

JKS England Christmas Course 15th December 2024



The 2024 JKS England Christmas Course was held in Nottingham on the 15th of December. On a typical cold Winter's day, Alan Campbell Sensei-8th Dan, Head of JKS England gave a very warm welcome to those in attendance and introduced the instructors for the day. Steve Carless Sensei-6th Dan and Matt Price Sensei-7th Dan from Walsall and Harrogate Karate Dojos respectively, capping a stellar domestic lineup for the customary end of year seminar.

Alan Sensei reflected on a very busy year with JKS hosted events and competitions, Kagawa Shihan's visit and sessions with multiple other Honbu Dojo instructors as well. The World Championships in Japan was also something which Alan Sensei wanted to highlight as the whole team; from competitors, coaches, officials, parents and supporters helped JKS England to great success, representing all its members with aspirational levels of effort, focus and perseverance.

A warmup then started the course before Alan Sensei took the first session. Concentrating on hikite first (the withdrawing hand), students would practice on the spot in a simplified and static manner as Alan Sensei reminded and guided the line with how to execute this most efficiently. Students were treated to a deeper understanding of its place in the system and how the ability to control it can be translated to effective use when defending against an attacking partner as Alan Sensei's lesson progressed.

The shoulder position, forearm rotation and elbow alignment were all elements which Alan Sensei covered as students were paired up to receive an incoming strike. Alan Sensei covered the benefits of blocking with two hand and the control that this can afford as they could manipulate their partner or adopt a suitable kamae to help combat further attacks.

This began with age uke and then moved on to soto uke as the class continued to appreciate how the hikite hand is not at all passive but needs to be active in many applications when something unpredictable is expected. With the preparation hand of these traditional blocks becoming the initial part of the blocking action or even the entire defensive movement, the second hand could then take control, strike the arm or be fired towards a newly presented target.

The defender then worked through a sequence, developed to vary the direction in which the attack was received and parried/countered. Defence to multiple height levels aided the class in their comprehension of blocking technique, The recognition that these "textbook" movements need to be adaptable, with distance, speed and timing all aspects which can render the blueprint kihon version of the block too inflexible, putting the defender under more pressure and danger that could otherwise be avoided.



Ura-zuki was also used as part of the strategy when the distance had been closed. Alan Sensei showed how this should be performed and the way in which it is ideal in certain close combat situations. Dealing with an ura-zuki attack was also covered in the sequence which students had built towards. Alan Sensei showed how to protect certain areas of the body through an awareness of how any part of the arm may be necessary to defend effectively.

Alan Sensei had opened the seminar with a very considered and precise look at the understanding of how techniques are meant to function and how this is crucial to successful application. A significant amount of the points raised by Alan Sensei earlier in the course would be reiterated by Steve Sensei and Matt Sensei, even when the training exercises were very different.

After a short break, Steve Sensei then took the class and began with some leg strengthening exercises. Steve Sensei demonstrated how many years and a consistent approach to flexibility, mobility and leg strength can yield dramatic results and the ability to perform many skills which the majority of the class were in awe of. Steve Sensei commented on how each student must take advantage of specific things they are most proficient at and work to hone these more natural skills, complementing the abilities which may need more time or attention to develop to a similar level.



A punching drill then saw the class start to centre their thoughts on hip action and engage the correct foot pivots as a multi-directional sequence was shown. As students started to turn to the side, behind and spin, Steve Sensei covered how important the correct timing of the body was to give fast and efficient movement with the bodyweight controlled and managed to be able to offer maximum power at the point of delivery of the technique.

Steve Sensei then examined shuto-uke, prior to practicing the longest sequence it appears in, in Bassai Dai. The whole kata would also later be repeated. Teaching points were raised as Steve Sensei assisted students in identifying where improvement is possible and how this can be accomplished.

As shuto-uke was done forwards and backwards, Steve Sensei detailed the correct foot movements needed, as well as how to time the hip and upper body as the weight was transferred. Referring to some of Alan Sensei's earlier points and the capacity to manage range with the front preparation hand, students were guided by Steve Sensei to scrutinise their current shuto-uke and see if it is the stance, hip or hand execution which could be enhanced.

Steve Sensei also looked at how different defensive actions could be used and to appreciate the value in less common counters, such as takedowns. Steve Sensei showed how the centre of gravity should be positioned and weight distribution controlled to allow the takedown to be executed swiftly whilst keeping safe from the dangerous arsenal of options which become available as the opponent is manipulated to the floor.



The way in which all the JKS England instructors enrich the students remains a testament to their attitude and approach to both training and teaching. Alan Sensei commented on the “infectious enthusiasm” which emanates from Steve and Matt Sensei and how many others share this same quality, positively benefitting the atmosphere in which everyone trains and the results which this inevitably leads to.

After Bassai Dai has been done in its entirety, Steve Sensei would cover the koten (non-syllabus) kata Kashu. Exhibiting the same desire to add something for every student in the class, no matter the grade or knowledge level, Steve Sensei repeated many of the salient points covered earlier, but also added the complexities of this kata and the less common movements or techniques which it contains. Students were able to move through it at a pace which not only gave them the opportunity to see how it should be performed but also begin to understand parts of the kata which they may have not encountered before. Steve Sensei had delivered a very enjoyable and very clinical session with content which applied to the whole hall.

Matt Sensei would then bring the Christmas Course to a close. Starting with kata standardisation of Junro Godan (fresh in the mind from Matt Sensei’s most recent trip to Japan), he covered the sequences within the kata and how these should be interlinked to support the technical detail which the Headquarters aims to make consistent across the JKS family worldwide. Matt Sensei spent time observing the complete kata but paid particular attention to certain sequences and sections which had been clarified in Japan.



As the sequences were repeated and neko-ashi dachi, a common stance in the kata comprehensively examined, Matt Sensei had illustrated how students need to refine their karate to only the necessary movements, avoiding anything extraneous, detracting from the speed or power being sought.

Matt Sensei then looked at some footwork drills and referenced the need for time to be reserved to practice this, essential for good stamina in kumite. Matt Sensei demonstrated the need to load the stance and how to train smooth but explosive movement. Utilising a seated partner with outstretched legs, students spent time moving forwards and backwards, trying to maintain the same height and stance length. As fatigue set in, many found themselves losing rhythm, depth or length of stance, increasing the vulnerability to an opponent’s advances and increasing the difficulty to deliver a scoring attack or forceful strike.

Students were also tasked to respond to hand movements made by the partner to change direction or switch stance, more closely mimicking common footwork patterns found on the tatami or in a kumite exchange. As students attempted to remain focused and react quickly to their partner dictating the random changes, they often noticed a loss control of the hands and



kamae position which Matt Sensei commented on. Matt Sensei ushered students to ensure the hands raised slightly as the distance was closed, ensuring a prompt response could happen if the opponent attacked.

Matt Sensei brought the excellent seminar to an end with some close quarter combat options. Looking at choke holds and how to establish the most dominant position for this, Matt Sensei covered the different types of chokes and how and understanding of the hand, elbow and arm positions is needed to ensure pressure can be applied to the appropriate

area without any hesitation. A grading and some instructor and examiner qualifications would then take place with many successful in achieving the goals they were aiming for.

It was a fantastic end to another busy year for JKS England. There is a huge amount to look forward to in 2025 so please keep a watchful eye on the Facebook page and website for what will prove to be many more over-subscribed courses and entertaining competitions. JKS England wishes everyone the best for a New Year of training and to progress being made in many fields of karate, not just on a personal level but also with instruction and officiating. One of the biggest strengths of the JKS lies in its reverence of well-rounded karateka who not only work hard for themselves but for others which they share the dojo floor with as well.