

The Power & Grace of Karate – A seminar in aid of Cancer Research

By Jonathan Roll

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On Saturday 11th November, the E.S.K.K in association with the E.K.W presented a martial arts seminar in aid of Cancer Research U.K entitled 'The Power & Grace of Karate'. This unique event took place at Summer Grove Hall in Cumbria, where experienced instructors from four independent karate clubs worked together and shared their extensive knowledge in order to raise well over one thousand pounds for the worthwhile charity. Organiser, Chris Denwood, Chief Instructor of the E.S.K.K was delighted with the success of this event and said, "I felt very privileged to be teaching alongside such competent, selfless instructors. All the participants who took part thoroughly enjoyed the day, which allowed everyone the chance to explore past their own boundaries and at the same time achieve something together that's so positive for the local community".

Chris began the day by introducing each instructor, asking them all to join him at the front of the class. He then suggested that as part of the opening salutation it would be fitting to perform Mokosu (Meditation) with the aim of focussing our minds on the main reason as to why everyone was there. He reminded us all about the realities of cancer and the duty we should all feel as martial artists, to help combat one of our most frightening adversaries. As soon as the salutation was over, the seminar kicked off with the first session of the day.

Session (1): 'Multiple Application Theory' with Sensei Chris Denwood 3rd Dan & Fred Ritson 3rd Dan - representing the British Karate-Do Chojinkai.

Chris and Fred are both senior instructors within the Chojinkai Karate Association, under Doug James 7th Dan (WKF). Chris began the session by explaining the definition of multiple application theory as being that a particular technique in karate can be applied in many different ways. He also explained his own personal view that this concept could also suggest that the principle(s) of a particular application could be used in response to a multitude of attacks or reference points on the opponent's body. He then explained that the purpose of the session was to look at applying 'multiple application theory' from both of these viewpoints.

Chris and Fred then started applying the basic technique of Gedan Barai (lower sweep) in a variety of ways. They explained and showed that the movement could be used as a grip escape, arm bar, neck wrench, vital point attack or even a pre-emptive strike and allowed time for the participants to practice each. Chris emphasised the fact that in his view, one of the worst limitations you can give yourself when practising karate is to become 'a slave to the name of the technique' and explained that the art should be both adaptable and practised in a free-flowing way. He also pointed out that 'multiple application theory' could be deemed irrefutable from both practical (self-defence) and historic perspectives, since it is now understood that many of the original forms contained the core ingredients of complete fighting systems. This could not be true if the finite movements of a form were deemed forbidden to be applied in a variety of ways.

Chris then led the second half of the session and showed applications to help the participants appreciate his view that 'multiple application theory' can be grasped from a

different angle. As a practical example, he used a movement from Pinan Sandan kata (Peaceful Mind, Third Level) as a neck wrench and showed how by extracting the gross principles of the sequence, the same application could be applied against different attacks and from both inside and outside reference points. This brought to a close a very informative and enjoyable first session, which seemed to make everyone appreciate the amount of adaptability that the art of karate has to offer.

Session (2): 'Tegumi Combat Drills with Sensei Micky Bage 4th Dan, Steve Winwood 2nd Dan, Steve Armstrong 2nd Dan & Eddie Glass 1st Dan - representing the Hartlepool Karate Club (E.K.W).

After a short comfort break, Chris introduced the next session. Micky Bage opened up by giving a brief lecture on the history and application of twelve tegumi drills that pre-date modern karate. Steve Winwood and Steve Armstrong then gave an impressive flowing demonstration of all twelve exercises, which pleased the participants immensely. Micky then showed everyone the first drill (an application of kake uke or hooking block) and asked everyone to practice. Initially the participants practiced from a static position in order to grasp the basic technical aspects of the movement. Once these concepts were instilled the participants were encouraged to move around whilst performing the technique to develop a more free flowing movement stemming from a combination of tactile awareness, ashi sabaki (foot work/movement) and tai sabaki (body movement).

The second technique took this concept one step further by looking at a series of flowing strikes in response to a punch from an opponent. Micky once again demonstrated for the group showing the five separate strikes directed at different vital points on the body. He went on to explain that this drill was designed for mapping out these points using a number of hand techniques including kake uke (hooking block), ko zuki (wrist strike) and shotei zuki (palm heel strike).

Steve Winwood and Steve Armstrong demonstrated the third drill that was a response from a hook or roundhouse punch. The principles from this drill were similar to that of the previous two i.e. flowing movements targeting vital points but this time using soft blocks, mawashi empi (elbow strike) and elements from mawashi uke (circular block). The drill identified a number of useful concepts including the drawing in and release of opponents generating a lot of energy from rapidly changing direction in a close quarters encounter to the application of rolling motions designed to prime the body for further techniques.

Micky demonstrated the final drill that was a response to a push. Circular movements were introduced in this drill were used to take an opponent of balance and bear them to ground in preparations for follow up "finishing" strikes. This concluded the first half of this session and Micky handed over to Steve Winwood and Steve Armstrong for a session on finger lock drills.

A flowing demonstration was given of the full sequence of finger lock drills that showed the potential these simple movements could have. Steve then demonstrated several of the drills highlighting various kata where they appear before breaking the class down to pairs for the participants to practice. The versatility of the movements soon became apparent as we were encouraged to experiment with the techniques to gain an understanding of how truly potent they were.

Micky finished the session by explaining that with any technique or strike your mental approach plays a big role in defining how successful that technique is. By imagining a strike will land with 2 tonnes of force you will have a much more powerful technique even though

the actual force is limited by your body weight. Finally Micky wrapped up by demonstrating a recovery method to use if someone is struck in a vital area.

In the closing questions it was asked whether any of the drills or techniques were written down anywhere and Chris expanded on this in the closing comments by highlighting the effectiveness of drills in learning techniques and drew comparisons with the kata that each participant practices.

Session (3): Traditional Adaptable Karate Concepts with Sensei Chris Denwood 3rd Dan - representing the Eikoku Satori Karate Do Kyokai (E.S.K.K).

Following a break for lunch Chris began the third session of the day on behalf of the E.S.K.K. He explained that he had no set plan for this session but had decided instead to pick out some concepts and experiment with them to show the true adaptability of karate. The concept he chose was based on morote style movements, in this case mawashi uke (circular block) that appears in many techniques and kata. Chris explained that most modern schools no longer practice this technique as it has limited use in long range situations, however when in a close range encounter its incredibly versatile providing a vast range of options that he wanted to explore today.

The first half of the session looked at the adaptability of mawashi uke combining the tactile awareness concepts seen in session 2 along with the ability to zone either to the inside or outside of your opponent. Chris explained that zoning is an important concept as it allows you to easily gain advantage over your opponent by removing his weapons without hindering your own. For both the inner and outer reference points Chris demonstrated a number of strikes including morote uke, ko zuki and soto ude uke (inner forearm block) which showed how effective mawashi uke was in opening the door for other techniques. Chris finished the first half of this session by encouraging the participants to adapt the technique using mawashi uke to lead into any other strike from their training.

In the second half of the session Chris looked at flowing tactile drills designed to increase awareness of opponents movements and practice reacting to changes in the direction of energy. The practical upshot of this is most apparent in grappling situations where the ability to map an opponent's movement is invaluable. Chris closed the session by reiterating that all these drills give you are reference points, which are recurrent throughout all kata. By being able to recognise these and apply the kata from them you will enhance your karate making it much more adaptable.

Session (4): Mental development and its application in prearranged sparring with Sensei Paul Ditchburn 4th Dan & Paul Hurst - representing Cumbria Wado Kai (C.W.K).

Following the final comfort break of the day (during which a charity raffle was drawn) Sensei Paul Ditchburn and Paul Hurst began the final session on behalf of Cumbria Wado Kai. Sensei Ditchburn opened the session by explaining that whilst karate is primarily a physical combat style it has an underlying spiritual or mental side that is often not consciously developed. In order to settle the class and prepare for the session Paul talked the participants through a three stage of meditation exercise using visualisation techniques to envisage the flow of energy through and around the body.

In essence this session focused getting the feeling of the techniques right by becoming aware of your opponents energy and responding to this, rather than any physical movement. Sensei Ditchburn demonstrated this to good effect using Kihon Kumite pre-

arranged sparring drills and explained that by combining both the physical and mental sides of your training you have “a complete arsenal and a very destructive force.” The participants practiced applying this concept using two of the Kihon Kumite drills.

Kyoshi John Ditchburn 6th Dan (Hartlepool Karate) who was attending the seminar as a spectator kindly agreed to give a talk to help explain the concepts Paul was teaching. This was an unexpected but highly informative discussion that was exceptionally thought provoking and was well received by all of the participants. In his closing comments Paul explained that these concepts are not easy to master but form an integral part of any fighting system.

In closing Chris thanked everyone for attending and expressed his gratitude for all of the instructors who took sessions on behalf of their respective clubs. He went on to say that the atmosphere on the day was most impressive as there was no ego involved and everyone turned up to support this worthwhile cause. Additionally he thanked Aramak for supplying the venue, Martin Diamond Photography Ltd, Richard Harvey for producing a DVD of the event and all of those involved in making the seminar a success. A total of over £1000 pounds was raised for Cancer Research.