

July 2012 Newsletter
Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai

www.goju.com



Stop the Presses!

The printed version of the Newsletter has been discontinued.
We will no longer send a paper copy to our members.
You will continue to receive the email version.

Dan-Rank Promotion 2012

by Matt Loisel

The GKK held a black belt promotion on May 18th. The grading panel was Yamakura Shihan, Mr. Ken Maunz, Mr. Dave Shaneman, Mr. Ed Myers, and Mr. Dwight Scales. The participants were John Herrman, Angie Monday, Nancy Ault, Diane Jackson, Jim Jackson, Ray Walter, and Anthony Lugo. I had the honor of being invited to participate even though I've only been training with the GKK for about eight months.

The grading started with welcoming remarks from Yamakura Shihan and kneeling in seiza to bow in. Next was a series of kihon, followed by several kata done by the participants as a group. Then, one at a time, each participant performed their kata required for promotion and a desired kata.

Ippon kumite as a group was next with everyone paired up. We started with a half dozen or so randomly selected from the standard GKK jodan and chudan ippons by the grading panel. After that we took turns doing improvised ippons. Either a punch or kick attack was announced. The aggressor partner would punch or kick as directed with the right or left as their choice. The defending partner improvised a defense and counter-attack.

Following group ippons each participant individually demonstrated a bunkai of their choice from any kata. Then a technique from a kata was shown to the participant and it was up to the participant to demonstrate a bunkai for the technique.

At the end of the testing we did Tensho as a group then knelt in seiza and bowed out. The grading panelists compared notes for some time after the formal promotion was over, while participants and spectators visited.

Thank you very much to all the panelists and job well done to all the participants!

Minutes of Annual Meeting 2012

by Ed Myers

The GKK 2011 Annual Meeting was called to order at 5: 57 P.M. on Saturday, May 19, 2012. About thirty GKK members were in attendance representing Dojo's from Missouri, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania and New York.

Opening remarks recognized the contributions of Yamakura Shihan and particularly the three seminars provided that day. Thanks also went to Dwight Scales for procuring the facility and to Ken Maunz for coordinating the Regional Black Belt promotion on the 18th.

Since the last meeting in 2011, the GKK has an over all growth of 54 members.

*We lost 5 dojo(s) and gained 5 for a net gain of zero. Most of the dojos lost were from Mr. Cramer (MI) and Mr. Taylor (CA). The growth was from Argentina, Panama and India.

* In black belts over all we had a drop of 16 (mostly US) and increases from India.

*In Kyu we had an increase of 70 mostly from India and Sri Lanka.

Highlights from the annual reports from our member countries were then presented. An unedited version of each country can be seen on the GKK Website

Next was the Treasurer's Report. Our income vs. expenses increased almost \$4000. It was pointed out that the merchandise sales were a positive for the past two ears. Copies of the Treasurer's Report are available upon request.

The recipients of this year's prestigious Chairman's Award were announced and a brief summary of their contributions to the GKK stated. The award was presented to Mr. Bill Kane from the Ambler Dojo. See June 2012 Newsletter for complete write up.

New issue/business

There were no issues submitted as of 5/18/12 by members that could not attend the meeting.

After requesting additional new business (none) and making closing comments by Mr. Stamper and Yamakura Shihan, it was motioned and seconded to adjourn at 7:13 PM

Teaching Karate to Special Needs Students

by Zak Zaklad

We at the Ambler GKK Dojo have been wrestling with the issue of teaching and advancing special needs students. We've had a lively discussion among our blackbelts and we'd like to extend the discussion to GKK. I've noticed that the GKK Yahoo Group list is not very active, and I was thinking that perhaps we could use the newsletter as the vehicle for a GKK-wide discussion of this issue.

Some more specifics:

We have 2 Downs students – R, a 50 year old man with mental capacity of about a 5 yr old; and J, a 40 year old man with capacity of about a 10 yr old. Both are devoted and eager karateka, but learn slowly. We had a kyu-testing ceremony recently, and J, who is 7th kyu, was not promoted. He was hugely disappointed. We also have K, an 11 year old autistic boy, who also failed to get the green belt, and was devastated. This precipitated an email discussion among our black belts, which resulted in essentially 2 camps:

1. We should keep our promotion standards as they are, not "water down" the requirements.
2. We should make allowances for people with special needs.

Thing of it is, none of our teaching staff is very knowledgeable about Downs or autism, but we have worked with these folks for years, and we feel we have been successful in some ways. We've just had an offer from a special needs expert to watch us teach and offer advice.

So that's where we are. We are very interested in guidance from Shihan and from Stamper Sensei, and how other GKK schools address this issue.

We appreciate your thoughts.

Dave Shaneman Promoted to Kyoshi

by Ken Maunz

I would like to announce that Mr. Dave Shaman was promoted to Kyoshi at the annual GKK meeting this year. This was not an accident or idle thought. Mr. Shaneman has a lot of knowledge and is one of our 40 year plus teachers. To talk about his training and what he can teach is not the point (he has a lot to give) but that he does. Dave has been willing and ready to go to different schools with the group when we are on a road trip. Like all of us, it always cost us something. The GKK may help us with gas, and the schools we go to seem to feed us or help in some way. Yet it always cost in vacation time or \$\$.

So to make it a short story. Dave is one of the people who gives us a good look at what the GKK is about. The art and not the person. He has put himself into the GKK. Once again Dave is also very able to teach all of us something of Goju to make you stop and think. So thank you Dave, and congratulations.

Cumberland Gap Trip Report.

by Ken Maunz

I had fun. Some of us arrived Wednesday afternoon. Kim and Trish from Springfield IL, Angie Monday and Ken Maunz from Toledo OH, and Grace Sink from Manchester KY. Thursday, Grace, Angie and myself hiked up the mountain 2200 feet and 8.1 miles round trip. We practiced on the mountain a little and Grace saw a bear on the mountain! I found out junk yard dogs back off from bears!

Others including the Herrmann's from Franklin, KY arrived Thursday night. The Huebners from Toledo arrived Friday 7 am. Last but not least, Grace's brother Jonathon made it in Friday afternoon (in time to eat) We ended with nine who practiced and seven who did not.

We held a couple of practices Friday and Saturday . We had 4 guys and 5 gals who came to kick and punch, but I think the park had everyone's interest, with the museums, other parks in the area, and the scenery.

Saturday, eight of us hiked to the pinnacle overlooking the Gap for a great view and a good rest after 7.5 miles and a steep 1600 foot up and down.

After everything was said and done we all hope to try it again next year. I think of it as my annual stress test.

Brad Smith, Mentor and Friend

by Zak Zaklad

One of the primary reasons I have reached the level of "self-OK-ness" as a martial arts practitioner and as a person is a wonderful man and karate master named Brad Smith, who died last week, June, 2012.

I first met him in the early 90's, when our karate group joined a national organization called GKK. He was the GKK rep for the East Coast and came to us as a teacher/advisor. I had never seen someone up close at his level, and up to then, our Sensei Bill Kane was "merely" Shodan, or 1st degree black belt. Brad was Rokudan, 6th degree, a very high level, and Kyoshi (master teacher).

I remember that first visit, when our few black belts (all Shodans) and I - one or two steps below - were asked to perform for Brad. Needless to say, we were all nervous and worried about our faults such an august personage would see in our modest attempts. But his engaging, kind, funny, humble, very down-to-earth demeanor relaxed us somewhat. When it came to be my turn, the only non-black belt, I showed the black belt kata I had been working on for several years, called Seiyunchin. In that kata, there is an explosive uppercut punch. Hoping to impress Brad, I did the move with such force that I tore my rotator cuff in half. I finished the kata, then collapsed in pain. I later found out that the force was good, but the technique was wrong. I learned the proper technique very well. That's what I remember about our first meeting.

A year later, I got an award from GKK, as the "most improved student" in the organization, a direct result of Brad's support. I still have that plaque hanging on my wall. A couple of years later I was finally awarded Shodan, by Sensei Bill, with Brad supervising. I have a photo of that event on my wall, as well. Over the years, there were more visits and Brad and I became friends, and his encouragement - which amazed and inspired me - boosted my self-image and my performance.

As our friendship grew, Brad and I found ways to hang out. What a combo: the Midwestern country boy/karate master and the little New York Jewboy/hippie. I was able to be a guide for him as psychotherapist, as he was for me as karate practitioner.

I traveled regularly with him to Nancy Ault's Maine dojo, as his assistant. We ate tons of lobster, drank beer, and laughed a lot. I learned how to teach others, particularly the combination of full-out techniques along with kindness and humor that were a core part of him. We talked endlessly on the phone about karate, therapy, teaching, and our personal lives. We shared our views on the meaning of life. We enjoyed the Philly Folk Festival where he would drive down from his home in Fremont, Ohio. We became spirit brothers.

I spoke with his life partner and fiancée Carolyn a few days after Brad died, and she said something that really struck a chord for me: "I'm sad, but mostly I feel grateful and blessed to have had this wonderful man in my life".

Ditto for me. Here is a bit of his obit, the first part of which he wrote himself:

Message from Brad: "If you are reading this now, I've started a new adventure. Karate student, karate instructor, college student, college professor. I have traveled a great deal, and my life has been a wonderful adventure. Now it is time for my next one. I want to thank all of my friends and loved ones for adding color to my life. I love you all, and have a wonderful life! Peace."

Brad Smith 1953 - 2012

Published in the News-Messenger on June 18, 2012



Brad Smith, 58, passed away peacefully on June 15, 2012. Brad was born June 17, 1953 in Fremont, OH to the late Vaughn Smith and Melva (Michaels Smith) Murphy, who survives. He graduated from Fremont Ross High in 1972 and was previously married to Jo Ann (Rossi) Smith. He graduated from Ohio University in 1994 with a Bachelors of Specialized Studies and from Heidelberg College in 1997 with a Masters in Counseling.

Brad was a karate instructor and owner of Goju Karate in Fremont from 1971-1994. Brad had most currently worked as a professor at Terra [Community College](#) for 14 years, until his illness. One of the most fun jobs he ever had was his first job as usher/assistant manager at the Paramount Cinema while in high school.

Brad is also survived by his beloved daughter Michelle; and grandson Rylie; and his loving and devoted fiancée Carolyn Forgatsch Link. Donations may be made to the Brad S. Smith Memorial [Scholarship](#) c/o Terra Community College Foundation or Hospice of Memorial Hospital.

Grandpa

by Rich Stamper

Many of you in the Mid-West region will remember Mr. Eugene Sandefur – “Grandpa” to most.

He took his first karate class at age 63.

An inspiration to all.

Grandpa passed on a few months ago.

He worked his way to Sho-Dan.

He wasn't fast, but he was fast enough.

His form wasn't great, but it was good enough.

He was strong.

He was very pleased with the power of his hands.

When he “caught ahold” of you, you were “held”.

His gentle strength and wise council were sought out by many.

Grandpa's no longer with us in person, but he lives on in our hearts.

Seiyu Oyata 1928 - 2012

Seiyu Oyata (Taika), 83, of Independence, Mo., died Monday, June 18, 2012, at Avera St. Luke's Hospital, in Aberdeen, S.D. Oyata had recently been diagnosed with bile duct cancer.

Oyata was born October 19, 1928, in Okinawa, Japan, to Kama and Kanami Oyata. He was a renowned world-class martial arts practitioner, founder of the International RyuTe Karate Association, teacher, mentor and friend to many and beloved husband, father and grandfather. He married Robin Swope on February 12, 1977, in Louisburg, Kan.

He was educated in Osaka, Japan, and then returned to his native Okinawa after World War II. Soon after the war ended, Oyata met two warriors of royal heritage in Okinawa who were lifelong masters in the military arts of the Ryukyu Islands. They agreed to instruct him due to his own legacy royal family heritage. These two legends passed down their family arts solely to Oyata in the final years before their deaths. Oyata's own martial arts career spanned nearly 65 years and he was considered the foremost authority in the world on life protection arts. He was routinely featured in trade publications and television documentaries involving martial arts, including a 2006 The Learning Channel documentary entitled “Martial Arts – The Real Story” featuring his signature “kyusho jitsu” strikes which rendered opponents unconscious with ease.

He traveled extensively throughout America and internationally nearly every weekend, where he instructed eager students in his family art. He also traveled to Okinawa annually with a group of students so that they would have a better understanding of his native culture, and gain a deeper meaning to his teachings. He treated his students like family and was a teacher for every rank and ability. Oyata had the knack to make everyone he instructed feel special, to feel that he had passed on to them something unique and extraordinary to them.

Oyata, a 10th degree black belt, operated a martial arts school near the Kadena U.S. Air Force Base in Okinawa, where he trained Okinawan and American servicemen as students. After some of these American students returned to the U.S., they invited Oyata to visit, which he did in 1968. Oyata then permanently immigrated to the U.S. in 1977. He eventually became a U.S. citizen in 2006. He loved the United States, was never without a USA hat and had USA embroidered on most of his shirts.

In 1995, Oyata formed the International RyuTe Karate Association. He later awarded special certificates to students that he felt embraced the technique of his art as well as the moral guidelines he exemplified. These students were a part of a group he named Oyata Shin Shu Ho, meaning “to strive to attain true moral goodness and to express it through one's every action.” Oyata made sure that his students understood that learning his family's martial arts meant that his students didn't only learn life protection for themselves, but also for the betterment of their community and society. He encouraged all of his students to give to charitable causes and he regularly supported charities nationwide, especially for needy children and food banks. He was formally recognized by local and state governments all over the United States for his lifetime charitable endeavors.

Oyata is survived by wife, Robin; daughter, Masami Oyata-Slocum and husband, Jeremy Slocum, of Seattle, Wash.; son, Masaki Oyata of Las Vegas, Nev.; two granddaughters, Ashlea and Amberly Slocum, and two grandsons, Jacoby and Isaacson Slocum, all of Seattle, Wash. Additionally, Oyata is survived by his sister, Tomi Oyata, three sons, Hiroshi Oyata, Hiromitsu Oyata, and Suemitsu Oyata, four daughters, Kiyomi Oyata, Rumi Oyata, Yukari Miyagi, Yaeko Shimizu, a niece, Masako Higa, a great-nephew, Satoshi Higa, and two great-nieces, Utako Inoue and Saeko Kaneko, all of Okinawa, Japan. He was preceded in death by his parents; a son, Seiichi Oyata; and three brothers, Taro, Kisei and Akio

The Battle of One

by Tom Baldrige

What do you do at lunch? Grab some fast food? Microwave a bowl a soup? Stay at your desk with a deli sandwich? Ninety-eight percent of my workweek lunches are spent working out. The vast majority are spent training and conditioning for the martial arts, although I add tennis in the warm / dry months, which in western Washington are few.

Since 1994 I have been lucky enough to work at a University. My lunch time is usually spent with three cement walls, the plywood back of folded bleachers, and a hardwood floor. Gym C – 110' x 50' x 40' and often empty when I arrive. Sometimes I have to share and only get a corner on the edge of the faculty / staff hoops game. In winter quarter the Scottish dance or beginning martial arts class is usually scheduled. No problem. The instructors are fine with me doing my thing in a corner. During summer camps I may have to find another gym, maybe invade the staff aerobics class, or jump in an empty racquetball court.

After 30+ years of Goju-Ryu training I am still just a student. I do not think I have mastered any single technique. If there is one thing that I am close to mastering, it is the tenacity to train solo. It is not easy, but after 18 years of lunch workouts, with out a doshi to be found, here is what I can tell you.

1) True learning requires internal motivation – The Why. Remember those subjects in school that you just wanted to get through? Take the test, regurgitate the required information, and forget it after the final. Learning did not take place because you did not care.

To become a martial artist you need to more than a student. Too often a student only wants a diploma / certificate to hang on a wall. A scholar on the other hand is interested in knowledge and understanding, the recognition is secondary. A student of the martial arts is happy with a superficial understanding and a belt on their waist. A martial artist on the other hand wants more than the skill to handle physical violence. Their interest in the martial arts is much larger. A martial artist has seen beyond the physical and come to comprehend the Why. I know my Why. Do you yours? How well you understand your Why and how much it touches your soul will determine your journey.

You cannot train solo for any length of time without confronting –The Why! If you don't know and fully appreciate The Why, you won't sweat. It is that simple, no Why, no work.

For me fathoming The Why is primarily the challenge of personal growth. I love learning and gaining knowledge. I desire to become the best person I can be. What is my potential? I don't know, as I'm still growing. But what I know is far too many limits are self-imposed.

I'm also rather independent. As a kid I hated people telling me what I could do. I was never good at following directions that made no sense. I hated others controlling me. Early on karate gave me a sense of being in control. As I learned to better control my thoughts and emotions I started getting better results in all manner of stressful situations.

The martial arts have taught me to confront my fears and embrace the challenge of reaching my potential. I have better concentration, more self-confidence, and better health. I have reached heights I would not have without my training. I am a better person because I am a martial artist. When I look at how far I have come, and see how far I have to go, it makes me appreciate my fellow travelers all the more. When they disappoint and frustrate me I remember that the opposite is also true. I have learned it is much more gratifying it is to assist other in reaching their potential then to criticize them. I know that to reach my growth potential I must look beyond myself and extend the hand of friendship to others, to help others reach their potential.

2) There is an audience factor. I have heard it many times, and it is true. Becoming a martial artist is partly about learning to check your ego. Humans are selfish, competitive, and violent by nature. This takes many forms, and exists on many levels, from boxing to beauty pageants, cars to jewelry; even in the most pious there exist an underlying comparison and sense of superiority.

No matter how hard I think I'm working when someone walks into my empty gym the energy level picks up. I hate that! I should be able to reach that level without an audience but I've experienced it too many times to deny that an audience changes things. I also know that on days when I am not motivated it is much harder to break a sweat when the gym is empty. When I have to share it with the beginning martial arts class this feeling seldom last long.

If you train in the dark of night when nobody is looking you do it so that when the lights go on you look good! Humans are herd animals and we want to stand out from the crowd. We want recognition. Does my shifting to a higher gear violate some aesthetic budo value? I don't think so. The goal is to control the ego so that it does not cause trouble. I don't believe you can eliminate it.

3) Take the Time to Reflect. Time spent training leads to growth. Many times in class I will state that the old prophet said "there is no substitute for practice". I wholeheartedly believe that. However, without reflection understanding is limited. To learn, to internalize, to gather meaning, one must take the time to reflect.

One big advantage of solo training is that you can immediately take the time. When a thought pops in your mind you are not forced to keep moving with the class. If you wonder how this would work, or what happens when you do that, you can find out. Most times I practice kata start to finish but I have learned to stop when a good thought appears. Do not wait or it may fade like a dream. Explore it, ponder it, and see if it has value. It may not wait for you to come back later. You do not want a new understanding to pass you by.

4) Disciple is a requirement. Self-discipline is like a muscle. The more you utilize it the stronger it becomes. Neglect it and it will atrophy. Millions of people want to lose weight and to be physically fit yet they do not even try. Why not? They do not want it bad enough. To achieve a goal you have to go after it and develop the habit of doing what it takes. Once at a conference the speaker was a blind university professor who kayaks to work. He said in his family he teaches that when somebody asks you “What do you do?” The answer should always be “Whatever it takes.” Now there is a tenacity that Nike could market!

5) The social aspect is important. An adage claims that if you want to travel fast, go by yourself, if you want to go far, go in a group. This also applies to training. While you can get more done by yourself, you need others to reach your potential. Besides, it is a lot more fun with some doshi with you.

6) Concentration – The mental component. It is often harder to stay focused in a gym by myself than with a bunch of other activities going on (see the audience factor). However, training in the midst of divergent activities will also test your ability to stay on task. Try doing kata on the edge of a basketball game. It is very interesting and great for working your peripheral vision. They will be amazed when you avoid the ball, or diving player, and then keep going without missing step.

7) Create the right habits. “Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch our actions; they become habits. Watch your habits they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.” – Lao Tzu

8) Bring a notepad. It took me years to figure this out. I often go weeks without making a note but then some days I have an abundance of insights. I have experienced way too many possibly good thoughts that never made it back to the locker room. Bring a notepad or you will wish you did.

9) Have a plan - you are the sensei. It is very rare that you get in your car and drive with no planned destination. Make sure your training has a purpose. Sometimes detours happen that is okay – go with it.

10) Go with what is working, but stay focused. Many times my workout plans change as I get going. Say today’s kata emphasis was moving with my one point, but I end up working on focused power instead. It does not matter. The next time it may be the opposite.

11) If after 20 minutes nothing is working, call it a day. It happens. You didn’t want to even start but you did. Some days that is as good as it gets. Fortunately these days are dwarfed by the ones where I didn’t want to go and came out fully energized.

12) Reflections on confidence. When you consistently train hard it gives you confidence. This is even truer when the sweat drips down your face again and again and no one else knows it happens. This willingness to keep pushing instills a conviction and mental fortitude that few others possess. You learn to not only understand yourself but to trust yourself. You may not have been tested under enemy fire but if you have done it right you will be tested in battle. Your life will possess a vitality that others can see.

The solo workout is primarily about the battle within; your battle with your laziness, your apathy, your excuses. Every culture has a form of the Jekyll and Hyde story, the good versus evil, and the drama of our short term nature that sabotages our long term desires. You can explain the yin and yang of it anyway you like but solo training will bring this internal conversation to the forefront repeatedly.

It took me years to get past the rudimentary levels. Today my auto pilot is set to not except excuses. Reasons, yes, excuses, no. At noon I end up in the gym without thought or strife. There is no internal conflict. That, at least, is one battle that I have mastered.

New Series;

GKK Around the World

Argentina

Chief Instructor: Gustavo Munoz
Year 2011 Summary



Since the beginning of the year Alexis Dritsos (1st Kyu), restarted his practice regularly and has made big efforts to deserve a promotion to Shodan. Our GKK family is growing since we opened a new dojo in City Bell, led by Carlos Rando (Shodan). We also opened a new class for kids at our Honbu Dojo, because before, kids practiced all the time with adults. The instructor for this group is Alexis Dritsos.

Enrollment detail by 2011: Chief Instructor: 1, Shodan: 2 Kyu: 12 Total: 15

Open class, December 3rd: We had a very successful open class with families and friends in which we shared a nice Karate class, proving that Karate is for all ages and genders. We had lots of fun!

Promotions December 10th and 17th:

Children; Ian Dritsos for 4th Kyu, Uriel Orazzi for 7th Kyu, Pedro Magliano for 7th Kyu , Juan P. Bereciartua for 8th Kyu, Mateo Marino for 8th Kyu

Adults; Néstor Arce for 3rd Kyu, Daniel Murakami for 3rd Kyu, Lisandro Suárez for 7th Kyu, Juan Bereciartua for 9th Kyu, Juan Marino for 9th Kyu

On December 17th we also had a very special event: the well deserved promotion to Shodan of Alexis Dritsos, who worked very hard that day and proved once more that he has the spirit of Karate inside of him.

IOGKF Tournament, December 11th; GKK Argentina was invited to participate in one of the most important karate tournaments of the year for Goju Ryu style. We are really very proud with the outstanding performance of our 3 participants: Carlos Rando, who showed his exquisite kata technique, got a 2nd place in kata, Male Adult category. Lisandro Suárez, in this, his first tournament, got a an important 3rd place in kumite. Sensei Gustavo Muñoz: Had a brilliant performance and won the 1st place in IRI KUMI - for Dan participants. We witnessed his hard training all along the last two months and we are very happy for this very well deserved prize.

2012 Goals

1. To open a Dojo in the City of La Plata, to be led by Horacio Vitale (ShoDan).
2. To organize special classes for Dan and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Kyu students, on a bimonthly basis. The objective of these classes is to get a better chance to practice specific details that cannot be covered in a general class.
3. To add one extra day of class for children at Hombu Dojo. This should promote the growth of members of the group age between 6 and 13 years old.
4. To participate in events that provide growth in knowledge of our art such as seminars or special classes organized by fellow karate organizations.
5. To keep promoting karate and the growth of GKK Argentina by organizing public events such as exhibitions, open classes and special courses (such as Self Defense Courses).

Enrollment detail by 2012: Chief Instructor: 1, Shodan: 3, Kyu: 17 Total: 21

Did You Know?

by Rich Stamper

Did you know that current GKK Members receive a special discount price on books and videos? Yamakura Shihan books are \$15 for current members and Yamakura Shihan videos are \$20. Rich Stamper's book is \$25 for current GKK Members. Postage included! Be sure to note your GKK School information when ordering. Regular prices are \$25 for Yamakura Shihan books, \$30 for videos, and \$35 for Rich Stamper's book. What a deal!

"We found that repeated flexion motion under simultaneous compressive loading was the easiest way to ensure herniation.....Clearly, herniations are a function of repeated full-flexion motion cycles with only a modest level of accompanying compressive load."Stuart McGill

I believe the author was Vladimir Janda who found it amusing with the West's fascination of abdominal exercises. The Soviet Bloc coaches regard abdominal exercises as silly. They feel holding a heavy weight overhead will do a lot more for core strength. Anyone who has ever stood and pressed a heavy set of dumbbells over head can attest to the strain it places on the entire abdominal complex. Old timers always stood whenever possible when lifting weights. If one stops and thinks for a moment, do exercises which flex the spine make sense when we really need an unbendable spine to protect against injury?

Stuart McGill, PhD is a professor at the University of Waterloo at Waterloo, Ontario, Canada and arguably the most knowledgeable man alive on the lumbar spine. His tome, *"Low Back Disorders, Evidence - Based Prevention and Rehabilitation"* is a masterpiece on the subject. Not a light read, the volume is designed for the Rehabilitative Specialist. This is a very expensive text, but if you suffer from spine pain, this book is a must have.

Mr. McGill writes exercises which flex the spine under load should be avoided. Have millions of exercise enthusiasts over many, many years been wrong? Situps, Crunches, Leg Raises, Torso twists and the like damage the spine? Did I help the destruction of my spine through decades of weighted situps and crunches?

Mr. McGill did not reach this conclusion theoretically. His research and laboratory testing spans over twenty years. Using a virtual spine created in the lab along with animal and cadaver testing, he de-bunked current thinking regarding rehabilitation and strengthening of the lumbar spine and abdominals.

So, what does Dr. McGill recommend? Static holds rather than situps, leg raises, twisting motions or any abdominal exercise which relies on repeated flexion of the spine. It is beyond the scope of this article to describe his exercises, and possibly copyright infringement, but he has posted videos on Youtube describing the exercises.

So, if flexing the lumbar spine is a bad idea, we may already be doing the best abdominal exercise; Sanchin. When done correctly, one would be hard pressed to find a superior core exercise. I believe a key to Sanchin lies very deep in a group of muscles named the multifidus. Once you find the multifidus you will most definitely know it; as if a pair of hands is wrapped around the spine. I accidentally found the lumbar section of these muscles and a little voice said "hello!" Australian researchers credit this rarely exercised set of muscles as a key to spine rehabilitation. The multifidus runs the entire length of the spine. Sanchin is technically a "dynamic tension" exercise. Those of you old enough may recall Charles Atlas' muscle building course based on the concept. It is easy to demonstrate extreme outer muscle tension and never get deep into the muscles which surround the spine.

Mr. McGill also advises against flexing the lumbar spine during flexibility training. Since the spine has nothing to do with how high one can kick, focus on tilting the entire torso at the femur / pelvis during forward and side splits. The stretch is felt in the hips and hamstrings.

One needs enough flexibility to meet the task. If one intends to kick no higher than the groin or knee, stretching is probably a waste of energy. Stretching as a warm up doesn't help prevent injuries. The best warmup for any activity is the activity itself, done at a reduced intensity. Warmups must be specific. Try doing a single half-power Seiunchin as your only warmup. It saves time and prepares your body in exactly the way you will be using it

If one wants the flexibility to kick high, stretching after a workout is the best time. There are all sorts of books on what is the best way to develop flexibility. I followed Bill Wallace's method of three stretches - forward bendovers, full front splits with both legs straight and full side splits, holding each position for several minutes. I know static stretches are old fashioned and take awhile to show results, but they are safe. I can do 180 degree forward splits and 170 degree side splits cold. No, my legs aren't rubbery. It takes a few seconds to get all the way down.

Is stretching dangerous? I have no idea. Bill Wallace had a double hip replacement. My hips are one of the few body parts which have remained trouble free. As long as the stretch is confined to the muscles and tendons, it is probably OK. It is very hard to tear a tendon during stretching exercises unless you do it violently. Tendons attach muscle to bone. Since one end of the tendon is attached to muscle, the muscle's elasticity help bear the brunt of the stretch.

Ligaments are a different story. They are not designed to stretch. I have watched with horror as people do standing knee circles while pressing the knee joint laterally.

M. Yamakura
Ed Myers
Dwight Scales
Greg Dodge
Deb Crawford
Bill Handren

Chairman
CEO
USA Director
GKK Marketing Director
USA Business Manager
Newsletter Editor

3763 Old Creek Road, Troy, MI 48084
11568 Reed Road, Whitehouse, OH 43571
1940 Bobolink Lane, Toledo, OH 43615
2430 Georgetown Ave., Toledo, OH 43613
5705 Northlake Road, Springfield, IL 62711
115 West North Street, Dwight, IL 60420

chairman@goju.com
ceo@goju.com
GKKdirector@toast2.net
marketing@goju.com
sharpda71@msn.com
yokagawa2002@yahoo.com