

# **Doshikai Kendo Key Teaching Points**

## **Lessons from Outside the Dojo**

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#### ***Purpose***

*The purpose of this document is to record key teaching points, lessons learned, etc. to reinforce the verbal instruction received outside the dojo. It is hoped that through this procedure the learning experience will be facilitated for the author and for fellow students. It is anticipated that this document will evolve and grow through additional lesson experience.*

#### ***Attribution***

*This first segment of information was derived from two sessions with the Boston Kendo Kyokai. On March 1 and 2, 2004 they hosted a visit from Asama Yutaka-sensei hachidan hanshi, 8<sup>th</sup> Dan, a professor at Iwate University who was visiting from Japan. Our thanks to Sensei Dave Harrison of Boston Kendo Kyokai for inviting Doshikai to participate.*

#### **Overall Impression**

Sensei Yutaka strived to make the teaching experience fun by employing games and exercises that he admonished were, “Not Kendo.” However, these games/exercises gave us a new insight into what ‘Was Kendo’ and we had a good time doing it. In general, the first session emphasized offensive techniques, Shikake-Waza, and the second session emphasized Ohji-Waza, defensive techniques with counterattack.

At the end of each session Sensei took on all comers in sparring. My overall impression here was economy of seemingly effortless movement. While others around him made large movements he reminded me of the first time I played racquetball. I was a fit early twenty-something playing against an overweight late thirty-something. During the one-hour session he moved barely a step in any direction while moving me all over the court as I tried to chase the ball. After fifty minutes or so, I was huffing and puffing and drenched in sweat. He, on the other hand, looked as fresh as when he first walked on the court.

#### **Shikake-Waza – Offensive Techniques - March 1, 2004**

The lesson for this evening was to learn/develop/perfect Ashi Sabaki, especially Okuri-Ashi, the sliding step from traditional kendo stance without overlap. Ashi Sabaki can be used to move forward or rearward. Also, we learned how to improve reaction time combined with shinai control for quick, accurate strikes.

#### **Skipping**

We started the session without shinai. All kendoka lined up abreast at one end of the dojo and Sensei demonstrated ‘skipping.’ We were instructed to skip the length of the dojo.

Next, Sensei admonished us to skip while keeping our head on a level, even plane. Skip while keeping the upper body quiet. Keep the back straight and move from the waist.

#### Variations/Teaching Progression – All Skipping

- One step skipping.
- Two step skipping.
- Three step skipping.
- Four step skipping.
- Four step skipping forward and four steps skipping backwards.
- Four steps with clasped hands in front.
- Four steps with clasped hands overhead.
- Four steps with clasped hands in front, then extended after the fourth step.
- Four steps with clasped hands in front, then simulating a large men strike.
- Finally, we were allowed to get shinai and repeat the clasped hand portion of the skipping with shinai instead. However, this was still ‘No Kendo’ as we were to grip shinai with both hands close together.
- The last exercise to emphasize the level head and quiet upper body was to balance a shinai on the head and advance by okuri-ashi. If the shinai fell off, you must stop and rebalance before proceeding.

Through this progression Sensei was able to teach proper kendo okuri-ashi without us even realizing what we were learning.

#### **Reaction Training / Shinai Control**

Sensei used a number of individual exercises/partner games to develop shinai control, fast reaction time and opponent awareness.

#### Tenugui Exercises

Solo - To develop quick reactions and good shinai control. Fold your tenugui to about the size of a wallet. Place it on the kensen. Quickly, move the tip down unweighting the tenugui and strike it before it hits the ground. Tap, Tap.

#### Variations

- Standing – Chodan.
- Standing – Shinai at waist level parallel to floor.
- Standing – Gedan.
- Kneeling – Chodan.
- Kneeling – Shinai at waist level parallel to floor.
- Fold the tenugui smaller.

#### Paired – No shinai.

Student - Holds tenugui across open palms at elbow height, shoulder width. Motodachi has hand in front of face ready to karate chop through tenugui. Student wins if he can grab both ends before motodachi can ‘chop’ out of his grasp. After five attempts exchange roles. Use both hands. Focus your attention on your opponent’s eyes, but also see their entire body and especially their kensen.

### Variations

- Come up from below.
- Hold in one hand lengthwise hanging down and dangle. Student must grab after dropped and before it hits the floor.
- Fold tenugui lengthwise to increase falling speed due to decrease air resistance.

### Finale

Use what we have learned to be able, from chudan no ka maai, to make a quick **Kote-Uchi**, strike at your opponent's wrist, before the opponent can react.

### Ohji-Waza, Defensive Techniques with Counterattack - March 2, 2004

The lesson for this evening was to learn/develop/perfect Ohji-Waza or defensive techniques with counter-attack. We concentrated on Kaeshi-Waza where you induce your opponent to strike you and parry, then strike while his motion leaves him off guard, especially Men-Gaeshi-Migi-Dō.

**Men-Gaeshi-Migi-Dō** – Parry with the left side of your shinai then strike at the right side of the opponent's dō. Don't draw your shinai when you parry, but turn your hands and point the blade at your target.

### Progression

Without shinais, kote or men, partners stand close enough to on another to deliver a karate chop. In all cases, go through several repetitions and exchange roles. The idea is to create faster reaction time by speeding up the movements once the correct movements are ingrained.

Motodachi delivers a men chop. Student Partner moves head to his right.

Above, plus student slaps migi-dō.

Above, plus student takes a small step about 45 degrees to the right of forward, then slaps migi-dō.

With shinais, partners stand initially stand close together, shinais vertical with the 'No Kendo' hands close together grip. Progression similar to above. Still no men, no kote.

Motodachi delivers a men strike. Partner moves head to his right.

As above, student moves head and steps.

As above, student using proper shinai grip, moves head, steps and strikes migi-dō.

In the next series, the motodachi uses a shinai and the student uses both a bokken and a shinai, still no men or kote for either partner.

Student starts with bokken in right hand vertical and shinai in left hand resting on left shoulder parallel to floor. Motodachi delivers men strike. Student blocks with bokken, steps and strikes migi-dō with shinai.

Student starts with bokken in left hand, shinai in right hand resting on left shoulder parallel to floor. Motodachi delivers men strike. Student blocks with bokken, steps and strikes migi-dō with shinai. More difficult because of crossed limbs. “Use brain” to figure it out.

Student starts with bokken in left hand and shinai in right hand. Arms are down and to the sides about 45 degrees from vertical. Motodachi delivers men strike. Student blocks with crossed bokken and shinai, steps and strikes migi-dō with shinai.

Student starts with bokken in left hand and shinai in right hand. Arms are down and to the sides about 45 degrees from vertical. Motodachi delivers men strike. This time student uses a double crossed block with arms crossed and bokken and shinai crossed. Student should be able to see motodachi through diamond window in front of face formed by crossed arms and crossed swords. Student steps and strikes migi-dō with shinai.

One shinai for each partner, still without men, without kote.

Motodachi delivers men strike. Student parrys, steps and strikes migi-dō with shinai.

Beginner should use a big angle (shinai almost horizontal) to block/parry.

As skill increases, expert should use a small angle (shinai almost horizontal), small movement (least amount required) to block/parry.

Now, with full bogu and movement.

Partners start eight steps apart. Each advances four steps. Motodachi executes a men-uchi and student executes Men-Gaeshi-Migi-Dō. Both partners continue to either end of dojo.

Last variation is with the student in the middle of the dojo. Motodachi advances four steps and executes men-uchi. Student executes Men-Gaeshi-Migi-Dō while remaining in center of dojo.

### **Overall Impressions**

Sensei Yutaka always conveyed a sense of humor and quiet enthusiasm. He tried to keep the learning experience fun and relaxed. Learn through “No Kendo”, and apply to Kendo.

His sparring demonstrated subtle movement, economy of movement, no wasted action, only what is necessary, combined with complete composure and control.