

May 2017 Newsletter
Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai

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Annual Testing and Seminar

By Dwight Scales

I hope all have made plans to join us in Toledo the weekend of May 19th and 20th. The weekend will begin with Black Belt testing Friday, May 19th. This will start at 6:30 PM. Testing will be held at the Imagine Community School, 1030 Clay Avenue, Toledo Ohio 43608. Dojo leaders please send the necessary information about your students who will be testing to Ed Myers and Dwight Scales no later than May 10th. Saturday, May 19th, Yamakura Shihan will hold a series of seminars. The times will be as follows:

9 AM - 10 AM..... White Belts
10:15 AM - 11:45 AM..... Green/Brown Belts
12:30 PM - 3:00 PM..... Black Belts.

Following shortly after the end of the Black Belt seminar we will hold a small tournament.

Prices: One Seminar - \$15, Two - \$20, all Three sessions - \$25.

Tournament: One event - \$5, Both Kata and kumite - \$7.

Yamakura Shihan's Seminars as well as the tournament will also be held at the Imagine Community School.

Our weekend's events will culminate with dinner and our annual business meeting. These will be held at Club 300, 3304 Collingwood Blvd., Toledo Ohio 43610. As soon as possible, please send Mr. Scales the number of people who will be attending the meeting/banquet. Cost per person will be approximately \$15.

We look forward to seeing all of you the weekend of May 19th and 20th in Toledo!

Springfield Training Event and Seminar

By Patricia Ballweg and Kristoffer Barrington

The weekend of April 1 2017, our club welcomed Sensei Myers to our club. He worked out with our brown and black belts on Friday night. The focus of the evening was running various kata and how to make them smoother and more efficient. The brown belts found this particularly useful. On Saturday, Mr Myers worked with our green belts and below assisted by the brown and black belts. The 3 hour workout focused on basics and katas Kihon, Gekaisai di ich and ni. He employed a round robin technique where each person called out a 1 step then ten reps were done then on to the next individual.

After lunch, our brown and black belts continued for the remainder of the day. The afternoon's focus was breaking down katas Saifa and Seiyunchin and applying different bunkai applications.

Mr. Myers was kind enough to bring some merchandise for some of our members to purchase. We completed the weekend with dinner at a local favorite restaurant. We enjoyed great conversation and good food. We want to thank Mr Myers and the GKK for making this possible.



Perseverance, or the Spirit of Goju-Ryu

By Dwight Scales

Merriam-Webster defines perseverance as, “continued effort to do something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition.” Another definition is, “steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, a state, etc., especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement.”

There have been times that I have faced difficulties, yet fought my way through them. Mentioning this to Sensei Algee, he would say, “Mr. Scales that’s the Goju in you”. Now, I believe I understand what he meant. I’ve begun to think of perseverance in another way, the Spirit of Goju-Ryu

In 2007 I had bi-lateral knee replacement. During my physical therapy, I was asked what goal I had set for recovery. I told the therapists that my goal was to get back onto the dojo floor. This was looked at with skepticism. But after seeing how determined I was to meet that goal, their attitudes changed. They didn’t understand the spirit of Goju-Ryu.

A couple of years ago I required knee revision surgery. My training and spirit - the Goju in me - helped my recovery. Last year, I received some unsettling news. Tests indicated that I needed both neck and back surgery.

The following is an article written in a local publication, Healthy Living News (February 2017), in which I was interviewed:

Laurels rehab clients overcome significant challenges with help of AlterG

Dwight Scales

.....Dwight Scales experienced a medical complication following surgery that presented challenges in his rehab at The Laurels. Scales, a karate instructor who has been in martial arts for 22 years and serves as the USA Director of the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai (GKK), underwent surgery on his lower back in early December of 2016. Afterward, he developed a hematoma on his spine that significantly interfered with his function. Before the problem was identified, he began rehab at The Laurels, working with Snyder. “But instead of getting better, I was getting worse,” he recalls. “By the 23rd of December, I couldn’t walk, and on Christmas Eve, I had to have emergency surgery to remove the hematoma.”

Once the hematoma was identified and removed, Scales’ function began to improve. However, beforehand, his inability to bear weight in rehab was completely baffling—both to him and to Snyder, who is a fellow martial arts practitioner and who worked with Scales before following a knee revision surgery. “It was really confusing for both of us,” Snyder says. “After surgery, Mr. Scales was supposed to be able to ‘bear weight as tolerated,’ but that just wasn’t happening. He was supporting almost all his weight with his arms and literally taking baby steps, traversing maybe a foot with monumental effort. When he was here after his knee surgery, we were actually working on front kicks using weights to get him back to his prior level of function, which was very high, so I knew seeing him struggling so hard to just walk was not good. It was a huge relief to both of us when they found the hematoma and removed it,” Snyder says.

Currently an inpatient client at The Laurels, Scales is pleased with his progress, noting that the AlterG has played a major role in his achievements thus far. “The AlterG allows me to walk as I should be walking without using my arms to bear weight. The cameras allow me to see and correct the positioning and movements of my feet and knees, so correct form and correct posture are all working together,” he says.

Still, Scales remains focused on a larger goal. “I’ve made remarkable inroads over just the past few weeks, but my goal is to get back to training, and I will achieve that,” he states. “With my back surgery, there will be some aspects I’ll need to modify, but that’s true for everyone in the martial arts as they get older. You have to learn different ways to achieve the same purpose, working smarter instead of working harder.”

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I am no longer an inpatient nor am I in physical therapy. I was blessed to have had a physical therapist who is a martial artist – Mr. Snyder is a ShoDan in Aikido. In fact, part of my physical therapy involved performing standing basics (Kihon) and basics with limited movement (Kihon Ni). These both have helped restore much of the movement and balance lost due to my back surgeries.

We may have known someone who has experienced issues that have left them feeling mentally or physically defeated. Maybe they have felt like giving up; not seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. We must encourage them not to let their issues define them. Those issues should be used for opportunities for growth, learning, and teaching. I know my journey isn’t over. I realize there is a lot of work to do before I get back on the dojo floor at full power. However, I won’t give up. It is not in my nature. I will work smarter not harder. I will channel the Goju in me to not let my immediate condition dictate my future circumstances. I will persevere.

The Central Nervous System, Part I I've Fallen and I Can't Get up

“Conventional explanations of the cellular changes accompanying the phenomenon of becoming more flexible would draw on terms such as sarcomeres, A-bands and I-bands, Z-lines and H-zones....Although flexibility is a property of muscles, ligaments, tendons and bones, it is not principally controlled within these parts of the body. The brain is a major part of what we ‘stretch’ when we do stretching exercises. Further, to the extent that muscles do stretch, the main changes occur through the remodeling of connective tissue or ‘fascia’, the most abundant of the materials comprising muscles”..... Kit Laughlin.

She covered her mouth in horror as I stood at the ballet barre and swung my leg sideways almost to the ceiling. “Poppy, please don’t do that! You’re going to hurt yourself!” When a skinny eleven year old girl thinks your range of motion is excessive, you have arrived.



The blue mat is 6'6" long. No wonder I have trouble with pants length

I am not naturally flexible. When I started in taekwondo, I could barely bend forward and reach halfway down my shins. The stretching made my back tension release so I became infatuated with developing flexibility and have stretched daily for close to fifty years.

We do not permanently lengthen muscles when we “stretch”. Look at the hamstrings of gymnasts, dancers or figure skaters. They are not floppy or saggy. You could bounce quarters off my hamstrings. Flexibility is mostly about the re-programming of the Central Nervous System. This dawned on me several decades ago when I read surgeons have no trouble manipulating a patient’s leg during hip replacement surgery. The patient is sedated so the CNS does not restrict the range of motion. The path to flexibility became clear: Convince the CNS it is safe to throw head high kicks at will.

Although re-programming would be a better term throughout this article, I am using “stretching” because it is simpler.

Improving flexibility requires a three step approach:

Static Stretching. Increase the range and hold it for as long as possible. This teaches the CNS you are safe in this range. OK..... Easier said than done as anyone who has tried to do sideways splits has learned.

Strengthen. A strong muscle tells the CNS that you have total control and can stop the extension at will.

Dynamic Stretching. Train the CNS to allow an extended range without a warm up. Flexibility serves no usefulness if you have to ask an opponent to wait while you “loosen up”.

I have broken down the three segments and how to reach a high level in each.

Static Stretching: I have a first edition of Voss and Knott’s *Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation*. Voss and Knott were physical therapists who developed the concept of Contract and Relax. The patient’s limb is extended by the therapist until it becomes uncomfortable for the patient. The patient then pushes against the therapist for several seconds and relaxes. The therapist then forces the limb farther. The sequence is repeated three times. The contracting and relaxing greatly increase the range of motion. The photos below illustrate the concept. I start the sequence at a fairly wide position.



This is where I start the first contraction. About 140 degrees. Your starting point may be higher depending on your current level.

Attempt to pull the feet together. Hands on the floor are for balance and safety

Take three seconds to ease into the contraction, hold for six seconds, then take three seconds to relax out of the contraction.

Now, walk, scoot or slide the feet a little farther out until the stretch feels uncomfortable again.

Second contraction, maybe another 10 degrees wider now.

Contract, hold, release.



Third contraction. Release and sit back.

Notice the cat about to become a seat cushion.

There is always a critic who comes along and is unimpressed



While seated in the side splits, I spend three minutes leaning left, three minutes leaning right, three minutes forward and three minutes lying back on the floor.

I will not argue about how long one should hold a stretch – experts disagree so I do what I feel is best. Besides, my sand timer is three minutes. I hold all stretches for three minutes.

Note; I no longer enter the side split stretch this way due to a knee and hip injury. Instead, I start from a seated position and work my legs outward. By placing my hands against my knees, I can do the contractions against the pull of my arms.



The front split shown above would irritate most purists because the rear quads are not flat against the floor. However, this position is how a fully extended mae geri looks, so I don't worry much about it. The two important points are getting the lead hamstring hard against the floor and keeping the spine straight as I lean forward. After seeing the photo, I started emphasizing getting the hips more squared. Again, the Contract / Release method works well here. Be careful to avoid hyperextending the knee of the lead leg. A pad below the knee joint helps. A cat will work but they tend to screech.



This third stretch is my favorite as it helps with lumbar pain.

Emphasis is on stretching the gluteals, NOT touching the floor.

Nearly everyone uses the wrong “cues” for stretching. We are interested in hip and hamstring flexibility, not rounding the spine.

Think “lower abs to thighs” not fingers to toes. A rounded forward spine will not help your kicking and may pinch a spinal disc.

Strengthen the Stretched Muscle: In the side and front splits, attempting to support the body weight works fairly well for strengthening the stretched muscles. Ideally, one could lower and raise using the strength of the stretched muscles alone, but at 265 pounds bodyweight, I am sure that would end badly for me. The reason for strengthening is to make the CNS feel safe when you throw a high kick.

A future article will address this.

Dynamic Stretching: Dynamic stretching, as it applies to kicking is simply swinging the legs forward or sideward. Basically, just swing the leg using a moderate amount of momentum ten times each leg/direction, gradually increasing the height with each swing. Repeat the 10 rep sequence three times until you get better at it. Dynamic stretching is usually referred to as Dynamic Warmup since the best time to practice it is before a karate practice session.

Yes, you can hurt yourself if you attempt a full stroke swing too soon. This about reprogramming the CNS and it takes a bit of time. Only you know what is too far or too high. Improving flexibility is a learning process and it takes time.

Many experts now advise against static stretching before a workout saying it weakens the muscles. I rarely do any warm-ups. When I worked twelve hour shifts, I had little time to warmup. I found the best warmup is the actual activity done at a reduced effort. A single relaxed Seuinchin worked better than twenty minutes of convoluted warm-ups. As always, specificity. I do the same with barbell squats – start light – build up to maximum. This is also a warmup for the CNS as it hones the groove of an activity.

Frequency, Duration, Etc: My philosophy has always been the longer and more often one stretches, the better. Then again, I like the time spent stretching. I have no idea what is the optimal time to hold a stretch, or whether it is best to do it every day or even more than once a day. I do not believe one can over do it or that stretching is harmful.

Age is not a big factor. If one starts karate at three years old, flexibility will not be an issue. But range of motion can be increased at any age. I added a few degrees of split using the PNF method outlined above and I am in my mid-sixties. I was accidentally using the PNF method for many years and did not know it. By really bearing down on the contractions lately my range improved.

Muscles are attached to bone by tendons. Ligaments are bone to bone attachments. If a ligament is stretched, the joint will become unstable and repairs don't happen on their own since there is no blood supply to the ligaments. Never hyper-extend the knees and use a safety stop on splits to prevent a hip or knee injury. Doing side splits between two chairs as you may have seen in various media is incredibly stupid.

Recommended Reading: I have several books on flexibility, but if I had to recommend one, it would be *Stretching and Flexibility* by Kit Laughlin. It is close to \$50 dollars, but if you are serious about developing flexibility this is the best one I have read. There are over 700 pictures of various stretches and great detail explaining how to do them correctly.

Stretching as Zen: The cat in the pictures brought something to my attention. He is an ornery creature, but for some reason likes to follow me to the basement when I stretch. He kept scooting under my hips as I tried to settle down to the floor then screeched and hissed indignantly as I sat on him. It became irritating and sort of ruined each session. It finally dawned on me how much I have come to rely on this "quiet time." Stretching has become a form of meditation. Without this daily ritual, I don't unwind well.

I am guessing yoga works along this concept, but my focus has always been on increasing my range of motion for karate. Lately, I have incorporated Ujjayi Pranayama breathing from Asthanga Vinyasa Yoga to further enhance the meditative effects. Basically, the breathing is slowly inhaling and exhaling through the nose while keeping the tongue against the palate. One makes sounds like Darth Vader with each inhale / exhale.

I no longer allow the cat downstairs.

No animals were harmed in the writing of this article.

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