



国際大山空手道連盟総本部

World Oyama Karate

Honbu Newsletter Issue 12 - Fall, 2006

組手

Kumite

By Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama

The Ultimate Goal !



Kumite is the ultimate goal of Karate. Each experience is also a new beginning of your karate journey.



Kumite - The Ultimate Goal ... Continue

Everyone is Superman...In Their Head

Whenever someone begins Karate training, regardless of their reasons for starting, most likely, they dream of one day becoming a Black Belt. A Black Belt symbolizes power and strength in the world of Martial Arts. These days, there are lots of "Karate" schools that hand out black belts left and right as long as the student attends classes over a short period of time and pays lots of money. Those are not the kind of black belts I'm talking about. I'm talking about the rank of Black Belt in styles that train with traditional fundamental principles that are not compromised by the business aspect of running a dojo.

As human beings, we all have an image of how things should be, our own worldview. We have opinions and values about how we and the people around us should act or behave. This part of a person's ego comes into play when they begin studying Karate. They begin with an idea already in place about who they are and what they are capable of doing. They have a sense of themselves that has been built up over the course of their entire life.

As a beginner learns a new technique, such as *mawashi geri*, they may think to themselves, "Oh, I can do this. I can definitely use this in a real fight." But, as I've said before, the mind learns at a greater speed than the body. Most beginners don't realize this. They think that just because they understand the basic elements of a technique that they are ready to fight. Whenever I teach beginners, I always have them wait a couple of months before starting kumite training. Instead, I have them focus mostly on kihon training.

But I can see a look in their eyes that says to me, "But I can handle kumite training. I'm ready now, I can do it. I have a pretty good roundhouse kick. I can punch pretty hard." They continue training with this mind set over the next few weeks. After a while, they start learning basic combinations, such as 1-2 punch, roundhouse kick, knee kick. Or punch, front snap kick, roundhouse kick. They become convinced even more that they "have it down."

They see themselves attacking their opponent with various punches and kicks. However, they



You need to suck each technique, over again, over again, into your body, down into your bones

Kumite - The Ultimate Goal ... Continue



Kumite shows your character

never stop to think that their opponent will also be attacking *them*. The physical pain of being punched or kicked never enters their calculations. Finally, the day comes when they experience their first free fight. It might be during their promotion test, or while training in the dojo. They bow to the referee, face each other, bow, and begin. Before “*Hajime!*” the beginning student might have a few butterflies, but overall, they’re confident that the fight won’t be any big deal.

But once they start, their opponent hits them hard two or three times before they have a chance to do anything. Their mind suddenly goes into shock. As the fight goes on, they start thinking, “Man, that really hurts. What’s the matter with me, I can’t make contact with any of my punches. I need some water. How am I supposed to hit this guy if he keeps moving around and kicking me in the stomach?”

They hear “*Yame!*” and everything stops. The beginner’s heart pounds and thunders in his ears. He tries to stand up straight and keep a poker face, but all he can think about is getting water and air. He’s exhausted and confused; suddenly kumite is very real. His expectations and preconceptions are rattled. In a fog, he finishes class and takes a shower. Driving home, he thinks, “Maybe I need to rethink this Karate business. I

mean, I used to be pretty good at tennis/jogging/frisbee/playstation...maybe I should try those things again...”

These kinds of whispers and doubts don’t happen to everyone, but they are not unusual. Our style is a *contact* style. Before experiencing kumite for the first time, lots of beginners are anxious to get out and fight. But afterwards, some of them have the same kind of doubts as I just now described. They have this experience because there is still a large gap between what they think they can do and what they *really* can. Some beginners, on the other hand, might have a good experience their first time. They may win their fight, control their opponent. Suddenly, they think to themselves, “Yes, I was right. I could probably handle a knock-down tournament.” Most likely, they will encounter the same obstacle the next time.

Kumite is the heart of Karate training. If you take out kumite, training becomes hollow and empty. All basic techniques, kata, movement practice, and everything else, ultimately have one purpose—to develop fighting strategy and ability. Kumite is the cornerstone of your training. But, after reading this article, I want you to realize that kumite is not easy. For example, in kumite,

Kumite - The Ultimate Goal ... Continue

you have to learn to control your own emotions and the nervousness that you experience. Also, you cannot control your opponent. Ultimately, the goal of training is to be able to control and read your opponent. But this is not always possible, even after years and years of experience. At the beginning and intermediate level, it's not very likely that you will be able to exert any control over your opponent.

Kumite=Character

As human beings, our actions often reflect our character. The same is true for kumite. A person's inner character shows up in the way they fight. Fighters at an advanced level can hide their true character when they fight. They are cleverer about hiding what they are really thinking. They can fake their opponent. But most likely, especially at the beginning level, a person's kumite style clearly reflects their personality. Here are a few examples you might recognize.

Strong-minded/Stubborn—When this type of person fights, they always move forward, especially if they are in good physical condition. They have a driving kumite style and favor punching, low kicks and knee kicks—in-fighting. They may often grab or push their opponent. If they see that their opponent is shaken up, they may try to kick the face area, more for show than actual effect. This kind of fighter is a little cocky. Well,

maybe not “cocky”, but big-headed. Well, maybe “big-headed” isn't the right word either...how about “confident”.

But, if this kind of fighter faces an equally strong and more experienced opponent, suddenly none of their techniques seem to work. They tend to get rattled and give up easily. After losing such a fight, they might think to themselves, “You know, if it was a ‘real’ fight, I could've taken him. But maybe Karate isn't for me.” If they have a sense of humility, however, they may say, “I've got a lot to learn. I'm going to try harder and build myself up.” In my experience, this kind of fighter can go either way.

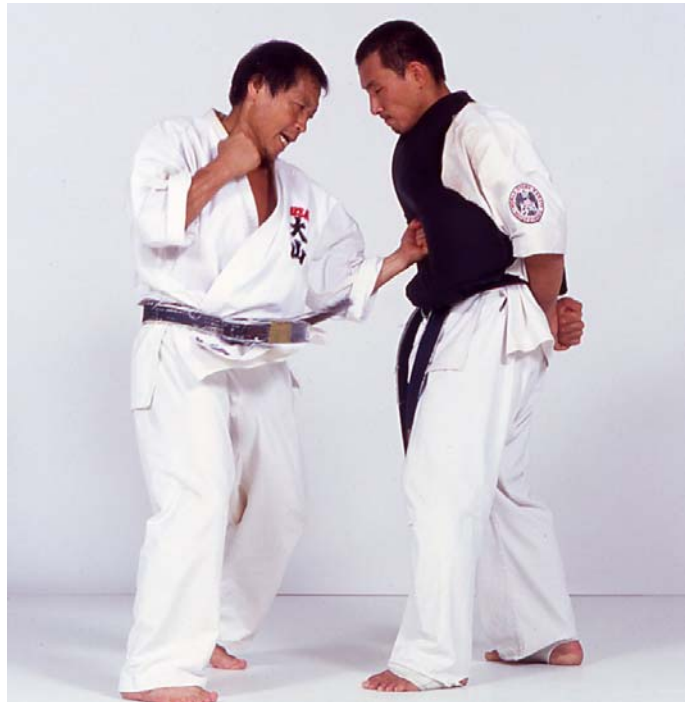
Easy-going/Sweet—Just like me sometimes! This kind of fighter's temperament is much more relaxed and flexible. They listen well to their instructors.

When they first begin fighting, they don't want to get in-close. They move around a lot, throw a couple techniques, and then move around some more. They don't want to hurt their opponent and don't want to get hurt themselves. If they have a difficult experience in a fight, they tend to give up training easily, so instructors need to pay close attention in that kind of situation.

Excellent Coordination—This category doesn't apply so much to a person's temperament, but to their physi-



Practice the technique in a stationary position to get the proper form



Without contact, the technique is only in your head

Kumite - The Ultimate Goal ... Continue



One breath one technique when training with contact. Don't forget Kamae—Technique—Kamae.

cal ability. These are the kind of people that excel at any sport they try. Sometimes they are very limber too. They catch on to techniques much faster than other people. If it takes the average student a couple months to be able to learn a basic technique, this kind of person can do it in a week.

Because of that, though, they never really learn basic technique on a deeper level. They think to themselves, "Yeah, I got it. I can do it." But they never get below the surface. In Karate training, you need to suck each technique into your body, down into your bones. This kind of person tends to stop at the muscle. In a fight, if their opponent gives them a lot of pressure, all their techniques disappear. Afterwards, they may hear a voice inside their head, "maybe you should try something else instead."

But if their opponent isn't so strong, they tend to use a lot of flashy techniques. Other students might be impressed by their coordination and ability. Tournament announcers, or the average spectator, might be awed by their ability, but a true *karateka* can tell that none of the

flashy techniques are that effective for delivering a knockout.

Uncoordinated, but Love Karate Training—This kind of person takes a long time to learn a technique, but when they do, they really get into it. No matter who their opponent is, they can depend on their technique.

But sometimes this kind of students gets stuck. They reach a point where they can't see the big picture of their future training. It's like they have the seeds for making their Karate deeper and bigger, but they don't know how to make the seeds grow. When they get to this point, an instructor needs to crack open their head and add fertilizer to help them see the path to the next level.

Average People with Average Coordination—Like most students. If they commit themselves, they can really build up their Karate. Instructors enjoy teaching this type of student. This kind of student will try to emulate their Sensei or Sempai, or another student who

Kumite - The Ultimate Goal ... Continue

fights well.

Often times, this becomes a problem, because the student doesn't realize that the person they look up to might be totally opposite from them in terms of physical ability, personality, even gender. They believe these factors don't matter as they try to copy the people they look up to. For example, they don't think to themselves, "I'm a woman, but he's a man," or "I'm a middle aged man, and she's a very athletic and limber young woman," or "I'm tall and lanky, but Sensei is short and stocky," or "I'm short and chubby, but Sensei is tall and skinny." Regardless of these differences, students in this category think that if they train hard enough, they can become just like the person they look up to.

For example, the Sensei has a very powerful and smooth *jodan mawashi geri*, but the student can only reach about belt-high, but they keep trying to copy the kick anyway.

If the person they admire gives them some advice, they get really excited. They try to copy their kumite style, even if it doesn't fit them.

In another example, they watch a student in the dojo who counter-fights so well. They move their shoulders and body at a close distance to get out of the impact of their opponent, and then deliver powerful knockout techniques. But when the beginning student tries to fight the same way, they just end up with lots of bruises.

This kind of emulation happens all the time in the dojo. A student will often times try to emulate their instructor not only while fighting, but in how they dress and talk too. This can be tricky, especially if a man tries to copy a female instructor with nice legs who wears skirts.

組手 Kumite and 基本 Kihon

—How are They Connected?

(Put it Your Body—Not Your Head)

Most karate people agree that Kihon (Basics) is very important. However, most of them don't realize what kihon training really is. They will tell you without hesitation that kihon training is the most important point for building up strong kumite. But do they really understand what this means?

Lots of other styles practice kihon by standing in *Sanchin dachi*, *zenkutsu dachi*, or *kiba dachi* and just punching and kicking the air. For example, they stand in *Sanchin dachi* and, without stopping, practice *seiken*, *uraken gamen uchi*, *Tettsui*, *shuto gammen uchi*, *shuto hizo uchi*, *furi uchi*, *shita zuki*, *mawashi uchi*, *jodan uke*, *soto uke*, *gedan barai*, and on and on. And that's it.

People who want to compete at a higher level treat basic training like a warm-up exercise. They focus their time on building up their conditioning with weights and extra rounds on the bag. They might go to a special gym to increase their stamina, power, and speed. However, they'll still tell you that "Kihon training is very important," but for them, kihon training is just an exercise.

Why is this the case? Because their kihon training is done without contact, standing in the same place. But, Karate has a long tradition over thousands of years. The importance of kihon training has been passed on down the line, without anyone questioning why. Since they compete in Karate tournaments, they have to use Karate techniques, which come from kihon. That's why they say that kihon training is important.

When I came to the U.S., I started to question how kihon training related to kumite. People had always said that, "Kumite is the heart of Karate," and that "Kihon is the heart of Kumite". But why? What were the important points of kihon training? I realized that kihon training involves all the techniques in Karate. Each technique requires you to use your body in a particular way. In order to discover what that way is, you must train with *contact*.

Until you make contact, your training is not complete. Your techniques are still just in your head, in your imagination. Most styles don't train beyond this point; they just punch and kick the air while standing in the same spot. They never feel the technique in their total body. For example, different types of hand techniques (i.e. *furi uchi*, *shita zuki*, *mawashi uchi*, *seiken*) each require you to use your body in a different way. Until you make contact, you will never understand this point.

I thought about other sports like boxing, wrestling, Judo, Kendo. Why was Karate the only one to practice just hitting the air? That's baloney! I like golf. I especially like Tiger Woods. If you want to be a better golfer, you can't just swing a club in the air over and over and expect to improve. There are lots of different clubs in golf: sand wedge, pitching wedge, 5 iron, 9

Kumite - The Ultimate Goal ... Continue

iron, driver, etc. You have to learn how to use each one by practicing hitting balls with it. Then you can tell where you're tense, how you need to adjust your swing. The same with baseball.

I like the Yankees, especially Matsui. If a hitter wants to improve their hitting ability, they're never going to do it by just swinging a bat in the air. They need to face a real pitcher, throwing an actual ball. That way they can see where their timing is too early or too late or how they should adjust their swing. The same is true for kihon training.

Whether you practice staying in a stationary position like *Sanchin dachi*, or moving in *kumite no tachi*, you need to practice until the point of contact. A basic progression for kihon training is to first practice the technique in a stationary position to get the proper form. Next, practice while moving, then finally while making contact. Kihon training should use one breath to execute one technique; otherwise, the student will feel pressured. Most likely, when beginners start making contact with punch techniques, for example, they already tend to be stiff in the shoulders and legs. Re-

member that every technique has 3 stages—*Kamae*—impact—*Kamae*. This is a key point in kihon training.

What Does “Kumite” Really Mean?

How does all this relate to kumite? There are two types of kumite—*Yakusoku* and *Jyu*. The kumite discussed in this article is free-fighting (*ju*). Kumite is composed of two words—組 *Kumu* and 手 *Te*. [*Kumu*] means to construct, put together. [*Te*] means technique, which includes step work, *kamae*, movement, and *hyoshi*. Building your own kumite style is like constructing your own house from the materials at your disposal.

In ancient times, all the basic techniques were already in existence. Straight techniques like *seiken*, *mae geri*, *ushiro geri*, *kakato geri* and curved techniques like *mawashi geri*, *soto mawashi*, *uchi mawashi*, *ushiro mawashi geri*, *mawashi uchi*. A fighter would pick up different techniques to compose their own particular fighting style. Building your own kumite is all up to you, like building your own house. Are you going to be satisfied with a simple straw hut, or a log cabin, or a huge mansion? It's all up to you, and the foundation



Without contact, you never learn how to utilize powerful weapon like “Chusoku” (ball of the foot)

Kumite - The Ultimate Goal ... Continue



Use the treasure of Kihon to build your own fighting strategy

for all of it is kihon.

That's why *Kyoten* vols. 1-4 and *Perfect Karate* are there, to give you materials to work with. In *Kyoten I*, beginning students learn techniques like *seiken*, *mae geri*, *mawashi geri*, *hiza geri*. At the next level, in *Kyoten II*, they add *ushiro geri*. As you get stronger, you have more techniques to work with. How well you develop them is all up to you. That's why we say that a person's kumite style reflects their character. The techniques they choose to develop and use reflect their own personal preferences. Your kumite is your own unique vision.

The Technique Will Speak to You—You Better Listen Good!

Whenever you work on *Kihon no Waza* (Basic Techniques), you need to get into each one deeply. You have to approach it from all the possible angles, see how to use it in a variety of circumstances. Learn it with your total body, not just with your mind. If you do, the technique will start to speak to you. It will tell you whether or not it fits your body. Getting to the point where the technique speaks to you is vital for building a strong foundation for your kumite. To a person with great coordination, the technique might say,

“Don't rush it. You need to put me in your blood and bone, not just in your muscles. Don't give into the temptation to skip ahead to the next technique just yet.” To an uncoordinated person it might say, “Take your time, little by little. I'm not going anywhere soon.” Or to a stiff person, it might whisper, “You need to relax your muscles and stretch more.”

Lots of people never get to this point. They learn a technique, but never take the time to really listen to it, really get into it. That's why they say that kihon is important, but have no idea why. Karate has a very long history. Each technique has been developed over a long period of time for a certain reason. For example, the use of *hikite* in punching increases power. *Ago uchi* is designed for speed and quickness.

You need to approach training with an open mind, like an infant, open to the possibility of discovery every step of the way. You need to soak up your training like a sponge. Infuse the techniques into the marrow of your bones. Kihon training is filled with treasures and priceless gifts, but you will never find them if you let your ego get in the way, if you don't spend the time necessary to delve into each technique from every angle.

Kihon is a Treasure Chest—You Better Find It!

Kumite - The Ultimate Goal ... Continue

The two training principles discussed here are unique to World Oyama Karate—(1) always train until contact and (2) *Kamae*—Technique—*Kamae* for every basic technique.

Most people like training that involves lots of action. Students sometimes find kihon training boring or repetitious. So, they just skip over it, anxious to do something more “exciting”. But if you want to build up your Karate and discover the treasures of kihon training, you cannot do this. You have to practice every detail of basic techniques, get into them from every angle. I want you to understand, though, that this doesn’t mean you have to practice them in the same rotation every time.

Once you feel comfortable with a basic technique, you need to practice it creatively, in different ways. Figure out how to connect different techniques. Some techniques don’t flow together smoothly, so you need to discover how to use your footwork and *kamae* to better connect them. For example, *mawashi geri* and *ushiro geri* flow together naturally. But *uchi mawashi* and *ushiro geri* do not, so you need to spend more time fig-

uring out how to make them work together. As you continue to work on the basics, you should use various timings, power, and speed to better understand the techniques. This kind of training connects with kata training.

How Are You Going to Build Your Fighting Strategy?—KATA

Just as with kihon, most people will tell you that kata training is important for kumite, but they don’t really know why. Kata is a fighting strategy, but also deals with how to arrange *hyoshi* (rhythm), power, speed, and fit different techniques together. Kata has a long history in Karate training. Most styles still practice kata that originated hundreds of years ago. Since that time, people have altered the kata and interpreted it in various ways so that nowadays, different styles have kata with the same name, but they do them completely different. Furthermore, they never question why they are still doing kata that originated in ancient times; they just follow what was done before.

In the old days, states, regions, cities, even towns and



If you learn Kihon technique deep enough, you can always stay one step ahead of your opponent. You can use your block for attack.

Kumite - The Ultimate Goal ... Continue

villages were much more isolated from each other than they are now. Information about neighboring regions was scarce, so people lived in pretty isolated environments, unlike today, where we have the internet and seem to know everything about everyone. A person in one region would create a kata that reflected their personal fighting strategy, and someone in another region would do the same. Different regions developed different fighting strategies without knowing very much about the strategies of their neighbors. But the situation now is completely different, meaning that some of the strategies in these katas are no longer relevant or effective.

I believe that some parts of the movements in ancient katas still work in fighting even today, but most of them do not. But when a Karate master tells a student, "Practicing this ancient kata will make your kumite stronger," that is often not the case. As I've said before, Karate's connection to ancient culture and tradition is one of its treasures. Preserving some of the ancient katas helps connect us with Karate's origins and lineage. From a cultural standpoint, it is important to choose some ancient Katas to pass on to students. My point is that if you think just learning and practicing these Katas will automatically strengthen your fighting ability, you are wrong.

Karate—Acrobatics? Gymnastics? 30+?—You Don't Have a Chance!

Recently, I've watched a lot of news and tournaments showing new kata on t.v. In these kata, everyone is jumping and flipping and shouting. It looks like something off a movie or video game. This is Karate? Give me a break. Karate is not gymnastics, this is Ridiculous! During a fight, any kind of big jump technique is labeled as *Su Temi Waza*. This means that the technique is used as a last resort, when nothing else is working. Executing this kind of technique in a fight is a huge gamble; if it doesn't work, you're dead. Not all jumping techniques are necessarily *su temi waza*, but when you jump, you need to use a big motion beforehand and save your power. When you land afterwards, it's very difficult to keep your balance, and you are extremely vulnerable to a counter-attack.

In an actual fight, people use jumping techniques very few times. But at these competitions on t.v., the more they jump, the more points they score—it's disgusting! I bet if I took a gymnast, put a dogi on him, and taught him a couple techniques, he could win. If you can act,

jump high, and use fierce facial expressions you can win these tournaments. I remember a Hollywood martial arts movie made years ago (I forget the title) that featured a member of the U.S. Olympic Gymnastics Team as the main character. He could jump all over the place, but I doubt he could really fight. Don't get me wrong, I don't mean to insult gymnastics. Being a good gymnast requires dedication and years and years of hard work, just like Karate. But in gymnastics, nobody is punching you or kicking you as you do your routine. In that regard, gymnastics and Karate are in two separate categories.

Our Katas are Authentic

I'm proud of the original katas of World Oyama Karate—**Kihon Sono 1-8, Shiho 1-5, and Hatsu To**. If you train in these katas, you can see how they apply to fighting. Each one has specific points and strategies that you can delve into and use to make your kumite bigger.

Whenever you are comfortable with basic techniques, practice them from every angle. Don't just train doing the same thing over and over. Be creative; connect techniques to different blocks and kicks and footwork. Sometimes, when you try and connect various techniques, you'll hit a wall, or get into a rut. When you try to combine techniques, sometimes you sacrifice the clarity and sharpness of each separate technique. As a result, they become muddy and don't seem to work. At that point, you need to go back to simple, basic training. Review each technique and listen to what it is telling your body and soul. If you do that, you can break through the obstacles in your progress.

気合 KIAI—Be the Technique!

Ki is the life-force inside of everyone. Starting a discussion about *ki* is like trying to pass through a massive foggy room without any exits. You could try all your life to work through the maze of material on this subject and never even come close to reaching the end. Someday, I'd like to go into more detail for you, but for now, I'm going to keep it simple.

There are two parts to the word *KIAI*. [**KI**]—Life-force, breathing. [**AI**]—Harmony, to fit together. Whenever you learn a basic Karate technique, you need to put all of your energy and focus, your *ki*, into that technique. You need to become one with the technique. Don't watch the technique from the outside, but rather put your entire being into that technique at that moment.

Kumite - The Ultimate Goal ... Continue

To do this, you need a strong *kiai*.

Most people think that *kiai* is just shouting, but there are lots of different types of *kiai*, not only shouting. Basically, human beings have two components—the mental and physical. In Karate training, it's important that you keep these two parts in balance and use them together so that you learn each technique in your mind and total body. Putting your *kiai* into your training means that you put your mind and body into each technique. Doing this gives you more power and focus, and helps eliminate any outside distractions.

As you chase each technique, if you train with good *kiai*, you'll become stronger and more confident. On the other hand, if you practice without good *kiai*, your technique will be sloppy and never fit you. Like I said, this is a simple explanation, and I'll try to go into more detail at a later time.

If you watch students fighting in a tournament, you can see a lot of different types of *kiai*. When they face each other, one student might look into their opponent's eyes and give a loud energetic shout. Another might get into their *kamae* and give a low grunt. While not always true, if a person fights with lots of shouting, they are

actually trying to hide their fear and nervousness. On the other hand, if someone kind of grunts and moves around smoothly, they are more confident in their fighting ability.

Even if you have techniques that really fit you, if you don't put your *kiai* in your fighting and training, those techniques will fade away from you. Like I mentioned before, if you don't put your *kiai* in your basic training, then your techniques will desert you when you're pressured in a fight. This often happens to people with great coordination who haven't spent enough time with basic techniques because they learn them too quickly.

Simply put, *ki* is your life-force, breathing. Training in Karate helps you strengthen your *ki* if you invest it in practicing the basics. This will help build up your kumite. Everyone has *ki*, but to enrich your life, you need to continue to build it up. Sometimes unfortunate accidents happen to people that leave them in a vegetative state. Their *ki* is just about dead. But for those of us who are lucky enough to be alive and healthy, we need to build up our *ki*. Training in World Oyama Karate will help build your *ki* up to a glorious level. It's all up to you! Osu!



You have to constantly polish your Kihon technique, otherwise they will get rusty and fade away.



身体障害者支援チャリティー

WORLD OYAMA KARATE presents

国際大山空手道連盟主催

JAPAN CUP

WORLD OYAMA KARATE ALL JAPAN KARATE CHAMPIONSHIP

2006年 11月19日(日)

会場 / 横浜文化体育館 (JR関内駅より徒歩5分)
開場 / 9:00AM
開始 / 少年部 & ノックダウン予選 10:00AM
ノックダウン本戦 2:00PM



WORLD OYAMA KARATE FOUNDER & DIRECTOR:
SAIKO SHIHAN YASUHIKO OYAMA
WORLD OYAMA KARATE JAPAN BRANCH DIRECTOR:
SHIHAN SHOJI SUZUKI



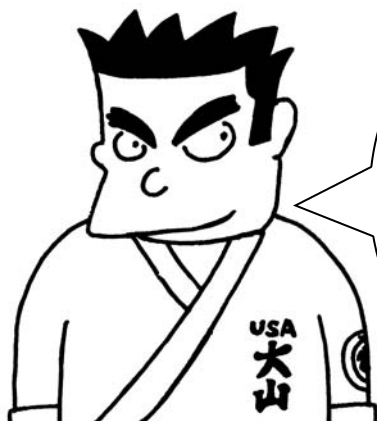
◎お問い合わせ: 国際大山空手道連盟本部事務局 TEL: 045-324-0379
<http://www.oyamakaratejpn.com/>

後援 / 星浜食品(株)

COMING SOON ! NEW NOVEL

..... by Founder Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama

Based on true stories of Uchi Deshi in America.



Don't Miss
The New
Novel.

"Uchi Deshi
in
America."

Issue 12 - Fall, 2006

Editor-in-Chief: Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama

Editors: Karl Julian

Graphic Artist: Sensei Masa Takahashi

Technical Assistant: Tony Ching

World Oyama Karate Honbu Dojo
1804 29th Avenue South, Homewood, AL 35209

Phone: (205) 879-4841 Fax: (205) 879-4849

www.worldoyama.com

Copyright © 2006 World Oyama Karate. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited.