

SHINTANI TEAM TRIP HIGHLIGHTS TO SASKATCHEWAN,

November 1997

By Sensei Ron Mattie, Welland, Ontario.

The training began on Friday from 8pm till 12 mid-night, then 8am till 10am Saturday just before the tournament followed by another session on Sunday at 5am till 7am. The tournament was part of the training program. The team was told that they were not there to necessarily win, but to work on their weaknesses and improve their strengths as well as working on their character. I made changes on the timing in their kata, not necessarily to improve it, but to test them on character, willingness to accept change and how quick they can adjust to changes. I told them that if you think you're good enough to be on the team then you won't restrict yourself from learning or by putting up barriers to prevent you from performing will. The difference between an amateur and a pro is that an amateur must have everything going in his favor like enough sleep, the weather, etc. to perform well, while a pro performs consistently well no matter what the conditions are. I was very proud of the team. They all behaved well on and off the dojo floor.

I feel we have a very good team with members full of talent and enthusiasm. I have witnessed the starting of a bond between the team members that will definitely strengthen in the next gathering, which probably will last a lifetime.

In closing, Sensei Peter Ruch did a fabulous job of organizing every little detail, keeping the team on schedule as well as public speaking at the tournament on behalf of the team. I felt that the audience was very impressed by what Sensei Ruch had to say and it left a very good impression of the team.

A JUDGE'S PERSPECTIVE: Part 2

By Sensei Neil Prime, St.Catharines, Ontario.

Reprint from the Niagara North Newsletter, Volume 17.

As stated in the 1st of this 2-part article, judging is an acquired role by Black belts. It is an acquired role yes, but like every other responsibility of wearing a Black belt it is a role that should not be taken lightly. It is your responsibility as a judge to be 100% impartial and 100% alert.

As a corner judge you should be aware of your physical presentation. Do not slouch in your chair or sit back as though you are lounging in front of the TV. Just as the Karateka must present themselves in an appropriate manner (eg. when doing kata they must show confidence and conviction) you must show that you are also alert and interested in what they are doing.

When scoring a kata there is generally an average range that you will use as a group. The most important rule of scoring kata is consistency. Do not raise or lower your score to coincide with other judges, even if your score seems unusually high or low. Keep on judging with the same biases for all the other competitors.

Between 5 judges, opinions may vary. Some judges look more at power and speed while others look for precision of the technique and how the technique looks. That is perfectly fine because kata should be a combination of speed, power and technical presentation. If you have them all put together in the right combination all the judges will notice accordingly.

When I am scoring kata I keep in mind the competitor that I have given the highest score. If you can remember your 3 highest scores, this is even better. If I score the 1st competitor a 7.0, the next competitor must obviously have a better kata to receive a higher score. Give yourself a range to work with. If you only go up or down by .1 it makes it more difficult to separate a good kata from an average kata. Even if you feel after the 5th or 6th competitor that the scores are not separating high or low you must keep in mind the score of the best (3 if you can) kata.

I have seen many 2nd and 3rd place katas lost when a competitor comes along in the middle of the pack with the winning kata. The average then jumps from 7 to 7.5 because the judges have not dropped the scores for the next competitors accordingly. This is just as adverse as raising or lowering your score to re-align your score to the other judges.

When judging kumite you might think that it should be less opinionated than kata, but if you review the first part of this article in Newsletter #16 you will see that personal opinion can play a very large role on how you score a match. I think the most important rule to remember is to call what you see and only what you see. Remember, this is controlled light contact to the body and no contact to the head so you must see clearly to be able to give an honest opinion.

It can be very frustrating to a competitor when they have points scored on them that have actually been blocked or have been out of range. Nobody is perfect, and I don't know any Black Belt that will claim that they see every point in a match but you must be sure that you can see the points before rewarding them. One of the strategies of a good tournament fighter is to place themselves in

view of the judges when executing an attack and to try to cut off an angle when an attack is coming at them. That's just the way light contact works.

I can tell you from fighting full contact that it is harder to defend yourself when sparring for points than it is when you can cut off a lot of techniques with a good hard jab or rolling out of a hard kick by absorbing the contact with your arms rather than trying to show a clear block and counter. When point fighting the judges are generally not able to honestly score a fading or weaving style of defense, nor can these defensive tactics be executed as easily from a non-contact perspective. Even though you may be evading the technique it may still look like you are going to be scored on and you'll never know if it was there or not unless there is contact.

I remember being told that I should change the way I was blocking a front kick. What I was doing is known as a "kip" motion with my hips. It actually allows you to move slightly back from your opponent (at the hip) but keeps your upper body weight forward. You'll find that it's one of the fastest ways to take the power out of a kick if you are in a self-defense or full contact situation. The problem is, when you are point sparring it looks like the kick is still actually making contact. Strategy is one thing you must consider when point fighting because situations like these.

In the kumite competition there is a center referee. This person is most critical in controlling a match. It is up to you to control the tempo of the fight. At each break (to call points) you must make sure that you make your call immediately and all flags are up quickly and counted quickly. Restart the match as soon as possible so that you do not take away precious time and so you do not disturb the rhythm of the match. The only time you may want to take a couple extra seconds to restart the match is when the competitors have to be told to maintain control.

If the center referee is too quick to stop a match then the competitors don't get a chance to put their techniques together and this makes it very difficult to get a nice clean, clear point. On the other side of the coin, if the referee lets a match go on too long the likelihood of someone getting hurt increases. This is not necessarily to blame the referee, but the competition may turn into a self-defense situation and sooner or later someone has to get hit to stop. This isn't the rule but you see it especially within the colour belt ranks because of the fact that there is no contact allowed and a person can easily misjudge their own distancing.

When taking on the role of center referee you must call the breaks loud enough (and more than once if necessary) to get the attention of the competitors. Remember, you have to be loud enough to be heard over-top of kias'. You must also be prepared to separate the opponents if necessary. I am not suggesting that the competitors would become over zealous purposely but when focused on their opponent, sometimes a nudge from the referee is required to catch their attention.

When starting a match you should get out of the view of the corner judges as soon as possible so that their vantage point of the match is not hindered. Remember it takes 3 flags to score a point so you want all eyes on the competitors. If the fight is shifting into a corner on the opposite side of the ring or moving into a direction where your view is hindered or you can not control the competitors then you must re-adjust your vantagepoint. If you are on the outside parameter of the ring you can cross in front of one of the corner judges with one step. This should decrease the amount of time that the view of the corner judge is hindered.

As a referee or a judge it is your responsibility to be aware of what is happening in your ring. Just like the competitor you must be relaxed and go with the flow. It is your responsibility to make sure that all competitors are judged equally and fairly. It is your responsibility to make sure the competitors are the highlight of the tournament and the focus should be on them, not on you. It is your responsibility to promote the rules and regulations of the sport.

After all is said and done, if the judging is efficient and nobody can question their calls then the competitors will feel good about their accomplishments and they will learn from their mistakes.

THE MEANING OF PINAN

By Sensei Rick Levielle, Northwest Ontario Wado Kai.

In a recent conversation with a student, I was asked to explain the meaning of Pinan Godan. When I asked him what he meant he told me that he had heard that there was another name for each of the Pinan Kata and could I write an article explaining the name and the history of this Pinan. I knew nothing about any other name for the Pinans, so before I answered his request I decided to find out more about the history of these kata from Sensei Shintani.

At the grading in Timmins in June 1997 I had some time to sit with Sensei Shintani and discuss this question in detail. Our talk gave me a whole new perspective on the practice of kata.

The Pinan Kata originated in Okinawa and was created by Master Matsumura. The Pinan was both Japanese and Chinese characters meaning "Gathered to formulate". There are five levels of Pinan Kata, Shodan, Nidan, Sandan, Yodan and Godan. These five katas were created to develop the student from beginner to expert in the basic techniques of Wado karate. After years of practice, the student is taught Kushanku Kata. The kata is referred to as the "fortress" which gathers all the techniques and protects them. Sensei told me years ago that it takes ten years to perfect Kushanku.

Sensei referred to kata as a precious gift, a heritage that should be treated like a beautiful antique, that should be cherished and passed on to the next generation so that they could see the value of tradition, and the history behind it.

To learn kata one must study its techniques. To know kata, you must practice with your heart. Each time you prepare to perform your kata, think of all the people who have done the same before you. Perfection of kata is a life long pursuit but then that is what kata and the pinans are all about. A way of life!

CALGARY NEWS,
By Pam and Dudley Driscoll.

The following speech was delivered at the Summer Camp Graduation held by the Calgary Wado Kai. The writer was asked to answer two questions

- 1) Describe the ideal Karate student
- 1) How can I become more like the ideal Karate student?

The following is Brett Hamilton's answer:

I am Brett Hamilton. I am 12 years old and going to Montgomery Jr. High. I picture the ideal Karate student, or teacher, as a person who always has the desire to grow. He or she always tries to learn from everything, which they have experienced. The ideal Karate student does not need strength and speed, only the desire to complete the task at hand. He or she would find the most logical way to carry out a task to have speed, power and control. The ideal Karate student would focus on what's happening yet know their surroundings and be aware of everything that is occurring, ready for whatever may come. He or she builds strength where they are weak or flawed and helps others out in their areas where improvement is possible. They would empty thoughts of selfishness or negativity and allow positive thoughts to flow through their mind. To become the ideal Karateka you must work hard at everything that you do. While attempting to become better, you should always have fun. Always try new things and different ways of doing techniques or different ways to move into stances. Whenever a disadvantage may take place, you must always look at a reason why it's making you better. You must be humble, if you lose, you say nothing, and if you win, you say even less. You must not shame losing, but use it to help you advance. And if you win, see why you won and use that to make you better.

The ideal Karate student improves himself/herself and others by learning from whatever happens. But there will never be an "ideal Karate student", only many students growing, learning and achieving.

HAVING FUN AT KARATE,
By Sensei Pam and Dudley Driscoll.

When teaching kids karate it helps to inject some fun to the program with games and activities designed to teach a karate concept in a unique way. Here is one such activity that is always enjoyed (especially in parent-children classes).

ACTIVITY:	Samurai Faces
CONCEPTS TAUGHT:	Mental focus and concentration
TIME:	10 –15 minutes
EQUIPMENT:	None

INSTRUCTIONS:

Pair up and face your partner.

Partner “A” to do straight tsuki on the count (or any simple, single technique).

Partner “A” must perform the tsukis while maintaining straight posture; eyes always focused straight ahead, demonstrating complete concentration.

Meanwhile, partner “B” does everything to distract “A”, bobs and weaves in their face makes faces and jokes.

If “A” loses focus, looks over, smiles, laughs, etc., its penalty pushups at the end of the drill, say 2 per infraction.

Both sides go, then do any penalty pushups together at the end.

Note: Tell the kids if they are “really losing it” i.e. way out of control, the pair must sit out to regain composure and not disturb the others.

Having Fun at Karate

Submitted by Sensei Pam and Dudley Driscoll.

When teaching kids karate it helps to inject some fun to the program with games and activities designed to teach a karate concept in a unique way. Here is one such activity that is always enjoyed (especially in parent/child classes).

ACTIVITY:	Samurai Faces
CONCEPTS TAUGHT:	Mental focus and concentration
TIME:	10 to 15 minutes
EQUIPMENT:	None

INSTRUCTIONS:

Pair up and face your partner.

Partner “A” to do straight tsuki on the count (or any simple, single techniques)

Partner “A” must perform the tsukis while maintaining straight posture, eyes always focused straight ahead, demonstrating complete concentration.

Meanwhile, partner “B” does everything to distract “A”, bobs and weaves in their face, makes faces and jokes.

If “A” loses focus, looks over, smiles, laugh, etc., it’s penalty pushups at the end of the drill. Say, 2 per infraction.

Both sides have a turn, then do any penalty pushups together at the end.

NOTE:

Tell the kids if they are “really losing it” i.e. way out of control, the pair must sit out to regain composure and not disturb the others.