



Adam Walker, 3rd dan Kyokushin Karate, is the chief instructor at Chikara Dojo at Spennymoor. This means he is now a sensei (teacher) instead of a senpai. He began Kyokushin karate whilst living in Japan in 1993. He took his black belt grading at Kobe and became an instructor at Nishinomiya Dojo. In 1999 he returned to the United Kingdom and opened the Chikara Dojo in 2000, the only one in the North East of England.

Can you explain shortly what Kyokushin Karate is about?

Kyokushin (極真) is a style of stand up, full contact karate founded in 1964 by Korean-Japanese Ōyama Masutatsu. 'Kyokushin' is Japanese for 'the ultimate truth'. It is rooted in a philosophy of self-improvement, discipline and hard training. Its full contact style has international appeal with more than 12 million practitioners over the last +40 years. A typical Kyokushin lesson is extremely strict with a bowing in and bowing out ceremony to help relax the mind and to self-evaluate. It will involve a warm up followed by some or all of the following: Standing basics, moving basics, pad work, partner work, bag work, kata (forms), self-defense, body conditioning, stretching, ground work, stamina training, weapons training and sparring. It is both an art form and philosophy. The values of Kyokushin can be found in our dojo kun (oath) which is recited at the end of every lesson. The first line states: 'We will train our hearts and bodies for a firm, unshaken spirit'. This, like many other of the statements within the oath is something that practitioners can take into their everyday lives. Training in Kyokushin karate teaches us about the values of hard work, perseverance and strength in the face of adversity. It teaches us that whatever difficulties we face in life, we must never give up!

How much different is Kyokushin from other types of karate?

Over the years, many karate styles have become more sport orientated, with the focus being on scoring points with fast, thrashing movements. In Kyokushin however, it is about deflecting your

opponent, both physically and mentally. Kyokushin karate has a very strict grading system. Rank is only awarded to those who have worked extremely hard. You cannot order your Kyokushin black belt from the internet. Kyokushin karate does not pretend. Everything about it is open to scrutiny and rigorously tested. It differs from other styles in the following ways: Kyokushin uses knockdown fighting. The aim of which is to defeat the opponent by knocking them out or down. This includes using kicks to the head. This differs from the other simulated encounters seen in many other karate styles. The breaking of solid objects like wood, ice and concrete form part of the training schedule for more experienced practitioners and are often used to demonstrate the power of Kyokushin. The breaking of wooden boards is also used to decide fights that don't result in a clear winner. Continuous full contact sparring matches against many different opponents also form part of a normal training session. Multiple fights are used in the grading system, with the amount of fights increasing according to rank. The ultimate test is the world respected Kyokushin 100 man kumite, where the fighter takes on 100 challengers, one after the other in bouts of full contact, knockdown fighting. In a competition, a fighter may have many fights with many different opponents in order to make it to the finals. If we were to compare karate to cars we can say with confidence that Kyokushin karate is without doubt in the same league as the Bugatti Veyron.

Does your Club attend competitions?

We attend two major competitions in Great Britain every year; the English Championships and the British Championships. We currently have several students who are ranked in the top 3 in their respective categories. We have had fighters from our club attend competitions in Europe, America and Japan.

Are you trying to reach something with your organisation?

We reach out to anyone who wishes to improve themselves and who wishes to be shown the path of the Martial Way. It is not an easy path to follow, as the path to perfection is filled with many obstacles. It is my aim as our Chief Instructor to help my students along this path. At our club we make the lives of our students better, allowing them to achieve things they would never have dreamed of.

Which values in life do you wish to convey to your trainees?

This can be summed up by the one word that is used very often in our Kyokushin family; this word is OSU!! It means to push, to endure. The first kanji (Japanese symbol) is the verb osu which means 'push'. It symbolises the combat spirit, the importance of effort and the necessity to overcome all obstacles, push them aside and advance with a steady positive attitude. The second kanji is the Japanese verb shinobu which means 'endure' or 'hide'. It refers to the notion of pain and expresses the idea of courage, the spirit of perseverance and the resistance to withdrawal. Students who train with us regularly benefit from better health, more confidence and better concentration levels. Once in our system, our students display a reserved, knowing confidence and are never bullied.

Which of the aspects in Kyokushin Karate do you prefer to teach first?

First and foremost, it is important that everyone who attends our classes enjoys themselves. A person who is enjoying lessons will learn very quickly. Our classes are split into kid's classes and adult's classes. Both are taught very differently. Lessons are very structured and are extremely regimented. This structure, along with the behavioural boundaries that are set in lessons allow for a superb training environment where students learn very quickly about patience, respect and appreciation. Standing and moving basics form the foundation of any martial art and Kyokushin is no different. Having a firm grasp of the basic techniques gives practitioners an excellent footing from where to progress.

When should people choose for practising Kyokushin Karate?

There is not a specific age that is best to start practicing Kyokushin karate. At our club, we start classes from the age of 5 years old. It is important to note however that it is never too late to start Kyokushin, as we only ever expect our students to try their best in class. Those who compete at the highest level have usually practiced Kyokushin karate from a very early age. Without years of training, competing on the world stage would be impossible. People come to our classes for many different reasons. They come because they want to get fit, they come because they want to learn a martial art, and sometimes they come because they are being bullied. Whatever the reason for participating in our classes we will always welcome anyone who wants to improve their life. Due to the high demands, both physically and mentally and in terms of commitment, Kyokushin karate is not for everyone, but those who continue to practice benefit immensely from being part of the unique worldwide Kyokushin family.

Kyokushin Dojo Oath

We will train our hearts and bodies for a firm, unshaken spirit.

We will pursue the true meaning of the Martial Way, so that in time our senses may be alert.

With true vigour, we will seek to cultivate a spirit of self-denial.

We will observe the rules of courtesy,
respect our superiors, and refrain from violence.

We will follow our religious principles,
and never forget the true virtue of humility.

We will look upwards to wisdom and strength, not seeking other desires.

All our lives, through the discipline of karate, we will seek to fulfil the true meaning of the Kyokushin Way...

Thank you for the interview Adam.

We wish you good luck.

Kevin Simons