

NEWSLETTER



No. 162 February 2009

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Report of January

New members 9

Total number of adults training 60

Total number of children training Holiday

Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 24th January

Jun-Nidan	Greg Dickenson	7th Kyu	Justin Titmarsh	3Y4 step	Matt Carpenter
Jun-Shodan	Joseph Stuart	9th Kyu	Ryan U Cabuang	2Y4 step	Kanako Yamaguchi
Jun-3rd Kyu	Matthew Ryan		Choi, Sukchul	S4 step	Urs Battig
5th Kyu	Jiro Sumitomo				Adam Sawyer
	Oliver Bradshaw	5Y5 step	Richard Diehm	S3 step	Dennies Delos Santos
7th Kyu	Murray Booth	4Y1 step	Lee Stemm	S1 step	Kaido Mori

Events in February

1. Getsurei Shinsa

- ♦Saturday, 28th 1:00pm~
- ♦Shinsa training starts from 21st Saturday.

2. This Month's Holiday

- ♦Dojo's Holiday 2nd March Monday

Sharing the feeling of Black Belts

Shodan

To begin with I can't thank Sensei Mori and Shuko enough for all your support, patience, understanding, humility and friendship during my journey to Shodan. And secondly thanks to everyone I have trained with, particularly my grading training partners and black belt mentors. You have all played a significant role in helping me to develop my skills and gain a better understanding of aikido. I have a long way to go but couldn't be where I currently am without you all. Sincere thanks.

Why Aikido

I have often been asked what made me chose aikido and why at such an advanced stage in life. Some of you know this story, but I parted company with my karate club in December 2007 (after training for 13 continuous years) and started the aikido beginner's course in January 2008. (No rest for the wicked !!) It was frustrating to throw away that experience, but I couldn't find a suitable karate club to continue my training. I had participated in competitive sport since the age of 6 and was faced with learning a different martial art, resurrecting interest in a previous sport or becoming a full time coach potato - which most of us get to at some stage in life.

The sports option didn't interest me anymore because I no longer had the competitive drive. I considered a number of different martial art forms but kept coming back to aikido. I had enjoyed practicing and teaching the joint locking techniques, grappling and pressure point strikes used in karate and believed that aikido might be the best option to further my development. I did some research into finding a suitable aikido club and the one that stood head and shoulders above all others was the Yoshinkan Brisbane Dojo. Sensei's extensive training and teaching experiences combined with the clubs direct links to the Yoshinkan Honbo Dojo in Japan was impressive. And the opportunity to experience a traditional Japanese martial art with true Japanese culture was also hard to go past. And I must admit that the Yoshinkan Brisbane Dojo has far exceeded all of my expectations. Sensei sets the direction and the standards and the senior grades make sure we all stay on the path to righteousness. I have no doubt that Sensei has created a world-class dojo and I feel



privileged to be part of it. There has never been a night when I have gone home from training without feeling challenged.

The Journey

When I started training in the Brisbane Dojo I was optimistic that I would be able rise to the challenges ahead. However I also had some nagging doubts that the odds were stacked against me to even get past the early grades. I was almost 50 years old and was carrying some injuries (from a lifetime of adventures ☺) and wasn't sure if they would hold up. I also wasn't sure if I could cope with the physical demands of aikido - which I have found to be far more demanding than karate. Like all beginners, it seemed such a daunting task to understand and perform even the most basic movements and techniques. I had hoped that my karate background may have helped me understand the aikido concepts more quickly - but it actually hindered my progress. In the early days (and sometimes even now) it was difficult to free my mind from the karate stances, techniques and tactics that were ingrained in me.

However I believe that "*winners never quit and quitters never win*". And so I was determined to fully commit to aikido and see where it took me. My immediate goals were to train as often as I could and as hard as I could while trying to stay healthy. I had some long term goals but dared not to think about them too much because I wanted to take it one grade at a time.

Unfortunately on several occasions within the first 12 months, I confided to Sensei and Shuko that some of my injuries may force me to give up training – either long term or permanently. My greatest fear (and the thing that drove me the most) was that if I took too much time off to attend to injuries or to other distractions, I may lose the passion and not make it back. Fortunately I was able to work through those challenging periods with only minimal time off training. I also appreciated the valued support I received from Sensei and also from my grading training partners - who eased certain techniques on me until I had recovered sufficiently. Mind you, the same could be said for the majority of my regular grading partners who also carried injuries and who in turn relied on my support. While injuries are problematic, they also have some positive aspects. Injuries help me to understand my body's limitations and also give me an insight into how I have to modify my training to avoid reoccurrences.

Sadly, there have been times when my body's limitations have affected my ability to perform techniques to the same degree as other students. For example my bad left knee only allows me to practice suwari-waza techniques for short periods. While this frustrates me, I have always considered strength of the mind a far more important quality than agility or strength of the body. Try running a marathon with a strong body but fragile mind and see how far you get. So for me, my training has been far more rewarding by showing spirit, courage, persistence and respect.

And now that I have reached Shodan I consider I have moved from my "L" plates to my "P" plates. I don't need an experienced driver sitting next to me in the car anymore. But it is still reassuring to have one close by. I am still on a substantial learning curve and look forward to the further challenges ahead. Achieving a black belt also comes with additional responsibilities in the dojo and I hope that I can live up to everyone's expectations.

Special Thanks

I would like to end this article by acknowledging a few students who have helped me above and beyond the norm. Lee Stemm was the "drill sergeant" that got me through my basic early training.

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Eagle Kao taught me how to break down the techniques into all of the active components. Urs Battig, Lawrence Monforte, Francis Hollingworth, Robert Austin, Joseph Stuart, Jamie Baker and Mark Coleman provided excellent technical advice through my brown and step levels. Thanks to Jason Williams and Aarjaun Burch for fine tuning some of my Shodan grading techniques. But the person I have to thank the most for getting me ready for my Shodan grading is Mark Coleman. And finally to Brent Weston who was my uke for my Shodan and Jun 3rd gradings. For differing reasons, I was anxious in the lead up to, and during, both of those gradings and was fortunate to have Brent's leadership and calming influence to help me through.

OSU !

David Shepley