Yamakura Shihan Canada Seminar

by John Roath

On April 26, 2008, Yamakura Shihan took part in a morning testing for some of our students and conducted an afternoon seminar. The seminar was again split into two sessions.

An item Shihan has brought up repeatedly at these seminars and a habit I’m personally struggling to break is the inappropriate use of the bow. Shihan tells us that it is appropriate to bow when the training session begins and when it ends. To bow in between (for example at the end of each kata or exercise) is inappropriate in relation to oriental culture and the social exchange between the parties involved. Seen in cultural terms the bow is similar to the western custom of the handshake. You shake the hand at the initial greeting and when the meeting is over. You don’t generally shake hands in between. Shihan noted students may be attempting to show respect by repeatedly bowing, however in context of the cultural custom and social exchange they are not and the bow should be restricted to the start and finish of the training session.

In the open session we worked on stance transition drills moving in the direction called out by Shihan (i.e. front, back, mawatte). It was noted martial technique should be free flowing and this drills purpose was to develop this flow by disrupting the mind body connection that occurs when a person’s brain directs their actions. The goal was to respond reflexively to the command with the correct action. We also reviewed the Geki Sai katas, Seiunchin kata and Sanchin kata and were provided some detail focus. In the review of Sanchin, Shihan introduced a method to work the energy circuit located around the center of the body.

In the blackbelt session we reviewed Sanseiru kata and were provided some examples of bunkai that included the use of soft force to overcome the body’s natural defenses. He asked that we practice this kata for further review at his next seminar which will hopefully occur in June 2008.

When the seminar was over I was left with a full mind, a sore body, and an appreciation for the chance to train with Yamakura Shihan. On behalf of the GKK Canada I’d like to thank Yamakura Shihan for his time and Pirrone Sensei for bringing this opportunity to us.