



ANN EKHAML

Grading and Kyu Test

Reprinted from *Notes on Training* by Tsutomu Ohshima

We make kyu tests in April and November each year. April 26th was the day Master Funakoshi passed away and November 10th was the day he was born. We make kyu tests during these months to remember those events. This is how I originally scheduled kyu tests, twice a year, in Southern California.

There are two points to always remember in a grading. First, we start with rei and end with rei. Second, the exam is not our goal; it is only one kind of practice for us. No matter where, no matter what, we have to express our best. This is the reason we continue to practice, especially people who get excited or who choke up in difficult situations like grading. They get in front of their seniors and cannot express their best. We practice so we can calm down. We want to be very alert mentally. Physically we try to be relaxed, with no conscious power in the shoulders and with our feeling going down to the lower abdomen.

When you present yourself to your seniors for grading, I am sure you feel excited

or scared, but this is one of the important practices in Karate. We have to get the habit of expressing ourselves strongly and making our best practice. If you don't have this habit, you need this practice to become strong and pass through these mental blocks.

The Kyu Test

In the kyu test we emphasize three points for kihon: eyes, pulling hand (hikite) and stance.

First, examiners are watching to see if you close your eyes or look down or turn your head. This shows an incorrect feeling and you should not do it. In kyu test, as always in the martial arts, we emphasize our own mental state. Mental state comes to the eyes. The eyes are the window to the mind and always reflect directly how we feel inside. Therefore, keep your eyes open and level, facing your opponent and looking straight into your opponent's eyes. Never look down, never blink, never turn your head and show your immature, weak feeling, especially in front of opponents.

When the opponent is in front of you, you cannot close your eyes or look down. But many people, when the opponent starts to come, close their eyes. When I first started to practice karate, if somebody closed their eyes or looked down, they got a punch right away from their senior. Today, I don't encourage any senior to do this, but all instructors must correct these bad habits in their juniors. When someone is looking down or closing their eyes, it shows they have a problem. Their mind is not strong enough. So I emphasize, always look straight forward and never look down.

Second, examiners are looking at how you coordinate right and left and left and right. A strong pulling hand connects underarms with other parts of the body to help make us one. We have to be one to make effective blocks, punches and kicks.

In the beginning it is very difficult to be conscious of the other side of your body when executing blocking or punching techniques. So make your pulling hand clear on each side (exactly on the point above the hip bone on the side of the body), make a fist, keep your shoulders down, slightly

tighten your underarm and connect with the punch or block. This way you can execute techniques with good habits, using both sides of the body at the same time.

Third, they watch your standing form, mainly your back foot. Toes should not point outside and the heel never goes up when you execute basics. Also, don't think that front stance is standing with most of the weight on the front leg. Even in front stance we stand with the back leg; the front leg is light. The back leg must never be weak, there is strong contact with the ground, and yet, movement is free. You have to make a solid stance.

I ask the instructors to always make the basics in the order shown below so that we have a standard order and there is no confusion when members go to other dojos.

In every kata, along with the points for basics, you should show in the ready form before yoi, that your mind and body are ready to face the opponent. Each technique in the kata should be realistic and effective against your imaginary opponents.

In sparring you show your strong mentality by always watching your opponent's eyes. Make exact oizuki attacks each time and, when you defend, make clear, effective counterattacks. That's the correct feeling during kumite.

For examiners who have not given many kyu tests, you should be aware that, generally, beginners overestimate their own level. So you must explain, especially to beginners first experiencing a kyu test: be happy with 8th kyu. There is nothing wrong with 8th kyu and, if somebody who is very good is promoted to 7th kyu, then he is very happy. But if a beginner thinks he's a brown belt and he gets only 7th kyu, he's very sad and disappointed and soon disappears. We have to remember when we were beginners. We thought we were pretty good, but we didn't know how bad we actually were.

When I gave kyu tests at Caltech, I always told them that before my first grading I made four Special Trainings—two seven-day and two ten-day Special Trainings—and I received 6th kyu. If anybody practices harder than that and gets lower than 6th

EVENTS

kyu, then they can come to complain to me. Actually, sometimes I felt upset with the results when I was coming up. The main practice for you when you take a test is not to feel bad even if you don't receive a higher kyu. We must be humble and trust our seniors when we take an examination.

The program for a kyu test:

Kihon: Gedan barai, ageuke, udeuke, tetsui-uke, shuto-uke, oizuki, gyakuzuki; Maegeri, mawashigeri, yokogeri-keage, yokogeri-kekomi, mikazukigeri, fumikomi

Kata: A favorite Heian kata. Another Heian kata as a request form. (One kata is enough for people grading for the first time.)

Kumite: Sanbon gumite, basic ippon gumite. ●

OCTOBER

"Eliminating one weakness is better than adding one strength."

JUNIORS

Kata: Heian Sandan (Heian #3)

Kihon: Bari-bari (continuous punches, alternating hands) with Hangetsu stance. Torite (escaping techniques), katate-dori (escaping one-hand hold). When opponent grabs your right wrist with his left hand: a) move your right elbow into opponent's left elbow; b) thrust right hand down between opponent's legs; c) technique from Heian Sandan; d) technique from Kwanku; e) technique from Heian Shōdan. When opponent holds your right wrist with his right hand: f) step back with left leg into kibadachi while raising your right fist, then make ippon ken (one finger fist) and strike down the opponent's wrist, releasing hold, then immediately execute uraken (back punch) to opponent's temple; g) step back with the right leg into kibadachi and pull right wrist back, bringing opponent's elbow in front of your face. Place your left palm under opponent's elbow and hold elbow in locked position to control opponent.

Kumite: Jiyū-ippō gumite (one-time engagement)

SENIORS

Kata: Bassai (To Penetrate a Fortress)

Officiating Seminar Held at Shotokan Ohshima Dojo

On Sunday, June 13, 2004, we met at the Shotokan Ohshima Dojo to answer Mr. Ohshima's directive for senior-level black belts to seek understanding of officiating jiyū kumite matches. We were privileged to have godans Tom Muzila, Bruce Kanegai, Randy McClure and Yoram Cohen as instructors. We were also privileged to practice officiating real matches.

The class objective was to raise the level of officiating by understanding what to focus on during the engagements.

- The angle of view should be about 45 degrees so that both fighters are clearly observed, and the referee is in a position of neutrality.
- It was revealed that the expectations the referee has of the fighters will tend to influence them to watch one fighter more than the other.
- Control the level of force in the match. The moment a fighter displays any excessive force the referee should stop the match immediately and take decisive action by giving either an official or unofficial warning.

Senior black belts in attendance were yodans Tom Heyman, Deke Keasby, Dan-

iel McSween, Hiroko Mori, Paul Morishita, Terry Perretz, Mark Petrigac, sandans Aja Al Fasah, Derek Greene, Pete Ladjimi, Virgil McClain, Dan Morales, Lee Quintana, Nancy Van Sickle, Chuck Williamson.

— Virgil McClain, sandan

Yodan Practice with Sensei

About 30-plus yodans attended the practice on September 11, 2004, at the Shotokan Ohshima Dojo.

As usual, Sensei conducted a very informative class, mixed with humor, wit and also the occasional admonition. Concerning the yodans' duties not only toward their juniors, but also toward each other during any kind of kumite, he pointed out that one should not do any extraneous movements merely to demonstrate a personal joy of superiority. The fact is, the opponent could respond accordingly.

Sensei was very generous with his time. He had all the yodans perform their favorite kata. The final lesson for all was the various ways of helping someone who has passed out. After practice we were invited to lunch in Sensei's house.

On behalf of all my fellow yodans who were present, I thank you Sensei, for your effort and perseverance, and for spending the day with us.

— Your grateful yodans, Hugh Bodie

NOVEMBER

"Be strict to yourself; forgive others."

JUNIORS

Kata: Heian Yodan (Heian #4)

Kihon: All basics

Kumite: Ippō gumite (basic one-time engagement); sanbon gumite (three-time engagement)

SENIORS

Kata: Kwanku (Kankū; To Look at the Sky, or To See through Emptiness)

DECEMBER

"Karate practice is for the whole life; while one breathes, one practices."

JUNIORS

Kata: Tekki Shōdan (Armed Warrior Riding Horse #1)

Kihon: Kibadachi-zuki. Ten no Kata (Kata of the Universe) with front stance

Kumite: Jōdan (upper-level) ippon gumite (basic one-time engagement) using kibadachi-zuki (punching from horse stance).

SENIORS