

JKS England Special Course with Arimoto Sensei March 2026

Hosted at Long Eaton in Derbyshire on Saturday the 7th March, JKS England's first visiting instructor of the year was Koji Arimoto Sensei, 5th Dan, from the headquarters in Tokyo. Arimoto Sensei is a multiple time Team Kata World Champion and has recently been flourishing as an instructor after retiring from international competition. Arimoto Sensei is widely regarded by many practitioners as one of the best karateka in the world, which was fully evident during the course, however his approach to teaching also shares the same exemplary characteristics that made him so successful with the revered Japanese National Team.

Prior to the warmup, a couple of Dan grade presentations were made by Alan Campbell Sensei 8th Dan, Head of JKS England who had given Arimoto Sensei the warmest of welcomes. The course was fully subscribed with many training with Arimoto Sensei for the very first time. After the bodies had been loosened, Arimoto started the seminar.



Beginning with choku-tsuki, Arimoto Sensei isolated and separated the important elements of the technique by looking at both the hikite and punching mechanics in great detail. Elbow position and the work needing to be done by the shoulders in both directions was repeated with maximum extension and contraction before speed was added as the movements were combined to complete the full punching technique. Arimoto Sensei spent a lot of time illustrating how the hip should support the punch from inception to execution, catering for contact made at any point within the forwards motion of the arm.

Arimoto Sensei also looked at the control and feelings needed to be able to snap the technique whilst not shortening the distance or relinquishing power or kime. The level of understanding which Arimoto Sensei both demonstrated and explained was very concise, avoiding any ambiguity or uncertainty so the students retained a clear target in mind, which Arimoto Sensei was advocating.

As Arimoto Sensei continued to clarify the value gained from the correct hip action and timing, students would then see how this is transferrable into all other aspects of karate; from power generation, the relationship to kicking and how it is crucial for contact at any distance range. This ability to cater for all distances was something which Arimoto Sensei stressed a number of times as although in kata there is a blueprint distance to work towards, this is not something which kumite shares as the unpredictable movement of an opponent prevents the ability to release a technique without many other corrections needing to be made, either through the stance and footwork or hips and attacking limb.

Students were then guided into how to retain the same thoroughness of biomechanical understanding with kicking, starting with mae-geri. The ankle position in relation to the knee, foot flexion and supporting hip action were demonstrated clinically by Arimoto Sensei. As the class were treated to further glimpses of Arimoto Sensei's supreme speed and co-ordination they further appreciated how the foundation built and then later refined at Teikyo University, underpins Arimoto Sensei's ability to execute each and every movement with relaxation, speed and efficiency. The truth that mastery is shown through how easy it is made to look could not

ring truer with Arimoto Sensei's karate, something that (although wildly impressive) even video does not do justice to.

After mae-geri had been practiced, Arimoto Sensei then looked at how the supporting leg needs to be engaged to extend yoko-geri properly. Establishing a stable base and therefore platform for the kick to be delivered without hesitation and with the correct knee position crucial to the kicking plane and power, Arimoto stressed where the students' focus should be. Please see the JKS England Facebook pages for many examples of Arimoto Sensei's extraordinary kicking, along with his command of basics which have made his kata something to behold.

After yoko-geri had been broken down and its component parts illuminated, Arimoto Sensei moved to look at how the hip action and timing of technique must be married with stance to achieve ultimate kime and energy transfer. A short sequence involving a block and counter saw students work through front stance, before cat stance and back stance were also added. Arimoto Sensei was always keen that when operating at full speed no hesitation crept in and that students worked to their full potential, aware that some sacrifices are difficult to avoid. For this sequence Arimoto Sensei highlighted which muscles need to be activated within the legs and when to ensure the desired drive is used to support the punch with maximum bodyweight involved.

Mawashi-geri was also covered in detail, with Arimoto Sensei revealing the differences in foot position for the basic technique and how it is acceptable for safety within competition for the top of the foot to be utilised. When striking with koshi (the ball of the foot), Arimoto Sensei encouraged the class to make sure basic technique are never practiced with anything but full power and this be reflected in the foot position and damage potential when the kick is performed in the ideal manner. The knee lift and core engagement was something that was mentioned many times for all of the kicks so students didn't raise their height or hinder dynamism. Correcting kicking execution, Arimoto Sensei also showed, makes it being blocked by the opponent much more difficult, as the path of the kick, foot position and efficiency all mean the receiver needs to be very focused so as not to be caught out.

After a short break, Arimoto Sensei would then illustrate his deep understanding of not only kata as a whole but also how to approach the training of it, in order to improve specific techniques or sequences. Bassai-Dai was put under the magnifying glass first, with particular time spent on gyaku-hanmi and how the points practiced earlier in the class needed to be applied. Yama-tsuki was also explored with positioning needed for defensive application demonstrated clearly to help the class.

Next, Enpi would be treated to the same level of attention to detail. Arimoto Sensei never holding back on his demonstrations to help students appreciate the spectrum of both basic and more advanced technical performance and how the gap is bridged by both knowledge and then what to practice to progress to a higher degree of performance. Arimoto Sensei, frequently returning to the core themes of the class, made it crystal clear how an understanding of mechanics of the whole body is needed to operate at a higher level of karate-do, often grounded in the ability to open the hip joint at the appropriate moment and connect the stance work to the upper body, whether this be a fast or slow movement within the kata.



To bring the seminar to a close, Arimoto Sensei would finish with the kata Sochin. Essentials of fudo-dachi (rooted stance) would be covered first, before the kata sequences were deliberated on by Arimoto Sensei, pointing out crucial features for students to address to maintain the essence of the kata. Arimoto Sensei spent particular time with the co-ordination of the slow movements in Sochin, as had also been done for parts of Enpi and Bassai-Dai, illustrating how balance, bodyweight shifting and hip action all need to be clinically timed so the movement doesn't lose its vital internal connection. Once the kata was dissected, all sequences reviewed, and participants' questions addressed, the course would come to an end.

Arimoto Sensei had delivered a fantastic seminar, exhibiting a confident approach to teaching which was delivered in a relaxed style which educated and inspired in equal measure. Students had not only seen the aspirational level of world-class performance but also had been gifted the understanding from Arimoto Sensei with how to navigate the mechanics of technique in order to develop speed along their own karate development. A remarkable karateka and now instructor, Arimoto Sensei is sure to be in high demand for a long time to come.

The next JKS England Course sees another visiting instructor in the very popular Kosho Kanayama Sensei, 7th Dan, who will be at Long Eaton on Sunday 19th April. Please visit the JKS England website for booking information in a seminar sure to be as rewarding as it is challenging.