

WHY I STARTED KARATE *by MARK KIRTON (2nd Kyu)*

KYOKUSHINKAI

I first became involved with Kyokushin Karate at the age of 25. Before I go on it is worth explaining how I got into Karate and why. It was in May 1976, I was walking my son Tyron who at the time was aged 2 years along Wimbledon Broadway and I was attacked and beaten up fairly badly. What made things worse was that Tyron nearly got run over because he became so frightened during my attack that he ran in the road and was nearly hit by a car. After recovering from this attack I wanted to kill or maim my attacker so I decided to take up Karate. I had heard there was a Karate Dojo at Raynes Park, so I decided to go along and join. I enrolled in the beginners class and started training, the strange thing was by now I had forgotten and did not think of my attacker anymore, because my thoughts had changed and I also saw that with Shihan Arneil's teaching this should not be a basis for taking up Karate to injure or hurt another person.

THE TRAINING

It goes without saying the training was very tough, and of course I was not used to training for Karate and I found I had to really push hard to attain a higher level of fitness which was necessary. The other problem I had was that I worked shifts because at the time I was a computer operator, so some months I could go all month and then the next month I could only train once which of course hindered my development. I can remember Shihan asking me about my attendance, and why it was so up and down - despite the obstacles I did achieve my grades, ... I realised very early on that to achieve my grading I would have to fight all obstacles and be determined.

DISCIPLINE AND RESPECT

One of the things I have learned through my teacher Shihan Arneil, is discipline and respect NOT only for the high grades in our organisation but for everyone and always to look for the good in everyone, that way you will always have a positive attitude. It is very important to be positive in your Karate training because this positive attitude can and should be applied in your daily life. As I have mentioned, I started training at Shihan Arneil's dojo, however when I got my yellow belt, 5th kyu, I joined Shihan Whybrow's dojo at Battersea. My reason for leaving Wimbledon dojo at that time was due to me not getting on very well with an instructor (who is no longer at Wimbledon). I will endeavour to explain. At this time I still worked as a computer operator on shift and sometimes I would turn up late to the session, a little later than the other students, everytime I tried to explain why I was late. But one of

the instructors would not listen to me and made me do push-ups until he said stop. This I did not mind because I got stronger. However, one night I turned up for training and he told me he'd had enough of my excuses and he made me fight during the free fighting with nearly all of the black belts in attendance. As a result I was so badly beaten I could just about go to work the next day.

THAMES DOJO

At this stage I thought it was time to join another dojo hence I joined Shihan Whybrow's club, Thames. I was really pleased that I did this because training was fun again, of course I missed my friends and Shihan Arneil but I did not think it was manly or right to go crying to Shihan. This proved to be a great time for me because under the guidance of Shihan Whybrow I was able to improve my techniques and fighting ability. At this time I was also selected to represent Thames in the National Team Clicker Tournament, this was successful and I won a gold medal with the team at Thames. During this time in order for us to prepare for the tournament we travelled to Sweden to train under Sensei Fitkin. This was great because for two weeks, for me and the other team members as we could train 2 - 3 times a day. We started by being led on a run by Shihan Whybrow over Stockholm Bridge in sub zero conditions, because I forgot to remember it was March in Sweden boy it was cold but enjoyable.

CLICKER TOURNAMENT

On this trip Shihan Whybrow also taught us breaking techniques, I was successful in breaking two breeze blocks with my head (which I will never do again, because I had such a headache afterwards, it wasn't funny, luckily the photos came out). Following this trip and the British Clicker Tournament, I was told by a knee and joint specialist that I would have to give up Karate for at least a year because I had torn the 'crucia' ligament in my left knee and it could collapse at anytime. If this happened it would wreck my knee completely. So I had a year off and did as the specialist had recommended. After that year had elapsed I really wanted to get fit and compete again. So I started training at Thames again and represented Thames in the First Irish Open Tournament in Dublin, Ireland and secured 3rd place, which I felt wasn't bad after my lay off. During my time doing Kyokushinkai Karate it has been my privilege to train under some of the best instructors in Kyokushin today such as Shihan Steve Arneil, Shihan Jeff Whybrow, Shihan Brian Fitkin, Shihan Howard Collins and Sensei Tatsu



Photo: Marcel Lelienhof

Nakamura.

WHY I STILL COMPETE

The main reason I still continue to fight in knockdown competitions is the fact that I still enjoy them immensely, quite a few people have said to me "don't you think you are a bit old at 40 to still be fighting in these types of tournaments?" and my reply is NO. I hope continuing to compete at my age is an achievement and an example to others to have a go and try. We must remember that we are always striving to do better and push ourselves in our training, so why not compete if you have the conviction to do so. It is one of my goals to win a Knockdown Tournament and be the oldest competitor. What I am trying to say is that age should not be a barrier, I have had injuries but I haven't lost the will to compete and try to win. Knockdown to me is a challenge because all of us go about our daily lives making a living and trying to do our best and in a way its fairly ordinary but at the same time essential. However without challenge in our lives we have nothing or very little to try for, one of the greatest things I feel knockdown gives me and others is the will and determination to win. With this will to succeed and win this can be applied to our daily life to enhance it. When problems arise fight them, work at them. Don't despair because they won't or don't disappear.

THE FUTURE

One day I will have to stop doing knockdown like a lot of others before me, at that stage I hope to be able to coach others and become a referee and at the same time my aim is to perfect what I have learned over the years to benefit others who want to learn.