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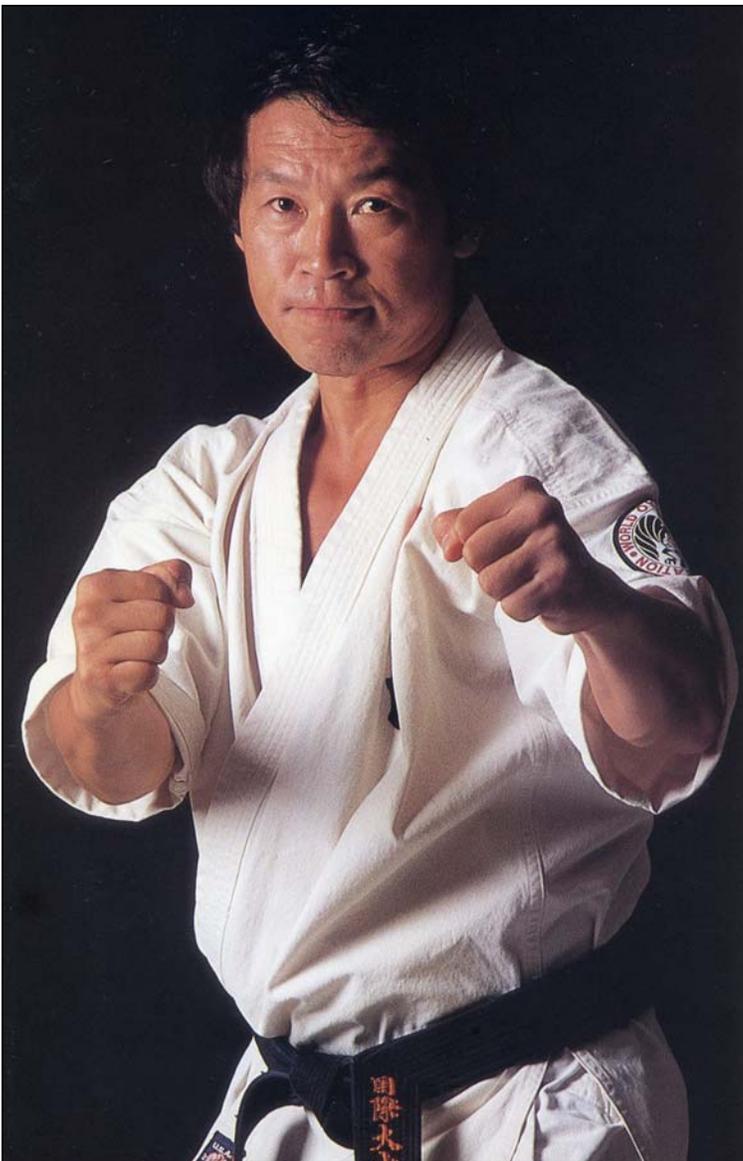
World Oyama Karate

Honbu Newsletter Issue 23 - January, 2010

Just Sweat !

“Back To Basics”

By Founder Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama



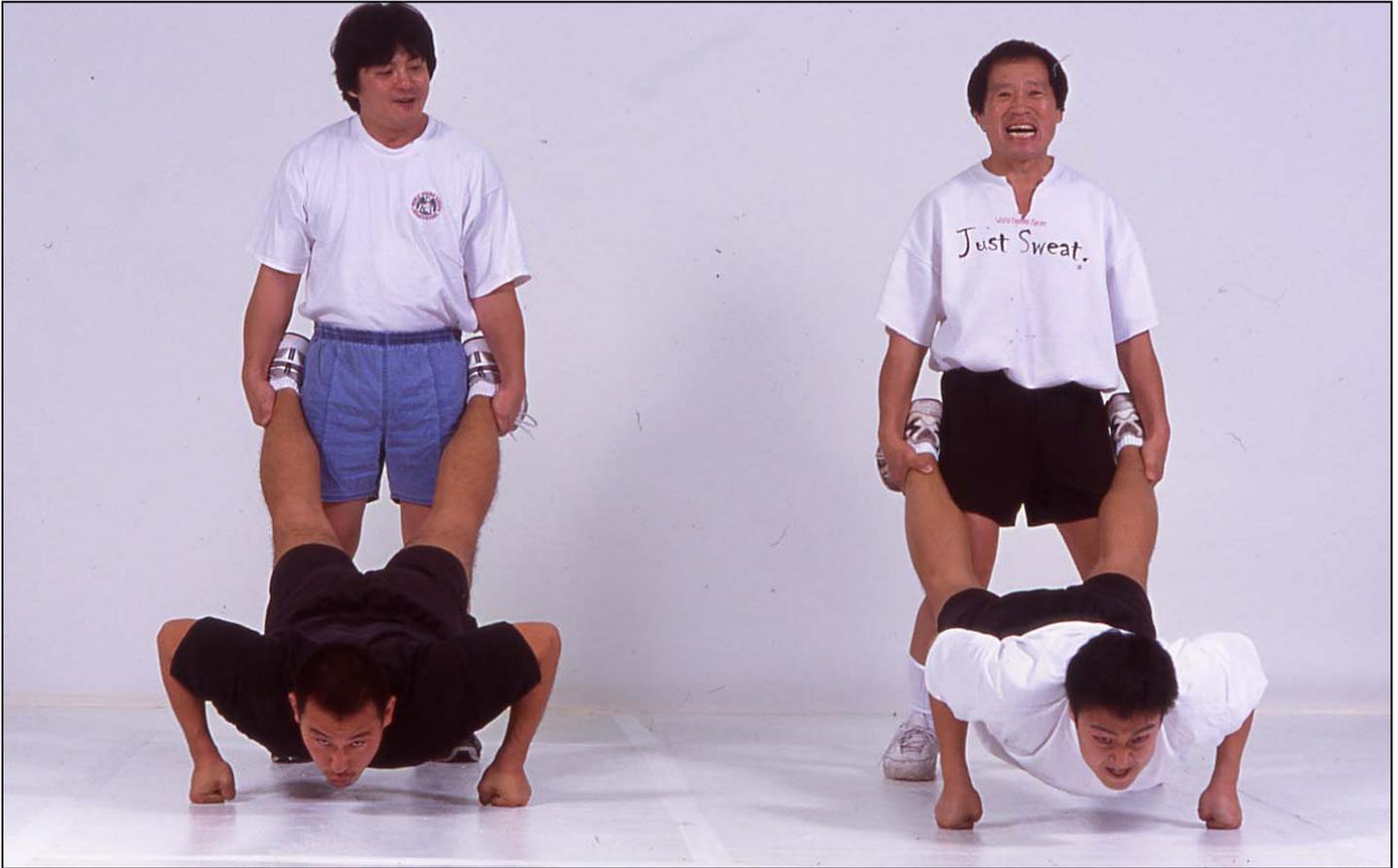
Time speeds by so fast; faster than the internet! At the start of this year, the economy was in really bad shape. The world almost fell apart. But we as humans still go on and persevere.

Technology continues to improve at a breakneck pace. Just in my lifetime, incredible progress has been made. When I was born, hardly anyone in the world owned a TV. To the best of my knowledge, people started owning small black and white TVs when I was about seven or eight, but even then it was only the very rich; not my family.

I can still remember watching TV, when I was about 7 years old, with a crowd of people out in the street in front of an electronics' store window display. It was during the winter holidays, and we were all huddled out in the snow watching *Sumo* wrestling on a tiny screen the store owner had pressed up against the front glass. *Sumo* was still extremely popular in those days. I squeezed my way to the front. I loved the *Yokuzuna* (Grand Champion). His name was Tochi Nishiki, and he had graduated from the same elementary school I was attending—*Shimo Ko Iwa* Elementary School. As I watched, I couldn't figure out how it was that this TV screen could show tiny little people fighting.

Happy New Year ! Let's get back to basics !

Just Sweat ! (Back to Basics)



Health is the number one priority! You gotta sweat...and keep smiling!"

One day I saw the shop owner, an older man, sweeping up in front of the store. I asked him, "Hey mister, how can this TV show wrestlers, singers, and all sorts of other people? How does it work?" I was completely fascinated with this machine. Remember, as I've mentioned before, my best subject was n't science. Or math. Or literature. It was P.E. But I was completely taken with trying to understand how the TV functioned. The old man stopped sweeping and leaned on his broom. "You really wanna know?" he asked.

"Yes sir!"

"You can't tell anyone."

"I won't!" I could feel my heart pounding with excitement.

He leaned in closer and whispered, "Whenever the TV is switched on, these tiny little bitty guys come inside from a part way in the back. They dance or sing or wrestle, and whenever the show is finished, they fly away, just disappear. Magic!"

"Wow, that's great! Can I see these little people?"

"No, you can't see them now. If you wanna see them, you gotta buy a TV."

We were poor back then. There was no way we'd ever buy a TV. For us, buying a TV would be like buying a new Mercedes.

"I tell you what," the owner continued. "If you don't touch the glass, and keep quiet, you can watch the TV from the street. Tonight's going to be *Sumo*."

Just Sweat ! (Back to Basics)

I believed every word the shop owner said and couldn't wait to tell my friends at school. "I know how the TV works!" I exclaimed proudly. "Do you?"

"Well, it's like pictures. And the pictures get sent."

"No, no, no," I said, shaking my head. "There's all these tiny little people that magically appear whenever."

"Oyama, you're so stupid!" My friends started laughing. My teacher heard our conversation and called me over.

"You really believe TV is magic?" my teacher asked.

"Well, I guess so."

"It's not magic, Oyama. There's no little people. If you study math and science harder, then you can understand how it really works."

Even now that I'm $\%\$#\wedge$ years old, I still start sweating with embarrassment when I remember this moment. This past year, Sensei Takahashi and I flew together from Atlanta to Tokyo for the All-Japan Tournament. He made us some good *onigiri* (rice cakes) to eat. Also, the middle seat between us on our row of three was empty, so I felt like we had a first class trip for the price of an economy ticket. Anyway, during the flight he showed me his iPhones (he has two!). I still just have a basic cell phone, and even that gives me trouble. Sometimes I can't find it, or I receive a text message which I have no idea how to read or respond to. Other times, I forget how to listen to my voicemail messages, or what button to push to deactivate the silent/vibration mode. Whenever I have a problem, I just yell, "Karl!" Karl comes running and explains everything to me yet again.

But Sensei Takahashi's iPhone is light years ahead

of my phone. He can watch the news, TV shows and movies, find the weather, take digital pictures and video, use GPS to find any location in the world, play video games...As he went on and on about all the features, I just nodded my head, fascinated by all this little gadget could do. He told me, "Saiko Shihan, everyone's got this phone now."

"I know," I sighed. "My wife and all my kids have an iPhone. I'm the only one that still uses a basic cell phone."

"Saiko Shihan, you should get an iPhone," Sensei Takahashi suggested.

"No, I can't figure out how to control it." At my age now, I have limited patience for trying to figure out something like an iPhone. I'm becoming a grouchy old man. I told Sensei Takahashi, "When I was a kid, any game we played was always physical. We used our *body*. Running around, chasing each other, hide 'n' seek—those types of games. But now, the games kids play are done with machines. They can play together by just using their finger. It unbalances their physical and mental aspects. You sit around and play with your iPhone all the time—that's why your stomach sticks out. You don't train enough!" After that, Sensei Takahashi changed the subject.

Every moment brings increased technological improvements to society. It's difficult for people of my age to keep up with each new development. But despite all these improvements, we as humans still have a *physical body*. I believe that if a person's physical condition is poor, their mind and spirit will suffer—technology cannot change this point. Health is the cornerstone of happiness in human life. I find it hard to believe that a person can truly be happy and enjoy life if they are in poor shape physically or suffer health problems—even if they have millions

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or hundreds of millions of dollars.

A person with just enough money to eat can be happy if they have their health. With good health, a person can endure poverty. They can pass through the hard times and fight back if their body is in good condition. If you have health, you have hope for tomorrow; you have the strength to achieve your dreams and goals. A healthy person can appreciate the inherent beauty of life's small treasures, like flowers, blue skies and falling rain.

However, most of us make excuses every day for why we don't need to push ourselves physically. We come up with all types of reasons why we don't need to go to the dojo and sweat, push-up, sit-up, kick, punch, listen to a screaming instructor. Technology has made daily life so convenient and effortless. It's easy for us to ignore the importance of physical training. But without sweating, without punching, kicking, blocking, jumping, without training, your head will become bigger and bigger and bigger (your body will also become larger and larger and larger!).

Lots of people talk about Karate as being very "spiritual" or "great for mental development". This is not wrong, but the mental and spiritual aspects are only *one piece* of Karate training. It's easy for a Martial Arts school to say, "Yes, we will make you strong in mind and spirit." But how are students supposed to actually achieve this?

The point is you need to sweat! You have to push yourself physically; beyond what you think is your limit. You will have to decide whether to give up or push forward. Only by pushing forward can you connect with your spirit and make it stronger. Most people skip this part. Their dogi is still dry after training, their dojo smells like perfume, and yet they proclaim, "Yes, I am a Karate master!" I strongly

disagree. In World Oyama Karate, you don't need to think or talk during training—all you need to do is sweat! That's our fundamental approach. Sweat first, then maybe you can talk about your mind and spirit. Without sweat, without enduring hard training, you cannot improve your health and overall quality of life. Karate training that is "sweat-centered" will make your life richer and more beautiful. That's the key point—sweat is basic!

I came to Birmingham 38 years ago. I can still remember one spring, a couple years after that, we were doing some renovations to the dojo. The contractor in charge was a stocky guy with a mustache. He was older than me, and had been a boxer before, so his nose jutted out at odd angles in places. I opened the door and he followed me inside. He stopped after a few steps, and took a deep breath, the heavy smell of sweat filling his nostrils. "That's a good smell, good sweat," he said nodding slowly. "You're doing something good here." He didn't know anything about Karate, but his eyes told me he understood about the hours of hard training it takes produce what he smelled. "That smell is golden," he went on, "you really got a good thing going here."

Whenever I teach *Uchi Deshi*, I've always told them, "You need to sweat more than all the other students. Teaching face-to-face is OK every now and then, but mostly you need to teach with your back. Show them what to do and let them copy your example."

So, in 2010, we need to get back to basics. I'm going to keep training hard and try to stay healthy, and hope you all will too. I hope everyone takes good care of themselves in the coming year. Remember, in today's world there are countless excuses to not go to the dojo and train. You'll hear whispers in your ear, "Hey, you can skip today. Don't you want to just take it easy and watch TV tonight?" And

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each day the whispers will come again. At first you take just one night off from training, then it becomes a couple nights, then a week, a month...If you start listening to these whispers, you'll see my face in your dreams. I'll appear to you while you sleep and grab you and make you sweat; just like a vampire (at

my age, I am equipped with special powers).

So, remember, first you have to fight yourself and the urge to take things easy. If you want to improve your life, you don't need technology, you need to sweat! If you do, tomorrow will be another beautiful day.



Sensei Naoi (left) — Middle Age Knockdown Champion

REFLECTION FOR THE FUTURE (2009 Review)

In the past year, we had some great events in the World Oyama Karate Organization. There was the Japan Clinic in March, American Cup Tournament in May, the June Fighters' Cup Tournament (San Francisco), the Japan Branch Chief Camp (also in June), the annual Summer Camp in Gulf Shores, AL, the All-Japan Tournament (Japan Cup) in November, and the Ultimate Challenge Tournament here in December. 2010 is going to be another exciting year, so get ready!

People join World Oyama Karate for many reasons. Some want to learn self-defense, others want improved health, or to gain confidence, get in shape, get a Black Belt, or any number of other reasons. When students start making discoveries about themselves

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during training, they more enjoy coming to the dojo. Maybe before joining, a student never wanted to kill even a mosquito, but afterwards, they start thinking, “Hey, I can punch! I can block and kick, even do a back kick!” As they begin to understand basic techniques and those techniques start fitting their body, they discover a new side of themselves that they wouldn’t have otherwise. Eventually a student will realize, “Wow, I really can fight in a tournament or defend myself if I need to.” Some students might have a different experience, but the majority of them go through something like this.

There are three main categories of *JISSEN KUMITE* (Full-Contact Fight). They are: On the street, in the dojo, in a tournament. Each type of fight has some differing characteristics, but when you fight, you need to know how to utilize your strengths and hide your weaknesses from your opponent. When it

comes to fighting on the street, a lot of people think, “Oh, you’re a Black Belt, you don’t need any weapon or gun to defend yourself.” But I say when it comes to protecting the lives of you and your family, if you have a gun—shoot it, if you have a stick or a bat—swing it. In this type of situation, you have to do whatever it takes to survive. Of course, you need to be able to keep your emotions under control and not just go crazy. If you need to defend yourself on the street, and there’s a big stick within reach, but you don’t use it because you’re going to just rely on your roundhouse kick—that’s stupid.

Fighting in the dojo is different than on the street. (When I first started training, however, they were pretty much the same thing. I’ll talk more about that later). If the Black Belt in charge wants to give a student or the class a hard time, dojo fights might last 4 or 5 minutes or longer, but generally they are shorter. Dojo fights also have rules that students adhere to, although these rules might differ from place to place. Rules for fighting in the dojo are usually not as strict as those for a tournament. In addition, students are familiar with their opponent in a dojo fight. They train together regularly, so they know each other’s strong points and favorite techniques.



Jared Ramsey (right) attacking aggressively

When fighting in a tournament, you first have to know the rules. If you don’t follow the rules, you’ll be disqualified. The other key point for tournament fighting is that you have a limited amount of time (i.e. 3 minutes for knockdown, 2 min-

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utes for semi-knockdown). You have to manage your time in a way that gives you the advantage over your opponent. At the Japan Cup, I watched Jared from San Jose dojo fight. He's made great improvement over the past couple years, and I thought he had a good chance of winning the lightweight division. But in the semi-final match, he mixed up his time usage. During the first minute, he rushed his opponent and kept attacking and attacking. His coach, Sensei Motoi, was telling him to calm down and relax more, but I think Jared was just too excited. I think it was his first time to visit Japan and fight, so he probably felt a lot of pressure. In the second minute, he started slowing down a little and in the last minute, he began losing sharpness in his techniques and movement. If he had used his time in a different way, I think the results would've been much different. If he keeps training hard this year and learns from this experience, I think he'll go far.

The pressure in a tournament is different than in the dojo. At a tournament, all eyes are on you—the spectators, your instructors, your friends and family, fellow students, people you've never met. One of the things you have to do to deal with this pressure is sweat before the match. Professional fighters always work up a sweat before they fight. Amateurs often make the mistake of not warming up enough.

How you manage your time is critical. Even in *Shogi* (traditional Japanese game of strategy, similar to chess) good players always have a plan for the beginning, middle, and end of a match. In a tournament fight of three minutes, basic strategy is that you use the first minute to figure out your opponent's strengths and weaknesses, then in the middle part, you attack hard and look for an opportunity for a knockout. You try to agitate your opponent and make them lose their *Hyoshi* (rhythm). Then in the last part push it all the way to the end.

In order to use time management effectively in a fight, you have to be mentally strong. You build up your mental strength through sweat and hard training. You put your spirit (*kiai*) into every technique, movement, Kata. You try to keep control of your emotions and push yourself hard in all aspects of training. You fight yourself and the urge to slack off or let your mind wander. When it comes to the tournament, you trust your hard training and sacrifice beforehand. Training hard and pushing yourself will build your confidence and belief in your ability. Then you can deal with the pressure of all the eyes on you. Before you face the opponent, you have to win the battle with yourself in training.

In order to build up your fighting ability and strategy, it's important to have a strong foundation of basic (Kihon) training. For example, students who don't use enough *hikite* when punch training won't be able to deliver effective punches in a fight. Every basic technique has a *Kamae* (body posture) that fits it best. For example, it's possible to kick from *Sanchin Dachi*, but not nearly as effective as kicking from *Kumite no Tachi* or *Han Heiko Dachi*. Training while paying close attention to these points will help each technique get into your subconscious and fit you naturally. Most likely, some techniques will fit you well, while others will not. Techniques that don't fit you will give you hints as to what you need to improve—stretch, build up strength, conditioning, etc. Techniques speaking to you is one of the beautiful parts of training. It's why people say that Kihon is the heart of Karate.

But you have to practice basic techniques *with contact*! During Kihon training, practice making contact with each technique using one breath for one technique. Practicing this way allows you to focus on that technique without pressure. Remember that

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At the award ceremony, Heavyweight Champion Sensei Masa (L) and Lightweight Champion Sensei Teru (R) discuss what to eat after the tournament. Sensei Masukawa (Center, 2nd Place Lightweight Division) listens in and thinks, “That sounds good. Can I join you?”

each technique has 3 important phases: before, the execution, after. You have to control each of these points in order to execute a technique correctly. Afterward, you need to add footwork to each technique. So, in Kihon training, there are 3 phases: Practicing in a stationary position *without contact*, practicing in a stationary position *with contact*, and practicing with footwork while making contact.

After developing basic techniques, you need to put

them together into an effective fighting strategy. This is Kata training. It's important to focus on tempo/rhythm (*Hyoshi*) when practicing Kata. There are four main points you need to control in Kata training: power, speed, breathing, connecting stances and techniques together. You also need to imagine fighting against an opponent, rather than just going through the motions.

When learning a Kata, you need to do it slowly, with

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each movement at the same tempo. Don't try to do it all at once, but rather concentrate on one section at a time. Especially concentrate on stance. Once you've learned it and feel comfortable, then you should practice with different timings using different power and speed.

During promotion testing, I see a lot of students do Kata with the same tempo for every movement. This is not wrong, but you should make each Kata your own, not just do it mechanically. That's how to connect it to your fighting strategy. A lot of students don't make this connection. I ask them during promotion, "What's your favorite Kata?"

"Osu! Kihon Sono Go!" the student answers. But during their Kumite they just punch and roundhouse kick, I never see them use their lead foot. Or they might say Kihon Sono Nana, but never use *Furi Uchi*, *Shita Zuki* or *Soto Mawashi*, *Yoko Geri* during

their fighting.

So, eventually, you need to develop your own fighting Kata, your own strategy that best utilizes your strengths. You should have more than just one and be able to adjust depending on who your opponent is. I can go into more detail about it, but there's not enough space in this newsletter. So, I'll save it for the next clinic.

If you want to someday get a Black Belt, or if you want to continue to improve in your training, you have to keep a Karate training journal. Whenever the instructor tells you that you did a good job, you can feel good about it, but you don't need to dwell on it. But whenever the instructor jumps on you and tells you all your mistakes and what you need to fix—those are the things you need to write down and focus on. If you do, you'll become stronger and build up your fighting ability.

Missing My Rival

After my talk with my brother about catching up to Haruyama, I changed how I approached my training. Haruyama, my rival, was at the center of my heart whenever I punched or kicked or blocked. In everything I did, I imagined beating Haruyama.

Even though I visualized beating him at every moment, when I actually saw him fighting, it was a different story. He was so dynamic and powerful. I watched him beat many of the other Black Belts and other students. Whenever he kicked his opponent's head or knocked them to the ground and stood over them as they crawled on the floor and gasped for air, I felt their pain as if it were my own body. The image of him I had in my mind as I went through Kihon and Kata training was eclipsed by the reality of him punching, kicking and taking down all the other students with tremendous force right in front of me.

Even just watching him would shake me up. I would think about how next time it would be me on the ground. I tried my best to tell myself that I wouldn't end up on the floor like that, but it was hard to believe when I watched him. He had a great powerful mountain of a body. On top of that he had a mean face. I never saw him smile. He had the type of face that would knock you out before the fight even started.

Before I go any further, I need to explain to you how we used to fight in the dojo back then. In those days, there wasn't any All Japan Tournament. Mas Oyama would tell us, "Whenever you face someone to fight, you have to knock him out. That's the bottom line." We didn't kill each other, but there weren't any rules about not grabbing the dogi or hair, or kicking the groin. So everyone had to build up their

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own strategy for survival.

The dojo wasn't that big. It was about 30 x 25 feet. One side had a pile of free weights made out of concrete. On another end was Mas Oyama's desk. Next to his desk was a small stove we used in winter that had a tiny fence around it. There was also a small hanging sandbag that we would pull back and secure to the corner during Kumite training. When fighting, you had to know the location of all these obstacles, as well as the rack of *bokuto* and the other students sitting and waiting for their turn to fight. The reason is that whenever we fought an opponent in-close, we would grab the dogi and try to take them down and throw them into the desk or weight pile or sometimes into the window. We busted the window so many times that eventually it was just covered up with paper.

We never had to spend a lot of time teaching *Ko-kutsu Dachi* because if someone had a wide stance, they would get a strong direct kick to the groin. If you dropped your hands, you'd get hit in the face. Some students would start the day with a normal, egg-shaped face and leave with one transformed into an octagon from all the blows they got. We didn't poke the eyes directly, but it was common to quickly flick the fingers into an opponent's eyes then follow up immediately with a strong blow to the body.

If you wanted to survive, in the dojo, you had to learn the phrase, "*Mae Ri Mashita*," which means, "You win". Whenever you were getting beaten badly, you'd have to say, "*Mae Ri Mashita!*" Then the fight would stop and re-start until you said it again, and so on. That was the only way to survive. Some students, before their fight with Haruyama even started, would just look at him and say, "*Mae Ri Mashita!*"

"What!? We haven't started yet!" he'd answer.

Then the fight would start and they would yell, "*Mae Ri Mashita!*" after every hit they took. I could understand their feeling. Some nights after training, I'd feel bad for saying "*Mae Ri Mashita*", like I didn't have any guts and gave up. But then when I was back at the dojo, I'd have to say it again if I wanted to make it out alive. After training, if I could still feel both my arms and legs, and be able to walk home, I'd feel lucky that I had survived.

Now that students compete in tournaments, the fighting in the dojo often reflects the fighting in the tournaments. Fights in the dojo tend to follow the same rules as the tournament regarding what techniques are legal and illegal. As a result, students' fighting styles tend to be more similar than they used to be. Each student still needs to build up their own strategy based on their individual strengths and abilities, but there are more similarities than differences in each student's fighting. For example, if you want to be champion, you have to know how to fight in-close, punch and low kick. You have to block low kicks if you want to be able to kick and move well in the next round.

But when I started, there weren't any tournaments. Once in awhile we'd hold a competition within the dojo, but that was it. There weren't any fixed rules—you could grab your opponent, take them down, punch the face, kick the groin, poke the eyes. In order to survive in this environment, it was essential that you have your own strategy and know your own strong and weak points. You had to read your opponent. If you fought 10 Black Belts, you'd fight against 10 completely different fighting styles. If you didn't have your own strategy, you wouldn't survive.

After I'd been training for about a year, I started to understand the top Black Belts—their fighting

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styles, favorite techniques, habits, movements, and characters. Some may have a real easy-going temperament ordinarily, but turn mean and nasty when fighting. Others were the opposite. I could begin to read and understand them because I was beginning to understand basic techniques. From constant training, basic techniques were starting to fit my body, become more natural. I was beginning to understand the special point of each one. If someone used a lead hand without any *hikite*, they'd be in big trouble during a real fight. Someone who couldn't keep their balance when kicking would get eaten alive.

So, I was beginning to feel and understand each basic technique and how to put them together for an effective strategy. This made training more exciting. I studied each Black Belt's fighting style. Haruyama was right-handed and right-footed. Most people who are strong on their right side fight left-foot front in order to reserve power for their dominant hand/foot. But Haruyama fought right foot front. He'd stand in an almost *Kokutsu Dachi*, raising his right foot up and down as he moved forward. His upper body was turned front, not *hanmi* (45-degree angle). He'd keep his left hand open and put it out front and keep his lead hand (right hand) in a fist, ready to punch. Rather than moving straight in or back, he'd slowly circle to the right, like a southpaw, steadily closing the distance to the opponent. Eventually his opponent would run out of room to back up. They'd give a loud *kiai* and try to attack. Haruyama would block and counter with his right hand, punching over and over again like a machine gun. Sometimes he would pressure his opponent. He'd move his right foot as if he were going to kick. Then he'd fake and do a jump straight kick with his left foot. His opponents would go flying back against the wall as if they'd been torpedoed by a telephone pole. On one wall were a row of nails that stuck out to serve as

hooks for the students' dogis. One time someone hit that wall so hard that the nail head became imbedded in their back, preventing them from freeing themselves from the wall.

But Haruyama was human, I was sure of that. He wasn't a ghost. I had to keep reminding myself that I had 2 legs and he had 2 legs—his were just longer. I had 2 hands, he had 2 hands—his fists were just bigger and his arms longer. I had a strong chest, he had a strong chest—his was just wider and thicker. I had a face, he had a face—his was just meaner and scarier (mine was cuter...I think). Whenever I would face Haruyama, my spirit would shrink. My movements would become stiff. I'd punch him, but he'd punch me back twice more. I would try to fool him when I attacked, but whenever I gave a *kiai* he could read me all the way to the bottom. He knew exactly what I would do, and he just waited. He'd pressure me, and I'd *kiai* then attack. My *kiai* was like a signal to him. My left cheek was always popped up from being hit since I stood left-foot-front. Because of my smaller size, I had to move quickly to survive, but he'd still catch me with his right hand. I knew he would punch with his right *ago uchi*, so I'd try to block, but I couldn't block everything. A few shots always got through. The left side of my face would always be swollen. I'd look in the mirror and wonder if I'd stay that way forever (even now the sides of my face are a little uneven).

Fights in the dojo usually lasted a minute and a half or two minutes. But sometimes, somehow, they'd last longer. If I landed a solid shot against a Black Belt, suddenly, the fight would last much longer. It would last until they paid me back. If we were lucky enough to get something in on a Black Belt, we'd have to fight longer, so we'd try to shorten it by saying, "*Mae Ri Mashita* (You win)!" But for

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some Black Belts, that didn't work. It was over when they said so and not before.

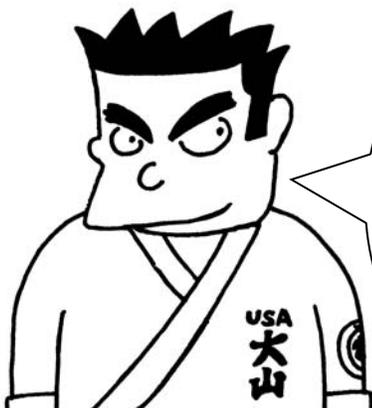
During this time, I trained every day and also played soccer. I would finish school, have soccer practice, eat a quick snack, then catch a train to Ikebukuro Ward in Tokyo where the dojo was. This was early in the post-war years, so a lot of Ikebukuro was still slums. The dojo, like the surrounding buildings, was very small. The train stations around the dojo were always packed with people. So, on my way to the dojo, I'd practice footwork, weaving in and out of the throngs. I'd dash up the stair and dodge all the people hurrying down. I had to move with a lot of quickness (If I'd played football, maybe I could've won the Heisman Trophy!).

After training for a year, I was still a little scared about the free fighting, but I started understanding things more. I was able to read my opponents. I used *kiai* in a different way. I learned how to set up my techniques and develop my own strategy. For example, I'd use my lead hand to set up for a right reverse punch. I'd use my lead foot kick to stop an opponent, then get in close or move left or right and attack. I used a lot of *soete*. If they blocked my right reverse punch, I'd use my left hand to unbalance them, move right and deliver a knee kick, then

take them down. Other times I would fight in close, then quickly slide back and kick.

Around this time, for some reason, Haruyama was at the dojo less and less. I was still training every day. When I'd started, he'd be there maybe three times a week. But, now it started getting to twice a week, then once a week, then once every couple weeks. I started missing having my rival there in the dojo. Whenever he came, I'd be excited to train with him. He still beat me every time, but I was excited to face him.

I found out that the reason he wasn't in the dojo so much was that he'd started working as a bodyguard for some shady people. We were the same age, still in high school, but he always seemed to have lots of money. Sometimes after training, he'd buy us dinner at a noodle shop. Not the cheap dishes, but noodles with meat and eggs. He smoked too. Japan is still very strict about kids under 20 years old smoking. Back then, they were stricter. If the police saw a kid smoking, they'd grab him and take him to the station. But Haruyama would be smoking outside, still wearing his high school uniform, and no one said anything. I kept training hard every day, but it wasn't the same without my rival there.



Let's get
back to
basics in
the New
Year!

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