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TIME ALWAYS TELLS

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Jesus Del Moral
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Cheryl Murphy posing for “USA KARATE” Magazine in Colorado Springs.
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Karate is a way to understand the meaning of life (and death) from the warrior’s perspective. It is correct to say that Karate is supported by four pillars. In the first place, it can be understood as a life vision; second, as the proper spiritual way to realize this vision; third, as a set of physical techniques and specific tools for self-preservation; and finally, as a way to see a warrior’s philosophy as the proper experience of freedom from death, which is its bigger objective. All these pillars act simultaneously to enhance our understanding of who we truly are.

The true way of Karate places a practitioner in a process of self-discovery. The process is one of continually freeing himself of concepts about who he is and of letting go of all the limitations imposed on his mind, so that he can know and fully express his essential nature. What the philosophy of Karate means to each practitioner who truly understands its meaning simply cannot be defined; it is something everyone must discover for himself. Attaining self-knowledge is not like discovering the law of gravity. There is no benefit possible in the process of self-discovery except through personal effort. No matter how much one man drinks, he can’t satisfy the thirst of another. All he can do is recommend the process of drinking to those who are thirsty.

Quality in anything we do in life is never an accident but the result of strong intention, intelligent direction, and skillful execution.

At USA Karate we have the intention of going in the right direction to execute what it is necessary to make the sport of Karate in the United States of America one of the best in the world. USANKF.

Jose M. Fraguas
Editor-in-Chief
Co-Sponsored by USA Karate

WKF KUMITE KARATE SEMINAR
With Coach Antonio Oliva

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• Sensei Antonio Oliva is a world-renowned Coach in the WKF competition rule set.
• March 2017 marks his return to USA Karate to share his successful International System with the USA National Karate Federation.

8th Dan,
International Coach WKF
• World leader and specialist in tactic and strategies in Kumite
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Who says Friday the 13th is an unlucky day? On Friday January 13, USA Karate had an amazing day!

WKF President Antonio Espinós came to Colorado Springs to visit the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and USA Karate in order to strengthen relations and explore different opportunities with the USOC and our National Governing Body.

President Espinós was welcomed at USOC headquarters in Colorado Springs by United States Olympic Committee Chief Executive Officer Scott Blackmun and USOC Director of International Strategies and Development Dragomir Cioroslan. Also in attendance were USA Karate President John DiPasquale, Jennifer Geisheker, Manager – Sports Performance from the USOC and myself.

During his presentation, Mr Espinós underlined the importance of the historic moment of Karate being a part of the program of the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan. Mr. Espinós expressed Karate's intention to continue being an active member of the Olympic movement in years to come, and reiterated the hopes of millions of Karate fans around the world to see the sport being incorporated in the 2024 Olympic Games and beyond. The development and progress of Karate were at the top of the agenda of the meeting. The Karate delegation and USOC representatives discussed the sport's growth on the region and around the world, as Mr. Espinós shared the WKF's plans to further increase the popularity of karate.

Mr. Blackmun gave the WKF President an overview of the USOC's mission and operation and explained how the mission is focused on performance and winning medals for the United States. Mr. Blackmun also explained how the USOC is unique in that it governs both the Olympic and Paralympic programs. Mr. Blackmun provided an overview of how the USOC raises its 200 million dollar budget. He also explained the process that National Governing Bodies go through to receive support from the USOC.

The meeting was a success and we would like to thank Mr. Blackmun for taking time to meet with us to share the vision of Karate in the US and across the globe.

The group then traveled to the Olympic Training Center (OTC) for a discussion on Sports Performance over lunch. We had the opportunity to discuss how other sports have approached their Olympic journey, how they have grown and supported National and International programs and details on ways the USOC can partner with us to provide the best possible chance for our athletes at the first Games for Karate. Casey Green, Visitor Center Ambassador, provided a tour of the OTC where the group had an opportunity to discuss sport with other NGB leaders and see the latest in training and medical support developed to give US Athletes support on their Olympic Journeys. If you ever have the opportunity to visit the OTC the tour provides a unique view of what it takes to develop the most elite Olympic athletes.

Mr. DiPasquale and I had the opportunity to discuss the role of USA Karate in the WKF with the President and affirmed our support to the WKF. We had a great conversation over the need for a strong United States Program as well as the Pan American Karate Federation.

If that wasn't enough, I met for over 2 hours with Kelly Skinner, Managing Director - Sport Performance and Jennifer Geisheker, Manager – Sports Performance to present USA Karate’s High Performance Plan for 2017-2020. As an Olympic Sport, this is the 1st time USA Karate has gone through this process. I am very pleased with the support we will be receiving over the next 4 years.

We ended the day with one more meeting over dinner where I felt that the USOC, USA Karate and the WKF strengthened our relationship and look forward to opportunities where we can work together.

No black cats or ladders on this Friday the 13th!.

Looking forward to seeing you at the USA Open

Phil Hampel
Chief Executive Officer
USA National Karate-do Federation
K

arate as we see today has evolved from warrior roots of the past. Currently, the popularity of Olympic style karate is practiced worldwide and shares the bushido (the way of the warrior) benefits of fitness, sport, and self-defense. Karate-do meaning “the way of the empty hand,” has been divided in to two categories, KATA (forms) and KUMITE (combat).

Since the induction of sport in Karate, the use of competition is measured to seek out a champion. Rules are then utilized to govern the nature of how we compete in one’s respected events. It is fair to say that these sets of rules are what tells us how we prepare for competition. In KUMITE, techniques are governed by the current set of rules that allow punching, kicking, and takedowns. In contrast, KATA techniques that are not deemed for KUMITE competition are presented in a set, form, or routine.

Since rules of competition are used to promote fair play, these rules can also be used for evaluating one’s performance. It is inquisitive human nature to understand our competition drive, but as martial artists we are taught to seek the road to perfection. In the past, legendary Sensei Yoshinao Nambu used diagrams to explain concepts and ideas of his teachings. Professor Antonio Oliva developed his system of combat based upon the ideology of Mind, Body, and Spirit, known as “UNIDAD”, which works with his specialty in tactical combat. “To place scientific methods to your field of study makes your work valuable,” he remembers.

Since Kumite residually produced systems of study (i.e. offense, defense, sen-no-sen, go-no-sen, sen, keri-waza, and nage-waza), on the other side of the spectrum Kata remained true to the roots of traditional Karate and is still left up to the RYU-HA (style). Prearranged forms already in place stemming from generations ago have now been put on display with sets of rules in the form of SHIAI KATA or KATA Competition.

The World Karate Federation (WKF)/Olympic Karate has done a great job of combining sport and traditional karate. As a result, I have mapped out a synergistic system pulling from three disciplines: kinesiology, sport psychology, and traditional karate. Fortunately, with the collaborating efforts of Professor Oliva we have been able to create a system of training for all kata competitors. The system is divided into three segments, Technical, Competitive, and Psychological. All of which are supported by the current WKF Rules.

• Technical is measured with biomechanics and how it correlates with Kata. We can also identify energy leaks and habitual patterns that an athlete does during training and competition.

• Competitive is a measure of how one is evaluated under the current WKF rules such as Conformance, Technical performance, and Athletic performance. We can take it one step further and work with different energy output and regulate the athlete’s performance during competition.

• Psychological is how we measure the athlete as a whole. Being a well-balanced athlete is much easier to find personal success within the parameters of performance.

We have seen this training plan work wonders with both Coach/Athlete. It is fortunate to see a methodological approach that shows consistency and validity to the art of Karate-do.

As we see both KATA and KUMITE are classified as two categories, KATA with its application of hidden philosophy of analysis or known as “BUNKAI” and KUMITE the derivative of KATA share the common name, KARATE-DO. Using the right system of tactical combat applied to both KATA and KUMITE—we’ll have a more complete KARATE Athlete.
Senshu, A Strategic Evolution

Over the years, and based on countless hours of observation and analysis of competitions, the World Karate Federation has added to and modified the rules of competition many times over. The federation does not enact these changes lightly. Instead, it makes changes to improve the rules, to make the decisions made by judges more accessible to the public, and to decrease opportunities for athletes to manipulate the rules in their favor. The latter especially has the potential to turn our sport into an ugly competition.

The latest change of the rules, adding Senshu, puts a spark in the competition, making athletes develop a new strategy. Prior to this new change, we witnessed a large percentage of the matches having passivity called due to the failure of either side to initiate an attack. This new rule changes almost every match, because everyone tries to be the first one to score.

A second reason to add Senshu was because a great number of matches that ended in an equal or no score that had to be decided by the referee panel. Unfortunately, many times the winning decision was not awarded fairly. Often, better-known competitors or countries were granted the win because of their name or their country name, but not because of how or what they performed. We, as officials, tended to not follow the performance from the beginning of the match, as the rules state. Instead, we tended to start paying attention to the athletes’ performances only towards the end of the match, which was way too late, and way later than the athletes. They were much farther ahead of the game than we officials. Since there was no way to rewind and see a playback, we raised our flag almost like flipping a coin, voting for the one who impressed us the most in the final segments of the match!

The Paris Open was the first premier league event of 2017 in which many competitors around the world gathered and competed under the new modification of this WKF rule. First, the number of passivity calls was reduced dramatically. Second, matches were more exciting, because of the athletes’ enthusiasm to be the first one to score. In addition, athletes tended to use a strategy of scoring more, even in the cases where they had scored first. This meant that many matches carried their excitement up to the last seconds of the match. In simple words, if any athlete is missing a strong state of mind for the early parts of the match, they will not be declared winner just because they had won in the past! The diversity of the finalists underscores the validity of this statement.

In addition to Senshu, the Atoshibaraku being lengthened to 15 seconds instead of 10 added even more excitement to the end of the matches. Many athletes with superior scores used to exit or avoid the combat in the last few seconds of the match, taking away the chance of being scored on and would get a highest level of penalty prior to disqualification. But now, they have to be much more careful since they can be disqualified if they exit or avoid contact with less than 15 seconds to go.

I do believe that officials must be much more careful to ensure that none of the competitors manipulate the rules to their advantage and fly under our radar. Instead of falling for mere tricks, we should correctly observe and reward superior technique, strategy, and athleticism. We have to be thinking a few steps ahead of our athletes to ensure the fairness and excitement of the competition. It is our duty! These new rules will help us fulfill that duty.
Master Funakoshi’s Fourth Guiding Principle

Mazu onore o shire, shikashite ta o shire
Know yourself first, then you can know others
By Teruyuki Okazaki

In Master Funakoshi’s fourth guiding principle, he tells us to study ourselves carefully. Get to know who you are and what you represent. Once you understand your abilities and skills, polish them. This practice of “knowing yourself” will help in all phases of life: social, business, personal—and karate training.

Most of my students have lived all or a good part of their lives in a Western culture, and they may say to themselves, “I have heard this idea.” The famous line: “know thyself,” is from a Western philosopher. It is a basic, simple idea. And yet, too few people even try, or know how.

We’re all different. We all have different abilities, different talents. Everyone does, and that means you, too. In order to be the very best person you can be, it is very important for you to recognize what your abilities and talents are. And what is the single greatest impediment to this? Again, it is the ego. When the ego gets in the way, we cannot see the truth, about ourselves, and therefore in the world around us. That is why humility is so important. That is why we emphasize the development of humility through karate training. When you bow, or clean the floor before training, you are developing humility in yourself. You are breaking down your ego. You are developing your ability to see clearly, to see yourself for who you really are. Without your ego in the way, you can recognize your weaknesses.

It’s okay to have weaknesses. Everyone has them. But it is through recognizing those weaknesses that we can most clearly see our strengths.

It is especially important that karate instructors understand this principle, and show a good example to their students and others. Once you are high ranking you must practice harder and longer. To progress and advance you must train at one hundred percent every time you practice. Most people think they are good. Many students, even instructors, think, “Oh, I’m good—I’m better than he or she is.” But this feeling is wrong. As soon as this idea occurs, the mental and physical discipline begins to decline. You must keep training, because once you stop practicing, your skills will decline.

Think of the discussions following a tournament. You will hear all kinds of comments and complaints about how the judges missed this punch or that kick in a kumite match. Or you may hear that the judges did not judge a kata fairly. These complaints are a waste of time. Instead, you should go back to your dojo and train harder so that your techniques are so fast and crisp that no judge could miss your point. Only champions do not complain! A true champion has developed the proper degree of humility, and is therefore able to see her weaknesses. She can then see what she needs to improve.

You must always study yourself and improve what you already do well. Then, work on those areas that do not come easily to you. They will also improve if you train at one hundred percent.

When you know yourself, then you understand your level of training and technical ability. When you know yourself, without your ego in the way, you can see things more clearly in the world around you. When you see that you are better than someone at something you both do, help that person to be as good as you are. That will inspire you to improve even more. One the other hand, if you have a weakness in your training, pick up pointers from others. No one person can be the best in everything. That is why we must all work together to help each other and make one strong unit: whether it is a club, an organization, a business, or a relationship.

We are all heading toward one goal—perfection of character.

To be able to pursue this goal to the best of your ability, you must always endeavor to know yourself. Then you can “know others,” which is to say, then you can better see the things in world around you for what they really are.
I tore my ACL in May of 2016, within the first few exchanges of bunkai during the bronze medal match at Senior Pan American Championships in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I had surgery July 21, 2016, and competed at the US Team Trials on January 14, 2017. I was a week shy of being exactly six months post op my first competition back.

My story isn’t special. Brian Irrio competed at World’s in 2016 at five months post op. Meagan Chicceti returned to competition at eight months, Jordan Valle tore her ACL twice and returned to competition the second time in eight months, Shannon Nishi has had four surgeries total in both knees! So, again, my story is not special. It just so happens that I have the opportunity to share mine.

On July 21, 2016 I looked at my surgeon, Dr. Peter Kurzweil of Long Beach Memorial, and he says, “I did it perfectly.” About a week later I find myself at a public park in Glendora for my first post op rehab session with Angelo Collado. It was so painful, but a good pain.

The only way I can describe rehab is to compare it to being a white belt all over again. But instead of knowing nothing, I knew exactly what I needed to do. I knew exactly how good I was, and so it was easy to set a goal and work towards it. It was fun. Every single day I was a little bit better. I got to win a small victory every single day! Who doesn’t love winning?

Rehab was and still is hard, and I’m at it every single day. As athletes, and especially as traditional martial artists, we were built to endure with poise. My story is not special enough that will allow me to sit around and feel sorry for myself. I just keep at it. One day at a time. Everyday a little bit better than the last.

“Mindset” is an important word to instill in your life. What some may call a roadblock or an obstacle, in a different light, can be viewed as a challenge that motivates you.

TURN ROAD BLOCKS INTO STEPPING STONES THAT CATAPULT YOU TO THE NEXT LEVEL! USANKF
This was what a medical doctor told the mother of Nate J., at age 3 ½. Nate was diagnosed that year (2011) with Autism Spectrum Disorder. He was not talking, slow to walk and was dysregulated all the time. He would get so upset with crowds, noise, too much input, etc., that he would often throw up from anxiety. He couldn’t catch a ball, make eye contact, and didn’t seem to hear you when you were talking to him. It was a difficult time for sure..

After a few years of speech therapy, occupational therapy, Playtime therapy and more, Nate’s mom was invited to bring her son, now 5, to the North Shore Dojo to meet Sensei Jeff Kohn. Having heard about Sensei Kohn’s work with athletes with disabilities, Nate’s mom didn’t know what to expect.

“I remember the first day Nate came into my dojo” said Kohn, “he was timid, unresponsive, uncoordinated and not very willing to try things. So I asked what he loves to do. His mom told me his favorite thing was to read. So I used my magnet board of letters and had him spell/read kata, karate, medicine ball, heavy bar. He read it all and then we used that as a check list for things we were going to work on. After each exercise we would go back to the white board and check it off. Nate was suddenly highly engaged and making a huge effort. I had him partner with another little boy. This boy was the type that never stops talking. But he couldn’t read. So, naturally Nate (somewhat verbal by this time but was electively silent 95% of the time) didn’t speak since someone else was there for it. I would use their opposite skills, strengths and weaknesses to help each other along. I would tell Nate to read the board and then tell the other kid to describe what we were going to do. That worked great. Then I made them switch roles. They were both stunned and somewhat uncomfortable with this switch. They looked at me and I looked back. I patiently waited as long as it took for Nate to speak. It worked. This was one of many times that I got to watch the ‘magic” happen through karate for athletes with disabilities.”

Now, 4 years later, Nate is 9, a blue belt, and has successfully learned many katas, exercises and drills. He is talking all the time. He leads the class in some of the exercises and is the “go to guy” when new students with disabilities come to the dojo. He will lead them by the hand and explain to them each exercise and drill. He has participated in the local and dojo tournaments and this year will make his first appearance in the NKF nationals as a para karate athlete in Greenville, SC. Karate has changed his life. He no longer goes to other therapies, but rather comes to the dojo 4 days a week. Through multiple means of instruction, karate can reach all learners. Kinesthetic, visual and auditory learners are able to use their strengths to be successful while activating and improving their other senses. Nate is just one of thousands of students who have blossomed through martial arts training.

“He may never talk. He may never really be able to fully participate in typical activities. He definitely won’t be able to live alone or drive, ever. I know that’s hard to hear, but the faster you accept it, and move forward with that idea, the better things will be for all of you.”
The name of Cheryl Murphy evokes a rush of unique attributes: femininity, empowerment, confidence and grace. It also conjures New York itself. She is living proof that willpower and technique is what matters in a fight. She began studying karate at the young age of 6 – and has never stopped. Now, in her first interview for USA KARATE Magazine after the Bronze medal in the last WKF World Championships in Linz, Austria, she explains to the readers, in a question-and-answer format, her philosophy of karate and martial arts. Her words show how important is to understand that karate is not an activity reserved just for an elite group of super-athletes but for anyone who generally is interested in the art regardless of size, age, or sex. She definitely opened the doors and set example for all female karate practitioners in the U.S.
How long have you been practicing Karate and who is your teacher?

I started when I was 6 years old and my teacher is Sensei Herb Wiles. I have also trained with other people through my career but he is my only Sensei. I always differentiate between a "sensei" and a "trainer". I have had many trainers who shared a lot of information and knowledge with me, and I am grateful to all of them. He always encouraged me to go and train with others in order for me to grow as an athlete. Dean Johnston; he was at my dojo and I spent a great deal of time with him in the beginning of my athletic career. As I grew, I was able to experience other trainers.

Have you trained in other Martial Arts besides Karate

I have always focused my training in Karate although obviously I experienced other systems during my martial arts journey. I did train in Kenpo, Kickboxing and Jiu Jitsu as well, but my main focus has always been the art of Karate. My style of Karate is Shotokan. I think this style fits me very well, although I had to work for it. My mother put me in many extra-curricular activities like dance, music, etc. but karate stuck through out time.

What made you enter in the competition world?

My school is a very family oriented school so the atmosphere is very supportive in anything we decided to do. A lot of athletes came out from my school – It was a great place to learn and to develop because of the environment. My dojo gave me a very unique experience; it is a very unique place and holds a special place in my heart. We would have a lot of fundraising and we always talked about competition. When I was 13 years old, we talked about getting into tournaments. My Sensei told me to go attend a competition because I at the time was scared to compete. He knew I was going to get "hooked" to it. After watching that competition I never stopped.
What are the most important points as an elite competitor?

When you compete, you compete to win. Dean Johnston guided me by introducing me to supplemental training methods. This, alongside my Sensei's support became the foundation of my athletic program. They always told me that in order to win I had to do more and more...always trying to get that “extra” because it was going to be that “extra” effort, that would give me the edge in competition. As I traveled and trained with many others, I began to win. It was exhilarating but not at the consistency of my other team mates. Not until I trained with the same group of people, did I then become more consistent. I started training with the Pinto brothers and that took me over the top.

What do you consider to be the most important qualities of a successful karate competitor?

Consistency! I was training in different places and also training on my own for a while. It was needed at the time, for me to train and effective but I was given different ways of doing the same technique, or footwork, or tactics. I was never able to really perfect anything. Sometimes the technical correction was not there so I had to learn how to correct myself in certain aspects. In order to improve and perform well you need consistency tactically and technically.

Do you see differences in how an athlete should train for a domestic competition or an international one?

There should be no difference. You train with the same dedication and focus no matter what. Obviously the opponents will be different and the tactical level will increase but your fundamental training and mental approach should be the same.

“It is very important to have someone who consistently corrects or adjusts your actions.”
What advice would you give on the question of training to developing a solid style of competition?

I believe everyone needs to find their own style and perfect it. If you can fight both sides, fight both sides. If you only feel comfortable on one make sure that one side is devastating. The best way to be successful is to perfect your personal craft and way of fighting. Want people to copy you, not the other way around.

Who would you like to have trained with that you have not?

I have been very fortunate to have trained with the absolute best in the world; from our own USA world champions to champions around the world. I have been able to pick their brains and ask their philosophies and train with them to see their techniques and I tried to absorb as much as I could. I can say that I have been spoiled when you consider the people that I have come into contact with. My willingness to learn is endless and will take as many opportunities given.

Karate is finally part of the Olympic Games for Tokyo 2020, what is your opinion about it?

I remember many years ago that I told my teacher that I wanted to go to the Olympics. That was my drive. We are finally in Tokyo 2020. I am proud of everybody who has worked so diligently to get us to this point. I am extremely happy to have been a part of this journey. We are finally recognized as an Olympic sport.

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

Strive for your dreams. Make your own history. Do not compare yourself to anyone other than the improved you. Focus on the goals you have for yourself and the steps
needed to reach them. I have always followed this philosophy in my life after I made some mistakes. Follow your heart and everything will fall into place.

What can you tell us about the last WKF World Championship in Linz, Austria?

I had an amazing experience in Linz. Though disappointed in my individual category I was able to be a part of history again with winning a bronze medal with the USA Women’s Team. The women’s team in 2010, Serbia was able to bring home a bronze medal as well. AMAZING!

Finally, what are your plans for the future?

One day at a time. Time will tell…USANKF
Sensei Antonio Oliva is considered a “Master Coach” around the world. Based on the numbers, he is the greatest coach in karate competition history. Equipped with an unmatched ability to communicate, innovate and lead his athletes with incredible desire and leadership, his teams and competitors had winning records that expands for over three decades.

He is an elite and high-level motivator, demanding a constant pursuit of excellence from each of his competitors, creating an environment where losing is not an option. He never allows you to miss a training session when you are under his command. I remember him saying, “a karate world champion is a well-oiled machine. And the training is when you put in that oil! Life is about its events; it is about challenges met and overcome – or not. It’s about successes and failures. But more than anything else, it’s about how we touch and are touched by the people we meet. It is all about the people.”
How was the competition in your day?

Traditional hardcore. It was pretty much “Ippon-shobu”; no weight division. Solid hits. No hand or foot protectors. Basically we went in there, hit hard, took the ‘punishment’, endured the pain and allowed the doctors do their job afterwards!

Have you been at any time discouraged with sport competition?

Five times I was national champion and I did reach a point when I saw things that I didn’t like. It took a while to realize that competition is not bad. What is bad is the behavior of some individuals linked to the sport competition. I worked hard to leave those things behind and soon realized that these [type of] individuals are present in all fields and areas of life. There are dishonest people in every line of work; education, politics, etc. Karate is not different.

I do love the competition and its elements; the challenge, the training, the sweat, the experience, the brotherhood, the trips, the excitement, the passion, the tears, the struggle, the victory or defeat and finally the learning process and self-discovery journey that it brings to us. That is what moves me today; the passion for what I do. The essence of life lies in our heart and our reasoning, not in our bodies.

Sensei, nowadays in our society karate is often referred and practiced as “sport” instead of as a “martial art”, would you agree with this definition?

To properly answer the question we need to define what is a “martial art” and what is a “combat sport”. What I see today is people trying to “separate” karate by pointing out the differences between these two universal concepts instead of understanding that both ‘perceptions’ [Martial Art and Sport] of the same activity fit perfectly in the universal ‘idea’ or ‘concept’ of what is karate or karate-do. To begin with to understand where these ‘differences’ come from we need to comprehend that the terms ‘martial art’ and ‘sport’ have different meanings depending if a country is located in Europe, America, Asia, Africa, etc. The definition of ‘martial art’ and ‘sport’ is not the same everywhere.

What we should do to correct this is to look for the elements that bring together these two concepts and stop focusing on what makes them different. All martial arts and all combat sports are practiced with two arms and two legs.

To me, what separates a martial art from a sport is exactly the same thing that separates one religion from another, one human being from another, one country from another, thus…fear, ignorance and personal interests. That simple. Follow the path of the “money” in karate and you will see where the “differences” begin. For some karate is a regulated way of fighting and controlling others. For others, karate is a civilized way of competing and testing yourself against others. For me, karate or karate-do (it doesn’t really make a difference to me) is a vehicle to improve as a human being.

Why can’t karate be a traditional martial art and a great sporting activity for our society at the same time? Is there any ‘specific’ way – Asian or Western – of describing universal values that excludes the other? Are the principles of respect, morality, ethics, honesty, etc. owned only by either the Asian cultures or the Western cultures? What are we talking about here...to finally get together in ‘unity’ or to keep separating and distancing one from each other more and more?

Stop and think for yourself just for a second, and you will see how that ‘manipulation’ is happening so we are ‘against’ each other [divide and conquer] instead of working together for the good of karate.

“I do love the competition and its elements; the challenge, the training, the sweat, the experience, the brotherhood, the trips, the excitement, the passion, the tears, the struggle, the victory or defeat and finally the learning process and self-discovery journey that it brings to us.”
The 5th WUKO World Karate Championship in 1980 represented a turning point in the history of karate. That year you took the Spanish National Team to the gold medal and also many other competitors from the Spanish squad. How do you see the evolution of the modern competition since then?

The 1980 world championship represented a turning point in karate history for many reasons. From a competitive point of view, that championship meant the transition from the “Ippon-Shobu” to the “Sanbon-Shobu”. We went from an old concept to a new concept of competing. The “Ippon-Shobu” allowed the transition from the very traditional karate [with no competition] to what we can call a “first-competition-stage as a combat sport”. This format was kept in the first four World Championships; Tokyo 1970, Paris 1972, Long Beach 1975 and Tokyo 1977. In 1980 the change occurred.

From a technical and tactical perspective, the physical movements changed and the strategies changed to fit the new format. We went from a more static way of fighting to a more dynamic and mobile approach. The rules changed and karate escaped from the hands of the Japanese masters and teachers and ended up in the hands of the Western politicians [who for their own personal interest] re-named the very healthy competitive aspect of karate-do as “Sport Karate”. See? Now we have two different 'karate'! There was no reason to separate it, but ‘karate-dollar’ always speaks louder than words. And this goes both ways…the traditional [budo] and the modern [sport]. One stayed with the “Japanese-based” format and the other went to an “all-countries-are-equal” format. Obviously many changes happened that caused these two groups to separate more and more from each other. It had [and has] to do with politics, interests, power and money and nothing with the art and the sport of karate as a tool for human beings to develop and progress in unity in their lives and within our society.

Sensei, what are the main differences in the two most recognized methods of competition in the world of karate; the “traditional” Japanese of the “Ippon-Shobu” based method and the “modern” or more Westerner approach that we can call WKF-based style? (Please note these two ways used here to describe two kumite competition formats, rules and regulations and are simply descriptive to “represent” a philosophy or approach to sport karate and its format of competition…and not necessarily representative of any “ryu”, style or branch of karate, i.e. Shotokan, Shito Ryu, etc.)

Something very important should be understood before I can move forward and dissect the more intrinsic aspects of the question in my answer. A martial art, a sport and the element of competition – as they are understood and regulated by our society – are three different things and putting them in the same basket as if they were ‘one’, is a terrible mistake. Please allow me to elaborate on this.
On one side we have the Martial Art that as an “art of war” focused on efficiency in combat, a life or death encounter.

On the other side of the coin, we have the sportive aspect (attention: not necessarily ‘competition’ per se here), that as “an art of health” focused on the well-being of those who practiced it.

And last, we have the “competition”. This element of competition is driven by the ‘Olympic spirit’ and “professionalism” where main objective is to win…trophies, medals, pride, glory, money, fame, etc. These things basically ‘swallow’ the athlete into its powerful machinery and the individual becomes simply an “object” of marketing to sell a brand and/or a product.

This very unusual social and cultural situation involving the Art, the Sport and the Competition, brings us to an interesting ‘scenario’ where we have what we can call “traditional karate” on one side and a “modern karate” on the other. Both of them fight desperately to ‘gain’ the favors and attention of the practitioners spread all around the world. What is very interesting is that – regardless of what they preach – both of them use the “Competition” element as a “selling tool” to spread their principles and philosophies and memberships. This is the great irony of this dilemma. The “traditional” side claims to be based on budo values (call it as you please) and the “modern” side presents a more current, active and up to date [to the times] proposal for our modern society.

But neither one of them can exist and live without the other. Both ideologies are doomed to have to ‘respect’ each other. They may not share the same principles but they have to respect each other because basically both sets of values are positive and good.

Then, we need to have a deeper look at what each side represents in reality and ‘why’ they represent what they represent.

From the perspective of WKF, the competition is an ‘open practice’ to all the countries around the world where the rules are changing and modified to better serve the modern concepts.
British sport anymore’. The origin is not important anymore. The country of origin does not ‘own’ or ‘control’ the sportive activity anymore. This new and modern approach makes the karate walk away, little by little, from its roots in Japan; farther and farther away from the Japanese system of values that are intrinsic to all the art of budo. The danger here is that karate can eventually reach a point where it may become ‘only’ a sport with simply a competition approach to shoot for and thus becoming totally disengaged of its roots.

The other format of competition that we agreed to call it [here for the sake of the explanation] “traditional” is ‘closed’ to few countries that agree to have Japan as ‘leader’. Japan tells how to compete, how to judge and how to train. The main representatives in other countries follow their Japanese teachers and sensei. Everything is dictated from Japan. Its type of competition tries to maintain and preserve a clean and pure art. It has a set of fixed rules and regulations, obviously dictated from Japan and rooted in the past. Following the rules set in kendo and judo, the powerful “ippon” concludes the match. This type of competition rewards a powerful, clean, well-delivered technique with a strong ‘martial budo’ spirit. Therefore, the type of technical movements that actually score a point must be solid, very standardized and even elegantly static.

**When you train, teach and coach international and elite competitors, which are the principles (“common core elements”) that apply to both sides of this “coin”?**

I was a competitor in both “styles” and “methods” and I am an international Coach training and coaching national teams and world champions in both competition styles. For me, both competition styles are very exciting and I enjoy them very much because I don’t see them as opposites. In order to be successful in any of them you have to have an understanding of the main elements that compose each style of competition. We need to know and understand the rules and regulations of each and also have a very precise knowledge of the different “interpretations” of the rules of each competition style, because sometimes the referees make decisions based on personal appreciation, based on the nationality, reputation and rank of the competitor. Not everything is scored based on the physical technique.

In the more-traditional style of competition, the most important thing is to have a solid base technique. In this style the proper and clean technique is recognized and awarded. It is an example of a kind of technical excellence that only comes from many years of hard kihon and kata training. It is a “Japanese” approach to training and competition that reflects that. As an example of this…we can see kumite champions that are also kata champions! This is the reason why. Kata and kumite are very close together because the excellence in kumite is based on a clean and perfect technique that comes from a very solid kihon, and kihon is the base for kata training. Everything makes sense. Full circle.
In WKF competition the important thing is to have a full and deep understanding of the tactical elements of the match and the competition, including all the collateral aspects. The technical element has to be organized in a functional and intelligent format so it can be applied specifically depending on the type of opponent, referees, etc that we face during the event. Unlike the other style of competition, the kumite competitors of the WKF are not very sound in kata competition, and some of them - as we all know - don’t even train or know kata at all! Some of them are world-class elite athletes in kumite but they can’t perform a kata at the same level.

These are the facts and either we like them or not, we should understand what is going on to maximize our possibilities when we enter in a competition. I am not judging any of them but explaining them so the readers and athletes can understand the fundamental differences and how these differences may affect a match in the competition.

After 40 years of experience teaching and coaching, the “common core” elements are the same for both styles of competition and they are the base of my training and coaching system. When I see a competitor, I don’t see a Shotokan guy, a shito-ryu guy, a goju or wado-ryu guy, I don’t see a Japanese athlete, a white guy or a black guy…I see an “athlete”; a “competitor”; a “karateka” and I analyze their mobility, awareness, timing, cadence and tempo, their rhythm and distance judgment during the match, etc. These are the “common core” elements.

The technique without tactic is almost a useless tool. And tactic without a technique is simply…nothing, because it can win a match without a physical movement. The key or “secret” is to know how to combine both elements properly; giving them the importance and relevance that each one of them has. And this is exactly what I do when I teach, train and coach grassroots or elite competitors for either style of
Sensel, what are the differences – if any – between a reverse punch and front kick “style” in each of these methods of competition?

Let me say that, “a correct technique is a correct technique regardless where the karateka is competing. Period”. This is the way it has always been and the way it will always be.

Today the main difference between the different formats of competition, is not in the execution of the movement but in the “perception” of that movement according to the rules. The traditional style acknowledges a strong offensive action that scores first and clean, awarding it with an “Ippon”. The WKF rules require certain amount of points to finish the match. Based on this concept, the way that coaches and competitors plan the matches has to be different. The technique is no different, the perception of it and how the rules award the points… is. In the “Ippon Shobu” style and spirit of the offensiveness in the attacking action is paramount. The technique must be straight, clean and hard. Your mind is on the “offensive” and you want to make it that way to finish the match. Under WKF rules because of the rules for points, the concept of “not giving the opponent a chance to score” is more important. You want the opponent to make mistakes that you will capitalize on to move ahead in the score. In this case we are talking of a hardcore “Defensive Approach” from the very first moment. In short, when you compete in a “Ippon Shobu” style tournament, a hardcore offensive, well, directed attack with kime and zanshin may be enough to win a match. This is very true in the classical “Shobu-Ippon” category. In WKF because of the way the match and the rules are set, you need to know how to use and maximize other “defensive maneuvers” because the match will keep going until someone scores all the points.

In short, the “overall concept” of how the rules are set, determines how the competitor will use the offensive and defensive elements that I teach.

What are the elements of you teaching and coaching a program that applies to both styles of kumite?

My coaching method and training system is based on the premise that all Human Beings, therefore the athletes or karateka, are composed on three parts: the body, the mind and the spirit. Only when these three aspects of the competitor are working together in unity, the karateka can give their 100%.

The Technique is the body language and is based on physical and technical gestures, stances, guards, footwork, controls, points of contact, sweeps, attacks, defenses, etc.

The Tactic is the language of the mind and is based on psycho-tactic acts, perceptions, observations, studies, analysis, synthesis, space, time, anticipation, rules, referees, scores, penalties, communications, etc.

The Emotic is the language of the soul (spirit) and is based on sensitive-emotive impulses, emotions, intensities, rhythms, cadences, tempos, intuition, inspiration, confidence, passion, etc.

In order to try to explain a long subject here within a short answer, I would say “the Technique dictates the forms, the Tactic adjust the forms to the rules/regulations and opponents, and the Emotic aspect brings credibility and the ‘martial’ element to the Techniques and Tactics.”

This universal principle or concept – which it is the spine of my coaching method - is true for any type of kumite, traditional style or modern style and it is also ap-
applicable to any other martial arts like kendo or jiu-jitsu or combat sports like Boxing or Wrestling.

**What are the differences that you see in both format competitors?**

If we look at the heart of the matter...there should be none. Why? Because the experience shows, that “the individual is what is really important and not the style” of competition that you are in. If the competitor has a solid Technical and Tactical base with the understanding of the Emotic component (“Common Core” elements), he or she will be successful in any kind of competition style. If we look at the history of sport karate we will see many excellent competitors that were and are successful in both styles of competition.

I am going to explain some of the fundamental details that are necessary for a technique to be recognized in both ‘styles’ of competition. These elements are common for both types of competition and are interchangeable to say the least. If you “have” them, you can compete in both styles with guarantees.

- Explosiveness in the initial movement in order to “fire” the chosen technique once the body position and the distance are correct.
- Speed in the ‘approach’ and ‘delivery’ [from the “set point”] of the limb used to try to score (hand or foot).
- Accuracy and control in the moment of “engagement”, thus once the ‘delivery tool’ (hand or foot) has reached the target.
- Automatism, coordination and a systematic method of recovering and recoiling the attacking limb back to the point of origin or to any position that the circumstances require for the follow-up movement.
- Firm balance and solidness at the final moment of the delivery phase in order to keep the right form and the overall body ‘readiness’ to follow-up with another technique [defensive or offensive] if necessary.

Of course, the execution phase is based on two previous and important phases called “observation” and “preparation”, which allows the competitor to ‘clear the technical mechanism’ from all possible defensive interferences coming from the opponent’s actions.

It is important to remember that once the attacking action has been completed, it will connect with another offensive or defensive maneuver [depending on the circumstances] or the competitor will revert back to the ‘safety zone’ [long distance] where he or she will be able to perform an analysis and assessment of the previous engagement and an observation of the new situation in order to proceed accordingly.

And last but not least, I would like to mention the important aspects of the correct defensive maneuvers more likely known as “blocking actions” in the sportive terminology:

- Perception of the ‘set-point’ on the preparation-of-the-attack by the opponent. This ability to detect that ‘trigger’ point should be perfectly timed and recognized.
- Reception of the attacking action. This movement is usually a circular or semi-circular action that absorbs or re-directs the attack.
- Neutralization of the striking power at the moment of impact. This is done by either re-directing the force of the attack or by blocking the action with our forearms, elbows, knees, etc.
- Obstruction of the recovery or recoiling phase of the opponent’s attacking limb by grabbing, unbalancing or other forms of altering the opponent’s structure in the recovery phase of his/her technique.
• Altering or ‘breaking’ the final phase of the opponent's attack with the intention of replacing it with our own counterattack [in time] or with a solid blocking action to fully nullify it.

All these different elements, phases and sub-phases of the technical aspect should be combined properly depending on the demands of the match and the level of expertise of the competitors.

Which are the most important elements for elite competition?

We have to understand that the ‘elite competitor’ is nothing more than a regular karateka but with an excellent base and fundamentals. The basics and fundamentals are paramount to become an elite competitor. The first three areas are: a) solid physic-technical base; b) solid psycho-tactic base and c) solid senso-emotic base.

These three areas are developed into three working ‘nucleus’:

• Physical Elements; resistance, strength, power, speed, flexibility, overall body limberness, general body coordination, balance, etc.

• Psychological Elements; character, maturity, intelligence, memory, willpower, concentration, adaptability, etc.

• Eidetic Elements; senso-perception, motivation, feelings, emotions, fear, mood, etc.

In short and using a simpler description to be able to compete at a high level around the world you need; 1. youth and experience; 2. excellent knowledge of the competition rules and the individual 'specificities' [likes and dislikes] of the referees; 3. experienced and knowledgeable coaches willing to teach and share with passion.
and love; 4. financial means and a solid sportive infrastructure matching the goals pursued and 5. strong personality, ambition, determination, motivation and commitment.

What is a ‘coach’ for you and what are the differences between a ‘coach’ and a ‘sensei’?

All these questions are directly related to the point of view of the person's background. This background can be understood as cultural, sportive or martial art. To begin with I would like to say that for some karateka, the concepts of “coach”, “sensei” and “trainer” are the same, because in many circumstances they do similar things but in other “environments” they play very different roles, all depending on if we approach its definition from an Eastern or Western perspective. On top of that, we need to remember that depending on the country you are in [different cultures], they use different terms to describe their trainers in sports and teachers in martial arts. The words mean different things and are used in different ways.

We all know that the ‘sensei’ is very well respected in Japan and the ‘coach’ is highly regarded in the U.S. in professional sports, Colleges, Universities, etc. Due to the modern interest in all kind of sports, the role of the ‘coach’ is becoming more prominent and visible in our society. The role of the ‘sensei’ is being ‘left alone’ for those who conceive the karate only as a traditional ‘martial art’ or budo.

Let’s analyze important factors here to better understand the reality of it. Both, the coach and the sensei have one thing in common; they ‘teach’ and ‘educate’. The ‘education or teaching’ of the athletes in sports and karateka in karate is based on common denominators described as ‘Universal Values’: respect, honesty, love, humbleness, dedication, understanding, tolerance, generosity, freedom, friendship, forgiveness, courage, etc.

All these values we reach through what is called “mastery”. Mastery is defined as “the harmonious fusion of wisdom, spirituality and perfection”. When we speak about these three important elements we are talking about the ‘language of the heart’ and not simply punching and kicking – what we can describe as the “language of the body”.

Unfortunately, with the emphasis of the sport the role of the “coach” and “sensei” have taken a path moving away from teaching and sharing these important ‘values’ and have been focusing on the physical aspects only. They are not ‘coaches’ anymore…they are trainers. They are not “sensei” anymore…they are instructors. This is a big difference.

Another important factor is that nowadays we are seeing more “coaches” and “sensei” but less real “masters”. Why is that? The answer is that ‘teaching values” as a good master does, has fallen into a commercial trap. We look for the amount of students and medals and not for the real quality and the important values in our teachings. To reach ‘mastery’ is a slow process that takes many years of hard work and dedication. To become a ‘coach’ or a ‘sensei”, unfortunately, can be achieved and awarded at a weekend seminar simply by paying the required amount of money. That simple.
What is a ‘master’ then?

To answer this I will refer to a quote: “Who knows and does not teach, does not know. Who teaches but does not know, does not teach. Master is the one who knows and teaches.”

In our modern society a ‘great sensei’ is that one who has many students and a ‘great coach’ is the one who produces many champions. Interestingly, the ‘master’ does not have a lot of students and/or champions. Why? Because ‘mastery’ does not go well with big numbers. A ‘master’ is that one who is capable to lead to ‘mastery’ the number of the people he relates to and gets in touch with. A good King is not the one who has a lot of followers in his country but the one who makes it possible that everybody lives like a ‘king’ under his supervision.

What does the value of “respect” mean to you?

Respect is not an Eastern or Western value. It is not something traditional or modern. It is a “Universal Value” that does not change depending on the time or place where we found ourselves. The respect is originated in the concept of ‘love’; love for what we do, love for whom we are doing what we are doing, etc. I remember when I got married in 1977, my father told me: “respect each other and the love will be there”. And that is true for martial arts, sports and for any endeavor in life. Love for what you do brings respect.

It is important that we open and expand our minds and our approaches and perspectives of things. Tolerance, respect and love are what make any country and therefore, mankind solid and strong. It is important that we open our hearts and look for unity amongst us, instead of focusing on the differences, because under the sky we are all one single family.

Karate finally got into the Olympic Games. Tokyo 2020 is waiting for us. How do you see this affecting the art and the sport?

Be it as it may, karate will always be karate and kumite and kata will always be kumite and kata. Karate will always have the World championships, the European championships, the Pan-American championships, etc. Karate will always be karate no matter what. USANKF
When people around her went to movies, parties, or on vacation, she spent time in the dojo, always focused on two things: her dreams and goals about what she wanted to accomplish in karate. Dedicated training and focused mind. These two things, more than anything else, have made her championship dreams come true.

If you meet Sandra Sanchez on the street, you will see a happy person with a quiet, pleasant personality. If you meet her in the dojo, you will see an exceptionally skilled and passionate athlete. And if you meet her in competition, you will see one of the most fierce and powerful kata champions of modern times.
How long have you been practicing Karate?

I started practicing karate at age 4. It has been more than 30 years dedicated to this great art and sport. I began training in a Dojo that was very close to my home. This Dojo closed its doors and after a short time I found myself training in Goju Ryu under the guide of Sensei Javier Pineño. He has been not only my Sensei, but also my friend. I remember that when I was 4 years old and it was time to do Kumite…I used to run away and get my “hula hoop” to play!

When I decided to focus on competition, I knew I had to study the elements of Shito Ryu and it was then, when I asked Sensei Jesus del Moral to help me. He got the best of me and always reminds me to stay close to the true roots of karate.

Shito Ryu and Goju Ryu are similar en many ways since the Shito “curriculum” encompasses the “Naha” kata. Of course, they are different but not like Goju Ryu and Shotokan, for instance. The delivery way of the techniques is very different, Shotokan uses wide motions, very open and wide stances, the body moves differently. Shito and Goju use different kind of approach but the truth is that Kata competition is unifying very much the way all competitors move. It is becoming more and more unified the overall approach to Kata.

Did you feel comfortable with the process of learning new physical movements and karate techniques?

I have always been very natural for sports; enjoyed training all my life. It was never a difficult thing for me to go and train in other sports. When I did get involved in karate, it was the same. I truly love the training.
I feel more comfortable in Kata as far as the competition goes. I don’t know…it matches more with my personality. I can “express” more who I truly am through Kata. As a karateka, obviously Kumite is part of my training but my focus for competition is on Kata.

**How has your personal expression of karate developed over the years?**

My karate has evolved greatly throughout the last decade or so. Elite competition always adds an external pressure to everything that you do in the dojo. You have to plan your training from every possible angle and make sure that all the components of your preparation are in place. The maturity in your training will be reflected in your performance when you enter in a competition. The pressure is also bigger and sometimes it is “just do it”. Every training session establishes the foundation for the next session, therefore what you do today will influence what you will be doing tomorrow. Give your best today, all you’ve got today…leave it on the mat. The rest will be taken care of by itself.

**What are the most important points in your current training methods?**

My personal training encompasses many different aspects. My Coach knows exactly how to organize and create my training cycles according to my competition schedule. Today’s elite competition is not “simply” train a lot of kata or a lot of Kumite. In Kata you have many details that you have to make sure are correct: rhythm, tempo, technique, intensity depending the segment of the kata, etc. You need to have all these down. Is that little detail that you may think is not so ‘relevant’ that makes the difference in a European or World Championship.

I do a lot of conditioning training but the most important part is that you need to know “why” and “how”. Find a good Coach because everything you do must help to make your karate better. Going to the gym and training with weights, running and using conditioning equipment randomly won’t help you to make your karate better.

**Do you think the Olympic recognition could help karate?**

I think it can be a double edge sword. It is going to help in all the sportive aspects and the worldwide recognition but we have to be careful and not to make the mistake of focusing on a ‘sport-only’ karate-do. Karate training is not only for competition. It provides practitioners with many positive things that are not competition related…and we must preserve these values and principles. If we focus only on the

“I do a lot of conditioning training but the most important part is that you need to know “why” and “how”.”
sportive aspect of it, we’ll miss many of the important things that it teaches. I have always learned from my teachers that karate represents tradition, spirit, discipline, martiality, etc. Even if I love to compete, I try to maintain these roots and don’t walk away for the “do” in my training. I like to think that with this approach it can be seen when I perform kata. I have learned that the different styles provide us with different approaches or perspectives of the same thing: the way of the empty hand. I believe all these styles, philosophies and methodologies are a beautiful legacy that we must preserve for the future generations. Karate is not only about winning a medal or a trophy, it is about living life like a warrior.

How do you see the technical level in Europe and American when compared to Japan?

Many countries are getting very close to Japan and other Asian countries. In the Western world the training is more based on athletic and physical development. In Japan, they base the training on “kihon”. Everything is Kihon and technique related. The important thing to keep in mind is that they are incorporating many great physical conditioning programs and methods…You add these to their already very high technical level…and they are very difficult to beat.

I truly enjoy going to Japan and Okinawa for training. Of course, there is a lot of knowledge there that any karateka needs. I love the atmosphere, the philosophy, the ambiance and the spirit. I’d recommend everybody to go at least once in their lifetime and enjoy it the more traditional aspects of the arts.

Karate is nowadays often perceived as a sport by many people around the world… would you agree with this definition?

I think we have to adapt to the current times and to the society we live in. When I started karate, I was very young; no idea of what Budo or Do was and is. We need to bring karate to the young kids more like a sport with qualities like discipline, respect, etc. They are simply too young to understand the more traditional parts of the art. Then, with time, they begin to understand the intrinsic principles and philosophy and they can appreciate these elements more. They will realize that karate-do is a way of life and can be used as a vehicle for personal growth and development as individual.

Finally, you learn that the more you grow and develop as a martial artist, the less you know. Karate is a growing process until the day you die.

What is the most important element for you; self-defense, health or tradition?

I believe the term “tradition” encompasses all aspects, but obviously depending on the practitioner’s age there are certain aspects that you emphasize more. Younger people will focus more on the sport, more physical side of the training. Competition is always a good thing. Either you win or lose, you gain something just from the experience…you gain a great amount of self-understanding and always you can learn from your mistakes. Later on in life, you see that the whole art of karate is bigger than the sport, being able of kicking high or winning championships. There is more to it. It is then that you understand why the traditional element is important.
Do you have any advice you would care to pass on the practitioners in general?

Enjoy what you do. Enjoy your training beyond the competition. Do you own research for things, find a good and honest sensei and be dedicated to the practice of the art. Karate will help you to shape the “best you”.

Who would you like to have trained with that you have not?

I assume that like every karate practitioner, I’d love to train with the old masters, the ones who developed the styles and methods we practice today. In my personal case, I’d love to train with Chojun Miyagi and Kenwa Mabuni for Goju and Shito. I have read a lot about them and I truly believe they were ahead of their time.

What is it that keeps you motivated after all these years?

I like to feel that I am improving in what I do; that my technique gets better, that my kata gets better, that my body expresses the style better, etc. I like that feeling. I know there is a long way to go ahead and the journey never ends…we never get the perfect technique, the perfect kata…never. But that is the real challenge…keep trying to get the best of us. The reward is in the daily training, in the struggle. That is what makes us stronger for our journey in life.

You can’t never give up, just keep pushing forward, keep training. Karate has helped me very much in other aspects of my life, but sometimes you don’t see it right away. Perseverance is the key word.

Have there been times when you felt fear in your karate training?

Fear no… but some days after training for 6 or 8 hours…I look at the watch hoping the end of practice is near [laughs].

“Competition is always a good thing. Either you win or lose, you gain something just from the experience...“
Part 4

KARATE KICKING
MASTERING THE BIG 4!

By Michael Berger

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!”

When properly executed, ushiro-geri is perhaps the most effective of all the kicking techniques. A well-delivered ushiro kick has devastating power and speed, can be delivered at various angles and heights, and is nearly impossible to stop when executed correctly. Let’s look at the proper mechanics of execution, offensive and defensive maneuvers, and some combinations that may be useful to you in your training.

USHIRO GERI - Execution

Begin by keeping your eyes on your opponent and sharply twisting the hips, while at the same time squeezing both legs together, and at the last moment, turning the head to view your target (fig. 1). It is important that you arrive in this position with the knees bent. The kick thrusts outward immediately following the raising of the knee, as the inner thighs squeeze past each other.
Part 4

KARA TE KICKING

MA STERING THE BIG 4!

By Michael Berger

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 Yamaka Tesshu, the great nineteenth century swordsman, calligrapher, poet and Zen Master, "DAMA TTE KEIKO!" which translates roughly to "SHUT UP AND PRACTICE!"

When properly executed, ushiro-geri is perhaps the most effective of all the kicking techniques. A well-delivered ushiro kick has devastating power and speed, can be delivered at various angles and heights, and is nearly impossible to stop when executed correctly. Let's look at the proper mechanics of execution, offensive and defensive maneuvers, and some combinations that may be useful to you in your training.

1 2 3

USHIRO GERI - Execution

Begin by keeping your eyes on your opponent and sharply twisting the hips, while at the same time squeezing both legs together, and at the last moment, turning the head to view your target (fig.1). It is important that you arrive in this position with the knees bent. The kick thrusts outward immediately following the raising of the knee, as the inner thighs squeeze past each other and the support leg drives the kicking leg to the target. The toes should be pointed at about a 30 degree angle downward to allow for full unrestricted use of the hips, while the legs are spread fully, until finally, impact is made with the heel (sokuto). The position of angling the upper body can be modified according to the height of the kick and distance of the opponent.

and the support leg drives the kicking leg to the target. The toes should be pointed at about a 30 degree angle downward to allow for full unrestricted use of the hips, while the legs are spread fully, until finally, impact is made with the heel (sokuto). The position of angling the upper body can be modified according to the height of the kick and distance of the opponent.
**USHIRO GERI**

Ushiro geri (back kick), is an extremely powerful technique that can be very difficult to stop when executed properly and decisively. It has tremendous thrusting and penetrating power, and can be used in a variety of situations at both close and far distances. Mastery of the turn is a critical point, as turning the back on an opponent can have unfavorable results if not done quickly and decisively.

**Common Mistakes**

*Fig 1 -* the inner thighs of the kicker’s legs do not pass closely by each other, resulting in the kick not being delivered in a linear path, but rather one that has a circular element. Balance, delivery, and power are thus compromised accordingly, and the kick is not effective.

*Fig 2 -* the position of the foot during execution is incorrect, as the toes are pointing too far laterally, making the kick more like yoko geri kekomi, a different technique.

*Fig 3 -* the kicker is leaning too far forward as impact is made, and not able to drive off of the supportive leg through the designated target. Note the position of the bodyweight and the loss of power that will result.

**USHIRO GERI - Training Exercise 1**

Practice arriving at the position of delivery by squeezing your legs together and turning quickly to land in heisoku dachi. Return quickly with the same energy. Repeat.
COMBINATIONS - Offensive Combinations

DIRECT ATTACKS - attacking directly and decisively

Begin by executing jodan gyaku zuki to your opponent's face. As he shifts his weight slightly to avoid the punch, follow immediately with ashi barai, causing him to step backwards. As he attempts to counter, immediately follow with ushiro geri with either leg as shown in figs. 5 and 6.

COMBINATIONS - Defensive Combinations

COUNTER ATTACKS USING MAAI/TAI SABAKI - Anticipate your opponent's stepping attack toward your head, by timing his attack and turning quickly to deliver ushiro geri to ribs as he moves forward with the punch. Note that the parallel position of the body helps to prevent you being attacked.
PERCEPTUAL-COGNITIVE EXPERTISE
IN COMBAT SPORTS

From Scientific Research to Training

By Oscar Martinez de Quel & Simon J. Bennet

Introduction

Performance in combat sports has been widely studied from the point of view of physiology, anthropometrics or biomechanics. Thus, conditional training is usually based on physiological research and techniques are evaluated from a biomechanical perspective. However, combat sport experts also differ from novices in their psychological characteristics. In fact, many trainers suggest the difference between a good athlete and a champion is the ability to make the right technique at the right moment, and that this requires expert perception, cognition, decision making, and tactical awareness. Given the importance of psychological characteristics, it is somewhat surprising that they are usually trained using methods based on the experience of the coach more rather than scientific research. Our aim, therefore, was to review relevant scientific literature on combat sports expertise in a selection of perceptual cognitive variables and then to provide some guidelines for training.

Research in Perceptual Cognitive Expertise

Scientific research in combat sport athletes (karate, boxing, taekwondo, etc.) has given some interesting outcomes. The large number of studies on Reaction Time (RT) has shown inconsistent results, with some evidence that expert athletes have shorter RT but other studies showing that RT is not a predictor of competition success (Martinez de Quel, Bennett, López, Zapico, & Saucedo, 2015). As the RT task becomes more sport specific (i.e.: stimulus and response are similar to those in combat), differences are more evident between experts and novices. However, this is often because experts show a good capacity for anticipation and are able to identify an attack in the very first moments (Rosalie & Muller, 2013). This superior anticipation is helped by their visual behavior, such as maintaining gaze in a central part of the opponent's body (head and trunk). In this way, gaze acts as a visual pivot from where the expert combat athlete can pick up the information needed to create an appropriate response (Ripoll, Kerlirzin, Stein, & Reine, 1995), as well as gain knowledge of situational probabilities (Milazzo, Farrow, Ruffault, & Fournier, 2015), which is linked to tactical training.
Application to Training

The first application is to train coupled action and perception as much as we can such that athletes are exposed to the same constraints as in a combat. This can be achieved by competition, sparring, attack defense exercises, overloading perceptual system using a task with two attackers versus one defender or wearing liquid crystal glasses that switch from a transparent to opaque state.

From the point of view of the fighter who responds to an attack by performing a defense, anticipated counterattack, displacement or dodge, it is important to do the following: maintain gaze in the center of the opponent's body (head, trunk) most of the time; try to obtain prior information from the opponent body and the environment (score, time to the end, situation on the combat field, more usual techniques of the opponent) to estimate the probabilities of the opponent's actions; adjust the distance to the opponent as a function of the time needed to respond; maintain an initial position (on guard stance) that allows quick reactive movement; create responses that could be adapted to a potential change in the attack or a response useful for many attacks (i.e. step backward could be useful for many attacks); change reactions to avoid the second intention of attacker; etc.

From the point of view of attacker, it is clearly important to try to minimize the ability of the defender to anticipate.

"From the point of view of attacker, it is clearly important to try to minimize the ability of the defender to anticipate."
Because the roles of attacker and defender are overlapped in combat sports, consideration of rapid changes of condition should be trained (i.e., to change from attack to defense or vice versa, or even to attack and defend at same time). In all these cases, it is critical that the action takes into account the distance between opponents.

In conclusion, trainers could use scientific knowledge in perceptual-cognitive expertise when designing practice in order to improve defense or attack techniques and tactics. USANKF

References


Email: odequel@edu.ucm.es.
1) Coach Akira and Jordan Valle posing for the camera. 2) Tom Scott warming up. 3) Jenna Brown and Adrian Galvan. 4) Coach Jeff Kohn, President DiPasquale and Coach Hill commenting the performances. 5) Athletes stretching and preparing.
The top athletes from the 2016 USA Karate National Championships flooded the campus of the Colorado Springs Olympic Training Center (OTC) in Colorado to compete for a spot on the Senior National Team over Martin Luther King Junior weekend.

1) National Anthem. Everybody standing. 2) Refreshing the “old” way. 3) Shannon Nishi-Patton wrapping her ankle. 4) Brandi Robinson “synching” with the rhythm.
(1 & 2) Jessica Kwon and Will Gatch performing kata. 3) Brandi Robinson and Shannon Nishi-Patton warming up. 4) Brody Burns and Jessica Herbst speaking to CEO Phil Hampel. 5) Ashley Hill...accommodating the hair.
1) Referees during one of their meeting. 2) Nishi-Patton warming up her punches. 3) Valle performs kata. 4) Maya Wasowicz…getting mentally ready. Ashley Davis during the warm up phase. 6) Coach Mertel observing the athletes. 7) Gakuji Tokaki performing his kata. 8) David Richmond at work. 9) Mina Yamazaki performing her kata.
The competition, held round robin style, was held on two tatamis in the OTC’s Sports Center. Spectators filled the stands to watch the competition, held to WKF standards with five officials scoring each mat.

The athletes had the option to stay at the Olympic Training Center campus where they had full access to the gym, dining hall and sports medicine facilities. The US Olympic Complex is the flagship training center for the U.S. Olympic Committee and the Olympic Training Center Programs. They are able to provide housing, dining, training facilities, recreational facilities and other services for more than 500 athletes and coaches at one time on the complex.

After Team Trials concluded, the athletes, as well as the 16-18 year old Junior National Team, then had the opportunity to stay and participate in a team training camp held at the Olympic Training Center. The camp consisted of team building exercises, skills practice, conditioning, team meetings and information sessions. Head Coach Tommy Hood instructed the athletes through some main drills, followed by smaller sessions taught by Coaches Brian Mertel, Christina Muccini and Akira Fukuda. The athletes were later split by discipline, Kata and Kumite, to focus on more specific drills. The camp was the first of several camps to be held throughout 2017 to further develop our National Team. USA Karate budgets to invest $40,000 annually for Camps and General Team Development.

The USA National Karate-do Federation is excited to congratulate the following athletes on behalf of earning their spot on the 2017 USA Senior National Team. USANKF
1) Tanya Baez performs her kata. 2) Brian Hilliard “chiling’ momentarily. 3) Erick Lamelas during one of his matches. 4) The complete 2017 USA Team. 5) Kamran Madani during his match. 6) Ashley Hill during her elimination match.
Male Senior National Team

MALE ELITE KATA
JOSEPH MARTINEZ
ARIEL TORRES

MALE ELITE KUMITE -60 KG
ANDREW RAGONA
DANNY CABELLO

MALES ELITE KUMITE -67 KG
BRIAN HILLIARD
BRIAN RAMRUP

MALE ELITE KUMITE -75 KG
TOM SCOTT
TYLER YAMASAKI

MALE ELITE KUMITE -84 KG
KAMRAN MADANI
EUZEBIUSZ WASOWICZ

MALE ELITE KUMITE +84 KG
DAVID MUHAMMED
BRIAN IRR

Male Junior National Team

14-15 MALE ELITE KATA
KEVIN STEVENS
KIERAN TAMONDONG
ANDREW MINTO
CHRISTIAN RIVERA

16-17 MALE ELITE KATA
ISAAC FRIEND
SILON REY
TAISHI TOZAKI
MYLES MONTON

18-20 MALE ELITE KATA
ARIEL TORRES
RANDALL JAMES
VINCENT CAMACHO
KENNETH MCLYMORE

12-13 MALE ELITE KUMITE
-35KG
LOGAN TURNLEY
AIDEN LEWANDOWSKI
MARTIN GISSA
ALEX QUAICHON

2-13 MALE ELITE KUMITE
-40KG
GAIVN SITARZ
RIKY GARCIA
SAHIL KAS
EDGAR TORRES

12-13 MALE ELITE KUMITE
-45KG
JAKE RUIZ
MARCO GARCIA
CHRISTOPHER LEE
NICOLAS CHAVEZ

12-13 MALE ELITE KUMITE
-50KG
ETHAN WACHSMAN
TRUMAN MOORE
TANNER GLENN
VIVEK NATARAJAN

12-13 MALE ELITE KUMITE
+50 KG
LEONARDO SCHAAFSMA
LESTER DIAZ
MATTHEW HILLIYER
CHRISTIAN ARGUELLO

14-15 MALE ELITE KUMITE
-52KG
ZIAH BALDIS
ANDREW MINTON
MATHIAS NICOLOPULOS
ANTHJUAN RODRIGUEZ

14-15 MALE ELITE KUMITE
-57KG
JAMES SEGAL
ZACHARY KELLY
NOEL HERNANDEZ
NAKOA HENDRICKS

14-15 MALE ELITE KUMITE
-63KG
DORIAN PAJOR
SEAN QUIROZ
IVAN FERNANDES
ADDISON TSUTSUI

14-15 MALE ELITE KUMITE
-70KG
JARED SMITH
BRAYSON REYES
EMRE KIVANC
BEAU LOWERY

14-15 MALE ELITE KUMITE
+70KG
GEOFFREY MAGIN
BRADEN IVEY
ANDRAIN RiORD
SIMON JENS

16-17 MALE ELITE KUMITE
-55KG
ISAAC FRIEND
REY SIMON
JOSEPH TOLENTINO
TOMMY NGO

16-17 MALE ELITE KUMITE
-61KG
MATTHEW JEN
TAISHI TOZAKI
ADAM KRAUS
JOSUE HERNANDEZ

16-17 MALE ELITE KUMITE
+76KG
CHRISTOPHER PENNA
THOMAS PAPPALARDO
GARRISON PRESTWOOD
MARWAN ZAYED

16-17 MALE ELITE KUMITE
-76KG
REY CHINE
KEITA NADALIN
NOLAN O’REAR
JOSEPH MUSUMEKI

16-17 MALE ELITE KUMITE
-68KG
MAX SEGAL
LINUS JENS
ADAM ROBART
GABE HALL

16-17 MALE ELITE KUMITE
-84KG
ERIICK LAMELAS
BENJAMIN HARRISON
MATTHEW DERRYBERRY
KERIM TRICIC

To read the National Team bios, visit www.usankf.org under the Athlete Bios
Junior National Team selected at the 2016 National Championships and Team Trials

The Official Magazine of USA Karate
Female Senior National Team

FEMALES ELITE KATA
SAKURA KOKUMAI
JESSICA KWONG

FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -50 KG
SHANNON NISHI-PATTON
GISELLE KANEDA

FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -55KG
BRANDI ROBINSON
JENNA BROWN

FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -61 KG
JOANE ORBON
SABRINA HOSTETTLER

FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -68 KG
ASHLEY DAVIS
EIMI KURITA

FEMALE ELITE KUMITE +=68 KG
MAYA WASOWICZ
CIRRUS LINGL

14-15 FEMALE ELITE KATA
ZOE MESZARO
MADISON MALONE
IZEL CASTILLO
DESTINY VERGARA

16-17 FEMALE ELITE KATA
JENNIFER ROBINSON
BRISA COLON
SASHA RODRIGUEZ
ABBY FORD

18-20 FEMALE ELITE KATA
IZUMI SHIMANOUCHI
GISELLE KANEDA
MAGGIE STHILDT
ALYSSA TORNABENE

12-13 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -35KG
ELANNA FRANKLIN
VICTORIA PRINCI

12-13 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -40KG
GIANNA PELZER
KRISLYN DOTE
MADILYN JENNINGS
MOLLY MCHENRY

12-13 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -45KG
VICTORIA TATARYNOVA
SARA HOSTETTLER
JOELLE INCIONG
KRYSTIN URY

12-13 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE +45
MAGDALENA ZUCEK
ERICA BILDERBACK
LUISA VILLAFRANCA
PAIGE LEONARD

14-15 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -47KG
IZEL CASTILLO
ERICA SILVERMAN
BRIANY AGUILAR
CAROLINBE JACOBS

14-15 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -54KG
MADISON MALONE
CLAUDIA LEE
DESTINY VERGORA
ALEXIS MOODY

14-15 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE +54KG
ALEXANDRA WAINWRIGHT
JARIZA PERRY
TRINITY ALEN
ELIZA ATWOOD

16-17 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -48KG
CHANDLER URY
ABBY FORD
SAMANTHA QUIROZ
CYNTIA CAMPOS

16-17 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -53KG
PORTIA FISH
JENNIFER ROBINSON
KAYLA FERNANDER
YVETTE CAMPOS

16-17 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -59KG
KASSIDY MAHONEY
SABRINA HOSTETTLER
SABRINA MARTINEZ
ABBY HISTED

16-17 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE +59KG
CIRRUS LINGL
KELARA MADANI
SKYLAR LINGL
ZAIAH TUCKER

18-20 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -50KG
KARISSA SMOLA
GISELLE KANEDA
RACHEL SATTERFIELD

18-20 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -61KG
MEGAN NEAL
ANN HSIEH
REGAN MCNAMARA
AERIAL VINEYARD

18-20 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE -68KG
CARLY CRAWFORD
TAYLOR WOOD

18-20 FEMALE ELITE KUMITE +68KG
DIANNE SPENCE
NICOLE FISHER
AMBER RUTHERFORD
ELIYAH MALIK

To read the National Team bios, visit www.usankf.org under the Athlete Bios
Junior National Team selected at the 2016 National Championships and
Team Trials
1) Chris Stratis addresses the athletes. 2) Athletes receiving instructions. 3 & 4) Chris Stratis showing drills to the group. 5) Shannon Nishi-Patton posing happily for the camera.
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1) Coach Hood addresses the athletes. 2) Coach Brian Mertel. 3) Coach Christina Muccini-Finegan. 4) Team Leader Brody Burns posing for the camera. 5) Athletes focus on the instructions given by the coaches. 6 & 7) Young guns (juniors) enjoying the camp!
1) Joseph Martinez during the conditioning drills. 2) Kamran Madani “thumbs up” the camera-guy! 3) Mina Yamazaki and Jordan Valle drilling footwork. 4) The “circle of trust” rolling....
1) Brian Irr during the conditioning session. 2) Mina Yamazaki…waiting for instructions. 3) Shannon Nishi-Patton…feeling the pressure. 4) Cesar Colunga…”all cool here!” 5) Brandi Robinson during the sprints.
2017 USA KARATE

KUMITE

KATA

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How was the situation of Karate in NY when you began teaching?
At that time, AAU was trying to get started and WUKO was struggling to develop around the world. Our biggest event was Henry Cho’s Korean Tournament at Madison Square Garden in Manhattan, NY where our eliminations was on a concrete floor and no safety equipment at all, just groin cup made for baseball. All other events were small and the Dojo rivalry was high. A person would walk on your dojo karate floor with their shoes and you had to get him out by any means necessary. If you did not have a good reputation as a fighter, you would be tested till you close your doors.

What was the main obstacle in the growth of the sport in the State of NY?
The Japanese hardly had competitions, it was all the Koreans, they are good businessmen. There were only OPEN competitions, Karate, Kung Fu and Tae Kwon Do separated but together in one event. At that time, all were pioneers trying to develop a structure for Sports Karate: AAU, WUKO are only two mentioned, there were others Nakayama, Mas Oyama’s group was among them.

In the past few years, there has been a great amount of growth in NY, what do you think the reason for this?
The growth of karate in NY became a joint venture between the traditional Dojos. We started having more competition among each other and we started to produce
better competitors. It has been ten years since the New York Traditional Karate League (NYTKL) was formed, the League recognizing our top athletes once a year in an Award Celebration and Scholarship presentation, kind of rallied everyone together regardless of style. We assist any of our top athletes financially in competing Nationally as well as Internationally representing our State. This means that the NYTKL went on fundraising mode by giving workshops and giving competitions as well as solicit funds from large companies, but we had to be incorporated, so I applied for a 501(c)3 nonprofit which was approved, from that point on all became easier to receive assistance.

**What is the current status of Karate in the State of NY from a sportive perspective?**

Many of our athletes have been educated with the rules and they have been competing consistently, their eyes are open and they are hungry. We have good instructors in the US as well as some foreign individuals that have helped our competitors in NY. What I see now, is new Junior instructors have the ambition to run their own competition and they are trying to learn from the seniors by following their footsteps.

**What is the current financial status of karate in New York State?**

I can’t answer this question from others point of view, but I can only speak for the NYTKL, also know as New York ASO for the last two years. We are in good financial status due to our sponsors and donors. We have been able to assist financially those of our members that have competed in the PKF as well as the World. Furthermore, we have finance for the last 3 years as well as this year our Award Celebration and Scholarship Presentation held in a catering hall all expenses paid. We also have a Scholarship fund with a ceiling of one thousand dollars for any of our members that are entering College for the first time.

**Do you think the Olympic recognition will affect the growth of karate in the State of NY?**

It is hard to say because there is no guarantee we will be a permanent sport in the Olympics. I see some instructors in our State trying to capitalize in their tournament trying to stimulate due to the acceptance of Karate on the next Olympic games in Tokyo 2020. I am happy but I have some reservation because “getting there” is one thing, but “being” there is another.
What are your plans in the State for Junior athletes to increase their level looking towards the Olympic Games?

I do believe the future is bright for them. By having the game in the Olympics can only help our sport. My hope is to have and develop a 3 to 4 years collective program for their formation to the seniors. My hope also, is we need to have a concrete program created by the USA National Karate-do Federation where every State follows the same development strategy. Many countries have developmental programs for their Junior teams. I need to identify karate leaders with the passion, dedication and time to help develop future champions. I must say it is not going to be an easy task with so much ego in our Karate world.

What are your plans for coaches and referees to increase their level looking towards the Olympic Games?

As of now, my biggest concern is to educate the coaches with an annual requirement to renew their license, they must take a course on rules as well as ethics. I do have my own opinion about coaches. I do believe that coaching is done in the dojo not the ring. However, the world has a different take on the subject. The best coaches in my opinion if any, has to come from the pool of recent competitors, however, I have seen the reverse in many cases.
There is a big problem also with referees: they are not paid, they receive a stipend for their work in competition in New York. They finance their course to improve their understanding of the rules as well as obtain an upgrade in their license. I would love to select the best of the referees in our State and finance 2 or 3 per year, send them to the PKF and the World Championship as they would gain experience and be valuable for the Olympic games.

**What are the plans to keep growing in the future?**

This is a difficult question to answer, I do believe UNITY is the key, the plan is to discover and identify the next leaders in the Junior instructors in our karate community that have the qualities necessary to help others unselfishly. Once identified, they need to be groomed and have the assistance needed to grow and develop confidence to lead the next generation. The biggest obstacle is that “leaders are born not created”. I do believe we must have hope that we will find true leaders in our lifetime to help our Sport Karate in the future. **USANKF**
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