

JKS Summer Course 2025-Kanayama Sensei

The JKS England Summer Course took place in Nottingham on the 15th June. On a warm summer's day, Head of JKS England, Alan Campbell Sensei-8th Dan, welcomed the General Manager of the JKS, Kosho Kanayama Sensei-7th Dan.

Alan Sensei thanked Kanayama Sensei for his return to England and touched on many of the memorable sessions that Kanayama Sensei has been responsible for over the years, the recollections of which will have been sitting at forefront of many a student's mind before the seminar began. Kanayama Sensei has become synonymous with an approach which is not only very physically demanding but also one which challenges the mindfulness of the student. The need to maintain discipline and focus on the technical aspects as the body fatigues is something which Kanayama Sensei would again demonstrate in abundance. Many videos can also be found on the JKS England Facebook Page so please do take a look at some clips of the course in action.

Following the warm-up, Kanayama Sensei began with static punching, explaining the timing points and involvement of the hips and shoulders whether in a natural or front stance. Foot position and alignment was mentioned and also highlighted multiple times throughout the course. The stable base which results from proper stance and weight distribution was something Kanayama Sensei looked closely for and expanded on later, to ensure the rotation and direction of the feet matched the situation, whether this was standing still, making a transition in kata or during more free-flowing kumite techniques. Punches would be delivered in isolation and then in combination to continue the warmup but also instil the level of fixation which Kanayama Sensei wanted students to exhibit when examining their own karate.

The class was then asked to repeat the single and combination techniques with mae-geri, alternating the front and back legs. Kanayama Sensei echoed many similarities in how the feet enable the hips to drive the technique whether it ends with the foot, hand or a joint technique. Resisting the "easy" options by reducing the stance length, raising the back heel, lifting the body or not completing the kick was exactly what Kanayama Sensei advised he was wanting the class to avoid. To enable students to appreciate the sensation and composure needed, they paired up to give feedback on this. The kicking sequence was repeated with the partner placing their hand just behind the back of the student delivering the kicks. This simple modification gave a clear signal when the student's power was being diverted backwards, away from the front kick and reducing its potential. Engaging the hip by squeezing the knee quickly had to be simultaneously accompanied by the technique being driven from a planted back heel, snapping the kick into the target. This was a very difficult thing to achieve and showed Kanayama Sensei's desire for students to appreciate how even frequently practiced technique need continuing attention. It also underlined that the reality of some techniques needs to be tested as it can be all too easy to think something is being done a certain way when it really requires this great degree of understanding and practice.

The feeling which Kanayama Sensei wanted students to experience was then recreated in a posture and balancing exercise. With outstretched hands, the students would push into each other with their front knee raised and hold the position for a count. Kanayama Sensei reminded students of everything which needed to be considered; the back heel planted, back foot close to straight, knee lifted high, body straight with the core strongly engaged and an extended back leg. Kanayama Sensei encouraged students to ensure their centre was well in front of the back foot, meaning that teamwork was needed to equilibrate the pressure applied by both sides. Many students were able to harmonise quickly, whilst others needed a little longer to be able to adopt and hold the position which had been demonstrated a few seconds before.



To this point, Kanayama Sensei had not only been thorough on the technical points he raised but had also repeated each drill or sequence for more than just a cursory amount. This meant that students had time enough to reflect on their own performance and whether it matched the high degree of composure needed when done correctly. This intensity in repetition, is often described as a process of *tanren* (akin to forging on an anvil) and if done with a martial spirit can yield transformative results. It does, however, need the practitioner to listen very carefully and apply the concepts being taught as the drill is given sufficient repetition. Understanding remains a key part of this and Kanayama Sensei was excellent at giving students crucial training points to allow them to begin the never-ending process of refinement. It is this characteristic of Kanayama Sensei's training which should be a shining example to all, creating a solid foundation of basics before making the necessary refinements to increase the level of performance. This approach is also extremely rewarding as students are not just content with having "had a good workout" but ultimately getting so much more from the content cleverly woven into the seminar.

Kanayama Sensei then moved on to some blocking and countering combinations which are part of the kyu grade syllabus. Keeping with the same level of consistency and balancing the technical and the physical, Kanayama Sensei echoed much of what had already been introduced in the earlier parts of the lesson. Back stance became something which was covered in depth, with the landing front foot identified as a particular point for many to work on as the heel was tending to strike first. The scrutiny which Kanayama Sensei clearly places on his own karate shone through, and as a testament to his very intentional way of development, helped the student recognise the intention behind each drill or technique. If this knowledge base has been founded, then it serves as a great platform to grow one's technique somewhat organically if a purposeful practice is followed. This learning approach has resulted in a level of expertise which many instructors revere and no matter the karateka can benefit majorly from.



Mawashi geri was then treated to the same degree of focus. Initially practiced slowly, Kanayama Sensei raised the importance of how the knee should be lifted to the side and return in the same manner. Peeling the toes to kick with the ball of the foot was also something picked up on and many impressive demonstrations were given by both the Sensei and invited students, to help convey the teaching points covered.



After the deliberately slow kicking was done, the pace would then spike to hit an even higher level which would be present for the remainder of the course. Students would work in a line in threes, with the active participant the one in the middle. Kanayama Sensei would translate much of the earlier messages in how they related to kumite. Taking it in turns to rotate into the active position,

the class quickly evolved into an even more dynamic machine. Gyaku-tsukis were delivered to the target students on the outside of the three. With students turning swiftly to alternate their attacks between the opponents, smooth footwork became necessary to maintain the correct height (with no bobbing up and down) and to ensure smooth transitions as they twisted one hundred and eighty degrees to zone in on the next strike. This drill was then replicated with different attacks such as a low lunging gyaku-tsuki under the opponents outstretched arm, oi-tsuki, mae-geri and mawashi-geri.

Just as the students thought a rest may be coming their way, Kanayama Sensei evolved the drill further, as students would be given free reign to attack with hand techniques without any restriction to their position. The twist to this was that it would be two attackers against the one defender. This meant that although tired bodies were numerous, vigilance was necessary to try to parry, evade and escape the often-unremitting onslaught from the two attackers. Students then swapped places before the final iteration of this block of kumite practice saw each student in it for themselves. The atmosphere was electric as students were given space with half the hall on at a time, allowing them to manoeuvre themselves into either dangerous positions of attack or try to secure a safer position when defending. The exercise had the hall ringing with kiais and many excited faces as the attacking opportunities were taken advantage of. Kanayama Sensei looked on with a beaming smile as students needed to be resolute to avoid being overcome in a difficult combat arrangement. A fantastic drill that is sure to be remembered for the entertainment and excitement which it generated, both when active but also when watching other groups clash!

A short break was then given as students caught their breath and hydrated. After this, students were immediately immersed once more into Kanayama Sensei's world as the kata Kanku Sho was performed. Drawing on a host of earlier ideas and teaching points, Kanayama Sensei added the importance of preparation and timing for many elements of the kata. The kata was repeated a number of times with the speed and intensity always kept high. Students were invited by Kanayama Sensei to perform the kata as a detailed critique was given with areas for improvement noted. Students were unable to escape Kanayama Sensei's keen eye as he identified areas to be addressed and guided students to understand where the fine-tuning was required.

Kanayama Sensei then brought the class to a close in his own inimitable style with a series of slow press ups. As students fought to prevent their nose or stomach colliding with the floor, Kanayama Sensei held the same contented expression which he had had throughout. A dedicated martial artist and true inspiration to others, it is clear in Kanayama Sensei's teachings that he wants others to share in his passion and the results which can be had with consistent training and an industrious (but very calculated) work ethic.

Dan gradings and other instructor/examiner qualifications would then be held as many students drew on their reserves to complete the performances that they had been training hard to sharpen in their home dojos.

The next JKS England course takes place on Sunday 3rd August and is sure to display the wealth of ability from the senior instruction team of JKS England. A big thank you must go again to Alan Sensei and Wendy Sensei for making these courses happen and for doing so at such a frequency as well.