ASHLEY DAVIS
2017 PKF CHAMPION

KYOSHI YAMAZAKI
The Perfect Balance
A WKF ICON

SABAHUDIN TRICIC
PARA-KARATE 2017 PANAM CHAMPION

2017 US OPEN
Las Vegas, NV
FULL COVERAGE!

COLUMNs BY:
PHIL HAMPBEL
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TERUYUKI OKAZAKI
SAKURA KOKUMAI
JEFF KOHN
USA National Championships & Team Trials

Greenville, South Carolina
July 19-23, 2017

HOTEL INFORMATION

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You will be sent confirmation # with further instructions.

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Cover Story
ASHLEY
DAVIS
Worthy Fights
By Jose M. Fraguas

Kyoshi Yamazaki
The Perfect Balance
By Jose M. Fraguas

Elite Competition Clinics
Photos: Antonio Moxo

Sabahudin Tricic
Para-karate
2017 Pan American Champion
By Sasha Gerritson
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Ashley Davis gets GOLD in 2017 PAN AMERICAN CHAMPIONSHIPS.
Photo Courtesy Jose M. Fraguas.

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2017 US OPEN LAS VEGAS
By Elizabeth Sottile
Photos by Brentwood Digital
There are no shortcuts in the process of character development in Karate training. The practitioner of Karate has to develop as a whole, and, when only one of the aspects, such as the physical body, develops very quickly and the others are left behind, there are more obstacles and challenges in the medium and long run. Once a person awakens to his/her thirst for self-knowledge, the determination to succeed in life is reflected in the sincerity and strength of the search. Some like to talk about water but not look for it. Some like to discuss the available ways to search for water or hope that water will come to them out of the blue. Even some enjoy the process of looking for water so much that they avoid finding it. Only the sincere seeker feels keenly the thirst inside and determines not to stop looking for water until the thirst is quenched.

Regardless of what level the Karate practitioner finds him/herself in, there really is only one teacher: experience itself. The true karateka follows one abiding principle: pay attention to what is happening in one’s immediate experience. And, this is something that cannot be expressed in words. As the famous Japanese writer Yukio Mishima, practitioner of Martial Arts, personal friend of JKA Karate master, Masatoshi Nakayama and fifth dan in the art of kendo said, “Words are a medium that reduces reality to abstraction for transmission to our reason. In their power, they corrode reality. Inevitably, danger lurks that the words themselves will be corroded, too.”

Jose M. Fraguas
Editor-in-Chief
There’s no denying it’s an exciting time to be a karate-ka and USA Karate member. Over the last decade, we have watched our organization and sport strengthen and flourish. The strength of our organization and athletes was evident when watching our senior teams compete at XXXI Pan American Karate Championships in Curacao last month.

As President, I was proud of our performance and felt the USA Senior National Team made a marked improvement from last year. Our overall medal count moved us from 7th place, from the previous games, up to 4th. We had some standout performances by Ashley Davis, Sakura Kokumai and Sabahudin Tricic who all took home gold medals in their events. I was impressed with the overall condition of the athletes, they looked to be in far better condition than we’ve seen in many years. I think that paid dividends, especially when those athletes went late or deep into the division or made an appearance in repechage. I’d also like to compliment our coaches, who did a nice job working with the athletes. They seemed to collaborate well and come together for the overall benefit of the athletes.

I commend William Millerson for all his hard work running the tournament. The tournament was very well organized and they provided a nice facility for our athletes to compete. Congratulations to Cleve Baxter who is now Chairman of the PKF Referee Commission. Thank you to Tokey Hill for his hard work with the Technical Committee and Jeff Kohn and Fariba Madani for the success of the Inaugural Para-Karate Division at the PKF Championships.

Now that the Senior Pan American Championships have concluded, Tom Scott and Sakura Kokumai will be participating in the World Games in Poland this July and we look forward to amazing results from both of these incredible athletes. I’m interested in seeing the USA athletes’ performance at the Karate 1 Events. In particular, Tom Scott, currently ranked #1 in the WKF -75kg division, has been doing extremely well and I anticipate him having a strong finish in 2017 and an even better 2018. It’s imperative that our junior and senior team athletes who were successful at the PKF Championships get experience at more international events. Competing against the best will only help to prepare for the World Championships next year. Obviously, our long-term goal is to have our athletes represented in the Olympic team and be able to medal there. Being that there are only going to be 60 athletes competing in kumite and 20 athletes in kata worldwide that will be able to participate in the games, it means only the best of best will be able to participate in those games. The road to the Olympic Games will be difficult, there’s no arguing that. However, I believe as long as the United States athletes continue to up their practice and their performance, I think the United States has an excellent chance at placing athletes at those Games. They will need consistent preparation, increased intensity, and perseverance, but they can get there.

With the National Championships quickly approaching next month, it will be interesting to see how some of the younger athletes coming up out of the junior division will challenge some of the more established competitors. We also have some senior athletes coming out of retirement and returning to competition. The dynamic of those divisions and the outcomes will be very interesting to watch.

Finally, I’m excited to announce that for the first time, we have a funding model in place for our athletes who are ranked worldwide that they can tap into and we already have several athletes benefiting from it. I believe this program will give the athletes the financial support they haven’t had in the past.

I look forward to what our future has to hold, USANKF

John DiPasquale
President
Diversity and Inclusion – Why It Matters

There are a lot of conversations in Corporate America regarding meeting Diversity and Inclusion guidelines, but you might wonder why those same guidelines are important to USA Karate. To start, let me say that in many cases viewing Diversity guidelines as a numbers-only exercise is a mistake. While it is true that we need metrics to see areas we want to improve, there are other benefits to meeting Diversity guidelines.

As background, The Ted Stevens Act requires that we provide the USOC with data on our demographics. To that end, we have added questions to our membership process in order to capture this data. It is possible for you to opt out of providing the information, but before you do, I want you to know why it matters.

One of the great things about karate is that it is available to anyone and our membership is highly diverse; however, USA Karate as an organization is not currently as diverse as our membership. We want to embrace diversity at USA Karate and enjoy the benefits that diversity will bring to the organization. This means looking past biases to find the best people interested and qualified to help grow the federation.

Diversity helps us look at problems differently and to solve issues more creatively. Diversity will challenge us to make better decisions that support our diverse members. We feel strongly that diversity of thought, perspective and experience will be instrumental in growing USA Karate. Diversity comes in a lot of different ways and we need to consider gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression and mental or physical disability. Diversity programs help breakdown the barriers that individual biases create.

Karate has already made great strides in being more inclusive and a great example is the Para-Karate program. In 2012, we added divisions to our National Championships and USA Open for athletes with Disabilities and today Para-Karate athletes are fully integrated as members of our Senior National Team. These athletes have competed at the WKF World Championships and the PKF Continental Championships. This evolution has enriched the lives of the national team and is setting an example that there is one Senior National Team. This program illustrates that karate can be practiced by any individual and provides an example of how diversity benefits our organization and its members. As an organization, we are now working to make certain that equal opportunities are available to all our members and we continue to focus on areas to improve our diversity.

Our Diversity and Inclusion program is accessible on our website. The USA Karate scorecards provided by the USOC and our 2017-2020 diversity plan are published online so you can see our goals and what we are trying to achieve.

For USA Karate, our growth depends on our ability to support a highly diverse base of karate practitioners not only through standard diversity measures but also through taking into account variations in styles across the traditional karate clubs in the United States. Through Diversity and Inclusion we will become a stronger National Federation.

Phil Hampel
Chief Executive Officer
USA National Karate-do Federation
Perseverance of an Athlete

A thletes face numerous amounts of challenges throughout their career. One of the most challenging psychological obstacle is to keep motivated and come back to perform at a higher state after a loss. When the match begins, you sometimes find yourself in an unfavorable situation resulting in repechage. This is when the work begins; the result of the last match becomes a thing of the past. Let it go, maintain composure, and have a fresh mindset.

Here are some coping skills to help reset your mind to carry you through periods of expectations, regrets, and let downs:

- **Treat winning and losing as a learning opportunity versus a measurement of your skills:** Remember every match that you perform is a building block for a solid foundation. Research has shown that outcome-based performances lead to athlete burnout. Instead, a process-based performance leads to a higher intrinsic motivator in sport (Schmidt & Wrisberg, 2008). Losses do not define who you are, in fact you can normally recall things that were done right during training and competition that can set you to continue to grow throughout your life. Develop a growth mindset, where by blocking the outcome serves as a learning opportunity.

- **Put the last event in your short-term memory. Limit yourself to think about the last match:** Give yourself a limited amount of time to think about the last match. Every athlete experiences emotional responses from a negative outcome especially when they invest their time and effort in the match. Have a short-term memory. By the time you get off the tatami put what happened in the past. Start to focus on the task at hand. Be in the moment.

- **Reflect and evaluate your performance:** Using a 3,2,1 system (Alexander, 2017) keep your evaluations to the following. List 3 things that you executed right. Like setting up your attack, continuing your exchange of techniques, or controlling your breathing. Next limit yourself to 2 things that were the low points of your performance in your match. Like losing balance, getting scored on, or reacting after a bad call. Lastly, let’s take 1 thing that you can improve on that happened in the match. Make it your own and start the process needed to improve on your personal growth, you have just created a process-based performance goal.

Working towards a learning mindset versus an outcome-based mindset will help with personal growth. At the same time creating a performance based plan—using goals that are attainable and viable for success. Goals serve as road maps to successful performance of the target skills in the target context (Schmidt & Wrisberg, 2008). For more assistance, reach out to your Sensei/Coach and create a support group, which in turn becomes a winning team.

**Akira Fukuda CC-AASP is the Chairman of the USA KARATE Coaches Committee and Certified Consultant with the Association of Applied Sport Psychology (CC-AASP), if you have any questions concerning mental skills please contact: info@ocjmac.com**

Resources:


What happened in Curacao should not stay in Curacao!

Over the past few months, we all have been witnessing the changes of the rules of competition. To keep us up to date, USA Karate invited Mr. Javier Escalante, the new chairman of the World Karate Federation Referee Commission, to conduct the referee course in conjunction with last US Open. Due to some administrative issues, Mr. Escalante could not attend our event and instead the secretary of WKF RC instructed us about the rules of kata and kumite competition.

PKF then decided to invite Mr. Escalante to lead the referee course in Curacao for the XXXI Pan American Sr. Championship. Over 100 officials from 33 countries benefitted from an educational, informative seminar that covered the latest changes on the rules of competition over the course of two days. Many questions were asked throughout the course and the many judges, referee, match supervisor and Tatami manager received the clarification they needed. In addition, the coaches who participated in the coaching course, received an excellent overview of expected ethical behavior of and protocols for coaches. This may have come as a shock to those who viewed championships as opportunities to socialize and renew acquaintances with their friends, and instead now understand that they need to pay attention to possible conflicts of interest that they may inadvertently create throughout a competition.

In all, the seminar was an eye-opening experience for Pan American officials who never had the opportunity to participate in any WKF referee course.

The presence of WKF RC chairman was not only a benefit to the officials but also a benefit to the athletes who competed in this championship. All officials were extremely cautious about avoiding mistakes and biased decisions. Although there were mistakes here and there, there also was a person of authority with no personal agenda or the possibility of personal benefit who would ask for explanation or simply correct the error. I do believe that our athletes benefited from this professional, cooperative atmosphere, because they were more likely to get fair judgment calls. As a matter of fact, Mr. Escalante’s presence was an assurance of that.

Over the three days of the competition, we observed Mr. Escalante officiating in all capacities, which is something that never had been seen at a Pan American championship. By serving on the referee commission, and contributing his expertise on the competition floor, Mr. Escalante set an example for everyone.

We also watched him disqualify some athletes because of category 2 penalties. His only mission was to apply the rules fairly towards athletes from all countries, regardless of which had more points on the screen. He was following only one set of rules: the WKF rules of competition. He raised the bar high so no one can violate the rules. If anyone wins, it was because they deserved to win. If anyone loses, it was because they violated the rules of competition or simply faced a superior opponent!

A coach approached me at the end of the first day and asked why Mr. Escalante disqualified an athlete who had four points more than his opponent and why he did not help the superior athlete to advance to the next round? The answer is so simple, he is following the rules of competition and the rule does not state anything about not applying the penalty if a competitor is ahead in points!

The responsibility of the new PKF referee committee and the new chair of the PKF committee, Mr. Baxter, now have the highest responsibility to follow the new path that Mr. Escalante has created for fair competitions. The diversity of American countries should not interfere with the application of the rules equally across the continent.

This responsibility is also on the shoulders of those of us who were present at the recent PKF championship to spread everything that we learned and to make sure what happened in Curacao does not stay in Curacao. USANKF
Master Funakoshi’s
NIJYU KUN

Gijitsu yori shinjitsu
Spirit and mind is more important than technique
By Teruyuki Okazaki

M aster Funakoshi understood human nature and how easy it is to concentrate on strengthening physical skills to the exclusion of spiritual and mental development. Gijitsu refers to technical skill and shinjitsu refers to spiritual skill. Literally translated, this principle reminds us that spiritual development is the most important thing, and technical skills are merely a means to an end. This idea that developing the spiritual aspect is more important than developing the physical skills is fundamental to understanding Master Funakoshi’s philosophy.

All martial arts use the suffix, do. This is meant to emphasize the spiritual growth and development that is the main goal. Karate-do, then, means to practice karate as a way of life. It implies that our major purpose is the perfection of character. The word ‘michi’ may be used interchangeably with do, as it means to strive for the perfection of character throughout your lifetime.

As human beings, we all have limits on what we can do with our technical skills. The term gijitsu is synonymous with technical skills, and reflects that aspect of the human condition wherein we have limitations. However, when the spiritual aspect of human life is considered, there are no limits. This is the connotation of shinjitsu, reminding us that we can always improve, and always learn more.

A person of any age can practice karate, because as a martial art, karate implies the development of shinjitsu. Remember spiritual growth should continue throughout your lifetime. There is no end to the study of shinjitsu. Therefore there is no end to the study of karate-do.

Those students of karate who practice to be good technically, in order to win competitions, are placing too much emphasis on gijitsu. There must be a balance between the training and sweating associated with gijitsu and the spiritual development and study required for the advancement of shinjitsu.

The opposite may also occur where an individual spends all his time reading books and studying the philosophy of karate-do. He may think he understands the principles set forth by the founding fathers of karate, but he cannot possibly understand without having trained and sweat. “Gijitsu yori shinjitsu” cannot be understood without training and sweating and studying to be a better person.

Tournament competition has the tendency to bring out the gijitsu, emphasizing the physical skills and techniques, winning, and being the best. There is nothing wrong with being the best—if it is accomplished in the proper manner. But if you hear an individual singing songs of praise about herself, then you know that person has no understanding of shinjitsu. Just by observing an individual’s techniques you can determine their character and personality. This will be expressed in the way they handle themselves.

A balance between shinjitsu and gijitsu is what we strive for in our daily lives. It is the meaning of karate-do, the perfection of character for which we strive. USANKF
I haven’t learned from many sensei in the past so it is difficult to compare Inoue Sensei with any other. I think the principles in karate are very much the same no matter who you learn it from. However, Inoue sensei’s approach and method to Karate was very unique and interesting and it has broadened my perspective in the art and the sport. He was able to explain and execute each movement by demonstrating it himself, and he was able to explain things as simple as possible so we could all understand. There was always a white board and a pen involved in training, he always encouraged us to take notes after he explained things. He was never limited to one style either. He taught all styles, from all ages, for all practitioners. I think that is what made him so unique. Some things and concepts he taught, I couldn’t understand till years after. Year after year, I was able to connect the dots. Looking back, I really enjoyed the process of learning from him.

I remember him as someone who loved very much what he did. He spent his entire life practicing and teaching Karate. But it is not just his techniques that I remember. His personality was different than any other sensei that I have met. He encouraged us to smile and have fun during practice and he always tried to make us laugh. During practice, he would constantly tell us to “smile”, and would always tell jokes. If I had questions, big or small, he would answer them, and for some reason everything made sense. I miss him very much, and sometimes I wish I still had his guidance. But his philosophy and his way of Karate will stick with me forever. I am very lucky and grateful that I was able to train directly under him because he had such a big influence in my life. So when he passed, I didn't know what to do. There were questions and pressures from people around me, asking who I was going to train with or how I was going to train... even people asking me if I was going to retire. These pressures from outside made me doubt myself about my training methods, but even through these difficulties, I told myself that I could overcome these questions of if I can do it or not.

After a year of struggle, I started to find my rhythm again. I became more open to new ideas and training methods. I started to combine the things that I new, and the things that I was learning, and naturally training became much more exciting. As I began to show results in competition too, I regained my confidence again; both in the dojo and in competitions. I am sure that wherever he is...he will be looking out for us in Tokyo 2020.
As an educator with 20 years of experience focused on personalized learning for students and as a parent of a special needs child who has attended North Shore Dojo for over 5 years, I am a firm believer that Sensei Kohn provides the very best special education I’ve ever observed. In fact, his karate instruction can serve as a model for educators committed to reaching and teaching a population of differently abled students. I’ll focus on 3 essential special education principles that his instruction exemplifies: 1) differentiation; 2) modeling and scaffolding; and 3) inclusion.

Differentiation. If you watch Sensei manage a class of students, you will see a powerful model of instructional differentiation at work. From adapting levels of rigor for each individual learner (adjusting weight or equipment used, modifying activities, etc.) to breaking into small groups for activities at a range of challenge levels to focused one-on-one attention provided to specific learners, the classes are smooth and fluid demonstrations of what many education authors have written on: highly personalized learning within group settings. Here one can witness the best principles of differentiated instruction transformed into fun, engaging, challenging learning activities.

Modeling and Scaffolding. Sensei and his team understand gradual release – modeling and scaffolding movements, sequences, and basic skills thoughtfully and gradually building toward independent work from the student. Now this is no small task in a place where students are challenged by a wide spectrum of apraxia and ataxia, making the motor planning required for complex katas a major accomplishment. By isolating the micro-competencies needed for each element of a kata and building intentionally and patiently towards that complex choreography, students perform at levels that were not imaginable at first. A patient, consistent, rigorous approach to modeling and scaffolding of skills is at the heart of this powerful instruction. Watching this teaching over time is necessary to appreciate the intelligent planning behind it. Tasks that at first seem unrelated to karate – opening and closing clothes pins, dribbling a basketball, even drilling with flashcards – later are revealed to have built the essential precursor skills necessary for higher-order, more complex work. That’s simply great teaching informed by a very long view of the learning process.

Inclusion. Well, this is the big elephant in the room for special education. Where do these students belong? As we know, sadly, many school systems and school leaders do not proudly own these students and include them in the instructional and social culture of the school. The Dojo is completely integrated, a model of an inclusive environment. There are world-class, tremendously talented neurotypical teachers and students in his Dojo as well as both teachers and students with different abilities.

From this inclusive environment follow many important elements necessary for successful specialized learning: 1) community—it’s a warm, welcoming, safe environment, a place to take risks, a place to imagine new possibilities for yourself; 2) common standards—the bar is high for everyone: neurotypical and differently abled. There’s no babyish behavior tolerated. All too often the bar is way too low for our children with different abilities. As we know, when our students are properly challenged, they rise; 3) culture. There is evidence everywhere of a successful culture of learning and hard work: the students are a part of something much bigger than themselves.

Educators who wish to build a strong learning environment should adopt the 3 Cs: community, common standards, and culture. They should also work towards a vibrant, successful model for special education as well as the core principles of excellent instruction for all students. As Sensei would say, “This is ‘can-do’ karate, not ‘can’t-do’,” and that positive attitude says it all about the growth in learning and achievement that he and his students reach.” – Jeff Kohn
When you meet Ashley Davis, you will feel nothing less than the energy of someone seriously devoted to the sport of Karate. She started practicing karate at age 4. Her first teacher was Shihan Tokey Hill who instilled in her a great love for the sport and the desire to be a fierce competitor. Later on, she had the opportunity of training with several sensei and champions such as Sensei Cheryl Murphy, Djabrail Moukhtarov and Leonard Pinto.

“To me, the pursuit of good technique brings satisfaction and great happiness,” she says; “It is important to concentrate your mind and body on the execution of the techniques. I believe that using the body and mind in practical training will answer a lot of our questions in Karate. Sometimes, silence is golden.”
Have you trained in other Martial Arts besides Karate?

My older brothers were into Judo so when I was 6, my parents sent all of us to Judo Camp. On the last day of camp there was a tournament. I was disqualified for kicking my opponent in the head so Judo definitely wasn’t for me. I also did Tae Kwando for about a year through the Police Athletic League when I was 7. But Karate was always my sport!

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

For the first few years, I competed there were never girls in my division at local tournaments so I had to enter the boys division. They always thought they could beat me, but the only boy that ever beat me was my brother.

When I was 8 or 9 on Wednesday night’s fighters from Jersey, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens would come to the dojo to train. It was always packed. Sometimes National Teams from other countries would come too. The walls would shake from the “kiai” vibrating off of them. I was allowed to train with them. There was woman from the Turkish National Team who was training at the dojo at that time and I always wanted to fight her. She probably would have hurt me but I really believed I could beat her. Every young competitor should be able to experience training with such talent! I only wish I had been older so I could have learned more from the experience.

In 4th grade we had a Special Persons Day at school. Most kids had their parents or sibling or some other family member as their special person. My special person was Billy Finegan. He came into my class in his gi and did a board breaking demonstration just like they do at birthday parties. I had the best special person and all the girls in the class were so jealous of me!

I don’t remember a life without karate. Having three older brothers who were in judo and karate I didn’t have much choice but to learn the moves and hold my own quickly!

What made you enter in the competition world?

Competition was just part of our dojo culture. I always enjoyed meeting new people and traveling. One problem I had was that I would make friends with someone in my division and then I wouldn’t want to fight them. Sometimes I would let them win because I didn’t want them to be mad at me. I still struggle with that, sometimes, but I wouldn’t just let my friend win now!

What are the most important points in your current training methods, as an elite competitor?

I am still working on the transition from being a junior fighter to senior. It is definitely a process!

I am working on speed, agility and explosiveness. I have been doing more international competition this year so I am adjusting my training and strategies from what I have learned not only competing but watching all the European champions as they warm up and fight.

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

I grew up around some of the best fighters in the world such as Billy Finegan, Brian Ramrup, and Cheryl Murphy. It was always understood that you train hard because the way you train is the way you will fight. Some people don’t like that and will complain, “Oh you hit too hard” or “don’t punch me in the face.” Sometimes as a Junior I was like that too, but I realized that was not the mindset needed be a champion.
We always used the American names for moves: front kick, reverse punch, etc. Now when I train at dojos where traditional Japanese names are used I have to laugh at myself with how confused I get with the moves. It’s like learning a new language.

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

Kata is definitely an art. It is so beautiful to watch but it is also practical for kumite. I love watching bunkai. Sometimes wish I had continued training in kata, but kumite is my cup of tea. I was raised with the philosophy that kumite was a sport with the goal to fight and win.

I especially love Team Kumite! Team Fighting is definitely a sport. I love the strategies of being part of a team. I have been on a team with Brandi Robinson, Maya Wasowicz and Cheryl Murphy. Our team has been very successful at the US Open and PKF. We also fought at the WSKA World Shotokan Championships and killed it. Obviously, WKF bronze medal in Linz, Austria in 2016 is an amazing memory!

In the last year or so I have been fortunate to be welcomed into dojo that are more traditional and I am enjoying learning the beauty of their philosophies and practices. Karate is an art but the ultimate goal is to bring home the gold.

**How do you isolate yourself when preparing and training for an important championship?**

I pretty much stay by myself. I just zone out and people know to give me my space. I think all competitors are like that. During big competitions we say “hi” and are cordial to each other then once the competition is over we let loose. During competitions my Beats headphones are my best friend. I block out everything and just get into my zone. I listen to dance music on competition day. In the warm up area I will switch to rap music before I fight. Many athletes have a special routine or ritual they do to get them into that peak state before they compete. I haven’t found my routine yet.
Who would you like to have trained with that you have not?

I would love to train with the French and Egyptian National teams. One of my first sensei died very tragically and his death had a profound effect on me. I occasionally still think of him before I fight and dedicate some of my fights to him. He was member of the Dominican National Team and I would have loved to have had the opportunity to have learned more from him.

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

Go for it! Karate is a great sport, but it’s tough on many levels. I love teaching and watching the little kids grow as they get involved with the lessons. They become more confident and self-disciplined. I love it when a kid first comes to class and they are afraid to leave their parent but after a few classes they want to be the first in line for a drill. Parents often comment on how their children develop more self-esteem after a month or so of training.

A great side benefit of competing in karate is traveling and seeing places you may have never had the opportunity to go. I have been blessed to be able to travel around the country, South America and Europe. It has been a real eye opener and learning experience. After last year’s Jr. World’s in Indonesia we went to Bali to celebrate my birthday on an elephant preserve. I don’t think I would have ever been able to experience that if it wasn’t for karate!

What is it that keeps you motivated to keep competing?

It’s always a challenge. Every fight is a learning experience. I cherish every win and learn from every loss because I am determined never to lose from that person again! I love meeting people from different cultures and learning about their lifestyles, food and beliefs. We are so different but karate brings us together.

Honestly, I love being a New York fighter. We compete hard against each other at local tournaments and on a National level, but we are also very supportive of each other. On the Jr. Team there were many New Yorkers who made the Jr. Team. We were from different dojos but got together as a group to train every weekend between Nationals and the Jr. PKF. We pushed and supported each other. It was awesome!
Karate is finally part of the Olympic Games, what is your opinion about it?

I have always thought of Karate as an Olympic sport. I was fortunate growing up to be able to go to the Olympic Training Center in Lake Placid a couple of times a year to train. I was always excited to go because it is such a special place. It has incredible energy. One of the first things you see when you walk into the Lake Placid training center is a big display case with Shihan Tokey Hill’s World Championship “gi” signed by many athletes. It is a piece of karate history and every time I saw it I would get this funny feeling in my stomach. I got that same funny feeling when the announcement was made that Karate will now be part of the Olympic Games.

It will be interesting to see how the dynamics of the sport change because karate is now a part of the Olympic Games. This is a great time to be in Karate!

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

Training hard, dedication, perseverance and checking yourself. When it was announced that karate was going to be in the Olympic Games, I was thinking about what I have to do to make the team and more importantly to get on the podium in 2020. I thought of two non-karate people I know who are successful in their chosen sport. One is doing well but the other person is really killing it. I analyzed what they were doing differently and realized the person who was killing it didn’t take their success for granted. Even on the off-season they make every training, come on time, and nail every drill. Later in the day, I was at the gym and was getting ready to run on the treadmill. I noticed my phone was ready to die which meant I would have no music to run to. My first thought was, “I can’t run without music,” and was ready to skip the run that day. Then I had to check myself because I thought of the person who is killing it and realized they wouldn’t let a dead phone stop them from running.
What advice would you give to students on the question of supplementary training?

I enjoy taking cardio classes, yoga and swimming. I have to be careful with weights because I can bulk up and it slows me down. I love doing plyometrics. We used to do them at the Olympic Training Center before anyone else was doing them.

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

To train hard and train like you want to fight. Know that every call is not going to go your way and some matches are going to seem unfair, but don’t give up cause it’s all part of the game. When you lose, even though it’s hard you have to shake it off. Don’t make excuses; don’t dwell on what went wrong. It’s over, get over it and move on. Tomorrow is new day and a fresh start. Make the most of every opportunity that comes to you and never take opportunities for granted. Most importantly enjoy yourself, work hard and have fun!

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

I went through several years where I really did not like competing. I hated going to tournaments. When I was a junior in High School, I felt that karate was taking over my life and couldn’t balance my school/social life and karate life. That year I had just won a spot on the Junior National Team and on the plane ride home from Nationals I said to my mother, “I quit. I’m not going to the Jr. PKF. I’m done.” I stopped training for almost two years. Even though I enjoyed myself during that time I really missed training. I spoke to my sensei and explained that I wanted to get back into training but never wanted to compete again. That was in October. In May I signed up for a Nationals qualifier and my first fight was with Cheryl Murphy. It was surreal. All I remember was thinking, “This is my first fight in two years and as an adult and I’m in the ring against Cheryl Murphy.” I didn’t win, but I enjoyed the fight. I fought at Nationals that July and won a silver metal and discovered that I loved competing. I had lost a lot of ground during my two year hiatus. It was really hard coming back and frustrating because I felt I fell behind my peers who had grown through competing those two years I sat on the sidelines. I still feel that way, especially now that I’m fighting internationally. I don’t recommend taking long breaks in training and competing but I guess it was just part of the personal process I needed to go through. Now competing is my lifestyle and it’s all about what’s the next event and I wouldn’t want it any other way.

How important are your sponsors in your career?

As a child I was been blessed with many opportunities and assistance from the very beginning. When I first started karate I was sponsored by an organization called the Nassau County Sports Commission. Their mission was to introduce children to a variety of sports. If a child showed an exceptional talent in a specific sport they would occasionally continue to sponsor them in that sport. My brothers and I were part of those lucky few and they sponsored us for many years.
This year I was very fortunate to be sponsored by PUNOK. That sponsorship came a great time because my gear was in really bad shape!

Karate is an incredibly expensive sport. Going to a competition you have travel and hotel expenses for maybe 20 minutes or less of competition time. So if you spend $1,500 to go to a tournament that 20 minutes of competing is costing you $75 a minute!

I have to admit it was frustrating to see my friends getting full college scholarships for basketball, lacrosse or soccer when there really are no scholarship opportunities for karate athletes. My family has sacrificed a lot to support my participation in karate and sometimes it hasn’t been appreciated. My mother has heard complaints from my brothers and me about having us in a sport that didn’t have the same opportunities as other sports.

My mom always says if she hits lotto she will sponsor any New Yorker who make the Jr. Team or is second seat on the Sr. Team.

Hopefully there will be more individual and team sponsorship opportunities now that we are in the Olympics.

How did you prepare physical and mentally for the 2017 PKF Championships in Curacao?

I trained hard preparing for the 2017 PKF Championships. Most of the days were two practices per day. I trained at the gym, in the dojo, at the beach, just about anywhere I could. I surrounded myself with people who believed in me and encouraged me to do better. One of my favorite sayings is that “luck is when preparation meets opportunity.” Everything came together for this championship.

What expectations you had for this Championship during the preparation time before the event?

I came into this championship like I do every competition --- expecting to win. No other thought was in my mind. Victory was the only thing.

How did you feel in the first match?

I felt good the entire competition. It started out a little rocky with the first match starting with the other girl scoring on me with a kick to the head in the very beginning. I kept telling myself that I could do it one point at a time and that’s what I did.

What emotions you had when the referee announced you winner of the final match and the gold medal was around your neck?

I was so excited! I kept telling myself, “I freaking did it! I freaking did it.” It felt so good!

Was it hard to hold the tears in the podium when the national Anthem was playing?

Fortunately I had time to compose myself between winning the match and the medal ceremony, but yeah, it was tough holding back the tears when they played the National Anthem. It was definitely a proud moment!

Now after this Gold medal in the 2017 PKF, what are your plans?

I took a couple of days off to enjoy the paradise of Curacao, but then it was back to the grind. I’m preparing for the K1 in Toledo, then preparations for Nationals, the German Open and Team Trials. Always moving forward! USANKF
Born in Chiba prefecture on 16 August 1940, Kiyoshi Yamazaki immigrated to the United States in 1968 and has been a resident and instructor in Anaheim, California, since. Along the way, during those years, he received a certificate of excellence from the All-Japan Karate Do Federation (FAJKO) and competed in the All-Japan Karate Championships, where he was a kata and kumite finalist. Yamazaki sensei has a reputation for outstanding technique and a deep knowledge of the Japanese traditions. His skill and proficiency has led to many jobs in the film industry as both an actor and technical adviser. Some of his past positions have included being the Japan Karate Do Ryobu-kai Overseas Chief Instructor, USA National Karate Do Federation Technical Chairman, Pan American Karate Do Union Technical Chairman, and member of World Karate-do Federation Technical Committee. He is currently the President of the Japan Karate Do Ryobu-Kai. As a prominent teacher, Yamazaki sensei displays the qualities that are expected of a true master. Embracing the future, he feels that a great responsibility lies on his shoulders. But with dedicated passion and an amicable attitude, Sensei Yamazaki knows that a perfect balance can be achieved - a balance in which the art of karate-do becomes an international sport and, at the same time, maintains the true spirit and legacy of budo.
How long have you been practicing martial arts?

I have been practicing karate for almost 70 years. My father was a kendo instructor. He was very traditional and very strict. My brother and I began training under him at an early age. We would arise in the morning and, whether it was summer or winter, we went outside to practice our basic technique. Cut, cut, cut. Practice, practice, practice. After morning practice we would go to school, and during our lunch break we would return home for more practice. And after school ended, we would practice once more under my father's supervision. He was very strict and if you made the slightest mistake, BAM! – he would strike you with the shinai. He struck very firmly; there was no question of discipline. Sometimes I wondered if I really had a father. He would strike us so often, I would wonder, “Is this man really my father?” And needless to say, I was not too eager to return home and commence the afternoon session practice.

How many styles of martial arts have you trained in?

My first teacher was Master Yasuhiro Konishi and I trained in two different styles of karate: shotokai and shindo jinen-ryu. Ryobu-kai was founded by Master Konishi. He was a practitioner of Takeuchi-ryu jujutsu and was also a student of Morihei Ueshiba. Master Konishi’s background then was in jujutsu and aikido. Master Konishi studied under Gichin Funakoshi, so ryobu-kai is influenced by shotokan. But Choki Motobu, a relevant Okinawan teacher and fighter, and Kenwa Mabuni, who was one of the main instructors in Japan and recognized as an encyclopedia of kata because of his combination of naha-te, tomari-te, and shuri-te methods in the creation of shito-ryu, were master Konishi instructors. Ryobu-kai combines Master Konishi’s experiences as a practitioner of aikido and jujutsu, but the karate-do as-
pect is a highly evolved form of three major Okinawa styles. The approach of these three karate masters – Funakoshi, Mabuni, and Motobu – gave Konishi sensei a very peculiar approach and allowed him to develop a very efficient style that he named ryobu-kai.

This integration of Funakoshi, Motobu, and Mabuni teachings provides the ryobu-kai practitioner with a very flexible and adaptable method. Jujutsu and aikido allow a great deal of flexibility and effective techniques in close-range self-defense situations. Konishi’s goal was to create a well-balanced system without losing the friendship he had with all karate-do masters. Once Yasuhiro Konishi passed away, his son Takehiro Konishi took over as the leader of the style. In iaido, I studied the omori-ryu and kashima shinto-ryu methods.

How did you get involved in kobudo training?

My instructor was a very good friend of Master Nakazato Shugoro of Kobayashi shorin-ryu. Nakazato sensei also was a master in iaido and kobudo. In order to broaden my training, he arranged for me to study kobudo under Nakazato sensei in Okinawa. We practiced several times a day – and into the evening. A great deal of our practice was conducted outdoors, on all types of terrain. It was a great addition to understanding karate technique. Also, thanks to my instructor being a friend of Nakazato sensei, he gave me special instruction in kobudo – he taught me a favorite sai kata of his. But the actual training was very hard, intense training, good for technique and spirit. We would practice well into the night – and often kata special training was conducted at night to give the feel of using karate in the dark – and in different spaces. I was very fortunate indeed to study under him. My kobudo training, of course, was focused on the bo, tonfa, sai, nunchaku, and kama.

At the time of my training in Okinawa, I met Tadashi Yamashita, one of Nakazato sensei’s best students. We trained together there and became great friends. Then, of course, I returned to my studies in Japan. I did not see Yamashita sensei again for nearly 20 years. Then, one day at a tournament in Southern California, I turned around and saw him – what a surprise. It was one of the most ironic moments of my life.

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

While a student at the University of Tokyo, I studied shotokan - but I should say I studied with the shoto-kai group. There is a difference between the shotokan practiced in the Japan Karate Association and the shotokan of the shoto-kai. Shotokai is a branch of shotokan that traces its lineage directly to Shigeru Egami, one of the top Gichin Funakoshi students and a legend in karate history. Training in shoto-kai was very different. We never heard of tournaments; it was unthinkable. One practiced karate conditioning and kata training, but sparring was something very different than what we understand today. We did not practice jyu-kumite. Our sparring was limited to one-step sparring - ippon kumite. At the highest level, there was free one-step sparring - free in the choice of technique. And of course, when we sparred, we sparred very hard to attain kime and proper ma-ai (distance). The training was geared to developing explosive power – power delivered with one blow. This also helped us develop a sense of feeling our opponent’s opening, the right moment to attack decisively. When I first began to train, it was a totally different kind of training than you see today. It was traditional Japanese – very strict, and you never questioned your instructor. This philosophy made things difficult and I flunked my shodan test three times. I never knew why, and did not dare ask Konishi sensei why. More than 30 years later, he finally told me why I did not pass – he said I was overconfident! Back in those days, you didn’t know you would test until a day

“When I came to the United States in 1969, Westerners thought that karate was only about breaking boards and concrete blocks. I did do that to get people interested in what I was doing because that was what they wanted.”
or two before. You didn’t know what you would be tested on, either. You didn’t have three or four months to prepare your kata and sharpen your timing in kumite. The idea was that a real martial artist should be prepared at all times. Only when you give up the idea of rank will you realize that the study of karate is the study of your true self. In every moment of your life - not just the art of karate-do, or the art you are involved in - you must be ready to act.

How did Westerners respond to traditional Japanese training?

When I came to the United States in 1969, Westerners thought that karate was only about breaking boards and concrete blocks. I did do that to get people interested in what I was doing because that was what they wanted. Once they saw me do those things, I was able to slowly teach them real karate-do. The first question I always was asked back then was, “Can you break boards? How many?” I would respond to them by saying that usually wood and concrete don’t attack people and therefore that issue was irrelevant. People may attack you; that is why you need to learn real karate-do, not just a simple trick of breaking boards to impress people. Fortunately, most people today understand karate either as sport or as budo, so there’s no need to break boards and do crazy things to get their attention.

It must be kept in mind that Japan has a cultural tradition and educational background etched solidly in martial arts. Training attitudes therefore are very different: young people are not surprised to have their mistakes corrected by being struck by a shinai. Of course, this tradition is not the same as the cultural background and educational approach in America. There must be adaptations to make. This is a very interesting point. In Japan, one does not question the purpose of a certain technique or move from a kata. Westerners are eager to study martial arts, but in their own way. They also have a different attention span and attitude to training – and they are very interested in “how to” and applications, which I think simply is a reflection on the culture of the West.

Iaido is a good example of this. It is well understood in Japan that the art is a form of meditation – it is not a teaching of fighting technique with sword; it is a form of moving meditation. But my students in America want to know what this movement is and what the kata means. To keep their interest in training, it is necessary to elaborate on the application. For example, there is what is known as tate or tate-do in Japan. This dates from the development of kabuki theatre, which contains many dramatic stories and incidents that call for swordplay. The movements are dramatic but are extrapolated from traditional fencing movements. That is what I do to keep my students’ interest – I elaborate tate-do, show them the application that can be drawn from an iaido kata. But this is an intermediate stage, something done after the student begins. The student begins to train very enthusiastically, but then there comes a point at which he questions what he is doing. Tate helps to provide an answer. Then it becomes very important to move beyond that stage.

There is a great difference between choreography and the moving spirit of iaido. It becomes necessary to insure that form is correct and that a deeper, truer understanding of the art is reached. One may adapt training to the student – for example, it was common during my day to restrict kobudo training to advanced levels. This is not practical in the
Western world. I think kobudo is an important part of training because it helps coordination and balance. The more you train, the better your spirit and confidence become, which helps your overall control. You introduce weapons gradually to the student to keep his interest, to lead him further into the true budo. But then you become strict. You should adjust the pace to the student’s capability and his background, and then introduce the art.

How has your personal karate changed over the years?

I remember that in the beginning I had to train very hard. Since I started very young, it is difficult to say whether I was natural at the art or not. Of course, after so many years of training and dedication, one must have some natural ability. When I was in my 20s and 30s, my main emphasis was on attacking and offensive techniques – how to finish off an opponent completely in the fastest and most powerful way. In my 40s and 50s, I practiced more blocking and development of different methods of controlling the opponent without facing his power. Today, I focus on improving my spirit. When you reach a certain age, it is the spirit that keeps you going. Your body is left behind and your mind truly knows the limitations of your body. It is then that your spirit really pushes you forward. Although my stamina may not be the same as it was many years ago – and that is natural - the techniques I use still are the same. Their physical application is not based on power and speed but on deceptiveness. As long as you have a good, strong foundation developed through years of hard training, a good healthy spirit will keep you going. When the practitioner is young and strong, he can be very powerful and fast, but as you age you must learn how to adapt your body and not expect that the same physical qualities that made your karate strong will be important now. This is partly what is meant by the motto, “The man makes the art.” You always are changing how to train, the techniques you select, and the way you see your art as your body and mind change with age. Karate-do is my life and I put all the necessary time and effort to do my best by correctly promoting the art in all its different aspects.

What were the most important points of your teaching days?

Important aspects of my teaching involve how and what is being taught. I feel it is important to teach children the importance of a good education—not just karate kicks and punches, but the importance of excelling in their regular school as well. Education will be with them for the rest of their lives and will have a big influence in what they will become as adults. The physical techniques of karate-do should be used as a vehicle for that. For adults, I feel it is important to instill a sense of confidence and the importance of responsibility. These aspects of our karate training can be translated into how we conduct ourselves in our everyday lives. Better and more mature karate practitioners will become better human beings - and with better human beings, we all have a better world to live in.
With all the technical changes during the last 30 years, do you think there still are pure karate styles?

While there have been many changes to the karate tournament system over the years, and things may have changed and modernized, the elements of good karate have remained the same - strong basics and strong spirit. These two simple concepts can make any activity better over the years. Different ryu are important in budo. Ryu is a system developed by a martial arts master through years of training, experience, and dedication. Today, we don’t have that much time to dedicate to the art, so whatever was developed by the ancestors should be taken very seriously. It is not correct to take those different perspectives lightly. Life always is changing, so systems change. And that is natural. What is important is to understand and respect the changes and differences in the different ryu. By understanding those differences, we always will be able to remember our roots and at the same time appreciate what other styles have to offer. Knowing and practicing different styles of karate can be beneficial as long as the instructor teaching those styles understands and passes on the real essence to the students. Once again, it boils down to the teacher and how he shares the knowledge with the students.

Do you think that karate in the West has caught up with Japanese karate?

Japanese karate-do isn’t as fancy as other Western fighting methods, but it does attract a steady clientele of well-educated people who understand there is more to karate than just kicks and punches. Other styles seem to be fads, and those who are serious eventually find their way back to traditional karate. There are examples of world famous competitors who only practiced sparring and criticized kata training and the traditional aspects of the art. And guess what? Now they are teaching traditional katas and traditional karate. They should have thought a little more when they were younger and didn’t have such narrow minds, because their level as karate teachers would be higher today.

Basically, everyone does kicks and punches in any karate, regardless of their nationality. But I think the Europeans move very quickly and are extremely fast on their feet, while the Japanese don’t move too much. Japanese fighters are more static and base their offensive on pure speed. Europeans tend to fake a lot before an attack, which makes them very deceptive. Nowadays, it is almost impossible to hit someone with a clean shot. The competition level is very high, and the control of the fighting distance is extremely correct by the elite competitors. Europeans train more and are very versatile in their approach to kumite, so they have a different kind of confidence than seen in other parts of the world. Americans are very independent and also train well. America will be very strong in Olympic karate in the years to come, but they still have a long way to go when compared to the European countries.

I don’t think it is necessary for a person to train in Japan. Today, there are many good instructors here in the United States and all over the world. I do think that if you have the opportunity to visit Japan it is a good idea to experience a different culture. The atmosphere and environment will definitely help you to better understand...
stand the proper art—but from the physical point of view, it is not necessary. Just take a look at the names of Japanese instructors outside Japan—there are many and they are very good.

**Do you feel that you still have further to go in your studies?**

I don't think that anyone ever reaches a point at which they have learned all there is to know. I travel and give seminars in many countries and I learn something new all the time from the students—maybe not a new technique, but maybe I need to use a new approach to teach a certain person a karate movement. This simple fact makes me improve my teaching ability and therefore the general knowledge of that particular movement.

**How do you see Japanese karate in America and the rest of the world at the present time?**

Unfortunately, compared to other martial arts systems, there is not a high percentage of traditional Japanese karate schools in the United States. I think that many people feel uncomfortable when they first begin, but the longer they train, the more they want to know. They realize there is a deeper meaning to traditional training. I guess that to truly understand the real value of traditional karate-do, the practitioner needs to spend years training in the proper way and under a competent instructor. It is only after years of practice and a certain level of maturity that an individual will be able to perceive all the benefits of budo and not just stay on the surface of the physical movements, the tournaments, et cetera.

**What's your opinion about makiwara training?**

I think makiwara training sometimes is misunderstood. Some people simply think it is just to strengthen your fist and develop callused hands so other people are impressed when they look at your hands. Real makiwara training is much more than that. Proper tension should be felt throughout your body by using the connection between your wrist and your hip to achieve a correct whole body feel at the moment of impact. That feeling should be duplicated when we punch every time, because that’s the right kime. You need to use the makiwara properly so your body develops that important aspect of all techniques in karate—kime. Without kime, there is no technique in karate-do.

**Do you think a practitioner's personal training should be different from what he teaches?**

I think instructors should have at least one class a month dedicated to training themselves in those important areas they need to develop. I also think that instructors can get personal training while they teach. A good instructor should show techniques slow and fast. This is the time to demonstrate good solid basics. This also is part of your training. In fact, if you teach five classes a day and you perform 100 gyaku-tsuki per class, by the end of the day you will have punched 100 times with each hand. Of course, it is advisable that the instructor doesn’t use the class for his own training, but whatever he has to do in class should be used for his own benefit, too. When he performs for the students, he is receiving the benefits of doing the techniques over and over.
What is wrong is that some instructors, after showing the techniques a few times for the students, keep repeating the technique for their own benefit instead of going and correcting the pupils. And that’s not right. The instructor’s main objective in class is to teach and to correct the students, not to train himself. He should allocate time for his own personal training and development.

When teaching the art of karate, what is the most important element: self-defense, sport, or tradition?

Self-defense, sport, and tradition all are important elements of the art. You don’t want to separate them. Which one is more important depends on your own personal goals. What is important is that each one relies on good solid basics. If you are more focused on developing self-defense techniques, then make sure your foundation is good. If you want to compete, make sure your kihon is good enough to get you there, etc. A good and strong foundation is the base for anything you want to do. Kata and kumite should be divided 50–50. The karateka should balance his training because the path to perfection—a perfection that never is achieved, by the way—is based on balance. This balance should keep the practitioner on the right track, preventing him from going too much into one single aspect of the art. Your karate-do should be technically balanced. If you can do good kata but you cannot perform good kumite, then there is something wrong—and vice versa. Being good at kumite but performing poorly at kata is a sign of unbalanced training.

What do you consider to be the major changes in the art since you began training?

The basic difference between today’s training and when I started is that today’s training is easier. It’s not as strict as it was in the past. When I started, your instructor was your master—you never questioned him. You addressed someone saying “ousu”—a word that had a different meaning back then. If Mr. Funakoshi, Miyagi, Motobu, or Mabuni sensei saw our training today, I think they would be shocked—truly shocked.

I agree with the idea that karate today is also a sport. I also feel it is very important that an instructor know the difference between sport karate and self-defense—it will make a difference in how and what an instructor teaches. Karate is several things at the same time: a great physical activity, a martial art, a self-defense method, and a great sport. We need to educate future instructors correctly because they will be the ones carrying on the art and the sport without losing the values of budo.

What would you say to someone who is interested in learning karate-do?

The first thing I would tell someone is that it is not like what you see on TV or in the movies. All that stuff doesn’t belong to the art of karate-do. Budo and martial arts in general are deeper in meaning than what people see in movies. Movies sometimes are good because they bring exposure to the martial arts, but sometimes they are bad, too, because they misinform and give the wrong impression of what martial art training is all about.

Movies show action. It’s exciting and draws people to martial arts. But one preserves the essence and the spirit and tries to lead the individual further on. So it is with adapting instruction. With my pupils, I introduce a weapon into training at the green belt level. I introduce the bo first, because it is a very good weapon for developing overall coordination, and the student now has something new and exciting. So his techniques begin to improve from practicing with the bo while his
interest is held. Then, you introduce sai and tonfa—they develop the wrist. Again, you strengthen the student's karate technique while maintaining interest. You are drawing the student closer to reaching a deeper understanding of budo while trying to avoid the plateaus that affect everyone in training.

Adapting teaching methods can aid the development of the student greatly. If you practice seriously, your body will know the techniques. If something happens, your body will react automatically—proper practice is the most important thing to remember. It won't matter if you are in an airplane, in the snow, if it's day or night—if you have practiced, your body will have the strength, balance, and coordination to use the techniques without having to think about it. You body will have a mind of its own.

You have been involved in teaching actors for movies, is that correct?

Yes, it is true. I instructed Arnold Schwarzenegger in sword techniques for Conan, the Barbarian. I also was involved in other productions like Dune, Dragonheart, and others. It is always a fun and interesting experience. But it is not real martial arts.

What keeps you motivated after all these years?

Teaching others motivates me. It is an opportunity to share with others what I have learned, so I want to be in good condition to do the demonstrations and to bring the art into other people's lives. I have also taken up golf. I have found that golfing motivates my mind and my spirit. It's very interesting. Also, iaido training always has been a key motivator for me. Martial arts training offers an opportunity to expand knowledge—not just the knowledge of budo, but knowledge of different cultures and people. As this knowledge grows and people are introduced to the benefits of budo and how it can enrich their lives—how it fits into the lives of people from different cultural backgrounds—we all benefit, not just in martial arts, but in terms of the largest goals of the budo, which are peace, understanding, and harmony.

Do you think it is necessary to engage in free-fighting to achieve good fighting skills in the street?

Kumite in the dojo or in competition and street fighting are two different ways of fighting. Training in kumite will help keep you in shape for any type of fighting; however, actual kumite techniques are not a part of street fighting. Self-defense techniques are completely different than those used for kumite. If you approach a self-defense situation as you would a competition, you are going to be in big trouble. Every karateka should know this and study both aspects separately. Those qualities developed in competition; reflex, speed, proper distance, et cetera, will help you in a self-defense situation. But forget about jumping around and scoring with a gyaku-tsuki; you need a more decisive approach and more decisive techniques.

How do you feel about bunkai?

I think bunkai is very important. It brings karate to another level. When you understand bunkai, a lot of things are revealed to you. You need to know how to look at kata and its bunkai. Even deeper meanings are found in its oyo, which involves a deeper and analytical use of the same techniques used in kata and developed in bunkai.

What is the philosophical basis for your karate training?

My basic philosophy for my karate training is to keep good health and spirit in your life, and use it as motivation to train. When you can do this, your karate training becomes an integral part of a healthy life, on or off the dojo floor. For many people, karate-do starts in the dojo and finishes in the dojo, but this is wrong. Yes, karate-do
started for you the first day you entered in a dojo, but it should be with you all the time. There has to be karate-do in everything you do.

**Do you have a memorable experience that has inspired your training?**

Many years ago, I was in a car accident. I was in the hospital for three months with a paralyzed hip. I had no leg movement and, needless to say, that was a very tough situation for me—not only physically, but emotionally as well. Returning to the practice of karate motivated me and brought my spirit up and helped me to work hard in physical therapy—which was a very challenging phase. My doctors said I recovered from my injuries three times faster than they thought I would, and were amazed I was able to walk again in such a short time. I owe it to those qualities developed through hard karate training. The practice of karate-do is the development of body, mind, and spirit, using physical techniques. These are the basics of karate-do, but they also can be used in everyday life.

**How can a practitioner increase his or her understanding of the spiritual aspects of karate?**

To understand the spiritual aspects of karate through discussion is difficult. It is not something you can talk about and know. It doesn’t work that way. I always tell people to just do it. It is only when they practice themselves that they gain insight into what karate is all about. Karate-do, as any art in budo, can be realized only through personal practice and not through words said by someone else. It also is important to understand the fact that when we are young, sport competition may be a relevant aspect of our training, but when we get older, the idea of being better than anyone else is kind of ridiculous.

**How much training should an older karateka do to improve and get better at the art?**

Students who begin karate as adults can be educated easily on the philosophy and history of karate, but their coordination and body movement may be limited due to their age. They should train as much as they can, but not worry about accomplishing fancy techniques and high kicks. They should train using step-by-step techniques and concentrate on doing the basics very well. They will improve quickly and be able to develop a very mature form of karate-do.

**Is there anything lacking in the way martial artists are taught today?**

When I first began training, instructors thought only about making strong bodies with strong techniques. Today, many instructors are thinking about making a good income. I understand that this is how times have changed and that’s how many need to survive in today’s world. True feeling and right motivation are the foundations of budo. There are things in tradition that are worthy to hold onto. Money should not be the main reason we do things.

**What do you see as the most important attributes for a student?**

The important attributes of a student include a strong body, motivation to keep learning, and a good understanding of the true meaning of karate. The most important aspect every karateka should keep in mind is to train hard. Also, training in kobudo and other weaponry arts like iaido will help the student very much. Iaido is particularly important because of the many Japanese martial arts’ philosophies involving the use of the katana. This weapon is a symbol for all budo practitioners.

**Why do a lot of students start falling away after two-three years of training?**

I believe some students stop training because they are not motivated by their instructor. While students must be responsible for their own training, many instruc-
tors try to control their students too much. A healthy balance of the instructor’s input and the student’s willingness to learn is needed. On the other hand, the student should understand that martial arts training doesn’t bring rewards the way we receive them in our daily jobs. We work and we make money. In budo, the gain is not visible—it is not that clear. The process is indirect and things should be discovered.

There is very little written about you in magazines. You obviously do not thrive on the publicity like some martial artists do. Why is that?

Not much has been written about me because I have been selective about what is published. If I am quoted in a publication, or if photos of one of my demonstrations are published, the information must be exact—techniques must be correct. I have a responsibility not only to myself, but to my students and organization, to show and say things correctly. I am still learning things and there still are ideas out there that I don’t understand. I have been more vocal on training children and self-defense because I am more confident in those areas. Eventually, I would like to write a book about my thoughts on the philosophy of karate and how to develop good spirit. I would like it to be helpful to everyone, not just karate people. True karate-do goes beyond rank, black belts, trophies, and tournaments. In some way, I would like to share this.

Have you felt fear in your karate training?

I have been fearful thinking about someone attacking me. Because of my karate training, I know what I can do to an attacker. Because of my karate training and who I am, I would have to fight back. Win or lose, it would be a shameful situation. Fear is an important part of the training of karate-do, but you should control this emotion and use it properly for your own benefit. Sometimes, fear is a great thing because it forces you to be prepared for whatever may come. You may feel fear and then you know you have to prepare yourself to the best of your abilities. Then, the better you prepare, the better you will do in anything in life. Fear is not a bad thing. It is good if you know where it comes from and how to use it for your own advantage.

What are your thoughts on the future of karate do and the Olympics?

I think the future for karate looks good and the Olympics can be a huge step forward—but only if we do it the right way. I hope sponsors will support our athletes, coaches, judges, and referees in the process. The negative aspect of karate in the Olympics could be that the focus of training will be toward the Games and will move away from budo ethics and morals. The teaching of karate’s history and philosophy may be lost and the traditional system of training may be diluted. This is why it is so important that today’s instructors have a good understanding of our roots, so they can pass it on to the next generation. The sportive aspects will bring more practitioners to karate, but it will be on the instructors’ shoulders to teach the true essence of budo in order to perpetuate the art in the proper way, for the generations to come. USANKF
Team USA athletes were invited to participate in an international team camp, which was held in Bally’s Las Vegas Hotel Monday through Wednesday before competition. The majority of Team USA athletes were able to come together for the first time since Team Trials in Colorado Springs to train together as a team. Led by Head Coach, Tommy Hood, the team practiced twice a day along with athletes from the Canadian and Guatemalan National Teams. This gave the team time to train together, alongside international athletes.

The middle of the week also brought a chance for Officials to renew or obtain referee licenses. USA Karate is happy to announce over 60 referees participated in the course, led by WKF Referee Secretary Robert Hamara, to renew or upgrade their licenses. Over 20 Referees received either a new or upgraded license.

Returning to the schedule this year was the Elite Champions Seminars, held the Thursday leading up to competition at Bally’s Las Vegas Hotel. Here, competitors had the opportunity to attend seminars taught by International World Champions. The lineup included Sandra Sanchez, World Medalist and #1 WKF ranked in Female Kata, Douglas Brose, World Champion and #1 WKF ranked in -60kg Male Kumite, Antonio Diaz, World Champion and #1 WKF ranked in Male Kata, and Jesus Del Moral, World renowned Kata Coach. Each seminar was filled with guidance and feedback under the leadership of these Elite athletes, as participants learned new skills and practiced them under their watch.

Day one of competition started bright and early with the Junior International Cup (JIC). The JIC, consisting of 1000 participants under the age of seventeen, started with kata and finished up with all kumite divisions. Divisions in this
Female - 50Kg

SHANNON NISHI-PATTON VS. JUSLEEN VIRK
competition included beginner, novice, intermediate and advanced, with our youngest competitors under the age of five!

The USA Open started Saturday morning and continued through early Sunday afternoon featuring Kata, Kumite and Para-Karate competition. Over 1,400 athletes competed on twelve tatamis as their teammates from around the World supported them from the stands. The USA Open competition had some strong competitors, as over 40 Countries were represented.

Fine Designs provided the event apparel and Brentwood Digital was there taking pictures throughout the event as requested, as well as each medal ceremony at the podium. Photos are available on their website BrentwoodDigital.us. Other vendors included Asian World Martial Arts, Arwaza, Adidas USA, PUNOK, Budo Mart America, Uventex Labs, Happy Song, and Martial Arts of America. USA Karate also had a booth for any membership purchase, renewals or benefit questions, along with USA Karate pins, magnets and stickers available for a small donation.

Sunday evening brought the highly anticipated 18 – 34 Elite Division finals. As tradition stands, the doors of the Champagne ballroom opened and the room was quickly flooded with people of every age and level. The event included 14 divisions over two tatamis and was streamed on Facebook Live. Highlights included Sandra Sanchez of Spain winning gold with a flawless kata, Elisa Fonseca of the USA returning from retirement to win gold in the -68kg category and Douglas Brose of Brazil’s gold medal match in the -60kg division. The 2017 USA Open brought strong competition from all over the world and we couldn’t be more proud of how the USA competed. The USA sent five athletes into the 18 – 34 Elite finals for a chance at the Gold. USA earned fifteen medals; 1 Gold, 4 Silver and 10 Bronze!

Other highlights of the evening included Team USA Para-Karate athletes Kevin Kucbor (intellectually impaired) and Sabahudin Tricic (visually impaired) demonstrating a kata for the crowd together, and Sensei Kiyoshi Yamazaki receiving a WKF 8th Dan for his dedication to the sport. Sensei Yamazaki received his award onstage from USA Karate President John DiPasquale and CEO Phil Hampel, with his daughter Mina at his side. Team Peru (Oliver Del Castillo Delgado, Carlos Lam Martinez, John Edgar Trebejo Fernandez) performed a demonstration of their Gold Medal Team Kata.

As always, USA Karate is very thankful for our officials, volunteers and members all of whom make competitions like this possible. Thank you for your continued support and promotion to the incredible sport of Karate. See you in Greenville for the National Championships and Team Trials. USANKF
Female - 55Kg

STELLA M. URANGO MARTINEZ VS. MARCELA BEDOYA LOSADA
Female - 61Kg

GUADA CABALLERO SANTIAGO VS. PAULA FLORES
2017 US OPEN RESULTS

18 – 34 Male Elite –60kg
1. DOUGLAS BROSE, BRAZIL
2. MAXIMILIANO LARROSA, URUGUAY
3. JOVANNI MARTINEZ, VENEZUELA
3. MIGUEL SOFFIA, CHILE

18 – 34 Male Elite –67kg
1. GUILLERMO RAMIREZ, COLOMBIA
2. BRIAN HILLIARD, UNITED STATES
3. DANIEL ESPARZA NIÑO, MEXICO
3. ISRAEL SANTANA, CHILE

18 – 34 Male Elite –75kg
1. THOMAS SCOTT, UNITED STATES
2. ALEXANDER NICASTRO, VENEZUELA
3. LI DIAZ, ECUADOR
3. GERMAN CHARPENTIER, CHILE

18 – 34 Male Elite –84kg
1. JORGE ACEVEDO, CHILE
2. ADHAM SABRI, EGYPT
3. KAMRAN MADANI, UNITED STATES
3. MERIS MUHOVIC, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

18 – 34 Male Elite +84kg
1. CARLOS BESNE-IRIGOVEN, MEXICO
2. FRANKLIN MINA GUERRÓN, ECUADOR
3. DANIEL GAYSINSKY, CANADA
3. DAVOUD ASHRAFIAN JAZI, UNITED STATES

18 – 34 Male Elite Open Kumite
1. DOUGLAS BROSE, BRAZIL
2. ADHAM SABRI, EGYPT
3. DANIEL GAYSINSKY, CANADA
3. GERMAN CHARPENTIER, CHILE

16 – 34 Male Elite Kata
1. DAMIAN QUINTERO, SPAIN
2. DAVID CONTRERAS, COLOMBIA
3. ARIEL TORRES, UNITED STATES
3. WILLIAM GATCH, UNITED STATES
Female - 68Kg
ELISA FONSECA VS. BIANCA MAFRA

2017 US Open

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Volume 5  39
Female + 68Kg
ANA IS MENDOZA LIZARRAGA VS. CIRRUS LINGL
Female Kata

SANDRA SANCHEZ VS. CARLA REYES
Male - 60Kg

DOUGLAS BROSE VS. MAXIMILIANO LARROSA
Male - 60Kg

DOUGLAS BROSE VS. MAXIMILIANO LARROSA
LAS VEGAS, NV

Male - 67Kg

GUILLERMO RAMIREZ VS. BRIAN HILLIARD
2017 USA KARATE

KUMITE

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Male - 75Kg
THOMAS SCOTT VS. ALEXANDER NICASTRO
2017 US OPEN RESULTS

18 – 34 Female Elite –50kg
1. SHANNON, NISHI, UNITED STATES
2. JUSLEEN VIRK, CANADA
3. CHEILI GONZALEZ, GUATEMALA
3. JUNA TSUKII, UNITED STATES

18 – 34 Female Elite –55kg
1. STELLA M URANGO MARTINEZ, COLOMBIA
2. MARCELA BEOYA LOSADA, COLOMBIA
3. VALENTYNA ZOLOTAROVA, CANADA
3. CONSTANZA PAREDES, CHILE

18 – 34 Female Elite –61kg
1. XHUNASHI GUADA CABALLERO SANTIAGO, MEXICO
2. PAULA FLORES, MEXICO
3. MAIKE STEFFEN MAC OLIVEIRA, BRAZIL
3. JAVIERA GONZALEZ, CHILE

18 – 34 Female Elite –68kg
1. ELISA FONSECA, UNITED STATES
2. BIANCA MAFA, BRAZIL
3. SACHIKO PAULINA RAMOS AKITA, MEXICO
3. LORENA SALAMANCA, CHILE

18 – 34 Female Elite +68kg
1. ANA IS MENDOZA LIZARRAGA, MEXICO
2. CIRRUS LINGL, UNITED STATES
3. GUADALUPE QUINTAL, MEXICO
3. DIANNA SPENCE, UNITED STATES

18 – 34 Female Elite Open
1. VALERIA ECHEVER MARMOLEIO, ECUADOR
2. KATHRYN CAMPBELL, CANADA
3. MAYA WASOWICZ, UNITED STATES
3. BRANDI ROBINSON, UNITED STATES

16 – 34 Female Elite Kata
1. SANDRA SANCHEZ, SPAIN
2. CARLA REYES, CANADA
3. MINAKO YAMAZAKI, UNITED STATES
3. SAKURA KOKUMAI, UNITED STATES
Male - 75Kg

THOMAS SCOTT VS. ALEXANDER NICASTRO
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Male Kata
DAMIAN QUINTERO VS. DAVID CONTRERAS
Male Kata
DAMIAN QUIINTERO VS. DAVID CONTRERAS
Open Male
DOUGLAS BROSE. VS. ADHAM SABRI
Open Male

DOUGLAS BROSE. VS. ADHAM SABRI
Para-Karate
SABAHUDIN TRICIC AND KEVIN KUCBOR
Para-Karate
SABAHUDIN TRICIC AND KEVIN KUCBOR
Winners
Winners
USA Karate Competition Seminars were led by one of the most relevant and sought-after kumite coaches in the world, Sensei Antonio Oliva. The National Federation has been closely working with Sensei Oliva to benefit from his scientific kumite program in the United States and better prepare for Tokyo 2020.

Two straight weekends, one in Chicago and one in New York, the competitors and members of the USA team, had the opportunity to correct mistakes, refine sparring strategies and get a personalize analysis of their strength and weaknesses in competition. Different elements of elite competition were analyzed in detail: offensive and defensive maneuvers, psychological profile of athletes, emotion and intensity management, tactics and strategies depending of the score and the time of the match, amongst many others aspects. In elite competition, the matches are not simply a game of physical ability but also a match of strategies and tactics.

Sensei Oliva carefully explained these fundamental and advanced strategies through different kumite drills and training protocols that employed the face punch, stomach punch, front kick, round house kick and specially the “broken rhythm” principle. The different kumite elements completed the initial training progression of the first days and brought the competitors to full circle of the most basic moves executed at a very high technical level with a complete tactical plan behind the physical actions.

Sensei Oliva will be returning to the US for more training with members of the national team, both seniors and juniors. Stay tuned for dates and information.

ANTONIO OLIVA SEBA, 8th. Dan WKF

Antonio Oliva is one of the pioneers of European Martial Arts and a world leader in the study and teaching of Tactics. Mr. Oliva is a Founding Member of the CICAC (Centre for Scientific Research on Martial Arts and Combat Sports). He is the author of: “Formalization of Sports Karate”, 1982; “Martial Arts Practical Encyclopedia”, 1985 and “Supreme Combat”, 2002.

He was born on 16 February 1948 in Lloret de Mar, Spain. He won the first five Spanish National Karate Championships (1970-1975) and was runner up in the lightweight division of the European Championships held in Cristal Palace, London, in May 1974. His technical and coaching talents took the Spanish National Team from complete anonymity to astonish the Karate world by winning the team event and also 10 individual medals at the World Championships in 1980.

Today, his “Sports Karate Coaching System” is respected and followed the world over. He has been teaching a total of 57 different countries: 27 in Europe, 8 in Asia, 8 in Africa, 11 in America and 3 in Oceania. In the last two Karate World Championships most of the medalist countries have competed using his technical and tactical approaches.
Originally from Bosnia, Sabahudin Tricic, age 48, has been practicing the art of karate for over 35 years. About his early years in karate he says:

“As a kid I loved Bruce Lee movies and such and when they opened a dojo in our small city of Rudo, I was quick to sign up. My parents were happy to have me do it as well. The program was small and we had no real place to practice so we met in the hallway of the school. When they saw that we were serious about our work, eventually they allowed us to go in the school gym. Our sensei was a Bosnian guy, a brown belt, who loved karate. We were all learning together. This was when I developed my true love for the sport.”

After finishing high school, Sabahudin went to the university in Sarajevo where he lived with his uncle in a neighboring suburb. He was studying for a degree in mechanical engineering and never stopped pursuing his dream of karate. He was (in his own words) “a kumite guy”, as in kumite was his main focus, fighting at -75 kilos.

“In Sarajevo I found a real dojo. A professional, high level dojo. After about 6 months I became a member of the Bosnian national team. I loved every minute of really practicing and competing in kumite. I fought -75 kilos and in 1988-89 I took first place in the Bosnia championship. In 1989-90 took the gold medal in the Balkan championships. I wanted to go as far as I could in karate.”
But in 1991 war started in Sarajevo, and enemy Serbian forces surrounded the city. He was trapped and couldn’t return back to his uncle’s home in the suburbs. Their area was among the first to be hit by enemy fire. Like a refugee, basically, and he went to stay often in a bomb shelter, and this is where he met his future wife, Lejla.

“We would stay in the bomb shelter on and off, my aunt was a nurse working 24/7 in the hospital. My uncle was working in maintenance. We played chess and talked to pass the time. In December 1992, walking down the street, in one of these bombings, a motor shell exploded right in front of me. That’s when I lost my sight. Well actually to be clear I lost my eyes entirely, but I didn’t know that right away.”

They took him to the hospital, a field hospital, and there was no water, no heat, and no real equipment. They did the surgery on his eyes under a flash light. Conditions were very poor and he had a big chance of getting infections. The doctors were recommending that he go out and get help. The problem was the Serbian enemy forces surrounding the city.

He started training karate again three or four days after the accident. He had been training every day and therefore it was part of his being. He couldn’t see, with the bandages wrapped around his head, but he was stretching and keeping his body limber and ready. He was 24 years old.

So he and Lejla decided to sneak out in between bunkers. Sabahudin had no sight and Lejla had to guide him. They made it out, with her guiding him by the arm. Sneaking under barbed wire fences in the middle of the night, Lejla ripped her jeans. She fell into the barbed wire because she was making sure Sabahudin wouldn’t step on a mine.

“We still have these jeans and we show them to our children so they know what we experienced.”

They took around a month to travel to Croatia, which was a safe place. And there they contacted Immigration to ask for help to come to the USA. Sabahudin was matched with a sponsor for medical treatment in Madera, California, but as only a girlfriend, Lejla
couldn't get visa. At the time, he didn't know that he didn't have eyes anymore. They were completely destroyed by the explosion. Doctors were recommending he get extensive surgery after arriving in the US, but he didn't want to do it until she arrived.

“I barely spoke any English and there weren’t a lot of Bosnians in Madera, CA. But the doctors who helped me get to the US secured me an apartment and medical treatment. They were very kind and understood that I needed to wait for Lejla to arrive before I could go forward.”

Immigration re-routed her and after about a month she was able to come to California. He had the surgery that day. After she came they stayed in Madera for 6 months and they got married there. There were a series of human interest news stories on them on CNN, BBC, Fox News, etc., regarding their escape, their struggle and their great love.

Regarding his practice of karate, he took no time off. Immediately when he came to USA he found a dojo in Madera, and then after moving to Fresno he found the dojo of Sensei Will Cho where he stayed practicing for 20 years.

“At the time of my accident, I was a brown belt who specialized in kumite. But now I had no sight, so kumite was out. But I couldn't leave karate. So I started over. I went back to yellow belt and made my way up through the ranks to get my black belt with Sensei Cho. Then after that I took the tests for my Nidan and Sandan with USA NKF.”

Upon moving to Fresno in 1993, Sabahudin enrolled in California State University. He worked hard to learn the English language and applied himself fully. He felt that God gave him this opportunity to live and start life fresh and he enrolled in Computer Science
major. Even though that he had finished a lot of courses in Sarajevo, there was no way to access any of those records. So, once again, just like karate, he had to start completely over from the beginning. He completed his degree in 1999 in Computer Science and was still competing in karate in Las Vegas in the typical kata divisions. He took 5th place in the Ozawa cup in Las Vegas in 1999.

Still married to Lejla, the love of his life, he has 4 children ages 19, 17, 7 and 2. His older two kids have black belts and compete regularly. His younger daughter is 7 and is an orange belt and his baby son is 2 years old and knows how to say “Heian Shodan” and stand in Yoi. USANKF
SNEAK PEAK....
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ANTONIO ESPINOS VISITS USOC IN COLORADO SPRINGS
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH W.K.F PRESIDENT!
“TOKYO 2020 is just the beginning!”
By Minobu Miki

The book titled “Kobo Kenpo Karate-Do Nyumon” (Entrance to the way of the fist: Offensive-Defensive Karate-Do)” by Kenwa Mabuni, the founder of Shito-Ryu, was published in March 1938. Kenwa Mabuni co-authored this book with Genwa Nakasone, the publisher of many articles and books about the culture of Okinawa, especially on the subject of Karate-Do.

In this work, Kenwa Mabuni explains the details of technical aspects in many chapters as well as delving into consideration of the Japanese spirit as reflected in the era of Imperial Japan and its relationship to Karate-Do.

In this work, Kenwa Mabuni explains the details of technical aspects in many chapters as well as delving into consideration of the Japanese spirit as reflected in the era of Imperial Japan and its relationship to Karate-Do.

A good example of the depth of the examination of technical aspects in this book is the analysis of “Ukekata no Go Genri”: The Five Principles of Blocking. Those principles: Rakka (Fallen Flower), Ryusui (Flowing Water), Kusshin (Contraction and Expansion of body), Ten-I (Changing the position), and Hangeki (Counter Attack).

In this article, I will explain these defensive techniques in a simple manner with a few examples. In the actual application, one may apply several techniques utilizing a few mixed principles rather than using only a single principle by itself. I have analyzed and rationalized techniques in Katas and Kumite. Most of the techniques are in the five principles of these blocks. These explanations will aid in the comprehension of many difficult techniques, along with their principles and rules. However, I remind you that these principles of blocking work well when applied with the method of Ten Shin Ho (Body Shifting).