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World Oyama Karate

Honbu Newsletter

Issue 28 - June, 2011

Hot Summer and Sweet Whisper

By Founder Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama

▪ HOT, HOT SUMMER

As you've probably seen from the news, summer here in the Deep South has been extremely hot. We've only had rain twice, and it just lasted a couple hours. But even so, I finally finished and locked up the script for *Uchi Deshi in America*. The movie version of the book will be called, *Take a Chance: Uchi Deshi in America*. I feel good that this dream is so close to coming true now.

So, we've had a long stretch of heat down here, but the students of the Honbu Dojo have a great spirit and continue to train hard. When we start class with "Mokuso!", they've already started sweating. By the time they bow in and start the warm up, their dogis are dripping wet.

Extreme heat makes many people slow down; it sucks out their chi. During class, students' punches, kicks and blocks begin to fade in sharpness as they begin to get hot and out of breath. At that moment, they really need to kiai. If they do and push through it, they will build themselves up emotionally and spiritually. During times of harsh weather conditions (i.e. hot summer, cold winter), you'll eventually hear a lot of sweet whispers—excuses to skip training. You may usually go to the dojo twice or three times a week. Then, in the midst of summer, during triple-digit temperatures, you hear the news forecaster reminding you to get plenty of rest and drink plenty of fluids. You think to yourself, "Oh,



2011 Fighters Cup Knockdown Tournament in San Francisco

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they're talking to me. The weatherman really cares about me." This whisper comes in through your eyes and ears and makes its way to your heart. So, you start thinking about skipping class and staying on the sofa with a nice cold iced tea.

Then later, you hear another whisper. "No, I need to go and train today. Last week I skipped class, so I now I need to go." To be or not to be... To sweat or not to sweat...that is the big question. Even if you come to class, you'll still hear whispers during training, telling you to slow down or take it easy. So, I yell out, "Kiai! Are you punching or just moving your hand? Is that a kick, or are you just dancing?" I yell and scream and push the students on as they struggle. Finally, class is finished. You sit on your knees and close your eyes, your heart still pounding in your chest, but you feel so good. You hung in there and trained hard; you feel like you've won.

After shaking hands with the instructor, you walk off the dojo floor and get a quick drink of cold water. Such a wonderful taste. Later, after your shower, you drink something--tea, water, beer—whatever you choose, it has a million dollar taste. You go home and sit on the couch, exhausted. That night you can sleep easily. If you have a dream, maybe you see my or another instructor's face and we tell you, "Hey, you did a great job!" Or maybe you don't have any dreams, just snore away until morning and wake up feeling refreshed.

In this newsletter, I want to talk to you about sweet whispers. Whispers that encourage you to take the easy way or not challenge yourself. This is especially important in our society today. Technology has dramatically changed our lifestyles. You can spend all day in front of the computer doing email, Facebook, twitter, watching YouTube, streaming videos, movies and TV shows. With the click of the mouse, you can spend hours and hours without ever

having to move away from the computer screen. Or you can do the same thing with a smart phone, which you can also use to text and talk. If you spend all your free time in front of machines like this, you're only living in your head. Your body becomes thinner and thinner, or thicker and thicker with your stomach getting bigger and bigger. All your joints and muscles start growing weaker and weaker. That's why I'm telling you that you need to sweat!

Sometimes in class, I assign advanced students to teach beginners the material covered in **KYOTEN VOLUME I**—Sanchin Dachi, Zenkutsu Dachi, Kumite no Tachi, seiken, uraken, hiza geri, mae geri, mawashi geri, etc. There is



Senpai Jared Ramsey (R)

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only a limited time to teach during class. Students aren't going to be there all day and night—just an hour or hour and a half or maybe only forty-five minutes. Inexperienced instructors try to explain too much. Too much explanation means that a student is only training in their head. In Karate, they should train with their body first. So, it is not necessary to correct and explain every little mistake. The back foot in Zenkutsu Dachi should be at a 45-degree angle, but if its close enough in the beginning, that's fine. You don't need to stop and bring out a protractor and measure the exact angle with each step.

Other instructors will try and explain every detail as a way to show off the depth of their knowledge. But, here too, there is no action involved. It's great to have deep knowledge, but you should demonstrate with your body, not your mouth. Have the student repeat the same technique over and over again until they are out of breath, then move on to the next one. That is the correct approach. Karate training starts in the body, not the head. People who spend all of their time in front of the computer or TV will inevitably talk too much when it comes time to teach.

I still make mistakes with my English. During the warm up at the start of class, I begin with, "Grab your belt, toes up and down," then to, "knees up and down," and later I'll grab my wrist and start turning my hand, but say, "Turn your ankle" instead of wrist. Or if I start doing head circles, I might say, "Turn your knee" instead of "Turn your neck". But, the students follow my actions and don't get hung up on my words because I teach with my body, not just my lips.

After kids' class, sometimes they try to correct me. "Osu, Saiko Shihan, this is the wrist, this is the knee, and this is the neck". I looked at the little boy who told me this: six years old and he speaks perfect English. But he needed to practice more Zenkutsu Dachi. I told him, "Because you helped me, I'm going to help you. Bend your front knee and don't move! Stay in Zenkutsu Dachi one minute."

He said, "No, no that's OK."

But, I answered, "You helped me so, I'll help you. Now, you corrected three things for me, so we're going to practice three stances. The next one is Kiba Dachi. Move your feet wider, toes straight. Deeper! Now stay like that for five minutes."

I wasn't trying to make him cry, but he did anyway. He didn't correct my English after that. But the point is that when you teach, students will follow your actions, so count on your movement, not your words.

■ TOURNAMENT REPORTS

On April 30th, we held the 35th Annual American Cup Knockdown Tournament here in Birmingham, and on June 5th, the Fighters Cup was held in San Francisco. Both tournaments were a great success. We used donated proceeds from the American Cup to the Red Cross for Japan Earthquake/Tsunami and Alabama Tornado relief. All the Honbu dojo Black Belts and other students came together and did a great job. In the end, we raised nearly \$10,000. A copy of the thank you letter we received from the Red Cross is included in this newsletter. I really appreciate everyone's hard work.

Unfortunately, we didn't have so many fighters in this year's American Cup Tournament. In the heavyweight division, Kerry Wright from the Honbu Dojo won easily. In the lightweight division, Senpai Jared Ramsey from San Jose got first place. His fighting style was so calm and smooth; he fought at a different level than the other competitors. Sensei Karl Julian was still recovering from knee surgery at the time, so was unable to compete.

One fighter who really impressed me was Senpai Zach Smith from Chelsea. At 16 years old, he made his first appearance in the knockdown division. He had a wonderful spirit and attitude. Sensei Testsu did a great job preparing him. I look forward to seeing him compete more in the future.

In last year's Senior Knockdown division, we had "four samurai" from Japan compete. This year, three of the four returned—Sensei Naoi, Sensei Fujii, and Sensei Munetaka. They had made a lot of improvement. Their



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35th Annual American Cup

techniques were sharp and they didn't give up. They showed tremendous spirit. For them to work so hard and be so dedicated at their age is a great example to other students and made me proud.

Middle/Senior age students should still try to compete. I bet all of them worry to themselves, "What if Saiko Shihan tells me I gotta fight? What kind of excuse can I come up with?" But I hope you understand that fighting in a tournament, not just in the dojo, will open your eyes to a different world and make your Karate bigger and deeper. I guarantee it.

The June 5th Fighters Cup, as I mentioned, was a great success. Sensei Saito and Sensei Yoko did a great job, as did Shihan John Lehner, Senpai David Godkin and all other San Jose and San Francisco Black Belts. Everyone worked well together to help organize, judge, compete and do demonstrations. The fighting in the tournament was exciting. Kerry Wright won the heavyweight division again this year. However, I felt that he needed more training going into the tournament. He has a lot of natural ability and talent, so I feel that he could do more.

Sometimes his job makes it hard to find time to train, but sometimes I think he hears whispers. I can see it when I teach him. Before the Fighters Cup, we trained 3/4 times a week. I had a question about his conditioning. But he hung in there at the tournament and got first place.

The lightweight division featured an exciting final match between Senpai Jared Ramsey from San Jose and Lucas Okuma from another style in San Francisco. After the first 3 minutes, the fight was pretty even. Both of them had razor sharp techniques and didn't slow down. The spectators watched intently, even those from other styles. During the first overtime, Senpai Jared pushed Lucas a little bit, but it wasn't enough. In the second overtime, Lucas showed a strong spirit, but Senpai Jared came back again. The corner judges couldn't decide a winner. Sensei Takahashi, the center referee, looked at my face. This was supposed to have been the final overtime, but I made them fight one more round (as the Director of World Oyama Karate, I have the authority to do that).



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o Knockdown Tournament

In the last overtime, Lucas had just slightly more kouka and so won the match. I'm glad that we were fair in our judging. I think everyone at the tournament was impressed with the integrity of our officials.

▪ SWEET WHISPERS

When I watched the fights in the American and Fighters Cups, I was reminded of the importance of *hyoshi* (rhythm/tempo). In my book, *Uchi Deshi in America*, I mentioned what Musashi wrote on this subject in *A Book of Five Rings*. Even though he wrote in the 1600's, it is amazing that human nature has remained pretty much the same until now despite all of the technological and other advances we have made in the 21st century. Musashi's words on *hoyschi* are still as relevant today as they were when he first wrote them. Senpai Jared's calm smooth tempo and rhythm in his fighting during the American Cup reminded me of the passage on *hyoshi* in *Uchi Deshi in America*, pages 131 – 133. In this part, Goyama explains the importance of maintaining one's *hyoshi* in a fight:

"Have you read Musashi's A Book of Five Rings?"

"Oooosssuu..." We had a copy of the book in the dorm. I'd tried to read it at one point, but hadn't gotten past the first page. I had never been much of a reader. I preferred magazines with lots of pictures.

"I'll take that as a 'no'," Shihan replied. I stared down at the table. The other uchi deshi started giggling, which didn't seem fair. They read the same magazines I did. I hadn't seen them reading the book. But then again, someone must've been reading it. I know it didn't go from room to room by itself.

"You better read it," Shihan continued. "One of the chapters, Chi no Maki, talks about the importance of hyoshi, rhythm. It's essential for a fighter to find and develop their own hyoshi, that's why you need to sweat and train hard constantly.

"Once you find your rhythm, you can easily arrange your power, speed, and tempo to defeat your opponent. Hyoshi isn't only in the mind or in the body—it's in your total being. If you are strong mentally, but

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weak physically, your body can't perform what your mind tells it to. If you have a strong body but are weak mentally, your timing and power will be off because you won't have the conviction and spirit to do what it takes to win.

"That's why you need a strong kiai. A strong kiai connects your body and mind so they can work together in harmony. When your body and mind are connected, you can find your rhythm. Understand?"

"Osu," I nodded my head, trying to follow what he was saying. Some of it made sense.

"Eventually, you'll understand what I'm talking about. For now, the point is that you put your kiai into every part of your training. There are lots of different kinds of kiai; one type is shouting. But another type is one that focuses your mental and physical being into every punch and every kick that you do in training. That's what you need, eh?"

"Osu!"

"Here's an example of hyoshi. An old student of mine in Japan sent me a sumo wrestling documentary about Yokozuna Chiono Fuji. At one point, Chiono Fuji talked with the interviewer about a match that he lost. His opponent was someone he never should've lost to. If they fought one hundred times, he should've won one hundred times—that's what everyone thought.

"But when the match started, his opponent slapped him in the face four or five times. As Chiono Fuji watched a replay of the match with the interviewer, he laughed and remembered how he'd become so angry that he just wanted to kill his opponent. He lost his temper and his hyoshi. All he wanted to do was pick the guy up and throw him down as hard as possible. His rage caused him to block out all the hours of training he'd put in. When he went to pick the guy up, his opponent hooked his leg and took him down.

"That's how important hyoshi is. Chiono Fuji lost his for a split second, but it cost him the match against someone he should've easily beaten. Your experience to-

night with Antonio was the same kind of thing. You faced him with an 'I'm gonna beat the shit out of you' attitude. You're body coiled up like a spring, and you exploded into the attack. Soon after that, though, all of your energy was spent. You had no rhythm, you were gasping for air, your form was sloppy and you couldn't move around. All of that was because you had no hyoshi, no tempo or rhythm."

The lightweight final match of the Fighters Cup reminded me of what Mori tells Masataro about facing the temptation to give up when fighting (pages 191 – 192):

At the start of overtime, Mori was still cool and relaxed, but his opponent was already out of breath. Suddenly, I remembered something Mori had told me a couple months earlier.

"You know Masataro, every year I fight in tournaments, and every year I gain more and more experience. It's not easy, but you have to keep a poker face no matter what. Never show weakness or doubt. Even if you feel intense pain from your opponent's attack, you can't show it in your face.

"I'll tell you honestly, sometimes, I feel the temptation to just let myself get knocked out so I can rest. It's strange what kind of thoughts come up during a fight. When you get those thoughts, that's when you need to kiai. Remind yourself why you're fighting. At those times, the fight isn't about your opponent, it's about fighting yourself.

"People who want to be champion train day in and day out, dedicating themselves to their goal. But it's human nature to be tempted to take the easier way, to slack off. Everyone faces that temptation at some point.

"Sometimes when I watch a pro fight or another sports competition on TV, I can see the point when a competitor gives up, gives in to temptation. I can feel it through the TV, because I've been there. I've faced the temptation to quit, give up and take the easy way out.

"Sometimes I wonder why I need to fight. Why do I



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need to keep going? The temptation catches people off-guard, even in the middle of a fight. These thoughts can make a strong man become weak, but they can also make your spirit stronger if you have the courage to pass through and keep fighting.

“Anybody who wants to be a champion will face these whispers in their ear. No matter how dedicated you are, they will always come up. At that point, I’m not fighting my opponent—I’m fighting myself. If the whispers come up, I need to defeat them, kick them out. If I can do that, whether I win or lose the match, I can still look myself in the mirror and say, ‘You did good. You won the fight.’ You understand?”

Senpai Jared and Lucas fought three overtimes. I bet they heard whispers to give up and not push forward. Maybe they didn’t realize it consciously, but I know their bodies were tired and they had to use a strong kiai to keep going and hang in there. That’s why all of the spectators were so excited about their fight. It was a battle of two kiais, both fighters pushing beyond their physical and mental limits. So, I was

happy to see their fight and I know they inspired the other people watching to not give up and to keep going even if they are at their limit.

Don’t forget that summer camp is right around the corner. I hope to see everyone at Gulf Shores **JULY 21 – 24!**
OSU!



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May 18, 2011

Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama
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Dear Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama and Students,

Thank you for joining the American Red Cross in our global humanitarian mission to provide relief from devastating disasters. Whether it is by aiding Japan in their recovery from a devastating earthquake, or by supporting those across Alabama who were affected by the recent tornadoes, you are changing lives in the face of disaster.

In every community across the country and alongside 186 partner Red Cross societies around the globe, the American Red Cross is translating your compassionate gifts totaling \$6,002.50 to Japan Relief and \$3,702.50 to Alabama Tornado Relief received on May 13, 2011, into relief and recovery. When tornadoes tear through communities or hurricanes threaten our coastlines, we are prepared 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to open shelter doors, serve meals and canvass neighborhoods to meet the needs of those affected. With your support, we have been able to serve over 626,000 snacks, shelter nearly 5,800 people and deploy 100 Emergency Response Vehicles in the wake of the April tornadoes in Alabama.

As a part of the global Red Cross network, the American Red Cross stands ready to assist disaster survivors such as those who need our assistance in Japan. With your gift, we can help by supporting the Japanese Red Cross, sending relief supplies and providing financial assistance to support response efforts.

To learn more about your gift at work, please visit redcross.org or call (205) 439-7800. Preparedness for and response to disaster is our responsibility and the everyday work of the American Red Cross. On those rare occasions when donations exceed Red Cross expenses for a specific disaster, contributions are used to prepare for and serve victims of other disasters. Thank you for your generous support that keeps our mission strong across America and around the world.

Sincerely,

Lee Thrash
Donor Relations Specialist

Thank you letter from American Red Cross. Nearly \$10,000 Raised!

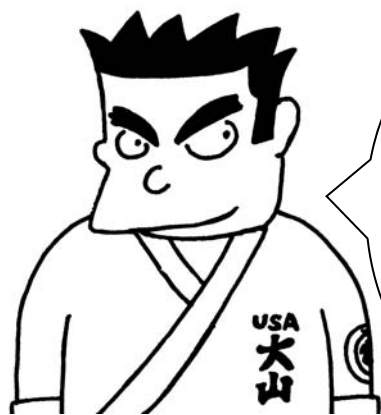


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SUMMER CAMP 2011

Orange Beach/Gulf Shore, Alabama

July 21 - July 24, 2011



**Weapon
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