



AJA NEWSLETTER

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Black Belt Glut - Dojo Dearth

George Kirby

“Back in the day” (as a history teacher I hate that phrase), really, back in the 1960’s and 1970’s, it was easy to get a dojo started. There was a dearth of jujitsu sensei and a glut of opportunities available (community service agencies like park and recreation departments, YMCA’s, etc.) A seriously committed black belt could teach 8 nights per week if he/she wanted so desired.

But somehow the stage has rotated 180°. Long established dojo now have a glut of black belts and the opportunities for them are not as fertile. Or is the problem that today’s black

belts either don’t want or can’t make the commitment to start their own programs and make the long-term commitment to get a successful dojo going?

I’m not necessarily blaming them. There are a lot of forces outside of their control. Familial & occupational obligations are probably the number one factor. The state of today’s economy is probably a real close second place. The time and monetary investment in starting up a dojo in a community center are a third factor. I know that some of my black belts travel 20-30+ miles between their work place & my dojo to get to class, they

don’t always get to class on time, but they ARE there. That IS commitment. I know that some of their jobs can send them across the country at almost a moments’ notice. That IS life!

I do think that the instructional opportunities to start new dojo are out there. They may be several miles away, but they’re there. I know that all of my black belts are capable of running their own dojo if the conditions would be favorable to such.

I guess part of my frustration is
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Kumikata: Grasping the Grip

Scott Anderson

If our situational awareness is keen, and we avoid a rough encounter simply by not walking down a darkened alley because there is a slightly longer route along a brightly lit street filled with passers-by, we will never know if our ju-jitsu works or not, but that’s not necessarily a bad thing.

If someone is determined to pick a fight with us, but we disarm the situation by cleverly talking our way out of the confrontation, the closest that we can claim to actually practicing skills from ju-jitsu may be closer

to saying we used Jedi mind tricks, so again, we evade using the techniques that we learned for self-defense (or at least the ones we learned for belt testing).

At the end of the day, to have a physical confrontation, and an influence on an adversary, we must have contact. The case of a strike is certainly “contact”, but the definition there is stricter because it is a “sudden application of force to a very specific area”. Think punch in the nose. In ju-jitsu we sometimes joke that we use a throw to hit the

opponent with the ground. Nice sound bite, but unlike a punch, the throw causes the impact to spread over the opponent’s entire body. Both strikes and throws can take an adversary out with one application, but both can fail to take out a trained opponent or even an untrained opponent. Both are tools, and must be used correctly for the right situation.

The Russian research for SAM-BO leaked into their interpretations of judo and ju-jitsu where they termed both strikes and
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Black Belt Glut - Dojo Dearth

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that I've seen most Budoshin Ju-Jitsu dojo in the southern California area close in the past few years due to the retirement, health issues, or economic decisions of the head sensei. The head instructors of all these programs had black belts under them. So what happened? Why didn't someone pick up the ball and continue the program? There is a glut of black belts, many of whom are just happy to be black belts or can't make commitments due to the reasons stated above or simply don't want the responsibilities of running a dojo.

I wish I could be like Seki (my sensei) was in the late 1960's, when he simply told Bill Fromm and me, that "The sensei at the Burbank YMCA had to leave. You're taking over his program." That was it! No discussion, no planning, no questions. Seki had made a decision and we were expected to follow through.

Unfortunately(?) that world doesn't exist any longer. The result is VERY frustrating. I see similar problems in other large AJA dojo on the east coast. Although I (and other top sensei) would hate to lose a solid black belt, who might be an integral part of the current instructional program, leave to start his own dojo, I would also see it as a unique opportunity for him/her and I would give them all the support possible. Starting your own dojo IS a big step. It IS a serious long-term challenge. But it DOES have the potential for great satisfaction and rewards – for the black belt and the students of the new dojo.

Perhaps part of my hesitancy in pushing some of my black belts "out the door" at this point in my life is that, at some point (although hopefully not in the near future) I may have to

retire from regular instruction. I am hopeful that one or more of my black belts will take over as head sensei of the dojo. I'd like to see it continue. That's my hope AND my concern. It should be theirs too!

These are some of my meanderings as a "head" sensei. I'm glad that the actual number of Budoshin Ju-Jitsu dojo is slowly growing in the U.S. However, I'd like to see more Budoshin Ju-Jitsu dojo "locally" as well, and the security of knowing that there will be a black belt or group of black belts who will continue my dojo when/if I am no longer able to do so.

However, in the interim, some of the black belts that are languishing in existing dojo need to get their feet really wet and experience the benefits and challenges of running their own dojo. If you're one of those black belts you will probably learn more about yourself in the process than anything else you have done in your life (except perhaps raising a family.) But then again, a dojo IS a family.

Teaching IS rewarding. I still get excited (49 years later) when a new student gets their first belt or when an advanced student gets their black belt. I still am in touch with a few of my students from the early 1970's and they are part of my "family". The continued connection IS rewarding.

After all, all black belt grades are teaching grades in jujitsu! You're qualified. You just need to get out there and do it! It IS challenging. But it IS also very rewarding and the benefits are priceless. So, don't be part of the glut. Benefit from being part of the challenge! 🥋



STUDENTS & PARENTS: CONCUSSION AWARENESS

Injuries or concussions are very rare in AJA dojos. However, they do occasionally occur. Here is some really usable information on concussion awareness for you as a parent and as a student. Please download this information, read it, and keep it for future reference:

For students/athletes:

www.cdc.gov/concussion/pdf/athletes_Eng.pdf

For parents:

www.cdc.gov/concussion/pdf/parents_Eng.pdf

For general information:

www.cdc.gov/HeadsUp/index.html

SENSEI/INSTRUCTOR: CONCUSSION AWARENESS TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

If you're an instructor and NOT yet Concussion Awareness Training certified go to: www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/Training/index.html take the FREE 30 minute course, pass the FREE exam, and secure your FREE Concussion Awareness Training Certificate. This is an insurance coverage requirement.

Also, make sure you're making the information presented above in Students & Parents: Concussion Awareness, available to your students and their parents on a regular basis, either by printing up the documents and handing them out in class or providing students and parents with the links so they can download the information themselves.

Upcoming Events

George Kirby Seminar

Where: Woodmont Program Center
Arlington, VA

When: Saturday, November 7, 2015
9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Cost: \$45.00

Notes: Advanced registration recommended. Please contact the Arlington YMCA at 703-525-5420. You should reference program number 01301-03.

Hosting an Event?

Is your dojo hosting an event? Please let us know so we can include it in the newsletter and on the AJA's websites.

Please send pertinent info (what, when, where, cost, how to register) to:

Newsletter@AJA-email.org

Thank you!

“Pop quiz, hotshot”

Most of the following questions (actually all but the bonus question) originally appeared in the October 2015 issue of “Kokoro”, the monthly newsletter from Budoshin Ju-jitsu Yudanshakai. Reprinted with permission.

See how many of the following questions you can answer:

1. The thing to do before you step onto the tatami (mat) in a dojo is to:
 - A. Shout, “Hey, sensei!”
 - B. Have a big meal.
 - C. Bow.
 - D. Drink some water.
2. When tying your obi (belt), you should end up with a knot pointing to the:
 - A. Left
 - B. Right
 - C. Up
 - D. Down
 - E. It doesn't matter
3. If your right gi top end is over your left gi top end, it indicates that you are:
 - A. Left-Handed
 - B. Right-Handed
 - C. Ambidextrous
 - D. Deceased
4. The main purpose of your obi when wearing a judo gi is to:
 - A. Help keep you gi top closed.
 - B. Indicate your rank or grade.
 - C. Provide a grip for others to throw you.
 - D. So you know where to line up in class.
5. When not wearing your obi and if it's not tied around your gi, it should be folded and tied in a single knot (according to mythology) to:
 - A. Make it easier to find in your bag.
 - B. Be a more useful weapon if you need to hit someone with it
 - C. Make it more difficult to find or wear
 - D. Prevent the knowledge of the belt from escaping

Bonus question (no multiple choice for this one):
The title of this article is a quote from what movie?

Turn to page 4 for the answers.
(Don't peak - you only cheat yourself if you do!)

Judo Over Ju Jitsu: One Step Back for Two Steps Forward

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throws as “technical actions” or in sports terminology “techniques that score points or directly win an event”. If your sport is combative, then a technical action is a technique that can directly lead to winning a fight—which brings us back to strikes and throws. Soviets realized that sometimes to be effective, technical actions must be supported by “auxiliary actions” that are actions that make the technical action either easier to perform or easier to implement. That brings us to gripping, or in our Japanese vocabulary: *kumikata*.

Contact is the crux of self-defense and combat because in this meeting of two bodies (with two centers of gravity), there usually is force applied by both participants. We can be cruder and apply force on force leading to a bruising stalemate (or at least a war of attrition), or we can strive for Kano’s ideal and supplement our apparent power by taking advantage of the opponent’s own efforts against us. Gripping is essentially viewed as holding an opponent to set up a technical action, so in Kano’s more refined view it is about securing an attachment point to merge the energies and the implications of two centers of gravity to our benefit without benefit to our opponent. Think the shoulder throw against a straight punch to the nose.

The punch to the nose can be applied without gripping because the impact of the blow is a momentary application of force. The shoulder throw requires gripping because the defender must secure his attacker’s body in the correct position to leverage his opponent’s body over his body, so that the throw can generate enough force to truly hit the attacker with the ground.

By the way, Russian combative instructors love gripping and pulling opponent’s into strikes. For example, they advocate grabbing the opponent’s lapels to pull him into a knee strike to the groin. That is only a partial realization of Kano’s method, but the knee strike is augmented by both the opponent’s forward movement and the inertia of his body weight following that movement that runs into an upcoming knee that is applying its force from the opposite direction. Similarly, a SAMBist may grip the back of the opponent’s head to pull him into elbow strike to the face. This is just a Russian take on efficiency.

When it comes to gripping in a purely throwing world such as sport judo, sambo-wrestling, or ju-jitsu, the world of gripping

becomes more complicated and the use of gripping as an auxiliary action becomes much more diverse:

- 1) We may grip an opponent to throw him immediately.
- 2) We may grip an opponent to provoke him into a rash or defensive action that sets him up to be thrown.
- 3) We may grip an opponent to break his hold on us or to block his throw.
- 4) We may grip the opponent for no other purpose than to suppress his offense and mobility.
- 5) We may grip an opponent to control him (more so than in item number 4 above) until we can set up a situation to throw him.
- 6) We may grip an opponent because we have no other idea of what else to do.

In an ideal world, any grip that we adopt would support both throwing and striking (if we go back to ju-jitsu as self-defense) without modifying the grip. That supports the efficiency of the technical action. We should never grip just to grip. It is an option, but it is generally poor option. If we don’t know how to grip or have a plan to use the grip to end the fight, we run to a greater risk of an opponent being smarter or stronger and turning our own contact against us.

In sport, fighters have been known to grip just to stall and run the clock down. This might be done to hold on to a lead, or to prevent the opponent from scoring more points. That is perhaps not so sportsmanlike, but it is a tactical decision. Now, while that might be technically savvy in a sport match, it is more likely to have less value on the street where no mat judge will be around to award a win for smart use of the clock. Many would be muggers do have time constraints, and prefer to hit and run, but tying up and holding a mugger when no help is likely to wander by is counterproductive. In this case, it is better to just be too much trouble to be worth a smart mugger’s time. That means the old fashioned and time honored methods of breaking holds, avoiding blows, and keeping distance between us and our would be attacker. Then again, failing the ability to use Jedi mind tricks, it would have been grand idea had we the situational awareness to have selected a different path home relegating *kumikata* to just another part of the exercises that we expect to do in every ju-jitsu class. 🍌

Quiz Answers

- | | | |
|------|------|------|
| 1. C | 3. D | 5. D |
| 2. B | 4. A | |

Bonus: “Speed” (Dennis Hopper’s character says to Keanu Reeves’ character, “Pop quiz, hotshot. There’s a bomb on a bus. Once the bus goes 50 miles an hour, the bomb is armed. If it drops below 50, it blows up. What do you do? What do you do?”)

AJA Website

If you haven’t seen the AJA’s revised website, do yourself a favor and check it out now. It’s totally revamped and more useful than ever. The address is:

www.AmericanJujitsuAssociation.org

About the American Ju-Jitsu Association

The American Ju-Jitsu Association was founded in 1972, by George Kirby and William Fromm at the request of their sensei, Jack Seki, for the purpose of bringing different ryu of the art together in an atmosphere of mutual cooperation and respect. Since that time it has grown from two dojo to approximately twenty-four, plus international affiliates. The AJA has established itself as a reputable organization within the martial arts community and works closely with other major Ju-Jitsu organizations in the United States and internationally in areas of mutual concern.

The AJA is a non-profit amateur athletic association registered with both the state of California and the United States government [IRS code 501(c)(3)]. It is a non-profit corporation with a charitable foundation status. Although originally recognized by the IRS as a "social club" because there was no other way to recognize the AJA as an amateur athletic association, formal recognition of the AJA as a true amateur athletic association, according to the criteria of the United States government, was secured in 1976 under the Sports Act of that year. To our knowledge, the AJA is the only martial arts organization in the U.S. that is classified by the IRS as an amateur athletic association. 🌐

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