



No.240 August 2015

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

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## July Report

New members 3      Total number of adults training 55      Total number of children training 43

## Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>

4 <sup>th</sup> Kyu	Bastian Hartmann	6 <sup>th</sup> Kyu	John Lam	4Y10 step	Kaido Mori
	Samuel Herron	7 <sup>th</sup> Kyu	Ken Livingston	2Y4 step	Lu Jiang
5 <sup>th</sup> Kyu	Vaughan Gray			2Y2 step	Vladimir Roudakov
					Janna Malikova

## Events in August

### 1. 20TH ANNUAL DEMONSTRATION ON SUNDAY THE 23RD

- ◆ 10.30am Start packing up at the dojo
- ◆ 11.00am Start setting up at the venue
- ◆ 11:30am Adults' Rehearsal
- ◆ 12:30pm Children's Rehearsal
- ◆ 12:30pm Doors open
- ◆ 1:00 ~ 3:30pm The 20<sup>th</sup> Demonstration
- ◆ 3:30pm Awarding ceremony and taking a photo
- ◆ 3:45pm Remove all the mats and clear the venue by 4.00pm.
- ◆ 5:30pm Dinner Party

### 2. Adults' Rehearsal for the demo

- ◆ 22<sup>nd</sup> August Saturday 1:00pm~ **at the Dojo**
- ◆ Everyone is expected to attend the rehearsal.
- ◆ Please note that there is no rehearsal on the demo day at the venue.

### 3. Children's Rehearsal for the demo

- ◆ 22<sup>nd</sup> August, Saturday 10:00am~ **at the Dojo**

### 4. This Month's Holiday

- ◆ **Dojo's Holiday: 24<sup>th</sup> Monday & 25<sup>th</sup> Tuesday**

## Sharing the feeling of Black Belts

### Nidan

Firstly I would like to thank Sensei and Shuko very much for all their hard work and dedication. I feel their effort flows through the whole dojo and I am very grateful for it. I would also like to thank Sam, Murray, Kaido, Lawrence and Ryan especially for all their assistance over this period.

As the Yudan gradings got to train together, I was lucky enough to have a big group of people doing the same grading to train with. This gave me a great opportunity to not only train my grading a lot but do so with seniors going for Yondan. With such big gradings it felt like everyone was making an extra effort to train more often and with higher intensity. Coming into the grading I was more confident than I was at Shodan, thinking that most of the techniques were similar to what was on the black belt grading which I was now performing better. But this soon changed. While training with so many soon to be 4<sup>th</sup> dans was a great experience it was a bit disheartening to have every technique I just performed done again but much better. It made me appreciate though how much more I need to progress and learn.

When some people heard I was going for Nidan they thought it seemed like I'd reached a high level of Aikido mastery or something. But as with my Shodan grading, I felt as much like a beginner has ever. This experience has made as eager as ever to continue training and one day catch up with everyone else.

OSU!

*Cameron Blake*



## **Nidan**

As I write this article I am reflecting on the notes I made in the months and weeks leading up to my Nidan examination.

Many important things happened preceding the grading that challenged both my mind and my confidence. As I grow older I am less focused just on my body's capabilities and more focused on continuing to train and develop my mind. Aikido is an ideal way to focus and develop the mind in many respects, one of which is awareness and the mind set in Aikido and in daily life.

When confronted with the Nidan shite waza sheet, my first thought was panic. Followed closely by a realisation that all the waza were in the steps I had already completed as far I knew, and the unsettling thought that I had practiced all these waza previously in prior step examinations. What unsettled me further was the worry that there were some techniques in the shite waza list that when I initially tried to recall them, all I had was mental blank. This aspect of the Yoshinkan Aikido grading system was clearly a challenge to my mind set in grading preparation and of course the grading examination itself in which I was challenged to keep my mind motionless – a testing of ones character. I learned the importance of continuously revising all aspects of our Yoshinkan grading system including those learned by our absolute beginners. This was driven home to me by Sensei in the two weeks leading up to grading day, in which we as a class collectively help each in grading preparation. Sensei – my deepest thanks for this lesson.

Preparation, preparation, preparation - I soon realised I needed a shite waza study plan which led me to review my balance of learning styles. Looking, listening, and doing are recognised learning styles and I know that my learning style is a mix of all three. When I thought about how we learn in class, I realised that Sensei always follows an exact teaching method which I tried to replicate in my preparation.

I think the most important thing I have focused in preparation has been awareness of the detailed aspects of study in Sensei's dojo. In this I am truly still a beginner.

As I beginner then, I wish to express my deepest thanks to all of the members of our dojo each of whom, have done me a great service in my journey so far.

Osu!

*Murray Booth*

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## **Yondan**

### **PRESSURE... GOOD OR BAD?**

The journey to 4th Dan became real to me two months out from the grading. One cool evening in April I arrived at the Brisbane Dojo running late for first class - I often find it difficult to make it on time coming down from the Sunshine Coast after work. After bowing onto the mats, running over to Sensei to bow and begin the grading training class, I was engaged by Sensei in a brief conversation. Well it wasn't really a conversation... it went something like this,

**Sensei:** *"Ryan, your grading for 4th Dan this June?"*

**Ryan:** *"Osu!"*

**Sensei:** *"This means that you will do a double step grading [Step 9 and 10] this grading, Jun-4th Dan next month [May] and the 4th Dan grading in June Sogo Shinsa."*

**Ryan:** *"Osu!"*

**Sensei:** *"Okay, start training."*



At that point I quietly began to freak-out inside my mind with all the self-doubt that comes flooding into one's consciousness when confronted with an arduous task on a tight timeline. I had two options, I could let the wave of expectation overwhelm me and monopolise and paralyse my thoughts and actions, or I could compose myself taking confidence in Sensei's judgement and mentally map my journey ahead. No questions for which option I chose. While mentally mapping my next two months journey, considering all other responsibilities - family, the Sunshine Coast Dojo, professional obligations and demands etc. - that were going to provide the bumps and potholes along the road, I broke the overall task into single objectives which allowed me to acutely focus my energy and attention more manageably. This also gave me the opportunity to not feel overly pressured with the main goal - 4th Dan - throughout the two months leading up to it, which would have zapped a lot of energy through worry. I was able to respond to obstacles along the way that would only impact on that particular stage of the process at the time, not the whole task collectively.

Managing my internal challenge, as I discussed above, allowed me to ponder the pressure under which I found myself over the course of the two months, and assess how it was affecting me and those around me, plus whether it too was part of my development. Cindy my wife became an Aikido widow for two months and my two children became single parent kids - orphans to their dad's Aikido training twice weekly in Brisbane and 3 times a week at the Sunshine Coast Dojo. Rationalising it, this was periodic and passing soon, and normality would return soon enough... no problem! But I am thankful to be married to such a supportive lady and belong to such a supportive family.

Additional to the pressure of expectation I placed upon myself to perform well in every step along the way of my journey towards 4th Dan, I felt the responsibility to perform at the 'top of my game' in all other spheres of my life over the two-month period. I felt I was a juggler in a circus keeping many balls in the air and I wasn't going to allow myself to drop one of the balls. Having begun this year in a new role with added responsibility at work and entering the end of semester period of exceptional busyness at the time of the gradings, I knew I had to strike the right balance. The challenge? To organise my time so that there was no down time and every spare minute was either effective in furthering work objectives and meeting deadlines or effective in Aikido training towards my 4th Dan grading.

I compartmentalised work and training and better prioritised what to best focus my energy on at any given time - clarity was the key! If I was thinking of training when working, or vice-a-versa, neither my training nor my work was effectively done and my progress would always be slower. I had to adopt a single focus approach at any time - totally immerse my mind and body in whichever sphere I was in at that time and move between them as efficiently and seamlessly as possible... who ever said we should multi-task? In my opinion, it produces an inferior version of that which would be produced had you focused completely on the task at hand. This was my strategy to minimize the impact of the pressure and keep moving forward.

Having said this however, every moment in between (driving, walking, showering, etc.) was spent visualising either an Aikido technique that was particularly challenging or what I was going to do next for work when I got back to the computer. Just when I thought I had everything in check... I was on top of things in terms of present pressures at work, family onside, each stage of 'the journey': it was June, and the double grading? Check! Jun-4th Dan grading? Check! I found myself slipping into a quiet confidence thinking that all was fine and progress was as it should be; all that was left now was the final leg - the 4th Dan grading! I was preparing for this last stage when out of left field I was thrown a curveball at the final leg.

What was the lesson learnt? Don't ever be complacent and too comfortable in preparing for anything... expect the unexpected! Two weeks out from the grading my students at the Sunshine Coast Dojo ask if they could come down on the night of the 4th Dan grading and watch. What could I say other



than the same response I had given Sensei two months prior? I replied, “osu”! and reverted momentarily to the same state of mind in which I found myself directly after the conversation with Sensei that April evening two months ago. Now the pressure was on once again... there was no room for error as I felt the pressure to perform well in front of my students and set a high standard for the Sunshine Coast Dojo.

Thankfully I had journeyed quite a distance both mentally and physically by this stage and found solace and confidence in the work I had done in preparation to date. I made the choice to change my perception of how I viewed this pressure; I viewed this not as added pressure or expectation, but as a further challenge to develop personally as an aikidoka and professionally in setting the standard for my students at the Sunshine Coast Dojo to follow. I kept telling myself, ‘rise to the challenge, don’t shy away from it!’... So much so that it became an internal mantra for me whenever a spate of self-doubt arose around whether I would perform at a high enough standard.

Well, the grading came and went. Thankfully I passed, but I learnt a lot from the pressure under which I found myself over that period of training. In short, the pressure gave me the opportunity to grow. Perhaps, if I had months to prepare, no other distractions, plenty of time on the mats and lots of sleep, I may still have passed... However, I doubt that I would have grown to the same extent. I wouldn't have learnt more about the way I respond to stress/pressure; developed a way to internalise the pressure, organise my time more efficiently; make use of the time I had to train or work more effectively; cherished the little moments in between playing with my kids as a nice distraction; developed a greater ability to focus attention on a single objective within a greater process without obsessing over the end goal; and just ‘be’ in the process understanding that I only could control certain aspects of the ‘journey’ while responding flexibly to other aspects that were out of my control.

Now I look forward to the next challenge that this year of Aikido brings... the Brisbane Dojo’s 20th Annual Demonstration, in which my students will participate for the first time, and our 1st Annual Demonstration up on the Sunshine Coast. As I approach this next challenge I will keep in the forefront of my mind the words that Sensei said to me earlier through my journey to 4th Dan, “Please enjoy the pressure!” and repeat the mantra that has worked over the past few months, ‘Rise to the challenge, don’t shy away from it!’

Before closing, I need to thank the people that have helped me along the way to 4th Dan. Firstly, thanks to my wife Cindy and my daughters for their understanding of my absence and unwavering support. Thanks to Lawrence for all his time and effort throughout this journey... I couldn’t think a better travel companion! And last but not least, thank you Sensei for your wisdom in giving me this opportunity to grow. You are more than just our instructor in Aikido, you guide us through life more often than not and provide us with chances to be better people!

Osu,

*Ryan Slavin*