept that fact and go back and do thousands of basics to catch up with the deficiencies of their past Karate training. Karate’s basic movements are incredibly difficult to perform correctly and it takes a certain attitude and personality to focus on details. Kata is kumite at its most complex form. All the techniques and strategies used in kumite and also in self-defense are contained in the fundamental kata. You just need to know “where” to look and “how” to uncode them. In traditional Karate, kata equals kumite but kumite doesn’t equal kata.

**Some people may argue that good technique is alright…but Karate is about “If you can fight or not.” What do you have to say about that?**

Very simple; that shows how little these people know Karate and their level of understanding. That mentality shows why they lack technique. And no, Karate is not about “if you can fight or not.” Mike Tyson at his best could probably have knocked down 90% or more of the karate practitioners around the world, but that doesn’t mean he knows Karate. Fighting is a part of Karate but it is not “all” there is to Karate. People use this excuse to justify their own inabilities.

**What can you tell us about kumite?**

Kumite is based on two principles: distance and timing. Without these two, nothing else matters. Not matter how good your primary elements (techniques) are, they will be useless. But even with a lousy technique, if you have developed a decent amount of ability in using distance and timing, you can be very good in sparring. You won’t have a “good” Karate but you can win competitions, even world championships.

**Would you elaborate, please?**

If you don’t have the right distance, your attacks will fail and your defenses will be useless. The right technique without the right [delivery] distance is useless. Then,
if you have the right distance but the technique (attack or defense) is not delivered at the right time, it will either fall short in execution or won’t be done to its fullest potential. The “when” to move is at least as important as the “how.” It is useless to have a powerful technique if your body movement can’t put you in exactly the right place and at the right time to use it effectively.

How we can develop the “right” distance?

Let me begin by saying that there is no one “right” distance. It is true that the “basic” kumite distance is the one that is slightly farther than the reach of the rear leg of the opponent. For instance, if you opponent is facing you, he won’t be able to reach you with a kick from the back leg without taking a preliminary step toward you. That is your basic “safety” or “critical” distance. During a kumite match, the distance alters constantly so the key to obtain the right distance is “correct footwork.” If you don’t have the right kind of footwork, you won’t be able to attain the right distance efficiently during the match.

What do you mean by the right kind of footwork?

You need to know what kind of footwork you should use to defend, to attack, to intercept, to shorten the distance, to create distance when defending, or to create distance in order to simply create space, etc. Not all footwork patterns are the same and shouldn’t be used randomly. Right footwork “gets” you there and gets you “out.”

What about timing?

Timing is a very complex element because it requires a sense of rhythm – not only of the correct [intrinsic] rhythm of how the technique must be used and works but also of the rhythm of the fight. Then, you need to have an understanding of the opponent’s rhythm and the tempo and cadence of his movements. Distance can be drilled and developed by Sanbon and Gohon kumite but timing only through actual jyu kumite. Then, it is when you can actually find a certain pattern in your opponent’s rhythm and find out how to break it. You can create it too, and force it into your opponent, but that is more complex. You can read the opponent’s rhythm and then break it to hit efficiently.

It is believed by many that the power comes from the hip but studies proved different. What can you tell us about this?

It is true that people say that the power in Karate “comes from the hip.” Let’s start using the words correctly. Power comes from the ground up. It doesn’t come or originate from the hip. This is pure physics. A Karate punch [or kick] does not begin with the hip rotation. It passes cleanly through the hips into the torso, but it is not the hips that cause the power or the turn. The power that starts/originates or comes from the ground is transmitted to the upper body [and eventually to the punch or kick] by the correct use of the hip and then directed to the target via the arm or the leg. Our hips will impede the progress of the leg force/thrust if we don’t know how to open them loosely as pivot points. Why the legs? Because if you have no base, you have no power. Once again, pure physics. Your connection with the ground is the base for the power. Studies have been made in universities where professional boxers and karateka have been placed in the air hanging, with no base or contact to the ground whatsoever. The result? Their punching power was gone, decreased to the simple arm power. Why? Because they had no base. Those studies proved
that the power originates from the ground up, not from the hips. It is impossible to deliver a powerful punch without a strong stance to launch it from, as you cannot use the rotation of your hips without being rooted to the ground. This is the right way to express it. What is important to the body mass and the way the hip is used.

**Body mass?**

Yes. The real driver behind power in any punch or kick is the amount of mass behind the movement and the direction of that mass. Check all the physics equations for force, momentum, and impulse. The way to maximize the amount of mass behind your attack is to get as much of your body moving in the direction of your attack as possible.

**So what is the role of the hip?**

As I said, the hip is the transmitter of the power that originates from the ground and from your “rooted” stance. Hip rotation is an accelerator that adds speed, and of course, increasing the speed of your body mass will increase the amount of power. But hip rotation is only one way of increasing the speed of your body mass and never is a substitute for proper application of your body mass to your techniques – which involves the whole body. You also need to know how to use the counter-rotation of the joint and when to use it properly. Hips are where the body’s center of gravity is located; our center point of mass is at the hip level and we should learn how to use our hips to increase velocity of the body mass – not necessarily speed. The right use of the hips helps to keep posture, balance, and stability for every move, but at the same time, being used incorrectly may shut off the powerful thrust of the legs. Hip rotation – not hip shifting – is used for adding speed to the body mass and therefore develop maximum power in karate techniques. That is why we say that in karate we always try to punch with the hips and kick with the hips, etc.

One more thing, the hips can’t generate power. Power is generated by the muscles around the hip. Two of the largest muscle groups in the body are the buttocks and the abdominal muscles; therefore, utilizing their strength, as well as rotating or shifting the hips, will add power to any techniques. As the hips turn, the torso and buttocks are added to the force of the technique. The hips are part of the bone/skeletal structure. A bone does not generate power …. muscles do. The real power comes from the buttock and the abdomen muscles. But a tight hip with no flexibility will decrease the potential power that you can use from your body mass and technique.

**What about hip shifting? What is the difference from hip rotating?**

These are two different things and should be used in different ways. Shifting is the movement of the entire body from one point to another in a straight line. Shifting includes both stepping and sliding the feet. And this is how the hips should be used because if you don’t move, you simply can’t hit your opponent. So shifting your hips is the real key.

Shifting the hips and not rotating the hips is the method which allows the karate-ka to develop the greatest amount of force. This is possible because we use the maximum amount of body mass by using the legs driving against the floor [origin of the power] to push forward against the hips.

The rotation is developed by the circular motion of the body mass. Control of rotation is centered on the use of the hips. The outside hip joint moves forward and backward, while the inside hip acts as a hinge. This can be practiced without technique, and then with techniques added. It is very important that the knees remain
locked in place without moving. The pivot point in hip rotation changes depending upon the situation. It is always either one hip joint or the other, never the center of the body. Rotating on the center of the body would mean that one leg is retreating while the other is moving forward, eliminating the effect of the rotation. With the use of hip rotation, it is possible to create very powerful techniques in a small space.

Another important aspect is to fully understand the hip rotation around a central axis and the application of the hip shifting in the same motion. This is a completely different concept and a more realistic way of using body torque to use the technique effectively. One aspect we should be aware of is that different styles tend to use or move the hips differently, although they are based on the same principles. Shotokan uses a very “wide” application of hanmi and shomen and Shito Ryu, Goju, and Wado use the same principle but with more emphasis on shifting.

Why do you think people explain it incorrectly?

They are misinformed. Hip shifting and hip rotating are both important. Hip rotating by itself won’t do anything to your punch unless you are punching a stationary object and your distance is already there. It is like rotating the top of a bottle … it doesn’t move/shift forward to reach the target. You need to use hip shifting and body mass, and then you finalize the movement with full hip rotation that concludes at the moment of impact, not before. And this has to be synchronized and not divided in parts or different movement sections.

What do you mean by “divided in parts”?

You see many people snapping the hips back and forth. They really get good at “hitting” and snapping the hips but this is useless in real Karate. It is just showing off. When they punch, you see clearly when the hip movement (rotating) starts and when it ends. You can actually see the “separation” between the hips and the rest of the body movement. Well, this is wrong. The hip movement or rotating should be “hidden” along with the punch [or kick]. It should be “one” with the punch [or kick]. These people snap the hips and then punch. This is ridiculous. The hip movement should be coordinated with the rest of the body and not be visible. It is like the separate parts of a whip … when snapped in the air, you see just one single action, not several segments moving one after the other. Only one single perfectly coordinated movement, that is what a karate technique should be. So drop that hip snap. It may look “impressive” to a beginner and fellow karateka’s, but not to someone who knows and understands Karate.

What would be your final advice for the athletes?

In Karate you never stand still. You always have to try to move forward, to get better and improve what you are doing. When you go to train every day, you have to go far beyond the idea of simply “training” and use your mind when you train. That is the only way to really progress.
Don’t forget that karate was developed in Okinawa, where the people were strictly forbidden to own weapons. Practitioners used to train themselves through practice centering on kata. They held no matches. Although we can maintain our technique through practice without an opponent, we cannot improve our mental and physical conditioning in preparation for actual battle if we adhere to the “solo” kata method all the time. This is when bunkai appears. It gives meaning to kata.”

The more I study kata, the more I can see how important its bunkai is for fighting. To fight better than your opponent, you must make him move as you want - with proper spirit, and well-balanced techniques. Your technique has power when your body moves as a single unit. Bunkai helps you learn that unity. Maybe for one master to develop a kata, it took him a lifetime. He thought about a lot of things. You know, if my opponent does this, what can I do? So the katas and bunkai are the result of all his training and experience. And the more time you spend exploring a kata and its bunkai, the deeper will be your understanding of the art of karate and its uses. You have to go deeper and deeper into the study of the bunkai. You just can’t stop on the surface and simply try to master the physical and external appearance of the kata.”
Kata, and its components of kihon bunkai and oyo bunkai, is the very essence of traditional, authentic karate. You can practice kata alone, in a small area without the need of training aids. Kata affords a serious student an opportunity to analyze – kihon bunkai – and put to use – oyo bunkai – the training, knowledge, and experience that the student has gained through years of training. Oyo bunkai – to apply what you have analyzed – allows the student to develop the kata (pattern or form) and the kihon bunkai (basic or standard analysis) on a more personal level without restrictions.”

Bunkai is a very important aspect if we are interested in learning the right form of karate-do. We have to notice though, that bunkai varies depending of the style that you practice and does not always indicate the skill level of the practitioner. For instance, shotokan styles favor more long range techniques as compared to shito ryu or goju ryu. Therefore, the application of the physical techniques is based on a different conceptual approach. At short distance, you need to use your limbs and shoulders in a different way. One problem I have perceived in the understanding and development of bunkai is that many practitioners try to explain the kata techniques, or bunkai, and how they apply to a real situation, as they are performing the actual form. This is alright at a basic level but not for the advanced karateka. If you think about how kata techniques are applied to combat then you’re thinking that fighting and combat will give you a different mentality. If you understand this point you’ll realize that your mind needs to be in a very different state, which gives a very different flavor to the kata technique. You can’t try to put that into a real situation and squeeze the physical into the form of the kata. If you do that then you can come out with a very weird and unrealistic application of kata movements. The classical or the traditional movement found in kata is one thing and the way you directly apply them in a real situation is another. The body mechanics may be the same but the flavor of the combat application is different because your state of mind is different. Only if you know what you’re looking for will you find the karate behind a real confrontation. Curiously enough, bunkai doesn’t make you a good karateka - kihon, kata practice, and kumite do. Don’t be mistaken.”
It is very important. The mental aspect or attitude is paramount in this aspect of karate-do. However, the physical side is more important in the beginning. You must push the physical side first using your mental power, then both start to interrelate. The student must understand the way his body works, because this is crucial in order to execute the physical techniques properly. The practice of bunkai should be carried out slowly for a better understanding - at least at first. Once the bunkai is understood, then it must be practiced at full speed. Otherwise, there is no reason for doing bunkai - it's pointless. Kata without the element of realism is a waste of time. Unfortunately, these days we are not aware enough of these important elements in training, and even the simplest physical task becomes a chore. We depend too much on devices that do work for us!

MINOBU MIKI

People tend to look at kata simply as a pure physical exercise and a formalized method of training karate-do techniques but there is more to it than meet the eye. It is true that kata is a recollection of techniques standardized by the old masters but behind the physical movements there are important principles governing the techniques. These principles and fighting concepts become visible to the student after analyzing and studying the possible applications of each movement. In the beginning the bunkai is quite simple; just a common sense application of the movement found in the form, but after a deeper study, the karate-ka should know how to use the principle behind that particular movement to take the application to a higher level of functionality. The bunkai becomes more ‘formless’ and the use of the technique less ‘rigid’ or ‘classical.’

The real knowledge of bunkai and oyo bunkai is something that not everybody has and it has to be developed through many years of diligent study and training. In the more advanced forms of application the technique exemplifies the original principle but the ways that concept can be used are limitless. Only when you reach this level of understanding is when you can truly affirm that you know that particular kata.

YASHUNARI ISHIMI
Kata is an integral part of the art of karate and karate can’t be totally understood without the study of kata. The analysis of the different karate techniques found in kata is a very important aspect. You need to understand that bunkai is structured in different levels of application and the difficulty varies accordingly. The first step is when you apply the physical movement from kata directly, without changing the movements. This is a very basic application but opens the student’s mind in order to see how the art of karate looks at the techniques, how karate uses the mechanics for the physical movements. Then, the next step is to incorporate the principles found in that particular technique and bring a more creative application without totally breaking away of the movement found in kata. This phase is more free and allows the student’s creativity to come out. Finally and after you totally understand the intrinsic principles of that particular movement, you can enter in what we may call a “non-classical” phase. In this phase you use the principles of the technique but in a totally free format. You have learned the principle but now your application of the original movement doesn’t look like that movement in the kata anymore; the principle is there, the main concept of the movement found in kata is still there but your external application if different. This is when you can truly say that you have transcended kata. Reaching this level of skill and understanding takes many years of serious and dedicated training and study.”

KIYOSHI YAMAZAKI

I think bunkai is very important. It brings karate to another level. When you understand bunkai a lot of things are revealed to you. You need to know how to look at kata and its bunkai. Even deeper meanings are found in its oyo, which involves a deeper and analytical use of the same techniques used in kata and developed in bunkai.”
The late Nakayama Sensei was a man of great presence and few words…but I will always remember him telling us, “More kicking techniques! You must practice more kicking techniques!”

In truth, keri-waza, or kicking techniques, comprise about one half of the weaponry of the arsenal in karate. Perhaps of more importance, being that the legs are so tremendously superior to the arms in both strength and reach, neglecting the proper development of kicking can only result in partial development of the art, and thus in obvious ultimate defeat.

Conversely, proper use of kicking opens up a full array of possibilities in both offensive and defensive maneuvers. Only through continued and repetitive practice is one able to make his/her own discoveries and gain deeper and lasting insight that transcends words. Best said, in the words of Yamaoka Tesshu, the great nineteenth century swordsman, calligrapher, poet and Zen Master, “DAMATTE KEIKO!” which translates roughly to “SHUT UP AND PRACTICE!”

MAWASHI-GERI

Mawashi-geri (roundhouse kick) is unique in that it can be delivered from a variety of angles and distances, and the course of the kick, position of the foot upon impact, and direction of the kick all are highly adaptable to circumstances. Mawashi-geri, properly delivered, can come from outside an opponent’s field of peripheral vision, and can go around blocks or come from angles difficult to block. Additionally, the power generated by twisting the body into the technique at the right moment makes this a devastating technique.

Fundamentally speaking, mawashi-geri should be learned initially as a large motion incorporating the full rotation of the hips, in order that one understands the mechanics...
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involved relative to the generation of power. At more advanced levels, the course of the kick can be modified (see advanced application) to allow for quicker delivery and a more protected, less predictable attack.

Begin by bringing the kicking leg out to the side of the body, parallel to the ground, keeping the heel close to the buttocks, support leg bending, and body upright. Maintaining a bent supporting leg throughout insures maximum height, reach, and balance, by allowing for unrestricted use of the hips, as well as keeping a lower center of gravity. Now, rotate the hips with the kicking leg and deliver the kick, describing a wide arc. If the designated target is jodan, the kick can be delivered on a slightly downward angle, making it nearly impossible to block. The striking surface of the foot can be either that of haisoku (instep) or koshi (ball of foot). The supportive foot should be allowed to slide naturally on the floor as the body rotates. This not only will allow the body to rotate freely, but also will prevent a potential knee or ankle injury.

Figures show basic and advanced/alternative mawashi-geri course, foot and body positions.
Common Mistakes

Fig. 1-2 – the course of the kick is incorrect, resulting in the kick being delivered obliquely on an upward course. It is therefore more likely to strike the target indirectly with a glancing blow, is more easily avoided, and lacks maximal power.

Fig. 3 – shows the hips not being rotated fully with the kick, again resulting in a tremendous loss of power and reach, with the entire body not being utilized fully, as described above.

Fig. 4 – as the kick is chambered, the heel is not tight to the buttocks, which will result in a loss of power as the kick is delivered.

Mawashi-Geri Training Exercise

1. While seated on the floor, as shown, practice the course and develop the strength and flexibility of the hips.
Similarly, practice against a wall by the count, as shown.

The same kind of practice is essential with a partner holding one’s wrists, in order to gain an understanding of target, distance, and trajectory.
Mawashi-geri from zenkutsu, not directly to the front, but 45 degrees left past the front midline of the body. This exercise emphasizes the full rotation of the hips.

Partner drills – one person executes the kick off both front and back legs to partner’s open hands in juji-uke position.
WKF Reaches Landmark Agreement With Olympic Channel

The World Karate Federation and the Olympic Channel signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to work together to promote sport through the creation and distribution of audio-visual content. The agreement was signed on Wednesday, July 20 by WKF President Antonio Espinós and the Olympic Channel General Manager Mark Parkman at the Olympic Channel headquarters in Madrid.

The Olympic Channel Services (OCS) announced recently that it has to date signed collaboration protocols with other 27 International Sports Federations.

The WKF and the Olympic Channel will work together in the production and distribution of highlights, news coverage and original sport-related content to increase the audience and active participation in sport.

“We are thrilled to be forging such a wonderful partnership with the Olympic Channel. This MOU states our intention of building an enduring association with OCS and we look forward to taking a leading role in the success of the Olympic Channel,” said WKF President Antonio Espinós.

“With this landmark agreement we continue lifting the profile of Karate, as it gives sport fans around the world the opportunity to get in touch with the values of Karate through our sport and our athletes’ stories to be broadcast in the Olympic Channel,” declared WKF President.

Prior to the signing of the memorandum, the delegation of the WKF received a tour of the impressive facilities of the Olympic Channel in Madrid. Antonio Espinós’ visit to the OCS headquarters is the first presence of a president of International Federation in the recently inaugurated base of operations of the Olympic Channel.

The agreement with the Olympic Channel represents a milestone in the WKF’s media strategy and contributes to strengthen the ground-breaking initiatives taken by the global governing body for Karate to further develop the media presence of the sport.

The WKF recently engaged International Sports Broadcasting (ISB) to provide TV coverage for top Karate1-Premier League tournaments and Senior World Championships in a four-year agreement, and new projects are being developed to expand the on-line streaming of first-class international events, among many other actions. USANKF
The 9th Annual WKF Training Camp and Youth Cup, held in Umag, Croatia was an incredible event. With more than 44 countries participating, it was easily one of the hardest tournaments for any junior athlete to compete in. Before the Youth cup, athletes get to participate in a training camp led by 4 world champions for kumite and 2 world champions for kata. After this high level training received for 3 days, athletes compete in the Youth Cup held for 3 days. Team USA with 5 Junior athletes won overall 1 gold and 3 bronze medals at this prestigious 9th WKF Youth Cup 2016.

Alexandra Wainright competed in the 14-15 kumite winning multiple rounds but losing a very close match in “hantei”.

Ivan Fernandez competed in the 14-15 -63kg kumite and kata placing 5th in kumite out of more than 32 competitors and winning multiple rounds in kata.

Saisheren Senpon competed in the 14-15 -63kg, won a bronze medal in the division with over 32 athletes, losing only to a Croatian (1-0) athlete who placed 3rd in the previous junior world championship.

Jennifer Robinson competed in the 16-17 kata and kumite divisions placing third in both events.

Chris Penna competed in the 16-17 -68kg kumite division and placed first, being the first American to win a gold medal in the Youth Cup. Chris won a total of 5 rounds and beating many high level athletes including the previous Pan-American champion and the previous European champion in the -68kg division.

Senthil Thiyagarajan, a WKF official, represented Team USA as an official.
Over the course of the last 8 years, members of the local Karate community have been working extremely hard to make Florida, and more specifically Miami, a premier competitor at a national level. Florida boasts one of the most complete karate programs which includes local referees, a dedicated volunteer staff, and some of the country’s top athletes. The development of this karate program has elevated the level of all local athletes and referees, proving that if a community comes together with a single agenda, the growth that can be achieved is unimaginable.

With an organized calendar of events that rarely interfere with one another, we are able to provide a steady flow of opportunities for our athletes and referees to practice and develop their skills. It is worth noting that in recent years Florida’s athletes have done extremely well in overall medal counts at the USA Open and the USA Karate National Championships. In addition, Floridas athletes have excelled in international competition placing many times at Pan-American events and taking a silver medal even at the Jr. World Championship in Spain. Florida karate, lead by the Karate-Do Alliance and Sport Karate league has focused on the development of karate as a sport; with its inclusion into the 2020 Olympics we feel that we are in a unique opportunity to show the world what karate and its athletes are all about. In addition to actual man hours, members of the karate community in Florida are dedicated to advancing the program with technology.

The Karate-Do Alliance developed software that makes organizing and running events much simpler, also there is webpage dedicated to information about karate in the state and a YouTube channel that highlights our athletes and events. Anyone may confidently say that the karate community in Florida has an excellent structure and a dedicated group of leaders that are continually working toward the good of karate as a whole. We believe that for our community to continue to grow it is imperative that they compete and participate in the greatest number of events possible. For this community leaders come together to create a competition calendar that takes into consideration the dates of local events, as well as national and international events. By avoiding conflicts between dates we are able to maximize the opportunities for athletes, coaches, and referees to participate. Today Florida is host to 7 local events, 3 events of national relevance and 3 international events..
The event organizers for some of these events are:

1. Sensei Carlos Quintero (Kobushi Cup)
2. Sensei Robert Young (Miyagi Cup)
3. Sensei German Briceño (Contender Cup)
4. Sensei Jesus Costa (Miami Open)
5. Sensei José Fundora (Karate Do Legends)
6. Sensei Luis Sanchez (Miami Tai Kai)
7. Sport Karate League (Sunny SKL International).

It is important to recognize some of the athletes that have set the course and represented the United States at International Competition:

Joseph Martínez  Jesus L. Costa Jr.
Anthony Costa  Jennifer Robinson
Airel Torres  Adrian Palmieri
Marcos Palmieri  Erick Lamelas
Daniel “El Gallego” Cabello  Zoe Meszaró
Christian Argüello  Edgar Torres
Ben Harrison  Ahmed Calvo
Megan Neal  Elvis Ramic
Gunnar Flinchum  Justin Suen
Angel Diaz

The grand majority of these athletes have stepped onto the podium at Pan-American championships, but it is important to highlight one athlete in particular, Jennifer Robinson who placed a Silver medal at the 2014 Jr. World Championship in Spain. In the most recent Pan-American Championships in Ecuador from 87 American athletes 11 were from Florida. The U.S.A team brought home 10 gold medals, 5 silver medals, and 14 bronze medals. Of those, 3 gold medals, 1 silver medal, and 5 bronze medals were obtained by Florida’s athletes.

It all began 8 years ago, with difficulties and obstacles, but today we are able to see the fruits of our labor every time one of our athletes steps on a podium and is recognized for his hard work. We hope to continue to grow and be better.
The 2016 Junior National Team traveled to Guayaquil, Ecuador August 24th-28th to compete in the Jr. Pan American Karate Championships. The delegation consisted of 80 athletes, six coaches, one doctor, two trainers and two team leaders. The United States was also well represented by its 15 participating officials, a number of whom successfully updated their licenses at this event.

This tournament was particularly special as it was the first event the U.S. Team competed in since the announcement of Karate’s inclusion in the 2020 Olympic Games. It was clear that all of the young athletes from across the Pan American Region were ecstatic with karate’s inclusion and are working hard toward becoming future karate Olympians.

From the first team meeting on, it was evident that the U.S. athletes and coaches had a fire within them after falling short of winning the overall medal count by two in 2015. The team showed up to each training session with focus and determination as they prepared to represent their country in the Jr. PKF.

Nearly 800 competitors in two disciplines competed to be a Jr. Pan American champion and Team USA led the final medal count with 29 total medals - 10 gold, 5 silver, and 14 bronze.

In an emotional award ceremony the National Team coaches were on the podium when the trophy was awarded with the junior team chanting “USA! USA!” They stopped as soon as the National Anthem was played to recognize the Overall Champions. Like many of the international events only a portion of the anthem was played but our juniors kept on singing the National Anthem. What a great end to an amazing outing for the junior team. Our athletes competed hard to the final match and came ready to compete.

“The 2016 Junior Pan American Championships, held in Guayaquil, Ecuador, was a huge success for the U.S delegation,” says USA Karate’s President Mr. John Dipasquale. “It was outstanding to see so many athletes on the podium. Congratulations to the American coaches and officials for their dedication and success at the event and many thanks to the parents for all of their support.

This tournament concludes the 2016 competitive season for the Junior National Team. The 2017 Junior Pan American Championships are to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina next August.
2016 MEDALISTS

Gold Medalists
ZOE MESZARO - FEMALE CADET KATA
KEVIN STEVENS - MALE CADET KATA
DORIAN PAJOR - MALE CADET KUMITE -63 KG
CHANDLER URY - FEMALE JUNIOR KUMITE -48 KG
REY SIMON - MALE JUNIOR KUMITE -55 KG
JOELLE INCIONG - FEMALE U14 KATA
BRANDON UJIMORI - MALE U14 KATA
GIANNA PELZER - FEMALE U14 KUMITE -40 KG
EDGAR TORRES - MALE U14 KUMITE -40 KG
ERICK LAMELAS - MALE U21 KUMITE +84 KG

Silver Medalists
BRISA COLON - FEMALE JUNIOR KATA
CHRISTOPHER PENNA - MALE JUNIOR KUMITE -68 KG
MATTHEW HILLYER - MALE U14 KUMITE +50 KG
BENJAMIN HARRISON - MALE U21 KUMITE +84 KG
SAHIL KASTURI - MALE U14 KUMITE -40 KG

Bronze Medalists
CLAUDIA LEE - FEMALE CADET KUMITE -54 KG
MADISON MALONE - FEMALE CADET KUMITE -54 KG
JAMES SEGAL - MALE CADET KUMITE -57 KG
BRADEN IVEY - MALE CADET KUMITE +70 KG
JENNIFER ROBINSON - FEMALE JUNIOR KATA
ISAAC FRIEND - MALE JUNIOR KATA
VICTORIA PRINCI - FEMALE U14 KUMITE -35 KG
SARA HOSTETTLER - FEMALE U14 KUMITE -45 KG
CHRISTIAN ARGUELLO - MALE U14 KUMITE +50 KG
ETHAN WACHSMAN - MALE U14 KUMITE -50 KG
IZUMI SHIMANOUCHI - FEMALE U21 KATA
AHMED CALVO - MALE U21 KUMITE -60 KG

JUNIOR & CADET KATA TEAM USA
ADAM KRAUS, ZACH GAONA, IAN ESTRADA

KUMITE U21 TEAM USA
ERICK LAMELAS, BEN HARRISON,
CHRISTIAN ARGUELLO,
KUBA WASOWICZ, DANNY CABELLO
THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF

Member, U.S. Olympic Committee