

Course Report
Spring School 2017
by
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3rd Dan

The Shoto Budo residential spring course took place in April this year. This was to be my 21st senior national course in a row since my return to practice. I try to attend as many courses as possible to learn as much as I can and to practice with similar grades from other clubs. These courses have been in Scotland, Dublin and Lincoln. It is also a great opportunity to learn as much as possible from the Meijin group. On this occasion I definitely wasn't to be disappointed.

I hadn't been in the dojo long on the Friday evening when Richard suggested we go over higher level kata. We were practicing kata and Richard was explaining the basics of the modelling process. This was excellent information and we were eventually joined by Billy. Billy asked me 'What do you want?' It gave me something to think about all weekend. What did I actually want after approximately 20 years of combined practicing? My obvious answer to myself was to improve in all the Shoto Budo skills. I feel the weekend course has helped me improve and has answered some outstanding questions.

On Friday evening I was part of a coaching team made up of Eric, Andrew and myself. Eric and Andrew led the teaching until the third group and I took over. I added in some other aspects to their practice. As the evening carried on I was enjoying the experience of teaching and supervising. As usual everyone headed in to the lounge on Friday evening to relax and talk before the Saturday practices.

When we all assemble in the dojo in the morning Billy asked who either ran their own club or had aspirations to run their own club to come to one side. I don't run my own club but I help at clubs. I decided for a change I would like to experience things from the other side and decided I would like to train. I wasn't to be disappointed. Regardless of grade all the black belts who were teaching did very well. I enjoyed the experience of learning under multiple instructors and the variety of coaching on Saturday morning.

As normal after our lunch on Saturday morning we practiced outside. Fortunately it turned out to be a lovely sunny afternoon. Not only were the practices all good fun but were a fantastic learning experience on rough terrain. Unless we experience practicing on different surfaces we will never know how using our skills outside the comfort of a warm hall will feel to us. The variety of instruction allowed us to test out the different practices and to see if they would actually work if they were ever required.

After dinner we were back in the dojo for more variety and excellent coaching. The practices had progressed and they had progressed quickly. I was really enjoying until I had to step out for a short while. Fortunately I found Ruth Anne wandering about the dojo so we trained in kata and Billy came and offered some advice. This was more advice to make me think.

The gathering in the lounge on Saturday evening was jolly but with no singsong on this occasion. I didn't stay up too late and limited my beer consumption to a minimum. I also didn't order pizza. I was determined to be fully engaged in the grading the following morning.

Sunday morning came along. As usual the Kyu grading was first and then the Dan grading. There were three brown belts and one junior black belt who graded for first Dan. Two graded for 3rd Dan and one for 4th Dan. They were all put through their paces and thoroughly tested by everyone. At

last it was over and everyone went for lunch.

The last practice on Sunday afternoon involved the instructors taking a short part of the practice and using Bassai Dai as a tool. Yet another very worthwhile practice and I would like to thank all the instructors and Meijin for their brilliant efforts during the weekend course. The last part of the course was the grades presentation. It was a very emotional occasion for some. I would like to say very well done to everyone who passed and very well done to Steven on winning the Vinnie Strachan award.

I am already looking forward to the next course and winter school in November.