

# USA Wado-Ryu Karate Newsletter

November—December 2011

## Four Students Advance to Black Belt



Congratulations to Boris Shirman, Jay Maehara, Austin Leung, and Andre Leung for passing the black belt examination! For them, the years of training and hard work has finally paid off.

But what does it take to become a black belt? For those who are curious as to what the Shodan (first degree) black belt test entails, it is a comprehensive examination that tests an individual's strength, stamina, spirit, and technical ability. The test starts off with an exhausting fifty knuckle pushups, then moves on quickly into *kihon* and *kata*. Under the watchful gaze of Sensei Nishimura and two other senior black belts, each student is heavily scrutinized as

they perform *kihon*, and afterwards, four advanced *katas*. After that, they move on to do 15 combination techniques, one of which is created by each student. Then, they must successfully demonstrate one weapon *kata*, and the weapon of choice is usually a *bo*.

When *kata* requirements for the test are fulfilled, they move on to *kumite*. While the word *kumite* is usually used interchangeably with sparring, this is not quite accurate. *Kumite* is one of the three main parts of karate training along with *kata* and *kihon*.

-Continued on page 2-



### Inside this issue:

Sensei's Message 2

Four Students Advance to Black Belts, Continued 2

Student Profile—Manda Nguyen 3

Junior Dojo Tournament Photos and Results 4



## Sensei's Message

This year is almost over and I hope everyone is looking forward to the new year. At our main dojo, we just held our last major event for this year (the annual junior tournament) and the next one will be a Winter Camp in January.

For the year 2012, I want everyone to become a better karateka, especially my advanced students, so I am planning on holding more special advanced classes and encourage more students to attend tournaments and seminars. Coming to class is good, but if you want to be better, you

have to put in a little more extra time and effort. It's important to keep practicing, even during break. Spending a few minutes each day will help you keep your strength and flexibility and avoid being embarrassed when you come back to class out of shape.

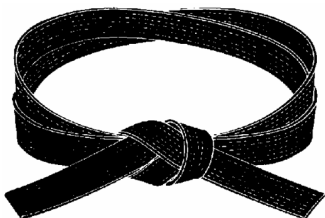


## Four Students Advance to Black Belt, Continued

*Kumite* is the part of karate in which you train against an adversary, using the techniques learned from *kihon* and *kata*. For the *kumite* requirement of the test, each individual has to execute ten *goshinjutsu* or self defense techniques. Then, before moving on to free-sparring, they must also demonstrate knowledge of *kihon kumite*. *Kihon kumite* is choreographed fighting techniques that demonstrate each individual's proficiency in punching, kicking, blocking, counterattacks and efficient body movement with an opponent.

The final criteria of the test is *jiyu-kumite*, more commonly known as free-sparring. It is here where each student is able to put together everything they know about karate and utilize them. While specific criteria for what constitutes as "good sparring" varies depending on the tester, it is generally known that they are not merely looking for whoever can score the most points.

When everything is finished, the black belts deliberate and discuss the overall performance of each student. The scores are then tallied and averaged between the three tester and the final decision to pass or fail the student is



made. Before the result are delivered, however, each student is commented on by each tester in-depth, pointing out what they thought was good, and what they thought needed more work. After extensive praise and criticism and two grueling hours of testing, the results are finally announced.

Karate is a short-lived hobby for most people who start it and only a small fraction of them possess the dedication and perseverance to become a black belt.

When Boris, Jay, Austin and Andre passed the black belt test, their hard work

over the years was finally recognized. But this is just the beginning for them. The Chinese characters for Shodan (初段) actually means beginning degree, and indeed, their attainment of a Shodan marks the beginning of their career as a black belt. We look forward to their continuous training in traditional martial arts with us.

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# Student Profile – Manda Nguyen



HEY GUYS! My name is Manda Nguyen, age sixteen, and I have been practicing the art of Wado-Ryu Karate for approximately five years, achieving

the belt of brown with stripe. Studying karate has honestly been a life-changing experience for me as it has been for others. This is because I started out as a plain rookie that only wanted to be a follower and someone who was always afraid to step out of the comfort zone to motivate others. However, I am proud to say that I have transformed into an enthusiastic leader which had benefitted me greatly for life. Needless to say, I could not have become the person I am today without several individuals.

It is a given that all my past sensei that have taught me gave me a more stronger foundation of discipline, but not in the way most people would believe. Imagine yourself as a random spectator, looking through the window. What can you see? Most would see a sensei demonstrating a move and students in white uniforms mimicking the movements. However, there is much more going on than what meets the eye. When

you are the student, you are not only given the technique, but the spirit of sensei as well. This may not be the case for everyone, but for me, it made me realize how much they pour their heart into teaching. Every sensei that has taught me left me a partial part of their unique selves, encouraging me to be myself, as well as giving all my effort into teaching and practicing karate.

Friends too, have made an impact on me. They were my friends in basic practice and my foes in sparring. They were a constant healthy competition, always giving me tips after beating the bolagna out of me. Sometimes, my friends would accidentally hit me so hard that I would want to just stand there and wallow in my pain, but quickly learned to “build a bridge and get over it” in a short amount of time. Now, I face pain with less fear and a weaker reaction to pain. (:

I genuinely love karate and everyone in it. Someday, I hope to influence people the way all my sensei does today. Thank you for giving your time to teach each and every one of your students. I know I am not the only one who appreciates what you have done for us!



# Junior Dojo Tournament 2011

## Student of the Year

Chiara Ghidoli

### Best Kata

Cael Howard - Dylan Pagaduan - Tanner Mauro

### Best Kumite

Tyler Ramirez - Alyssa Real - Beryl Tsang

### Spirit Award

Andre Leung - Noelani Murayama - Christin Chen

### Student of the Month

James Peck - Daisy Haumann - Kengo Kishimoto

