

NEWSLETTER

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AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

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August Report					
New members 1		Total number of adults training 57		Total number of children training 40	
Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 19th & 20th August					
Jun-3rd Kyu	Charles Delaporte			2Y6 step	Stephen Cuthbert
5th Kyu	Greg Burley Dessy Gunawan	9th Kyu	Errin Rodger	2Y5 step	Vladimir Roudakov Janna Malikova
6th Kyu	Louis Chatfield	3Y5 step	Cameron Blake	2Y1 step	Andrew Crampton
7th Kyu	Jason Henry	2Y7 step	Dominic Hogan	S5 step	Viktor Ovcharenko
Events in September					
1. Sogo Shinsa <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training starts, Friday 9th 7:15pm~• Steps, Friday 23rd 7:15pm~• Shinsa, Saturday 24th 1:00pm~			2. This Month's Holiday <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dojo's Holiday: Monday 26th September		
			3. Children's class <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No kids class between 24th Sep and 3rd Oct.		

A little more knowledge for your Aikido

Annual Demonstration

Next month, our dojo's biggest event of the year, 21st annual demonstration, is taking place. The day is very important for Brisbane Dojo to show the spirit and the art of Aikido Yoshinkan, performing as one. It is a great opportunity to train for raising our level of skills and to unite our hearts with bonds of passion towards the same goal. It is not too much to say that I spend a whole year to condition my body for this day to be able to perform my best Aikido of the year. This is the day to gauge my level of Aikido to see whether it is making a steady progress or deteriorating, applying good pressure on myself. If we did not have our annual demonstration, it is easy to be lazy and I would be satisfied with my existing state without the proper motivation. I am very grateful that we can hold this event again this year though lots of miscellaneous work are needed in preparation. I sincerely hope that the demonstration will offer all of you an opportunity to learn and gain something out of your hard training, beyond the pressure you may feel.

In the first place, what is the demonstration? As Aikido does not take the system of a match to decide who is the winner or loser, we hold a demonstration instead. In English, demonstration means an act of showing or explaining how something works or is done, in this case Aikido. In Japanese, it writes 演武, performing martial arts. Then, our demonstration is for showing the characteristics of Yoshinkan Aikido through our performance, not a real fighting nor to win the match nor to perform a play. Therefore, a good demonstration is about the balance of power, strength, accuracy of Aikido techniques and harmony between shite and uke. You know, because the demonstration is not for deciding who is stronger or winner, shite and uke are the partners to produce beautiful pieces of Aikido art together.

Yet I know you do not train for trophies or awards, receiving a token for your hard work to be acknowledged is always nice and encouraging to keep training. Several students asked me if there were any knacks to earn high points to get a trophy. From the view of judges, there are three patterns that catch our eyes; the power with speed type by males, the strength with grace type by females and the impact with cool beauty type by a small female throwing a big guy. Besides, white belts performing correct and precise techniques skilfully even without much power or speed stands out and attracts the judges' attention. A boy who was pretty keen to collect his trophies, being born and raised in the dojo, analysed the pattern of winners and chose his partner carefully last year for the 20th anniversary. He pictured himself being uke, not shite!, to perform the impact with cool beauty type demo. I was completely amazed at his clever(?) calculation that proved right...

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One of the best demonstration from our dojo, I remember, was performed by two females. Their techniques demonstrated perfect harmony at the top speed and strength from each person's ability, and it was absolutely pleasant to watch. This kind of performance is the evidence of diligent and continuous training from the pair and that is why we are impressed with. On the contrary, when each shite may perform his most powerful techniques but not being harmonised with uke, then the techniques simply display one's ego and therefore they are not graceful. Yet, when uke also shows his utmost uke ability, absorbing shite's powerful techniques at the right timings, being perfectly harmonised with shite, then they can produce the most beautiful piece of Aikido art. Obviously, a good quantity of good quality training is essential.

When shite's technique is very powerful uke's technique needs to be skilful too, to avoid getting hurt. Irimi-nage by Master Gozo Shioda was so powerful that an ordinary koho-ukemi (backwards breakfall) was not good enough to break his force. There, the more advanced koho-ukemi, so called koho-hiyaku-ukemi (backwards-jump-ukemi), was essential for us, as uchi-deshies, to learn in order to not have our heads damaged. I remember how pleasurable it was to receive Master's irimi-nage while my legs got floated in the air seeing my toes at the height of my eyes and my body formed a beautiful arch backwards. This extreme level of Master's exquisite technique was from the years of his constant and diligent training and uke had to raise our skills to match his supreme technique. Audience was impressed and amazed only when these two sides were matched in harmony. If uke's skill was not good enough and smashed his head badly though Master's technique was the greatest, then the audience would have felt sorry but not impressed. This is the difference between our demonstration and the fighting match when beating up one's opponent violently would please the audience considerably.

Once koho-hiyaku-ukemi became a trend among young students to perform at the annual Yoshinkan Headquarters demonstration. They practiced it until they looked cool, but not the shite side! So, what they demonstrated was a shite copying the movement of Master, just a hand sticking out forward, and a couple of ukes all flew backwards. It was surely an eye-catching show but it was an absolute fake. I was quite upset at their shallow understanding of what Aikido demonstration should have expressed. I know that we still see these showy Aikido demonstrations on YouTube and people generally think all the Aikido techniques are fake too. I believe that we should not forget that uke needs to develop skills according to the skills of shite's Aikido techniques, to keep Aikido as a real and practical martial art.

The most impressive demonstration I have ever seen was the last performance of Master Gozo Shioda in 1991 or 1992. He was ill and close to death and he was in and out of hospital through the year. He came to the annual demonstration as a guest to observe his students, but not as a performer. However, when all the programs finished and the closing ceremony was just to begin, he in his business suit walked out of his guest seat to the centre of the venue. As soon as the audience realised Master came forward, they all watched him in absolute silence. Two senior uchi-deshies rushed to him in a hurry, bringing a microphone for him. He took it and thanked the audience but his voice had no strength. We all felt his life was weakening. Then he passed the microphone to one of his uchi-deshi and grabbed his and other uchi-deshi's wrists in a flash and said, "This is the focused power of Aikido." The next moment, they were smashed flat onto the tatami mats with a great impact. The audience was stunned by the scene in the complete silence, but after they recovered from the shock they broke into thunderous applause. This was the very last piece of his Aikido art demonstrated for us. I saw the moment very closely and I was full of emotion as I witnessed his Aikido life condensed into that one Aiki-waza, sensing his spirit of samurai. I will never forget the scene for ever.

Well, I am looking forward to watch everyone's best performance as the Brisbane dojo's members who all train hard. Any dramas may occur would surprise us, impress us or may raise a laugh. We shall all unite our hearts in harmony to make the day most enjoyable for everyone.

OSU!

Michiharu Mori