

Shoto Budo Newcastle course March 7-8 2015

Weekend focused on kick techniques

Snap

Stamp

Swing

On staying safe

On parrying skills

On practicing those skills

We started using basic kicks and practicing in pairs to get them right - bringing the knee up high for stamps and snaps, getting the snap right in Mae-geri and Mawashi geri and that leg out of the way before it could be caught by a sparring partner.

I learned there are differences between snaps and stamps and to get the distance correct one has to keep moving back after each kick.

It may sound like a simple practice but it was harder than it looked! After a while my hip flexors were agony, and the effort of bringing my knee high into my chest above the level of the pad for an axe kick seemed almost too much.

But by the end of the practice on Saturday afternoon kicks were stronger, snaps were sharper and there was a real sense of everyone working to get the technique right.

Come Sunday morning, after a fun evening where we disturbed the local population of a nearby pub with some Scottish singing, eating most of the steaks in Newcastle and making the waiting staff do detours round clumps of shoto-budoers, I was relieved to find at least some of what I'd learned remained and the training so far seemed be paying off, at least a little.

My snaps are snappier and my stamps had benefited from practice against the breeze-block wall - revenge on all breeze blocks for treating my head so badly in my first grading....

The parrying sessions were excellent - both in pairs and in threes, where we learned not only more about using those kick techniques, but how to encourage others and not to be afraid to give feedback, especially the importance of positive feedback,.

John demonstrated 2 on 1 parrying against Drew and Paul, and was allowed to stop after several goes when we finally 'got' what he was doing: Keeping safe!

I felt I learned a bit more on judging distance and made some tiny improvements in my parrying skills. But I was backing away A LOT. So I asked my partners Richard and John to slow down from black belt to nice and slow orange belt level and felt my confidence grow as I felt more able to move in towards them and actually spar. I realized how far I had to go, when after opening my big mouth for one too many questions to Billy, I got the answer in the form of helping demonstrate what was termed 'slow' parrying, 2 on 1 with Hugh and Richard. Hmm...Slow for Meijin Grades is somewhat different to most known definitions of slow...time may have stopped for them but after 2 minutes or so I felt almost as out of breath as I did after my last grading. I haven't had time to think just how embarrassing that must have looked, an orange belt against two of the most senior members of the organisation.....probably just as well not to dwell on that.... :) but I do feel it has given me a determination to really get to grips with parrying and practice practice practice.

So what did I take away from the weekend?

Billy said: if you practice rubbish you learn rubbish (to paraphrase) So I need to keep working on the things covered this weekend and I am thinking how I can use what I learned in helping out at the junior class

In order to help me remember them I have written this summary.

The amount of time that higher grades (nearly everyone there!) were prepared to put in to teaching and helping me humbled me a lot .Thanks guys!

That above all has inspired me to improve and keep on improving, and to more effectively encourage others.

Thanks to Ricky and Clare for organizing a fabulous weekend, to Billy and to all the senior grades for excellent teaching and to the local establishments that put up with us after hours!
Here's to the next weekend!

Diana Flynn
Orange belt