



Well Done Mid-America!

A Letter from Sensei Vaughan

On November 15-17 the Mid-America region hosted the 35th annual ISKF/US National and Collegiate Karate Championships at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Cincinnati, Ohio. Over 240 competitors from nearly every region of the ISKF/US attended. Also held during the weekend were the ISKF annual Board of Directors meeting, Dan exam, and Judges exams. As you can imagine it takes a great deal of planning, which started over a year before! Many details and negotiations are required to locate a suitable venue. I think everyone who attended thought the Hyatt was an excellent location. Many thanks to Jeff and Kim Weber for taking care of this important detail.

The events surrounding the tournament were well organized and ran very smoothly. The tournament itself was virtually flawless. It was well organized, thanks to Jeff Weber and Jim Nelson, and it was well executed, thanks to Jerry Baker, Tim Gay and the many others that helped keep the rings busy and competitors flowing into and out of the ballroom. However, a tournament's success is tied to the good work of the ring table workers. These students, parents, friends, etc. from most of our member clubs were key to the success of the tournament. I received many positive comments from judges and competitors on our friendly, well trained and capable table workers. Thank you to all of these special volunteers.

Some other notable contributions were: the beautiful, color program (Lisa and Chris Moore), the floor (Marty Schrager, his crews and Sport Court, Ohio), the medical team (Dr. Josh Hill and Sean Mahoney, RN), the many great and friendly members and friends who took care of our sales table, the after banquet entertainment (Kim Weber and Michelle Randall), awards presentations during the finals (Carla Killion, Michelle Randall, and Beverly Pugh), our announcers (Chris Moore and Bruce Green), our photographers (Dan Bare, Michael Parkhurst, Lexi Weber), and our many sponsors, especially Star Trac and Boxmaster, who underwrote the flooring for the tournament. There were so many examples of great work at various jobs that I hope I didn't forget anyone, but if I did, please know that I appreciate your efforts.

I must say that I was so proud when I walked into the ballroom on Saturday morning. Five rings, beautiful competition flooring, table workers eager to start, it was obvious that we were ready to go. I was even more proud at 4:00 on Saturday afternoon when the last events finished for the day an hour early! In my experience of attending these events for many years this is the first time I can recall that an early finish occurred. This is a tribute to the hard work of all of our volunteers and the many ring officials. The finals were equally impressive. The opening events: the assembly of the competitors, the color guard from the Greater Cincinnati Police and Fire Emerald Society (this group was AWESOME! Thanks Jeff), the singing of the national anthems (Clara Wilson and Hiroki Fukui, again, thanks Jeff); the group Tekki demonstration (Thanks Sensei Oberschlake) were impressive and a great start. The Taiko drummers (Cincinnati Dayton Taiko), the father, son demonstration of Bassai (Thanks David and Vince Talley and Eddy Vaughan), and great competition completed a memorable tournament!



Photo courtesy of *Indiana ISKF*

Thanks again to all the volunteers. The region has benefited from your efforts. And once again Mid-America has raised the bar for hosting the national tournament!

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A Special Thank You

From Master Okazaki

On November 19, 2013, shortly after the conclusion of the 2013 ISKF National Tournament, Master Okazaki took the unusual step of writing a personal letter to Sensei Vaughan. This is a testament to the hard work and diligent preparation we did to make this a very successful event. Congratulations Mid-America on a great tournament!

November 19, 2013

Dear Marty,

Thank you very much for hosting this year's ISKF/US National Championships. It truly was a success and your members did a wonderful job. Everything was well organized and everything ran extremely efficiently. I would also like to thank you for your hospitality during my visit. I really enjoyed your company and appreciate all of the time you took out of your busy schedule to assist me.

I would also like to mention what a great job you did with the demonstration with Mr. David Talley and both of your sons. It was not only a fine exhibit of our Shotokan karate, but also a testament of our organization and the way it brings families together.

I look forward to seeing you at our ISKF Master Camp June 6th-13th, 2014.

Sincerely,

Teruyuki Okazaki
Chairman and Chief Instructor
International Shotokan Karate Federation



Photo Courtesy of Chibo Bare

Editor's Note: Photos of the event can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/106851106@No8/sets/>

Proper Technique For Front-Kick

by Martin R. Schrager

The front kick, or *mai-geri*, is one of the most powerful weapons a *karate-ka* possesses. However, unless executed properly, which includes considerations of timing, target, distance, and technique, the outcome can be disastrous for the attacker, resulting in a swift and potent counter attack from your opponent. As diligent practitioners of karate, we spend a lot of time working on the right way to execute *mai-geri* in the dojo. In application, however, it is grossly under-utilized as most of us lack the confidence to apply it. In this article, my aim is to demonstrate proper technique – one of the critical components of successful execution.

Proper technique is the foundation for appropriate application. The other three facets listed mean little if this piece isn't already in place. We spend years "sharpening our sword" but often have a deficient outcome because we may lack one or more of the following aspects of technique:

Support leg – Any kick can be dangerous to execute because you are in a vulnerable position at the point of impact (standing on a single leg). For that reason, the support leg must possess enough strength to provide an adequate base. At the instant appropriate distance is achieved, thrust the supporting leg in to the ground while keeping it bent, with great force and equal pressure on all parts of the foot. Contrary to the way many execute a kick, the power is contained almost exclusively in the support leg and not in the kicking leg.

Kicking leg: Tense – Relax – Tense – As a first action, the kicking foot must be squeezed and held tightly to the thigh, simultaneous with the driving of the support leg into the ground. Then the knee must be driven sharply and directly at the target. We are taught to bring

the knee high and tight to the chest. Although this is critical for development, in application the knee should drive to the target to maximize speed and power. At this instant, the leg becomes relaxed to leverage the driving of the support leg, which creates power and speed. During this phase, the kicking leg should relax and contain only enough tension to properly guide it to the target. Simultaneous with the knee driving into the target, the foot and lower section of the leg "unfolds" quickly and sharply to the point of impact, at which time the entire abdomen and lower body contracts to create a burst of devastating power.

Course of kick: The knee up high and tight with the ankle brushing the inner thigh above the support leg knee ensures proper course. Viewing the kick from the knee to the foot shows the foot travels to the target in an arc. However, if you view the kick from beginning to end, the foot will travel nearly a straight line from the ground to the target. Proper course means your kick will not "scoop" and will penetrate the target effectively at a near 90-degree angle.

Hip and body position – In order to avoid an off-balance position at impact, the hips must drive forward, with the center of gravity directly over (and in some cases, more forward than) the support leg. This action must continue through impact. It is imperative that proper posture is maintained during this movement. Many kicks fail because we tend to fall backwards as the kick is executed, under the illusion that it will create greater distance. In addition, as with many karate techniques, the abdominal muscles should contract throughout execution, applying pressure from your lower mid-section into your belt.



Proper movement of knee and foot in a straight line to the target and driving forward with the hips

Proper Technique for Front Kick - Continued from Page 3

Snap-Back – Once the forward kicking motion is complete, the foot must retract back to a position where the foot is tight to the thigh. This must be done with a high degree of speed and force. The snapping back motion serves two primary purposes. First, it prevents your opponent from grabbing on to your leg and making a counter attack while you are in a vulnerable position. Second, it keeps you in a balanced position where you can dynamically move after the kick is complete. Without this, you would likely fall forward and create an opportunity for your opponent to counter attack.

Training method:

Step 1 – Start from *zenkutsu dachi* and practice the squeezing of the foot to the thigh while simultaneously driving the support leg to the ground, then release and set the foot back down to the starting position. Repeat twenty times for each leg.

Step 2 – Utilizing the method in step 1, squeeze the foot close to the thigh, but then continue forward with the motion driving the knee to the target. Do not add the final component of the kick. Treat this as if you are performing a knee attack – which the first portion of a *mai-geri* emulates. Repeat 40 times, stepping forward after each repetition.

Step 3 – Complete steps 1 and 2 and now add the expansion of the lower portion of the leg to complete the kick. As Sensei Golden has taught us, this can be done with varying grades, or levels of speed. Start slow (low-grade) and gradually move to full speed. Repeat 40 times.

Step 4 – Practice kicking with a partner. Face each other in *zenkutsu dachi* with the left side forward. Each person takes a turn to kick, aiming directly at the knot of the belt, making solid contact to the body. This is an ideal opportunity to practice low-grade kicking so as not to damage your partner. Kick 20 times each, then switch sides and repeat.

Step 5 – Using a kicking bag, kick with full speed in order to gain an understanding of what it feels like to throw a successful technique. Kick 20 times with each leg. Initially, it will not feel as if you are producing much power, and the bag provides excellent feedback on this. With practice, you will gain enough speed, power, and confidence to produce a devastating blow.

Mai-geri is a skill that takes many years to develop. With diligent and correct practice, patience, and coaching, it can become a significant weapon, capable of bringing an immediate end to any combative situation.

The Road to the 35th Annual National Tournament

by Jeff Weber

The International Shotokan Karate Tournament is a pretty big undertaking for the region that hosts it every year. Having the fortune of participating in these tournaments across the country over the years, I have taken many notes on things that I liked about each region's tournament and the things that I thought could be done differently.

November 22, 2011 was the day I began working on the 35th annual ISKF National Karate Tournament. I knew going into this event that I wanted to hold it in the greater Cincinnati area. Whereas, the venue for the 2004 event, held in Columbus was going to be hard to beat, I wanted it to be closer to home.

Having worked in the convention decorating business prior to getting into the fire service, I knew I needed to make the necessary contacts early to make the event go smoothly. The Cincinnati Sports Corporation was very helpful in making the initial contacts with area hotels and convention services within the area. Numerous meetings and site visits brought us to our final location, the Hyatt Regency Cincinnati. In part, this was because it has the largest ballroom of all the area hotels. Not to mention, they were planning to perform over \$20 million in renovations prior to our tournament.

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The Road to the 35th Annual National Tournament - *Continued from Page 4*

After the venue was set and contracts were signed, I decided to begin working on things early... to get them knocked off my 'To Do' list. Regional Banners were designed, printed and frames built. The next item on the list: Scoreboards for the ring tables. I saw a volleyball table-top scoreboard that gave me the idea for these. I made a few tweaks and brought the finished product to our Regional tournament to have our ring table workers try them out. A few of their suggestions were then added to make them more user friendly. Then the medals were designed and ordered.

The next item on my agenda was to create a list of all of the volunteer positions I felt would be required for the tournament. This list was then emailed out to the region to have folks sign up for positions they felt comfortable doing.

One of the first things on my list was to get a decent competition floor. To the best of my recollection, every other National Tournament competes on carpet during the eliminations and then a puzzle mat floor for the finals on Sunday (with the exception of the tournaments that are held in a gymnasium). From the beginning, I wanted to have our competitors compete on the same flooring during the eliminations that they compete on in the finals. To afford this, we would need a major sponsor. Members from our region stepped up to the challenge. One volunteer secured the flooring through Ohio Sport Court, who worked with us on pricing. Another made a major contact and secured a corporate sponsor (Box Master - Star Trac) so we could afford to have five rings for the eliminations on Saturday and then one for the finals on Sunday. This was awesome!

Once all of the Registrations were in, countless hours were spent by our regional office compiling all of the data needed to build the brackets and for paperwork required by those working the registration table.

Whereas all of the positions were important, one of the more crucial positions for a successful tournament was getting qualified people to volunteer



Photo courtesy of Jeff Weber

to work the Ring Tables. Initially, I was a bit concerned that we didn't get enough training for everyone in this area. This concern went away pretty quickly on Saturday of the tournament. Everything seemed to run very smoothly. The Table Workers were also complimented by the great job the Staging Crew did getting the competitors to their respective rings... like clockwork. I was commended by several referees on how well the table workers performed their jobs.

I know I haven't listed everything that people did during the tournament. But I do know that without them, the tournament just would not have been the same.

I really didn't think we would have been able to outdo our tournament we hosted in 2004, but I truly believe we did.

I wanted to add that I received countless comments on what a great tournament our region hosted. Of which, this could not have been accomplished without all of the volunteers from our Mid-America Karate Family.

Thank you to everyone who helped in one way or another!

Mid America Region Introduces Best Fighting Spirit Award at National Tournament

by Martin Vaughan

I presented the first annual Best Fighting Spirit Award during the Banquet following this year's national tournament in Cincinnati. The inaugural winner of the award was Joe Fultz of the Alaska region of ISKF. Joe has been a top-level *kumite* competitor for many years and has always fought with skill, determination, class and humility, win or lose. Coincidentally, Joe became the National *kumite* champion for the first time at our nationals!

The Mid-America region will supply a trophy for the 2014 national tournament in Alaska. The local tournament committee will make the decision on the next winner and a representative from Mid-America will present the award at the banquet following the tournament.

This award has a great significance for the Mid-America region because Sensei Golden was the recipient of "the Best Fighting Spirit Award" at an international tournament in the late 1960's.



Joe Fultz (pictured at left), winner of the Best Fighting Spirit award, faces Ben Cheeseman on the final day of competition on Sunday November 17, 2013.

Photo courtesy of Jeff Weber

Considerations in Kata Competition

by James Oberschlake

Recently, I did a great deal of judging at the ISKF National Tournament. I noticed my scores for *kata* were lower than most judges. I was asked about this by an A level judge. After explaining my reasoning, he commented that I made a valid point. I wish to share with you some thoughts on *kata* competition.

Kata means form. By form we mean correct movement. This correct movement is more than a pretty dance performed by a skilled athlete. *Kata* is to be performed with the spirit of one decisively overcoming a deadly encounter with several opponents. I remember Sensei Golden saying, “*Kata* should feel like fighting.” When performing your *kata*, does it feel like fighting?



Sensei Weber performing Jitte in ISKF 2013 US National Finals
Photo courtesy of Mike Parkhurst Sr.

The ISKF Tournament Rules and Regulations states that “*kata* is not to be judged as simply good or bad.” *Kata* is to be judged according to certain essential elements. These elements are listed on pages 36 and 37 (Third Edition). It is good for judges and competitors to review these essential elements.

A few years ago Yaguchi Shihan taught at our summer camp. One important point he made was that we should always protect our “life line”. The life line is the center axis that runs vertically through our body. During movement our knees should squeeze together to protect the groin and the ready position of the arms helps protect the life line of the upper

body. Many people think karate is only happening at the end of their technique, but this initial starting, squeezing motion and the ready positions are very important. Consider the self defense aspect of the ready positions. This opens up a whole realm of possible *bunkai* interpretations for *kata*.

The movement of protecting the life line also allows for the development of more dynamic expansion and contraction of the body. The faster and stronger you squeeze toward the body center, the faster and stronger will be the release as you propel the technique toward its target.

Consider the timing of your own body movement. In general, everything starts same time and ends same time. Upper body / lower body, right side / left side – start same time; end same time. Slow moves in *kata* help develop this body timing. Perform the first two moves of *Heian Yondan*. When you have hit your stance, are your arms still moving? Now examine the slow moves performed in other *kata*. How is your body timing? Mastering proper body timing in the slow moves will help you improve the timing of all your moves. Remember what Sensei Swain told us: “Slow is smooth; smooth is fast.”

Consider the timing of your breathing. In general, when you are moving, you should be breathing – either inhaling or exhaling. At technique impact your whole body tenses, and your breath is naturally held. Sometimes you see an enthusiastic *karate-ka* doing just the opposite. They hold their breath when moving and exhale a giant breath at technique impact. The *kiai* is a good indicator of proper breathing. Start your *kiai* with the breath. Think throw your technique with the *kiai*. As your technique accelerates, so does your breath. The sound of your *kiai* reaches a crescendo just before impact. At impact the breath stops, and only the echo of the *kiai* is heard.

When performing *kata*, please consider: fighting spirit, the essential elements, protecting the life line, the ready position’s *bunkai*, more dynamic expansion and contraction, body timing, breathing, and *kiai*.

Congratulations to Students Achieving *Dan* Promotions!

Name	Promotion Rank	Club
Macaylee Allison	<i>Shodan</i>	Indiana ISKF
Scott Allison	<i>Shodan</i>	Indiana ISKF
Catherine Dorsey	<i>Shodan</i>	Shotokan Karate of Anderson
Corinne Dressler	<i>Shodan</i>	Indiana ISKF
Douglas Gunzler	<i>Shodan</i>	Cleveland Shotokan Karate
Jaylon Hudson	<i>Shodan</i>	Indiana ISKF
Jesse Nolan	<i>Shodan</i>	Shotokan Karate of Anderson
Lindsay Oswald	<i>Shodan</i>	Shotokan Karate of Anderson
Anna Polivka	<i>Shodan</i>	Shotokan Karate of Anderson
Gabriel Tice	<i>Shodan</i>	Indiana ISKF
Matthew Sievert	<i>Shodan</i>	OSU Shotokan Karate
Jeremy Washburn	<i>Shodan</i>	Ohio Valley Karate
Mark Whitt	<i>Shodan</i>	Columbus Shotokan Karate
Adam Clouser	<i>Nidan</i>	OSU Shotokan Karate
Alex Grooms	<i>Nidan</i>	Brown County Shotokan Karate
Robert Joshua Snyder	<i>Nidan</i>	Brown County Shotokan Karate
Michael Tomcsanyi	<i>Nidan</i>	Creekside Karate Club
Craig Carmody	<i>Sandan</i>	Dayton Shotokan Karate
Mike Greenlee	<i>Sandan</i>	Dayton Shotokan Karate
Clifford Poirot Jr.	<i>Sandan</i>	Brown County Shotokan Karate
Jason Tice	<i>Sandan</i>	Indiana ISKF
Robert Hensley	<i>Yondan</i>	Brown County Shotokan Karate

Sensei Golden



Chief Instructor, ISKF Mid-America Region

Sensei Greer Golden graduated from the Instructor Trainee Program in 1969 and was sent to Ohio University in Athens to begin sharing his knowledge with Mid-America karate students.

Sensei Vaughan



Assistant Instructor, ISKF Mid-America Region

Sensei Martin Vaughan has been training under Sensei Golden and Master Okazaki for over 40 years and has been our region's Assistant Instructor since 1999. He is also the Chief Instructor of Indiana ISKF.

Executive Director, Mid-America Region

Sensei James Nelson is the Chief Instructor of the Swartz Creek Karate Club and has served as the Executive Director of the Mid-America Region since 2003.

Calendar

March 22, 2014

Saturday-Regional Training-Willis Middle School, Delaware, OH 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

April 12 - 13, 2014

Mid-America Spring Camp with Special Guest Instructor Cathy Cline from ISKF Northwest region.

May 17, 2014

Adult regional tournament and Regional Board of Director's meeting - Willis Intermediate School, Delaware, Ohio

June 6 - 13, 2014

ISKF Master Camp and Goodwill Tournament - Camp Green Lane, PA

Contributors

SENSEI MARTIN VAUGHAN

Sensei Vaughan, 7th *dan*, is the Mid-America ISKF Region Assistant Instructor and Chief Instructor of the Indiana ISKF Karate Club in Indianapolis, IN.

SENSEI JAMES OBERSCHLAKE

Sensei Oberschlake, 6th *dan*, is the Chief Instructor at the Brown County Shotokan Karate Club in Hamersville, OH

SENSEI JAMES NELSON

Sensei Nelson, 5th *dan*, is the Chief Instructor at the Swartz Creek Karate Club in Swartz Creek, Michigan.

SENSEI JEFF WEBER

Sensei Jeff, 5th *dan*, along with Sensei Kim Weber, 5th *dan*, are the co-instructors of Shotokan Karate of Anderson in Anderson Township, Ohio.

Editor

SENSEI MARTY SCHRAGER

Sensei Schrage, 4th *dan*, is the Chief Instructor of the Ohio Valley Karate Club in Cincinnati, Ohio.