

Special IUKF Member Edition

# THE BLACK BELT TEST GUIDE

*Special e-Book Edition*

By George E. Mattson



Peabody Publishing Co. Mount Dora, FL

## **Introductory Information:**

### **Important Links for your reference:**

We have had quite a few website improvements and modifications since this Black Belt Test Guide IUKF edition was created. I've created the [www.IUKF.net](http://www.IUKF.net) website for members and plan to update the website on a regular basis with articles, photographs and Blog entries that are relevant to Uechi-ryu.

Please note that it is the responsibility of the membership to use this manual and refer to the website, for important rules relating to black belt testing rules, seminars, webinars and forum information.

Also, the original BBTG paperback is highly recommended for general tips and training recommendations relating to black belt testing and also includes detailed photographs of kata, bunkai and other elements contained in the test. Order your copy by clicking this link.



## Welcome to the IUKF digital Black Belt Test Guide

I am very pleased to offer this newly edited and revised "Black Belt Test Guide". The Test Guide contains the International black belt testing requirements and standards that were created for the first formal black belt test held on Okinawa for a very young serviceman (me) in the spring of 1958. A history of the black belt test for Uechi practitioners is documented in the Test Guide, beginning with this first test, continuing through the present day.

The IUKF Board of Directors formed a committee in 2005, for the purpose of clarifying the rules, standards and requirements found in the Test Guide, not so much to change them, but rather to help the Uechi community understand the existing standards and the range of possible interpretations regarding how a test board should be looking at a black belt candidate.

Additionally, the committee will, once the first phase of their task has been completed, look at possible ways to both improve and update the IUKF international testing requirements, taking into consideration the multi-faceted specialties being explored and taught today as part of their "core" Uechi-ryu.

The IUKF Board of Directors will be sending out regular Black Belt Test Guide "updates" on this and many other subjects. Chairman Henry Thom will appreciate any comments, suggestions and recommendations you may have on any IUKF subject.

Sincerely,

George E. Mattson, Founder IUKF and senior advisor

Henry Thom, Chairman IUKF

Darin Yee, President IUKF



## **KANBUN UECHI**

*Born May 5, 1877,  
Motobu,  
Okinawa Prefecture, Japan  
Died: November 25, 1948  
Iejima, Okinawa*



## **KANEI UECHI**

*Born June 26, 1911  
Izumi,  
Okinawa Prefecture, Japan  
Died: February 21, 1991  
Futenma Okinawa*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am especially grateful to Master Kanei Uechi and the members of the IUKF for their support and assistance in the preparation of the original test guide, published in 1988. I would also like to thank Jon Mills and Martin Dow who graciously gave their time and translating skill, to this and other association projects prior to 1988. Jon Mills additionally, for spending many hours editing the final original manuscript, adding to its technical accuracy and readability.

George E. Mattson

January 1, 2019

My Teacher, Ryuko Tomoyose  
"Cultural Living Treasure" of Okinawa



# IUKF Code of Conduct

## **Purpose:**

To insure that all members of the International Karate Federation are fully aware of their individual responsibilities, to provide guidance in helping members maintain integrity within their dojo, organization and community.

## **Code of Conduct**

AS A MARTIAL ARTIST, my fundamental duty is to develop myself physically, mentally and spiritually; to keep my body honed and fit; to keep my mind strong and virtuous, and to keep my spirit commended to the time honored principles of the warrior ethos.

I WILL maintain my martial arts training to the best of my ability as an example to all; I will maintain courage in the face of adversity, threat or harm; develop self-control; and be constantly mindful of the welfare of others. I will display integrity in my decisions, actions and behaviors; I will be exemplary in obeying the rules and regulations of my association.

I OWE A DUTY to others as a practitioner and teacher of the martial arts. I will impart my professional teachings unbiased by personal feelings, prejudices and animosities. I will treat all people with due respect and never act officious or predacious. My professional decisions will be well-reasoned and objective, never given way to personal motives, biases or feelings. I will not compromise my teachings or the teachings of those who have come before me as I recognize that I am the product of an honorable and respected lineage. I will represent the highest ideals of the martial arts and never employ unnecessary force or violence towards any person.

I RECOGNIZE my rank as a symbol of my commitment to my chosen art and I accept it as a responsibility to myself and others to be honored so long as I am true to the ethics of the martial arts. I will constantly strive to achieve these objectives and ideals and I dedicate myself to this worthy lifelong ambition so long as I am able.

## IUKF Rank Requirement Summary Chart

Rank	minimum Age	Time Training To be eligible	In Grade Training To be eligible	Master Ratings	Stripes	Titles Min Rank to be eligible	Min Age
Shodan	16	2					
Nidan	18	3	2				
Sandan	21	4	3				
Yondan	25	5	4			Renshi	35
Godan	30	10	5	Master Instructor			
Rokudan	37	15	7	Master Rating	1		
Sichidan	45	20	8	Master Rating	2	Kyoshi	45
Hachidan	55	28	10	Master Rating	3		
Kyudan	65	36	10	Master Rating	4	Hanshi	55
Judan	70	50	...	Master Rating	5	Hanshi-Sei	70

## NOTICE

An active student is one who averages two hours training per week.

## TITLES OF HONOR

Ranks and titles of honor are a very important element of our training and are issued based on a tradition of requirements that must be met by the student and determined by the practitioner's teacher. Judgement of when a person should be tested is based solely on the sensei's judgement and IUKF's requirements, governed by a code of conduct and ethics that is time-tested and honor bound.

### Master Ranks in IUKF

	6th Degree
	7th Degree
	8th Degree
	9th Degree
	10th Degree

*Note:* This “striping” change has been adopted by most of the Okinawa Uechi-ryu organizations. IUKF formally used the gold stripes in association with the master “titles” in which only three stripes were used to designate the titles of Renshi, Kyoshi and Hanshi.

In order to prevent confusion within the Uechi-ryu community, IUKF has decided to use the new stripe system to represent the physical ranks of 6th degree to 10th degree. The existing titles awarding system will remain as a separate program with a yet-to-be determined symbolic representation.

## **Dojo "Kun" Principles of practice found in all traditional Uechi Dojo**

Translated by Jon Mills 10/1/1984

### **DOJO CONDUCT**

Everything in the martial arts begins and ends with courtesy. Be sure to bow when entering and leaving the dojo.

During practice always follow the directions of your instructor and seniors.

Whistling, gum chewing, singing and the like are improper behavior in the dojo.

Make the best use of your time by refraining from casual conversation during practice.

Keep busy while in the dojo. When tired, rest in a place away from the activity of others.

Show respect for seniors and elders. Treat lower ranks and juniors with courtesy and compassion.

Always have a clean uniform.

Always act with propriety whether in or outside the dojo.

### **PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE**

The purpose of karate training is to discipline the mind and body and to master the art of self-defense.

A karate practitioner should be well-mannered and modest, value courtesy, always wear decent clothing, pay attention to his speech and actions and work hard at training day and night.

A karate practitioner must never call upon his strength in a quarrel, speak harshly, act roughly, or become troublesome to others.

A karate practitioner must never bring shame upon himself or his school in either speech or action.

A karate practitioner must never speak arrogantly, fall into laziness, or act conceitedly. He should endeavor to work diligently at training and improving himself.

A karate practitioner should respect decorum and the martial arts, maintain the fine traditions of karate and contribute to society.

Uechi Kanei, President Uechi-ryu Karate-do Association

***[Click Here to get your Dojo Kun!](#)***

## **IUKF – International Administrators**

**IUKF Canada** offers Uechi-Ryu karateka annual regional seminars taught by the Canadian representative, David Mott. In addition, the Canadian newsletter offers the opportunity for karateka to share their thoughts and ideas about a variety of Uechi-Ryu topics, helping to bond Canadians across the length of the country.

For those interested in membership, simply go to [WWW.IUKF.net](http://WWW.IUKF.net) and fill out the Canadian membership form, submit online and you will receive information regarding the annual fee as well as the online newsletter.

**IUKF-GB:** -Lee Adams

**IUKF- Germany:** - Bruce Hirabayashi & Paul Kronschnabl.

**IUKF-Cuba:** - Noslem Torres

**IUKF Argentina:** Cecilia Salbuchi

**IUKLF Bermuda:** Al Wharton

## **IUKF and Board of Advisors and Committee Administrators**

### **IUKF: 501-C-3**

Non-profit corporation

George E. Mattson, Founder and Senior Advisor

Darin Yee, President

Henry Thom, Board Chairman

Daniel Maestas, Dojo Coordinator

John Felipe, International Testing Administrator

Bruce Witherell, Awards Chairman

Al Wharton, Oversight Committee Chairman

Rosario M.F. Rizzo, Esq., Legal Advisor

Andrew Fink, CPA. Financial Advisor

### **Summary of IUKF Committee Duties:**

#### **"Dojo Coordinator:**

Working with dojo owners on membership information.

#### **"Testing Administrator":**

Working with Individual dojo regarding all matters involving rank and testing.

#### **"Awards Chairman":**

Works with dojo and individuals regarding issues involving Titles and other awards relating to IUKF.

#### **"Oversight Committee":**

This committee was established to review and rectify, where appropriate, problems relating to rank and titles for members of IUKF.

Dan Maestas is the IUKF Dojo Administrator for the International Uechi-Ryu Karate Federation (IUKF).

The Dojo Administrator (DA) is responsible for ensuring all listed IUKF dojos are in good standing. The DA is also tasked with sending out annual reminders in November/December for your IUKF membership renewals. Upon receipt of your tax-deductible contribution, an IUKF letter certifying your dojo as a “IUKF dojo in good standing” listing the associated year will be dispatched to you. You may choose to pay for multiple years if you would like. Your letter of thanks will reflect the years which you’ve contributed and it will also include our tax-exempt number to be used for your tax records.

### IUKF Registration Process

IUKF membership can be submitted via the IUKF website <https://iukf.net/>. Go to Membership navigation menu, and select the IUKF Membership Forma and Payment link. Fill out the form with the requested information and hit the submit button.

### Membership Submission

Go to Membership navigation menu, and select the IUKF Membership Form and Payment link. Scroll down to the bottom of the page to the payment section. You will see a PayPal button that can be used to submit your payment.

### Payment Processing

#### Internet Payments

Payments for IUKF memberships can be submitted via the same location as the membership form on the IUKF website.

## PREFACE to 1st Edition:

By William Glasheen, Ph.D.

There is no simple statement that anyone can make to automatically endow someone with the ability to pass a dan level test. However, focusing one's mind on the more important issues can make the whole test procedure more meaningful and even more enjoyable.

It has often been said that the shodan marks the beginning of one's learning in karate. If this is so, then why is the black belt considered such a tremendous achievement? Other than the hype that accompanies any rare phenomenon in American culture, the black belt is special because it represents an initiation into a unique lifestyle. The accomplishments that have been achieved at the shodan level are minuscule in comparison to the limitless sea of knowledge that awaits the eager learner. However the shodan distinguishes him or herself from the average individual by displaying a thirst for knowledge, a desire to work and a tenacity that borders on sheer obsession.

One of the more common questions that I hear is 'how long will it take for me to get my black belt?' The question itself signifies a lack of understanding of the path that one must follow to achieve this goal.

Beginners are reinforced in this way of thinking because of the many belt color changes that are laid out in the path to shodan.

To a certain degree this method of leading with the proverbial carrot is useful in helping the novice student set short term goals and then do the work which is required to achieve these goals. However one must remember that belt colors cease to change after shodan. Why is this? Does this mean that the inefficient method of teaching, there most probably was a great deal of information with tremendous historical significance lost forever?

In the last half-century, the Okinawans have taken it upon themselves to share this wealth of knowledge with anyone who was willing to display the proper effort and attitude. Master Kanbun Uechi and his son Kanei have done much to organize and document the material that they absorbed in their lifetime commitment to karate.

Today karate is no longer primarily a course in self-defense. More importantly it is a chapter of history that can only be expressed via our minds and our bodies. Only the practitioners of this art form can carry on centuries of effort and creativity.

Shodan represents the first of the teaching ranks. If a student wishes to enter the dan ranks, then he or she must demonstrate a willingness to take a part in the task of proliferating the art in its purest form. Undoubtedly your instructors have sacrificed much to make karate available to you. You must show that you are willing to carry on this example.

The specifics of this task vary according to the dojo and the rank of the individual. In the beginning you will be expected to practice with contagious enthusiasm. You will be expected to demonstrate respect for your seniors and kindness towards your juniors. Later, the instructor may expect you to take on a leadership role. Fulfilling this obligation is a necessary task, as there would be no karate if we were all un-giving sponges. Karate represents the works of a mini-society where we all have our own roles to fulfill.

The final measure of all this must be a test composed of specific concrete tasks. The first task is to cheerfully fulfill the requirements of your dojo so that you can get the instructor's recommendation. The second task is to perform well in the specific dan test requirements. The testing board is composed of experienced and dedicated practitioners of our art. The specifics of what they will be looking for are the subject of this book. The never-ending path to perfection of those specifics is what gives the dan rank meaning.

### **Message from the founder of IUKF**

Faced with the prospect of being forced to condone and support what I considered to be a ship heading for an iceberg and with no opportunity to move it in another direction, I decided to form a new type of Martial Art organization; one not based on selling paper, but one intent on preserving the core elements of Uechi-ryu while guiding the system into the millennium and insuring that students of the future will have the same benefits of training that we do today.

This E-book has been created specifically for the members of IUKF. Its format will allow regular updates and upgrades, based on the work of the Board of Directors and their committees. My role will continue to be in guiding the standards, requirements of IUKF. Regardless where our members are tested for rank, all must meet or exceed the standards described in this book and the interpretations and clarifications of these standards, included in committee addendums.

Although IUKF has been in existence for many years, (earlier known as NAC -North American Chapter-) I wasn't interested in building up membership numbers until I felt as though the organization has enough substance to justify the time and energy needed to "grow" a large membership. Once I had identified the areas IUKF needed to focus on, the next step was to recruit a team who would devote the time needed to fulfill these goals. I was very pleased to gain the services of five uniquely talented and dedicated individuals who accepted my offer (and challenge) to become IUKF's first Board of Advisors. All membership monies are maintained by the Treasurer and Membership Director, who reports to the board on a monthly basis and to the members of IUKF on a yearly basis.

I created IUKF and appointed the board, along with a mission statement regarding how IUKF will function for the short term. During the initial five-year term of the board, should a board member resign or deemed unable to fulfill his/her job by the majority of board members, I will recommend a replacement for that board member. This person must be approved by a majority vote of the remaining board members in order to take effect. At the end of five years, I will once again become involved to the extent of recommending how the board members will continue or a method of rotation (through a voting process) will take place.

In turning over the membership reins to the Board, I have requested and was given approval by the board, for me to retain control over the black belt tests internationally.

In writing this E-book, I have included several links to website references. Although I have added material to sections throughout the book, whenever I made comments regarding a section, where I wanted the reader to be aware that this was new material, I italicized the comment and enclosed it with parenthesis. If you wish to view these links, be sure to be "on-line". If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact me



**Ryuko Tomoyose & George E. Mattson  
July 26, 2001 Reunion & Reunification.**

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Although most Uechi-ryu students receive the very finest instruction throughout the course of their studies, we occasionally find different standards in effect at black belt tests because of individual instructor variations in teaching the style.

A student who works extremely hard for two to three years in preparation for the shodan (first degree black belt) rating, may perform everything just as his instructor requires only to find his performance unacceptable by a testing board, may include senior instructors from other schools within the system. Not only are feelings hurt, but also the student can lose confidence in his teacher while the instructor may feel the test board was unfair and arbitrary in failing his student.

The purpose of this book is to define, in as clear a format as possible, the acceptable standards for the 1st degree black belt rating as agreed upon by the International Uechi-ryu Karate Federation (IUKF). The information will assist all students in their understanding of Uechi-ryu Karate, regardless of present rank. The newer student will find this book useful in gaining a better understanding of the underlying principles forming the foundation of the system. Advanced students and instructors will find it a useful tool in their own personal training and teaching.

The purpose of this book is not to discourage creativity on the part of the instructor or student. In fact, I have included many acceptable interpretations of the movements as examples of "dojo study" practices.

The book will, however, outline those critical elements of each test area that must be performed within reasonable standards that are accepted and understood by the majority of the Uechi-ryu world. It is hoped that some of the gray areas of the test, which in the past have proved confusing to students and instructors, will be clarified.

Uechi-ryu is a dynamic and flexible art form. There will be occasional changes in the interpretations of movements and instructors will continually modify the manner in which material is presented in class. But the basic nature of the system should not change. The content of the test and the manner in which it is conducted will remain part of the tradition that has made the style great.

A note regarding the manner in which this book has been edited: Originally, every reference to gender had the clumsy his/her or he/she compromise.

In re-reading the text, this bulky characterization of male and female students or teachers appeared out of place and was therefore shortened to he and him.

My apologies to the many women students and instructors of Uechi-ryu. Also, words of foreign derivation will not receive any separate treatment. Most people who will be reading this book will be familiar with these terms, and those who may not, will be able to look them up in the glossary at the end of the book.

*[A fantastic tool for learning the Japanese terms used in the martial arts is now available in the Uechi-ryu.com Store:]*

BASIC JAPANESE CD

## IUKF Member Crest



### **Recommended Wearing of the Uechi-ryu Crest on Your Karate Uniforms**

Traditionally, The crest should be proudly worn over the heart on our karate uniforms.

Dojo patches are worn on the left shoulder.

**Click [HERE](#) to order IUKF uniform crests**

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE TEST OVERVIEW**

A student must study diligently for approximately two to three years to be eligible for testing to the rank of shodan. He must be able to exhibit the ability to perform all compulsory forms and exercises with a high degree of accuracy, stability and strength. Although individual differences in compulsory form are allowed, certain basic Uechi-ryu standards must be carefully maintained to preserve the traditional value of the style. Those standards that can be described will be dealt with in this book.

In the past, a teacher would promote his students up to ranks that were one below his own. The teacher could merely rely on intuition and experience to determine when a student was black belt material and simply announce that fact to the Uechi-ryu world. Although this casual approach to promotions may have been appropriate twenty years ago, it cannot be condoned in a world organization where standards are to be maintained.

If guidelines are not formally established, the style will lose much of its traditional value within a couple of generations, and the resulting variations will split the family inspired organization into many individually run groups

The Uechi, family inspired style of karate, has established a loyal following throughout the world. There is a strong and fair leadership from Okinawa and the world Uechi organizations are determined to maintain the traditional values and standards of the system.

There have been many discussions in the past regarding what qualities we are looking for in a black belt candidate. Is it first an art form and therefore, heavily governed by the quality of the kata?

Or. is it simply an effective method of self defense, which would dictate that we should weigh the test more heavily in favor of the expert fighter. Although it is true that the person with strong and accurate kata has the potential to use his karate effectively for self-defense, not all students are able to bring out this ability under non-life threatening conditions.

Some question the traditional theory that studying kata alone is adequate preparation for defending oneself under actual assault. This uncertainty, which all traditional students must face, can only be answered at the moment of truth, when one has no alternative but to fight. Zen swordsmen have described this moment as a time of "Mushin" or "no-mindedness;" as a time of pure awareness, where a person is able to react to danger without conscious thought. It is the acceptance of a challenge knowing there is no way to retreat. No way to talk your way out of the problem. A person trained only through kata must wait for this moment to realize his potential. Light contact sparring contests are irrelevant for this person and it is unlikely that a reasonable method for testing this person is possible.

Although many people join a dojo (place where karate is taught) with the intention of becoming a stronger, more adept fighter, they soon realize that the karate path to fighting proficiency is long and tough. Those who are simply looking for a fighting method soon quit to take a firearms course, rightfully reasoning that the gun is a superior modern method for dealing with violence. Those who stick with the training do so because they realize that through traditional instruction they have the potential for developing themselves both physically and mentally and in the process become better able to cope with physical and emotional confrontations. The black belt is a symbol of a beginning on the path towards the achievement of this goal.

We view the test as a way to perpetuate the methods of our system that produces desirable goals. Without standards, the system would deteriorate over time, and innumerable spin-offs would result. There are literally thousands of styles or methods of karate throughout the world, many of which developed simply so that the individual who created the style could call himself a grandmaster.

In other situations, new styles materialized because high-ranking martial artists developed interpretations and directions at odds with existing systems. These individuals could not teach their modified methods under the strict standards of the current grandmaster. Under some conditions, these changes were good and the martial arts benefited from them. In most cases, however, the changes certainly did not warrant the creation of a new style.

We in Uechi-ryu have been particularly fortunate. The Okinawan parent association has been extremely liberal and progressive in their dealings with its members. The style itself is unique in its ability to accommodate an infinite number of physical variations within the primary kata, which constitute the style. Because of the organization's understanding attitude regarding the non-compulsory aspects of the style, most people find a tremendous creative outlet in the study of Uechi-ryu.

Even though individual instructors may differ regarding methods of training, applications of techniques and philosophy regarding specific emphasis of various conditioning drills, all agree on the importance of maintaining high standards in the test. In spite of this agreement, problems occasionally arise when the test board encounters a student who is marginally proficient in all areas or passable in some area but fails others. (e.g., a good fighter but a shaky kata performer.)

Because there are no hard and fast rules regarding these cases, the board often passes people who really should come back another time. And if one exception passes, how can another marginal person fail? If such a student returns to the dojo as a black belt, the teacher may be tempted to send other weak students for testing, using the latest test exception as his new standard for black belt.

The question of standards is not unique with Uechi-ryu. The existence of a test guide will not end the questions either, but it is an important step in the right direction. Obviously, if all teachers were exceptionally talented, there would be no need for this book. In the real world, however, this is not the case. Where these same teachers must pass judgment on candidates, the problem becomes magnified. When basic standards are agreed upon, the job of the test board becomes much easier. Some pressure is also taken off the candidates. They now know exactly what they must do to pass and exactly why they fail if things do not go well on test day.

Before continuing, allow me to offer a comment about exceptions. Obviously in a world where people are so different, there are cases where exceptions will exist. The Uechi-ryu Karate Federation takes many exceptions into consideration during a test. It is important that the establishment of standards not restrict the opportunity for exceptional individuals with limitations to be recognized.

There are established exceptional conditions, where a regular black belt degree may be awarded to deserving individuals who have no chance to pass a regular test, but possess all of the other traits of a Uechi-ryu black belt. Instructors having a student who may fall into this special category should communicate with the test board prior to the test.

This book has been designed for the test candidate, his instructor and the test board. It will go into great detail regarding the physical and mental preparations for shodan requirements. Although primarily intended for the candidate's first belt, the test guide will also treat requirements for higher ranks.

**Note: IUKF's role in black belt testing is the Certification of rank, titles and awards. If the test guide rules are followed as defined in this manual, Certificates will be issued and recorded in the International Uechi-ryu Black Belt Registry.**

## RANK & HONORS REGISTRY

This listing of Black Belts represent individuals who have been issued certificates by IUKF member dojo and associated authorized organizations.

## IUKF DOJO LISTING

We are in the process of updating this listing.

Unfortunately, many of the early listings are no longer in business or have moved without updating their listing.. If your IUKF dojo is not currently listed or incorrectly listed, please contact the IUKF dojo administrator.

# What is IUKF Uechi-ryu?

Rather than attempt to define Uechi-ryu in terms of self-defense, I elected to describe my personal definition and asked the members of the Board of Advisors to do the same. Instead of attempting to be an organization that dictates such matters as "why do you study" and "what do you expect to get out of the practice", IUKF focuses on the fact that members study Uechi-ryu as an Art. . . an art that happens to consist of self-defense movements, strategies and techniques, passed down from Kanbun Uechi and essentially fine-tuned by his son, Kanei Uechi! If you think about this definition, it is all encompassing .

Here then, is a more detailed and descriptive analysis of IUKF's Founder view on the subject. The board members' essays may be found on the IUKF link within Uechi-ryu.com.

A "Proclamation"

From George E. Mattson

Founder IUKF and Senior Advisor

*Just what is Uechi-ryu to the people who are studying it? Is a sport? Is it a fighting system and if so, just what are the criteria for determining competency and how should this fighting ability be measured by rank, certification or status. In my status as Founder of IUKF and the person who is responsible for introducing Uechi-ryu to the western world, I have created the core program of Uechi-ryu as taught in IUKF dojo. It is a flexible and workable approach that applies to all members of IUKF.*

*I practice and teach Uechi-ryu as an ART that uses self-defense methods, taught by Kanbun and refined by Kanei Uechi.*

*(End of proclamation!)*

This statement does not reflect in any way, anyone's capabilities or self-defense abilities per se, only the fact that I teach the art of Uechi-ryu karate and as the Founder and former President of IUKF, expect that members who wish to be graded by the organization, will be able to demonstrate this "core" system, to the satisfaction of a certified test board.

Further clarification: IUKF is primarily concerned with preserving the standards and requirements through the black belt testing process. In this regard, the Black Belt Test Guide is used as the international standards manual and the IUKF test committee (An independent group, chaired by a board member) is charged with the clarification, modification and interpretations of these standards and requirements.

Does this mean that I and my students practice Uechi-ryu as robots or perform Uechi-ryu as a dance? Of course not. It means that we believe in a "core" system, from which we can project all kinds of applications to satisfy our every need.

IUKF also understands the need and potential for dojo/student expanding on the Uechi core material and encourages individual exploration and adopting (what might be considered) spoke/offshoots to the core/hub program.

It is IUKF's challenge and job, to create places where these expanded interests can be taught, mastered and certified. . . always with the focus on having these offshoot activities remain an integral part of the core Uechi system.

# Chapter Three

## Preparation

The International Uechi-ryu Karate Federation (IUKF) requires that a candidate have studied regularly for a minimum of two years to qualify for the shodan testing. No mention is made regarding the number of hours the student must have studied, but the average student works out two times a week for an average of one - two hours per workout. This requirement is generally understood to represent minimum time required for an exceptionally dedicated and talented individual. The average time that the typical student studies before being tested for Shodan is approximately two and a half years.

This paragraph is one of the areas of the black belt test that is being clarified by the Board and its committee. Obviously there is a huge difference between a person who "owns a gi" for two years and a fit and capable athlete who trains three times a week and practices on his own. The "minimum" time requirement is something that has been passed down from Okinawa and represents generally, the best time a highly qualified and capable person is capable of earning his promotion.

Obviously there are as many interpretations to this rule as there are teachers and therefore, it is important that IUKF looks closely at this area and provides guidance for the international Uechi community and time standards for black belts that both make sense and are reasonable.

A student preparing for the shodan test should approach the material in a logical manner. Each of us has favorite techniques, kata and other aspects of the training. In watching candidates for over sixty years, I've come to the conclusion that most students do best with the kata Sanchin and less well on Seisan and prearranged kumite.

Typically, students have the most difficulty with Seisan Bunkai. Free style fighting is generally a function of the teacher's emphasis on this aspect of Uechi-ryu. An instructor may emphasize it in class or he may leave the student to his own devices. The free fighting part of the test is the most controversial area of the style, and is reflected in the great variation of skills demonstrated during the test

Although students study karate for many different reasons, in order to be considered a black belt; they must be able to demonstrate a well-rounded ability. Generally, the workout will cover the entire Uechi-ryu spectrum, from basic exercises to free fighting, but it is understandable that instructors will slant their classes to emphasize those areas in which they enjoy or excel

We see the results of this emphasis at tests. Students must train in a well-rounded manner, covering all material in order to demonstrate to the test board the overall standards of Uechi-ryu. For purposes of the test and awarding ratings, the test board must consider Uechi-ryu as a traditional art form and must therefore give equal consideration to all elements of the tests. [Note: Even back in the 80s I saw the need to approach the dan test from its "art" perspective. The student's fighting ability are certainly an important facet of the Uechi-ryu diamond, but should not be the basis for grading. "Realism" is an interesting "buzzword", but something that is impossible to measure or quantify as a basis for testing a karate black belt candidate.

The most the test board can hope to accomplish is to test the measure of a candidate's ability to perform a well-balanced physical and technical understanding of the test elements and grade the candidate accordingly.]

Okinawa has in the past given point values to each of the categories of the test, weighing some parts more heavily than others. They have determined that a student must successfully pass certain individual categories in order to qualify for the rank, regardless of how well they fared in other areas. The test board has experimented in the past with various scoring methods and has determined that the point system as used by the Okinawan test board is best. It is interesting that the "art" of Uechi-ryu is given equal weight with the self-defense applications.

As mentioned before, the ability to defend oneself is extremely important in Uechi-ryu, but to demonstrate only this talent, without any consideration for the other elements of the style does not qualify a person for the Uechi-ryu black belt. Likewise, if you only enjoy performing the kata with no desire to demonstrate a fighting ability, you must be willing to participate in the modified system without benefit of an official rating. One of the exceptions to this free fighting rule is for older candidates. IUKF recommends that candidates over 50 may be excluded from the free fighting segment. (Younger with sensei's or test administer recommendation)

*[Since free fighting is such an important element of the dan test, and since today's athletes over 35 (former rule) are no longer considered to be "senior citizens", this recommended requirement has been established.]*

Many traditionalists believe that the ability to defend oneself comes naturally with the development of the kata and prearranged fighting sets. These traditionalist feel that free fighting is unrealistic and a poor indicator of a person's real fighting ability and therefore should carry less weight in the test. Others feel that one must practice actual combat in order to overcome the natural fear of battle present in most rational people and although unrealistic, is necessary in both training and testing.

The International Uechi-ryu Karate Federation (IUKF) has wrestled with this philosophical difference of opinion and has determined that free style fighting, regardless of its limitations, is an important test feature for qualifying dan candidates.

Because we have elected to study and teach the Uechi-ryu family system, we must also accept the responsibility of maintaining the style's integrity for future generations. Regardless of our personal viewpoint, this includes placing a heavy emphasis on free fighting in training and in the test.

Having figuratively and literally paid your dues for at least two years, you and your instructor may feel that you are ready to face the test board. It is important for you to understand certain formalities of the test that may make the difference in marginal cases between passing or failing.

Come to the test with a clean, neat, traditional white karate uniform. This simply shows respect for the style, you, your dojo and instructor and to the test board. Make sure that your finger and toenails are neatly trimmed and clean.

The test will require a high degree of strength and conditioning. Your body must be able to withstand a certain amount of punishment in every drill and technique. Although the use of shin guards and other padding are not prohibited, do not count on them to take the place of proper conditioning.

Approach the test as a learning experience. Should you make a mistake or simply not be as sharp on this day as others, and consequently fail, channel the natural disappointment into renewed effort to perfect those weak areas of your performance. I have seen some students who have failed the test charge into the dressing room and punch out the wall. I have also seen others ask many questions of the board members regarding how they could improve. After each test, most test boards delegate two or three members with the responsibility of talking with the failed candidates, hoping to help them understand where they fell short and offer suggestions for improvement.

Most tests take upward of five hours to complete. You probably will not sleep much the night before and butterflies may emerge. At best, you will be coming to the event tired and somewhat apprehensive. To tell you to get a good night's sleep and to relax is excellent advice, but easier said than done. If you have trained hard and are well prepared, you will not experience the pressure of another who is still concerned whether or not he will remember his kata. Even though both people will probably be nervous prior to the test, the prepared individual should sleep better. Because you will not be able to take a lunch break during a test, bring along some fruit or a snack to help maintain your strength throughout the day.

Now.... what to expect at the test If possible, you should rehearse the test at your dojo, getting a feel for the procedures and their order. Having been through a simulated test, even if only at your home dojo, will make your pretest jitters much more manageable. Many successful dojo use the test board method for promoting students to various ranks up to shodan. In this way their students go up for black belt with a couple of tests already behind them.

There are many other tips that you can use to make the test easier to handle. Talk with some of your fellow students who have passed the test for advice.

The best advice we can give you is to be prepare

=====

•

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SANCHIN:

The dan test consists of compulsory forms and free fighting. In the compulsory forms the object is to maintain a worldwide standard within the Uechi-ryu community for the kata and the drills derived from the kata. The test board is charged with the responsibility of maintaining this standard throughout the administration of the dan tests. The most important of the compulsory forms is, of course, Sanchin.

Sanchin, which means among other things, "three modes" or "three conflicts", is an ancient exercise that brings one's mind, body and spirit together to act in harmony during mental or physical strife. The movements are deceiving in that they appear simple yet are infinitely complex. One literally relearns how to breath, walk and turn, while attempting to maintain a super clear awareness.

The following are some key words and concepts used by the test board in determining excellence in the performance of Sanchin. The discussion that follows the term will hopefully establish the standards by which a test board will judge the candidate's performance.

**Sanchin "eyes:"** In Uechi-ryu, the eyes, as in daily life, are the windows of perception. The eyes should not focus on a point and are not easily distracted. A candidate who blinks frequently or allows his eyes to dart nervously from point to point would appear to be displaying an unsettled mind. Sanchin is supposed to help this condition. A candidate who is able to cope with any adverse situation will have steady eyes, unmoving to the many distractions of life. One will not be able to catch this person's attention with a feigned punch while really intending to strike his groin with a kick.

**One must have "Sanchin eyes" to pass this part of the test!**

**"Strong hands with a glare in your eyes:"** is Master Ryuko Tomoyose description of an important facet of Sanchin. A strong positive attitude reflected in the glare of the eyes and the strong hands reflecting the ability to deliver with that positive purpose.

**"Sanchin centering:"** The ability to generate power from the center of one's body is of tremendous importance. The center of one's body for the purpose of Sanchin is generally understood to be located approximately two inches below the navel. In the West great emphasis is placed on chest and upper body strength. Hence initially we have difficulty understanding this concept. A student might have great natural upper body power yet have tremendous problems attempting to perform a credible Sanchin kata. In the West, a boxer will attempt to tap some of this extra power when he "punches from the floor," drawing on a power source other than the shoulders.

In Uechi-ryu the kata teaches and reinforces the concept of centering provided the kata has been taught and studied properly.

Many students incorrectly perform their kata as though the arms and legs are totally independent of the body core. There are inherent training methods within a properly performed kata that help tap the inner source of power which all karate masters possess. If the instructor cannot guide the student properly through the learning cycle of the kata, chances are that the student will never get much value out of the kata. The kata should be a vast reservoir of fluid power and strategy. Improperly learned and studied, it can become an atrophied appendage that one in the free fighting segment of the test must carry around - an actual hindrance to be avoided in a real fight.

Do you use your kata free fighting? Is your breathing natural? Are the techniques and kata related?

If you merely study kata because of a misguided belief that some mystical physical powers will someday be bestowed upon you, and until that day you try to develop your fighting skills in a totally independent manner, then you are probably studying your kata improperly.

The kata must be performed in a fluid, graceful, yet powerful manner. Punches and kicks must be delivered from a centered power source. Stances must be flexible and always balanced.

## **Sanchin Breathing: The "learning to breath Kata"**

There are many methods of breathing during Sanchin. My belief is that one of the kata's primary purposes is to overcome holding of breathe during stress. The most important thing to remember is to develop a breathing method that will work when you need it the most. The unusual combination of breathing to movement "breaks" the student's bad habit of "locking" or holding breath under stress.

A candidate must be able to complete a strong Sanchin kata, while under the supervision of a trained teacher, who distracts and creates stress to the candidate by slight pressure, controlled punches and kicks, but never overtly interfering with the candidate's ability to perform his kata. I developed the "In your face" method of testing a candidate's kata for the purpose of creating some stress and uncertainty to stance and movement.

The breath is the bridge between the inner and outer strength of Sanchin. The outer musculature is developed into a strong armor-like shell, protecting the internal organs from injury. The body must be constantly supplied with oxygen through proper breathing. Although we can lower our center of balance by pushing the breath out, we create a weakness in our center by deeply inhaling. To avoid weakness in our Sanchin defense while maintaining a necessary oxygen level, the practitioner must learn to breathe in natural, rhythmic cycles that never allows the "center" to rise in a way that would create a weakness and therefore an opening for one's opponent.

The breath is simply a forced exhalation, similar to a kiai, but quieter. While the breath is forced outward, the center is pushed downward by the diaphragm causing the belly to be pushed out. This explosive pushing outward of the breath at one end and belly on the other creates a vacuum-like condition internally which results in a natural inhalation. (A strong, short exhalation begins the breathing cycle.)

Although there is no correct number of breaths to take per step in Sanchin, it is helpful if your breathing follows a comfortable pattern.

**Remember...** Sanchin is the kata in which you learn "not to hold or "lock" your breath at "any" time.

I recommend that new students performing Sanchin, should breath three times per step: once when the arm is in a ready thrust position, once when the arm has returned to a Sanchin position and once again upon completion of the step. Attempt to breath in a rhythmic tempo; Move independently of your breathing for purposes of performing the kata. (Note: This concept of breathing not being connected to your movement is very' difficult to explain and also extremely hard to teach. We can talk about images, give examples and develop exercises which might help the student, but unless the teacher has an understanding of how Sanchin breathing relates to kata and practical use, the student will probably not understand or be able to grasp this concept.)

Although you should avoid inhaling during a punch or kick, if it happens do not worry about it. This regular ,strong and natural breathing pattern should help you in maintaining a strong and flexible center throughout your entire Sanchin. Once mastered, it should carry over into your other kata and techniques.

In order to not lock one's breathing during movements, teach students to exhale shortly after the movement is completed, to avoid the abrupt and exaggerated focus when one's breath and movement are combined. One of the important principles developed in Sanchin is the independent strength of a centered punch, block or kick.

*[Please refer to **this Uechi Breathing newsletter of mine** , with more links to a test I performed with three new students. There are 18 video clips where I discuss this type of breathing in depth. Note: Because of the large number of clips that are formatted in Windows Media Viewer, I've left them in that format. You shouldn't have any trouble viewing them]*

**Sanchin Release:** One of the most common errors that students make is to push the open hand strike rather than to release it. Try to imagine that your arm is an arrow being released from a bow.

**Aim the missile at the target, exhale, then release it. The arm goes out straighter and is better able to tap your inner strength than if you simply push the thrust towards the target.**

**Sanchin Alignment:** Correctly aiming the arm at the target is very important. If your arm is improperly aligned prior to release, the forward movement will have to be corrected during the thrust, causing the arm movement to be less than perfect. Practice aiming the entire arm, including keeping your wrist straight, at the target. Practice releasing and thrusting in a continuous straight line.

There are very important reasons the masters taught Sanchin breathing the way they did. But you must understand the purpose and method, otherwise you could be injuring yourself.

**Sanchin Acceleration:** When a student attempts to move too quickly, parts of his body will invariably get out of synchronization. A rear foot will come off the floor or a shoulder will rise out of control, resulting in a lessening of speed and power.

The key to steady, controlled progress is the principle of controlled acceleration. Feel as though every movement starts out slower than your potential; gradually build up to 100% effort by the end of the movement. Soon any loss in speed or power vanishes with the use of this training technique. Coupled with a strong, controlled focus (the coming together of all muscles at the end of the movement), you will be tapping all of your potential strength and skill in the movement.

**Sanchin Stance:** In order to form the foundation for all the centered movements and techniques, your stance must be properly developed and reinforced. Keep your knees bent at a comfortable angle, deep enough to provide stability yet not so deep as to be easily broken by a kick to the legs. Your forward foot should be turned inward for stability, but not so much as to be uncomfortable. A rule of thumb is that the heel is pushed out the width of your heel. You should be able to take a kick to your front leg without buckling. Obviously, this is not possible if your heel is pushed out too far. [Make sure your knees are not "pulled" inward. This habit will lead to knee joint injury. As a rule, your your leg bends in the same line as your foot is positioned.]

**Sanchin "Unbreakable Arm" Position:** Your Sanchin arm position should be comfortable. Elbows are approximately inline with the side of your body; fingertips are about shoulder height. The elbows should be about one fist distance away from the ribs while the fingertips should be displaced outwardly from an imaginary line drawn from the shoulder, perpendicular to the plane of your chest. The actual angle formed by your bent elbows is most important, providing a stable posture while maintaining great flexibility. Although your teacher should be able to move your entire arm, he should not be able to bend your arm. This unbreakable posture forms the foundation for all of the highly effective Uechi-ryu blocks. Every student must work on developing the proper arm position for the most efficient utilization of the Uechi-ryu blocks.

**Sanchin Shoulder and Hip Movement:** The advanced Uechi-ryu kata demand flexibility and movement of the shoulders and hips. Often students look like robots that have been wound up for action. Their movements have no relation to real life and come about from misguided and misunderstood instructions. This misinterpretation must be overcome when the student free fights or he will be completely helpless. Students and instructors must understand that the formal movements involved in kata are not and cannot be rigid and inflexible. Such movements are incorrect and are not part of the system. The shoulders and hips must be free in order to transfer power from the center to the focal point of the action. It is taught in advanced kata and must be applied even to Sanchin.

**Sanchin Dynamic Tension:** This much misunderstood term relates to the outer musculature rather than inner tension. Remember to keep your breathing passages free and separated from the outer strength generated by the kata. Concentrate on maintaining strong hands, pulling down with the latissimus dorsi and trapezius muscles and tucking in the buttocks. Grip the floor with your toes. Flex the upper leg muscles. Keep the rest of your body firm but relaxed, including your stomach. Through the controlled flexing of your back and buttocks muscles your entire upper and lower body will naturally develop strength associated with Uechi-ryu karate. Unnatural tension of the stomach, chest and legs will disrupt any attempt to coordinate breathing with your physical movements.

Teachers must understand the nature of Sanchin strength and not test beyond the student's limit in the dojo. A teacher who punishes a student only slows down that student's progress. The Sanchin test should build confidence. It is not simply a demonstration of the student's ability to take punishment. The student's stomach power, as well as the rest of his strength, must gradually build through Sanchin and the rest of his Uechi-ryu training.

The musculature of the student gradually develops through the controlled flexing of the hands, back feet and buttocks muscles. Concentration on these areas will allow freedom of movement while tying together all the rest of the body's muscles. Overly hard testing of the stomach muscles by the instructor will counteract the positive and natural development of the student's body.

### **Sanchin with Good Body Movement**

### **Sanchin Step and Turns:**

If you understand the principle of Sanchin dynamic tension, the steps and turns should be easy. Maintain a centered stance, even while moving. Your lower body weight shifts slightly to accommodate the moving foot. Be positive about your actions. When the moving foot reaches its position, your body weight should be centered. When you turn, your rear foot swings inward towards the forward toes along with your upper body. As you position your rear foot on the floor, your upper body continues in a smooth circle, until you face the opposite direction. Your (former) front foot smoothly and rapidly swings in concert with your body movement and is placed firmly on the floor, now in the rear position. Try not to sway as you turn. Work on coordinating the turn so that your lower and upper bodies move as one smooth motion.

### **Sanchin Pivotal Steps:**

The last three movements are very difficult to perform correctly. Many people lift their forward leg moving their body weight to the rear, then push forward towards their front foot. This in effect counteracts the purpose of the movement. You should lift the forward leg and simply fall towards the moving foot. As your weight begins to transfer to the forward foot from the supporting foot, you can accelerate the movement with a subtle push. Always move your upper body in the direction of the moving forward foot.

**Sanchin Wa-uke (Circle Block):** During the 1984 World Martial Arts Summerfest held in Boston, students and instructors were honored with Master Uechi's instruction for an entire week. During this time he reviewed the entire test, making corrections and comments. Although most of Master Uechi's review was an affirmation of what was being done, he noted that several techniques were being performed more than one way. The Sanchin circle-block is a good example of a technique that has evolved over the years with different interpretations being adopted by individual instructors. Master Uechi requested that Sanchin be performed the way he demonstrated it at the camp. Master Uechi's son Kanmei explained that because Sanchin was meant to be a very simple set of movements, it was important not to project complex applications or understandings into the kata.

There are many instructors on Okinawa who continue to practice different versions of the Wa-uke, and they do not feel they have compromised the system by so doing. My personal feeling regarding the circle block is that it should form the basis for all Uechi "intercepts", blocks and controlling actions. It must be practiced in such a way as to reinforce the patterns of these actions. Having practiced many Uechi-ryu teachers' ways of doing kata over the years, I find each method interesting. Hopefully, each added to my overall understanding of the style. Each variation helped to focus awareness on a particular application within the movement, not necessarily to the exclusion of others.

Master Tomoyose reinforced this belief by pointing out that Uechi-ryu's strength lay in the fact that the three main kata contained all self-defense techniques in the system. The kata appears to teach a limited number of self-defense movements, but in reality contain unlimited variations of thousands of techniques. With practice and time comes new understanding and awareness of the kata.

Kanmei Uechi addressed this theory in a more practical way, observing that the "Wa-uke" changes from the way it is performed in Sanchin to the way it is practiced in advanced kata. His explanation justified the variations in advanced kata, but not for Sanchin.

When I first learned the "Wa-uke" from Master Tomoyose, the block began from the Sanchin position. Because of the incorrect way many students and teachers were performing it, Master Uechi created a teaching exercise that made the block very simple to learn. His primary goal in this exercise was to prevent the student from pulling the block inward towards his body, thereby pulling a kick or punch into his body during application. To counteract this bad habit, he had students begin the block by positioning their blocking arm in a lower quadrant, in what has become the standard beginning position for the block.

While positioning the lead arm, the other arm is crossed over the body, the upturned hand resting on the lead arm's elbow. This posture identifies the accurate starting position of the "Wa-uke" block. Over the years, the training exercise has become part of the form for many instructors.

**The "Wa-uke" Thrust:** Although described as a thrust, this technique also doubles as a very effective block. The key to the technique is the principal of simultaneous block and counterattack. As you extend your arms, push out slightly with your elbows. This extension of your elbows forms what I call the Uechi-ryu unbreakable arm, able to block a punch while delivering a powerful thrust. This Uechi-ryu thrust is used extensively in the system, found in all kata in conjunction with the thumb-knuckle block. This application is particularly effective for blocking punches.

Following two clips demonstrate the

1. Uechi-ryu Circle block as I recommend teaching it and . . .
2. The Power in the circle/spiral of the WaUke



South China  
Martial Art  
Alliance crest

**Sanchin Speed:** The kata should be performed powerfully at a smooth and steady pace. The fastest part of the kata is the thrust, performed with acceleration and well-defined form. The end of the thrust should be focused with power and control. The arm should not bounce or appear weak. After a clean and powerful focus, the arm is drawn back to the Sanchin position. There are no other actual rules for performing your kata. Keep your movements centered and powerful. Regardless of speed, project total control in everything you do

### **The IUKF FireDragon Fitness Challenge.**

One of the areas IUKF is vitally concerned with, is the overall health and fitness of our members. At the current time, no measure of "fitness" is part of our testing, therefore, the "challenge" is an "optional" and highly recommended dojo qualification for meeting black belt standards.

Our "FireDragon" Challenge is one way our organization can motivate its members of all ages, to do a little extra in the way of exercise and training, to earn their FireDragon crest, belt pin and listing in the FireDragon Hall of Fame! Picture of the crest and pin shown here. Dragon Hall of Fame can be viewed [here!](#)



**SANCHIN TIPS:** Many students have a problem with their punches, based on bad habits or physical difficulties that cause the punch to be thrown improperly. It is possible to correct many of these mistakes, especially if the problem is caused by bad habits.

Teachers will drill their students on the need for keeping the shoulders down while punching, but can offer little assistance other than verbal encouragement. Often, a student can help himself once an awareness of the problem is brought to his attention.

A drill that I use successfully, for assisting students with punching problems associated with the shoulders, is described here:

1. Facing a mirror, the student stands in a right Sanchin stance, with his left arm in a Sanchin arm position. The student's right hand rests on his left shoulder.
2. The student draws his left arm back to a ready-thrust position, paying attention to any movement in the shoulder.
3. The object of the drill is to thrust outwards in a proper Sanchin manner, while keeping the shoulder in position, without any sudden upward movement during the thrust.
4. Should your shoulder move upward during the thrust, especially in a manner where your resting hand can feel the trauma of a sudden movement your thrust needs work. While punching, regardless of the speed, the power of the thrust should come from the floor and center of your body: not from your shoulder. The shoulder works like a hinge. Power is transferred smoothly, without interruption. Any jerky movement of the shoulder during a punch, steals energy' from the line of thrust and final focus.

You can easily determine when your shoulder is not transferring power in an efficient manner. Your hand, resting on your shoulder, will feel the trauma as the punch extends. A properly thrown punch will not cause your hand to bounce off your shoulder.

The first step in correcting this problem is becoming aware of it. This exercise will provide both the discovery and the solution. Practice punching at slower speeds until you have worked out the problems with your technique and can punch at any speed without incurring shoulder trauma.

**Check this video clip!**

### **SANCHIN ARM MOVEMENTS:**

The key to an effective and efficient thrust is to:

1. Aim your arm at the target.
2. Emphasis keeping your arm on the target through the entire thrust Some tips to help you punch straight and strong:
  - a. Feel as though your hand is pulling your arm along.
  - b. Feel the involvement of your back muscles, belly and legs in the delivery of the punch. Do not feel that the punch/thrust is coming from your shoulder only.

**Seisan Kata by George E. Mattson**

# Chapter Five

## Designated Kata

After all of the candidates have been tested in Sanchin, each must perform a kata designated for their rank. Seisan is performed for the shodan rating, Seiryu for nidan, Kanchin for sandan and Sanseiryu for yondan and above.

What the test board looks for in Designated kata:

1. Are the movements performed with strength and power?
2. Are all movements centered?
3. Are the movements accurate?
4. Does the student have an understanding of the Sanchin breathing as it relates to the designated kata?
5. Does the student understand proper eye contact?
6. In Seisan kata, are the kick and jumping techniques strong, accurate and coordinated? The kick as performed in the kata follows a very precise pattern, leading with the foot parallel to the floor, striking out powerfully, and then returning to a knee up, leg in vertical position with the toes extended, foot parallel to the floor. Uechi-ryu front kicks strike with extended toes.
7. Are the blocks accurate and complete? The test board looks for blocks that are not flat or abbreviated and have sharp, powerful focus.

Although there are a number of correct jump-back methods in Seisan, the test board looks for power and stability in the posture and accuracy in the blocks. One of the key points that the test board looks for is the timing of the jump and blocks. A weak, late block will project to the test board that you either do not understand the movements or that you have not practiced it enough, or both.

The elbow strike/leaning-stance is another difficult technique to perform properly. Many students have a tendency to perform this move appearing as though a strong wind could blow them over during and after the execution of the technique. If you are having trouble with this move, practice it by separating the block from the stance. Get the feeling of moving into the stance, keeping your center down as you enter the leaning stance. Feel as though you could push through a brick wall with your powerful stance. Add the block and elbow strike after the stance feels comfortable. Keep your shoulders down. This helps to maintain a strong center.

Uechi-ryu is primarily a front-on style. Although some associate the system with deep horse stances and severe leaning stances, these techniques are not taught in any of the kata. Some techniques are performed out of deep stances, but one does not stay in them beyond the execution of that technique. The nature of our style relies on Sanchin for the primary stance. When the test board watches a student perform his kata, they expect to see strong Sanchin positions throughout.

The question of stances in sparring will not be resolved here nor will any test board fail a student who uses a deep horse stance, performed with a solid and flexible foundation. The person electing to perform Kumite with a deep stance must be extremely strong in the lower body however, to take the punishment his legs are sure to get from the leg kicks his partner will deliver. Students who fight out of a deep stance soon find themselves getting more upright to avoid the leg punishment. At the same time most students who fight out of higher stances find their reaction time much quicker than when their stances were deep.

When karate went full contact, the supreme test of stances occurred. We witnessed many deep stance fighters quickly being defeated by the more upright fighters. This lesson was learned many years ago by Uechi-ryu practitioners who fought more realistically back when everyone associated karate with deep stances.

The question of hip and shoulder placement goes together with stance. The higher the stance, the more comfortable the frontal body position feels. The deep stance with one side exposed became popular because of the early Kung-fu movies and from early tournaments where emphasis was on best attack rather than best defense followed by a counter-attack strategy. If you only attack, then move back, the strategy of minimal exposure is sound. If your system is strong on defense, then your stance should support this philosophy.

Study your kata, and experiment with a frontal posture and medium stances. I prefer not to give them names, in spite of the desire to label such things. We should keep our options open allowing the instructor to individualize the stances for the student's body size, flexibility and advancement. The key to your stances and posture is whether it works for you. The test board will be watching your performance with that in mind.

# Chapter six

## Warmup exercises

There have been a few variations in the exercises over the past twenty-five years, but on the whole, they have remained relatively standard. Today most students visiting any Uechi-ryu dojo should have no difficulty following along during the class. The only controversy, if one wishes to call it that, is whether non-Japanese students should be required to learn the Japanese names for the exercises.

At the first Okinawa Week Summer Camp held on Thompson Island, Boston Massachusetts in 1983, five American candidates tested for godan by an Okinawan test board. When it came time for the exercise segment of the test, Master Nakahodo conducted the test. He lined up all five candidates. The students bowed to the test board at which point Master Nakahodo called out the name of an exercise in Japanese. Apparently no one understood what the command meant since all five began doing different exercises. Eventually, the candidates made it through the exercise segment of the test and performed extremely well for the rest of the test. They passed, but the exercises mix-up left a sour note.

Master Nakahodo does not speak English very well and none of the North Americans spoke Japanese. We can all count to ten in Japanese because all instructors teach from the very beginning using this way of counting. Every student knows the count by the end of the tenth class. For some reason or other, the line was drawn with counting at many dojo, perhaps because the formal names of the exercises are a bit longer and obviously more complicated. Additionally, many years ago Master Ryuko Tomoyose told the Americans that there was no need to use the Japanese language to teach Uechi-ryu, since we were Americans.

The test board has decided to use the Japanese names for the exercises during the test. The abbreviated terms described below are really simple to understand and learn. The main reason for this decision is that many visitors from Okinawa come to North America and frequently lead classes. It would be important that our people be able to follow along with the class, even though conversation may be difficult. Furthermore, many Americans visit Okinawa, and this requirement might help the Americans feel more comfortable during their visit.

The test board looks for a student's ability to perform strong, accurate and centered exercises during the test. The basic principals of Sanchin should be present in each exercise.

### **Do not anticipate the command. Move after the count**

Nothing is more disconcerting for an instructor than to be leading a class using a cadence and finding some students a half movement ahead of the count.

Accelerate every block, punch or kick with a strong finish. Do not let your shoulders rise during the exercise. Keep your feet firmly rooted to the floor while blocking or countering. Demonstrate an understanding of the blocks, punches and kicks. Move with confidence, speed and power. Breath in a rhythmic, calm manner. In other words... perform like a black belt while performing the exercises.

# Uechi-ryu Karate Exercises

We can all count to ten in Japanese because all instructors teach from the very beginning using this way of counting. Every student knows the count by the end of the tenth class. For some reason or other, the line was drawn with counting at many dojo, perhaps because the formal names of the exercises are a bit longer and obviously more complicated. Additionally, many years ago Master Ryuko Tomoyose told the Americans that there was no need to use the Japanese language to teach Uechi-ryu, since we were Americans.

(Note: Romanization of the Japanese terms compliments of Jon Mills)

## Junbi Undo

1. Ashi saki o ageru-undo (toe lift)
2. kakato o ageru-undo (heel lift)
3. Ashikubi o mawasu-undo (ankle rotation)
4. Hiza o mawasu-undo (knee rotation)
5. Ash mae yoko-undo (leg front and side)
6. Ashi o mae ue uchi naname ni nobasu undo (stretch leg up and diagonally)
7. Tai o mae ni taosu undo (body bend forward)
8. koshi no nenten (hip twisting)
9. Ude o mae yoko shita ni nobasu undo (extend forearms front, side, down)
10. kubi no undo (neck exercise)

Students are tested on the second group of exercises, usually performed after Sanchin kata.

Junbi Undo: Warmup Exercises

Hojo Undo: Advanced Exercises

## HOJO UNDO:

- \*11. Sokuto geri (side kick)
  - \*12. Shomen geri (front kick)
  - \*13. Mawashi tsuki (circular punch)
  - \*14. Hajiki uke hiraken tsuki (snapping block, foreknuckle strike)
  - \*15. Shomen tsuki (straight punch)
  - \*16. Soto uke, shuto uchi, ura uchi, shoken tsuki (outward block, chop, backfist, one knuckle strike)
  - \*17. Higi tsuki (elbow strike)
  - 18. Tenshin zensoku geri (turn, forward foot kick)
  - 19. Tenshin kosoku geri (turn, rear foot kick)
  - 20. Tenshin shoken tsuki (turn, one knuckle strike)
  - 21. Shomen hajiki (finger tip flick)
  - 22. Koi no shipo Tate Uchi (carp tail strike vertically)
  - 23. koi no shipo yoko uchi (carp tail strike horizontally)
  - 24. Shinko kyu (deep breathing)
- \* Exercises performed from both sides

**Three excellent Instruction video clips  
for the arm conditioning drill (Kotekitae)**

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### KOTEKITAE: (Forearm Conditioning)

Various dojo have developed many interesting variations and applications of Kotekitae, but for purposes of the test, there is only one correct method that must be carefully observed. The punch must be strong and should reach the target if the defender does not move away or block. The defender must block the punch as it is thrown. Block with a strong, correct inside block. End up with the blocking arm in a Sanchin position. The second block should demonstrate power and form coming from a strong center. Again the block should end up in a proper and focused Sanchin position. The arm strike should be done with a closed fist. Keep the elbow in during both blocks.

The person delivering the punch should complete it as his front foot reaches the floor. The attacker does not anticipate a block by pushing the punch laterally against the block, a common yet incorrect practice. Neither candidate should bounce or in any way project an image of weakness or being off balance. The whole point is to demonstrate to the test board that both students have complete control over themselves during this exercise.

The test board looks for an understanding of the exercise: Does the student punch with a straight wrist? Is his fist strong? Is the arm completely extended when the arm is being hit, or is it bent at a 45-degree angle? Do the shoulders rise in anticipation when he punches or blocks? Is the breathing steady and controlled? Does the stance have some relationship to Sanchin? Do the candidates anticipate various movements and turn their bodies and arms into the action rather than simply meeting it with Sanchin centered strength?

# Arm Rubbing Exercise

The test board looks for a precise and formal presentation of all elements of the test. Remember to practice the proper way to enter the test area and the formalities involved with the test segment.

1. Always bow to the board first, hands by your side and look to the floor during the actual bow.
2. Bow to each other, hands by your side. Watch your partner's eyes during the bow.
3. Line up correctly for the exercise, left foot aligned with your partner's left foot.
4. Begin the exercise by turning your left arm over, palm down. This exposes the outside of your arm to the outside edge of your partner's arm.
5. Extend your left arm, applying pressure towards your partner's shoulder.
6. At full extension, turn your left arm over, palm up. This exposes the inside striking surface of your arm to the inside edge of your partner's arm.
7. Pull your arm back to a Sanchin position, applying outward pressure against your partner's arm.
8. The test board will require that you perform arm rubbing long enough to demonstrate that you are in good physical condition and understand the meaning of the movements. The test coordinator will tell you when to change arm position.
9. Repeat the above exercise in a right Sanchin stance, using your right arm.

The purpose of the arm rubbing exercise is the conditioning of the arms and reinforcement of basic Sanchin principles, such as centering, balance, breathing, timing and inner strength. The test

board can quickly sense whether your technique comes from a deep understanding and application of your Sanchin or whether it is simply a superficial moving of arms. [I have been teaching a slight variation to this arm rubbing exercise. I maintain a fairly good Sanchin arm position throughout the rubbing exercise. Simply move your body slightly towards your partner.

Upon completion of the arm rubbing sequence, the partners bow again to each other, then commence with the arm pounding part of the test.

Arm pounding is also a demonstration of basic Sanchin principles under simple yet powerful self-defense conditions. The punches are delivered with full strength and speed. Safety is possible if both participants follow the rules:

# Arm Conditioning Exercise

When punching with your left arm, keep your right foot in one position.

Do not slide forward with your right foot before punching. This limits the distance your punch travels and cuts down the chance of striking your partner.

Because the exercise is a form of prearranged sparring, realism is stressed. A successful candidate for black belt must be able to defend himself against a strong attack. However, for safety purposes, one must always remain responsible for his actions in the dojo. When testing with a partner of lesser strength or skill, remain sensitive and cautious in your actions.

Under ideal conditions, the defender blocks the attacking punch as he would a real attack. The timing of the block is most important. Make sure the block does not extend beyond the proper Sanchin position. Keep your shoulders down during the block, transferring power for the block from your center... not from your shoulder. Keep your eyes fixed on your partner's eyes.

**The second block crosses under the extended arm, essentially trapping the punching arm while pulling it across your body.**

The attacker keeps his arm extended and focused; creating resistance to the blocks. When he finishes the second block, the defender strikes the attacker's forearm. Strike the forearm in different spots each time.

.

The blocking arm is withdrawn as the arm is struck.

The roles are now reversed. The test board administrator will tell the candidates when to stop the exercise. The candidates bow to each other first then to the board

The second block crosses under the extended arm, essentially trapping the punching arm while pulling it across your body.

The attacker keeps his arm extended and focused; creating resistance to the blocks. When he finishes the second block, the defender strikes the attacker's forearm. Strike the forearm in different spots each time.

## Two Arm Pushing Exercise:

Although not part of the test, I have included this exercise as an example of a creative drill that is used to assist students to develop Sanchin understanding. The exercise is basically the arm-rubbing exercise, performed with both arms. Students find this exercise much easier to do than the formal one arm pushing. The two arm pushing method helps the newer student perform the exercise with coordination and good balance, something that is extremely difficult using one arm.

## Leg Conditioning:

Leg conditioning is not part of the test either, but a very important part of the Uechi-ryu regular program. Students should approach leg conditioning, and for that matter, all conditioning, very carefully. The human body is a marvelous machine capable of absorbing considerable punishment. The marvelous machine can also be temperamental, breaking when least expected. Approach your training with goals in mind. Establish a disciplined, yet realistic schedule for yourself regarding your conditioning. Follow your instructor's advice carefully.

Just a few important tips to remember when you are on the receiving end of a leg kick:

1. Do not pull your leg inward. The pulling in of your leg signifies apprehension about being hit and has the effect of relaxing the muscles being kicked... counter productive to the purpose of the exercise.
2. Meet the force of the kick by concentrating on maintaining a strong, normal Sanchin posture. Do not anticipate the kick by trying to tighten the leg muscles more than what is natural. If the kicks hurt, tell your partner to lighten up.

## Uechi-ryu Circle Blocking Exercise:

This exercise is not part of the test either, but another excellent drill that can aid students in their circle blocking development. Since all blocks in our system evolve from the Wa-uke (Sanchin Circle Block), this exercise is worth considering.

1. The partners face each other with their extended right arms touching at the wrists. (Palms facing downward)
2. The man on the right performs a circle block against the resistance of his partner's arm. The resistance level is very important; too much and the defender loses confidence and alters the block to move the arm. Too little and the exercise does not develop the desired results.-
3. The person blocking, continues with the movement until he reaches a shoulder height, Sanchin position. After hesitating briefly, continue the circle until the blocking arm reaches the beginning position.
4. The exercise continues with the other person doing the circle block.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## DAN KUMITE:

In my opinion, Dan Kumite is the most important test of understanding of the principles of Uechi-ryu in the promotion exam. Here the student gets an opportunity to test the full range of his karate against a partner who is strongly attacking and defending. The fact that the movements are prearranged is a small help, but it is offset by the greater penetration and power of the attacks. Running away might work in free fighting, but in Dan Kumite the partners must trade techniques. There is no way to cover up marginal timing, ability or skill.

Students, who perform like robots, miss the purpose of the drill. Test boards may not know why a performance looked terrible, but they generally agree when a performance is either good or bad. Emphasis must be placed on making Dan Kumite appear realistic. A student who lunges five feet beyond his partner, leading with his head, certainly does not understand the principle of "distancing" or the concept of space. The student who retreats from the lunging head, does not understand what is being tested in Dan Kumite either, or he would have simply stuck his fist out and let the lunging robot run into it. Students and teachers sometimes get so much into routine that they fail to think about the reasons that the drills or exercises exist.

Dan Kumite is stressed by the test board because it is the most realistic way of testing a student's Uechi-ryu ability short of making him walk through Boston Common at midnight. The drill can obviously be performed using many variations of techniques, steps and understanding, but in order to pass the test, it must work.

## **Some of the most common mistakes made in Dan Kumite:**

- 1. Not attacking where your opponent stands:** Anticipating his running away from you and therefore leading him with your attack. When two people constantly train that way, the technique seems realistic; however, when you must actually use your karate, your opponent might not know that he is supposed to run away. Work on your timing so that your punch or kick is always delivered to a target. Train by shortening your reaction time. Get your punch off quicker, arriving at the target before your partner can retreat.
- 2. Anticipating the attack:** Here you have a situation where the defender knows that the attack is coming and where it will be directed. Most students, if they are not careful, will move out of range before the attack even begins, presenting a dilemma for the attacker, who either must chase the defender or throw a punch or kick that can not hope to land. Train yourself to react to the attack, not the thought of an attack. One is reality, the other only takes place in your mind. The only way to reinforce good Uechi techniques is to practice it against realistic attacks. Ironically, the easiest attacks to block are those that are delivered on target.
- 3. Defenders attempt to push away the attack:** Whenever a block travels outside of the “wa-uke” perimeter, you lose control of your opponent. A properly executed block can be performed with power, pulling the attack inward towards the defender, then turning the block into a powerful counterattacking movement. Uechi-ryu blocks may also take the form of a yielding technique where your body moves angularly to the rear in consort with the attack, using very little strength to control the punch or kick. The counter follows as a secondary movement.

In both cases, the blocking arm must not push the attack away. Your whole body should attack the opponent, leading with the blocking arm. Do not simply try to push the punch or kick away with the block. You will lose control of the attack, while opening up your own body to another attack. Keep your elbow in during the block. Think of guiding the attack just past your shoulder.

**4. In the jump kick** many students will kick five feet beyond the point where their opponent is supposed to be standing. The fault may be a partner who anticipates the kick and runs away before the technique begins. Anyone being attacked by a headlong encounter with a nose should simply jam the technique with a raised leg and an extended fist. After such an exposure to the real world, the kicker may find it appropriate to lead with his kicking leg in the next encounter.

#### **5. What is the proper kicking technique to use in the jump kick?**

Over the years, many variations have been used by various dojo. Because Dan Kumite is a pre-arrange set of attacking and defensive movements, designed to realistically test a person's ability to use prescribed Uechi-ryu self-defense techniques against pre-determined attacking sequences, it would seem important to standardize all the attacks. Currently, some candidates do not jump at all, merely delivering a long side thrust kick similar to technique number four in Kyu Kumite. I've seen double jump kicks with the last kick being a side or front kick. I've been teaching my students to be prepared for anything, using a very interesting "wa-uke" variation in defense. It works against all kicks.

Many teachers instruct a safe blocking method for dealing with the out of control jump kicks described earlier. Rather than jamming a rushing attacker, they step off to the side and allow the kicker to fly by. I recommend that each instructor work with this kick and a variety

of defenses for it before settling on a single application. Be especially careful to stress realism in the kick. Most importantly, be prepared for anything. Be able to defend yourself against any variety of exaggerated or extended kicks.

For purposes of the test, I recommend that the attacker use a right side thrust kick, aimed at the belt knot. Whether it is a jump kick or the final technique thrown after a left feint kick is up to the student's instructor. The test board is only concerned about realism and an effective defense. I am recommending a midsection kick because Uechi-ryu does not teach high kicks in the compulsory forms. Some students and instructors are very fast and have developed their high kicks to an amazing degree of strength and accuracy. Other styles of karate stress high kicks as part of their system. Uechi-ryu however, correctly reasons that all things being equal, the low kick is faster and more devastating than the high kick, and most importantly, much more difficult to block.

Uechi-ryu does not restrict high kicks in free-style fighting, and students often practice them for stretching purposes. All students should practice blocking them in order to be familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of high kicks.

**6. The Dan Kumite Take Down:** The test board is always concerned with the possibility that students being tested have not been well instructed in the practice of falling properly. We often see students landing with their extended arm breaking their fall and heads bouncing off the floor. Perhaps in the dojo, while practicing with a buddy who is consistent and predictable, the problem of realism never arises.

In the test, however, when the adrenaline is pumping, a student may generate tremendous force with a correctly applied take down and the victim may find himself falling completely out of control. At these times you must rely on instinct, proper instruction and practice.

Study the pictures of the fall. Practice the techniques. The person who is performing the take down should maintain a strong posture and stance throughout the movement. Do not push your partner and subsequently lean over trying to complete the technique. It may work when a friend allows it to work, but you will not pass the test with that kind of technique. Do not bend over. Keep your back straight and control your opponent's leg.

7. Breathing and Centering: Here's where your Sanchin training pays off. Perform all techniques as though you were doing Sanchin. After all, that is what the test board is evaluating: Your ability to perform various drills, exercises and self defense applications using your intuitive Uechi-Ryu.

## **Dan Kumite: Slow Speed for learning**

### **Tips for learning Dan Kumite**

#### **Dan Kumite Takedown**

# DAN KUMITE SERIES:

## Purpose and Tips

Prearranged drills give the student a taste of battle, using a multitude of weapons that may be encountered on the street. One should approach the drills with an open (empty) mind, not allowing yourself to fight the battle on a conscious level where you may separate the attack from your response. This separation, in your mind, will set up conditions where your defensive response has nothing to do with the attack stimulus, rather, it will be a result of what your mind tells your body is going to happen.

Make sure that you coordinate your legwork with your block. Subtle factors affecting any block/counterattack combination must be taken into consideration: The length of your opponent's arm and legs; His overall height. Obviously these same factors apply to your body and will determine how your defensive reaction to any attack be formulated.

All aspects of your Uechi-ryu is being tested, not simply your ability to avoid being struck. The test board wants to see blocks that defied attacks in good Uechi-ryu form. The board is also looking for the ability to demonstrate a reasonable capability for executing effective counterattacks during the test. This means that you throw the punches with the full potential associated with the technique. The judges will take points off your score, should you throw kicks or punches off line, short of the target or with poor form.

Under ideal test conditions, the judges would like to see punches and kicks that land right on line with the target, but pulled slightly before actual physical contact. At the end of the technique, there should be some extension held back for safety.

## **Judging Correct Distance:**

New students often have a difficult time moving their whole body smoothly during a technique, most often allowing their upper body to get ahead of their center and lower body. Practice sliding and stepping with a cat-like balance, moving the center of your body like the center of a rolling ball. When you over-react to an attack by shifting your upper body without the rest of your body, you may avoid a high punch, but you will find yourself in a weak position to defend against a low kick. You will not be able to effectively counterattack from this weakened posture either.

## **Pushing Danger Away:**

The natural reaction to danger is to get away from it, or in the case of a punch or kick, get it away from you. In karate, the problem with this attitude is that you lose control of your opponent when you push the technique away from you. The objective of Uechi-ryu blocks is to gain control over your opponent placing him in a position where an effective counterattack is possible.

If you have ever pulled a chair out from under someone in the process of sitting down, you will know that the best way to make the cruel trick work is to simply do nothing. Should you push the person on top of the head as he begins his descent and before he reaches a point of no return the person is very likely to do the opposite of what you planned... namely stand straight up. The push on the top of the head shocks the person out of his routine... brings him back to reality... gives him the opportunity to focus in on reality, not on the illusion.

When a person delivers a strong punch or kick he is repeating habits strongly ingrained in his subconscious. Your opponent sees a target, formulates subconsciously his strategy' and finally delivers the attack. If nothing happens to alter his mental image of what is to happen, that attack will continue.

Should you do anything to shock the attacker out of this image, you will be changing the predictable attack into the potential of a thousand attacks, which will be unknown to you. The simple punch, pushed drastically off line by the defender can quickly convert into a devastating elbow strike, using the accumulated power directed into the punch. Jack should keep Arthur's punch on-line, but off-target, thereby controlling the situation and preparing Arthur for an effective counterattack.

### **Leading With One's Nose:**

Anyone familiar with skeet shooting will understand why this problem occurs. We get into the habit of chasing our partners and automatically assume everyone we work with in Dan Kumite will run away from our punch or kick when it is their turn to block, and therefore aims the attack to where it is assumed the target will be when the punch arrives.

There is nothing so distressing to a student accustomed to this way of attacking than to ask him to throw a punch, and then instead of moving away as expected, simply hold your ground and raise your arm to meet his oncoming face. Invariably you will shock the student because you did not do the expected and is perplexed that he could have been so naive in his automatic reaction. This is not a unique and isolated practice in the karate world. The test board sees hundreds of examples of this kind of misguided training each year.

**Full Speed Dan Kumite**

# CHAPTER NINE

## SEISAN BUNKAI:

### 2019 - No longer a requirement for 1-5 dan ranks

Although IUKF does not require this bunkai for 1-5th dan test, it may be included in tests, based on a sense's wishes. IUKF is exploring the possibility of including a bunkai, as part of the master's test. The following description is how Okinawa felt about the bunkai when it was originally created.

Seisan Bunkai represents the student's attempt to demonstrate his understanding of the kata's practical applications. In early dan tests on Okinawa, the student was simply told to use movements of the Seisan kata while defending himself against various predetermined attacks initiated by a fellow student. After a number of years, a relatively standardized set of attacks and applications has evolved into what we know as Seisan Bunkai.

Seisan Bunkai has become another chapter of Uechi-ryu history, rounding out the cycle of understanding that begins with Sanchin and ending with free-style fighting. The Bunka appears more like a two-person kata than a prearranged kumite and should be approached with that formality. The test board is looking for the precise and powerful attacks and counterattacks approved by the association.

Within the dojo it is perfectly permissible to create new Bunkai for practice purposes. Some of the more exciting arrangements make for great training drills in the dojo and educational demonstrations for public view. The test, however, requires a strict adherence to the traditional way of performing the Bunkai. Thus the student must spend sufficient time practicing the traditional method in order to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding to the test board.

Above all, the student must demonstrate to the test board that he has the situation completely under control during the demonstration.

## CHAPTER TEN

### QUESTIONS ON UECHI-RYU HISTORY AND THEORY

During the final segment of the test the test board questions the candidates. The purpose of this part of the test is to insure that the student has some knowledge of the history of Uechi-ryu and an understanding of the style. The information required of the student should be part of every dojo instruction. The questions asked are those that a student from another system, or a person who has never studied the martial arts might ask. The test board wants to be sure that students who leave the test wearing a Uechi-ryu black belt have a well-rounded understanding of the style.

Any student who spends so much time attempting to master an art form ought to be curious about the background and history of the art. The questions assure that the instructors spend some time discussing these areas with their students, or make reading material available that addresses these questions.

Some questions that have been asked in the past and will probably be asked again in the future include:

1. Who was the man who brought our system from China to Japan?
2. What is a term used to describe the nature of Uechi-ryu? What does this term mean? How does this meaning apply to the physical movements in Uechi-ryu?
3. Describe Uechi-ryu breathing? Why do we breath in this manner?
4. What are the strengths of the Sanchin stance?
5. What techniques are most emphasized in Uechi-ryu?
6. What do you feel are the major targets for a Uechi-ryu kick?
7. Why are kicks to the head discouraged in Uechi-Ryu?

8. Name the dan ranks? The master titles? Kyu ranks?
9. Who is Shu-she-wa (Zhou zi he)? What is his relationship to Uechi-ryu?
10. What do the names of Sanchin, Seisan, Sanseiryu mean?
11. What are the names of the eight Uechi-ryu kata?
12. What rank must a candidate be for each kata he is tested for?
13. Explain why the Sanchin stance is used in Uechi-ryu?

[Some Regions have elected to use a written test or require candidates to write an essay on a specific subject. Both methods of testing a candidate's understanding of the history of Uechi-ryu are acceptable.]

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **FREE STYLE SPARRING**

Free style sparring is the most controversial segment of the test. Many teachers feel that more emphasis should be placed on this part of the test; others feel it should be downplayed.

Unlike the compulsory segment of the test, where most people can accept blocks being performed in certain ways, kicks ending up in a precise position, punches being delivered in an exact form, no two people agree on just what standards should be part of free style sparring.

Short of locking two people in a room and allowing the victor to emerge twenty minutes later, there does not appear to be any realistic method of testing a student's ability to apply his Uechi-Ryu in a free-style environment, There are those who would have us simply spar for three minutes using conventional tag rules used in limited contact sporting events. This places the responsibility on the instructors to train their students in the rules and regulations of the tag events within class.

Many teachers reason that this is not realistic, and develops bad Uechi-ryu habits that our style should not condone. If we accept the premise of Master Tomoyose statement that "...striking bone before your opponent strikes flesh, makes the late punch worthless..." then we must recognize the limitations of tag events.

However, if we are simply trying to test student's spirit by mixing it up in a controlled, somewhat free-style environment, then the match makes some sense. We must test the student's willingness to cope with a potentially dangerous situation, using whatever resources are available.

If he is hesitant and fearful during the test, he may react the same way on the street in a life-threatening situation. [Because the test board is testing a candidate's ability to perform under pressure and demonstrate his capabilities to demonstrate the "art" of Uechi-ryu, it is important for the candidate to spar, using his Uechi-ryu tools. If the test board was simply looking for one's ability to fight, using whatever instinct and/or prior knowledge of self defense to aid him, any street fighter or boxer would qualify to be a Uechi black belt.

Remember, we are studying Uechi-ryu as an art that happens to use self defense tools brought to Okinawa by Kanbun Uechi and further refined and codified by his son Kanei Uechi. IUKF does not simply grade fighting performance, without using the Uechi-ryu tools found in the art.]

The test board has instituted the following procedures regarding the free style sparring segment of the test, based upon the Okinawan test board requirements and some innovative twists designed to make the test more interesting and informative.

## FREE STYLE FIGHTING RULES:

1. Every match will last at least two minutes. This minimum requirement will insure that every candidate who reaches this part of the test is in top physical condition.
2. Every candidate must demonstrate an ability to both defend himself and be able to effectively counterattack by initiating a combination of attacking moves. Although Uechi-ryu is a defensive art, it is also an art that stresses the ability for stopping an opponent. More realistically, however, is the need for both parties to initiate and deliver a certain number of controlled attacks in order for the test board to observe both candidates abilities to defend themselves. A person who does not have the spirit to perform will definitely fail this segment of the test.

## WHAT IS THE TEST BOARD LOOKING FOR?

1. An ability to effectively defend oneself using the Uechi-ryu system.
2. The ability to use effective, well defined and controlled punches and kicks, in a manner that demonstrates an understanding of the Uechi-ryu system. The techniques should be delivered to the opponent in such a manner that even though blocked, they display a good understanding of strategy and placement. We do not simply want to see kicks, regardless of how technically perfect, which land two feet from the opponent.
3. A good ability to defend, using the blocks and jamming techniques found within the Uechi-ryu system.

**4. A respect for one's partner, understanding that it is a test, not a fight for life.**

A spirited encounter is encouraged, but do not forget the calm, centered awareness taught in Sanchin. Keep your control throughout the match. Keep in mind that the test board must see the candidate's ability to defend himself under stress and under conditions that are not found in kata.

5. Not withstanding various handicap conditions, IUKF feels that all candidates under the age of 50, should be able to participate in sparring.

Of course, the student's sensei has the final word regarding who can spar.

The board wants to see every candidate exhibit a willingness to encounter this difficult situation with confidence and calm, demonstrating an ability' to use those techniques learned in the kata, Bunkai and prearranged sparring in a free-style environment. We do not expect to see a superior fighter punish his partner. We expect to see every fighter demonstrate total control over his actions by fighting as hard as necessary to control his partner, if possible.

Once that control level is reached, maintain it for the duration of the match. Do not try to humiliate your partner if you are stronger or have more free style sparring experience. You won't pass the test by being unnecessarily aggressive. Many candidates have failed however, because they did not exercise control over their emotions during the test.

A student may use any controlled technique for the free style sparring segment of the test. Although the test board would like to see techniques that evolve from the Uechi-ryu system, it will not penalize a student who has developed additional free-style movements which do not have an obvious Uechi-ryu derivation.

Regardless of what kind of attack is used by his partner, a Uechi-ryu student should be able to cope with it, demonstrating total control and confidence during the match.

The test board looks for overall ability, not simply the ability to tag one's partner. The term "free style," implies a creative application of basic principles. It also demands a demonstration of an overall understanding of the underlying principles that make Uechi-ryu so effective as a fighting art.

The test board wants to see every candidate demonstrate a willingness to meet his opponent with courage and confidence, able to react spontaneously to the threat of a mock battle. Obviously the instinctive fighting ability is present, but may or may not be usable in mock situations such as sparring.

It is, however, the best test available at this time for confirming an individual's basic understanding of his style under spontaneous conditions. Many instructors, myself included, believe that the Dan kumite, when properly performed is a far better test of one's true fighting spirit.

The test board realizes that at best, the free style sparring test is a small measure of a person's ability to fare in a real fight. A candidate who may have been insufficiently trained in free style sparring, might have the intuitive skill to defend his life in a real fight, but lacks the practice to enter a ring and consciously play at fighting. We know of many situations where students who have never fought in tournaments, were able to take care of themselves quite well when faced with real danger.



**Reserve your  
spot at the  
premier Uechi-  
Ryu event of the  
year! Click Here  
Please!**

# CHAPTER TWELVE

## THE TEST FORM: Suggested Method

Each category of the test is designed to bring out a particular aspect of the Uechi-ryu program, working from the important mental/physical development kata, Sanchin, through the technique-building kata of Seisan. Strength and timing are tested through the arm pounding and prearranged kumite. Conditioning is tested in the exercises, as well as by the overall nature of the test. Understanding of the kata is brought out through the Seisan Bunkai while free style sparring tests one's spontaneous spirit and intuitive strategy. Finally, the question and answer session gives the student an opportunity to demonstrate his overall knowledge of the history and philosophy surrounding Uechi-ryu.

The test has evolved over the years. Small changes have been made in the past and may be made in the future. The existing test is an excellent representation of the system we study today. It is an accomplishment for a student to successfully complete the test. A person who passes the test knows that he really possesses the skills and spirit of a black belt.

The present test form has been in use since 1974. It employs a numerically weighted grading system. The most important part of the test is the kata Sanchin. In tests conducted prior to 1974, free style sparring was only given a value of 5 points out of 100. Today it is the second most important category on the test with a value of 20 out of 100.

A student must pass the test with a minimum score of 80 points (79 points fail and 80 passes). An assistant collects the test scores after each candidate completes a segment of the test. A secretary tabulates the scores as the test progresses.

The secretary also calls out the name of the student about to be tested and informs the next candidate to get ready.

The test administrator is in charge of the overall testing and appoints the various positions necessary to run the test smoothly. The most important role of the test administrator is to check the test applications to make sure that they are properly filled out and that the candidate is fully qualified to be tested for the rank designated.

Upon completion of Sanchin and the designated kata, the test board takes a brief recess to evaluate the scores. Only those candidates passing Sanchin and the designated kata with a minimum score of 28 out of a possible 35 will be allowed to continue. The reason for these criteria involves a safety issue. Anyone not minimally proficient in the compulsory kata may be a danger to himself and his partner in the remainder of the test. The test board may elect a representative to talk with those candidates who are not able to continue, explaining why they failed and possible ways to improve.

Uechi-ryu is first and foremost an art form, deeply imbued with the tradition of the Uechi family. This tradition dictates a strong emphasis on kata skill. A student who cannot demonstrate even a minimum understanding and technique in the kata, either has not practiced enough or is having a bad day. In either case, the test board will not allow this person to continue with the test.

The test board may use any grading technique for the individual parts of the test. A perfect score is 100. A test form commonly used by many board members is shown here.

## Testing Update # 1

For legal reasons. . . .

**IUKF does not condone full contact sparring without presence of medical staff and supervised by a black belt of minimum Sandan level, in addition to adequate insurance coverage.**

**Due to concerns with injuries, all sparring classes should be held with absolute minimal or no contact and requires head, chest and groin protections, and be supervised by a senior instructor.**

## Testing Update # 2

Details regarding acceptable testing requirements may be introduced or modified by the current President and his/her board of advisors. Current rank standards and requirements are listed and described in the appropriate section of this e-book.

=====

I hope you have found this newly edited version of the BBTG both interesting and helpful. Although this version is only a fraction of the material contained in the 1988 published edition, the new e-book contains all the new testing standards endorsed by the IUKF.

We still have a number of brand new soft cover books in inventory, being offered at a very low price. You can get your fully illustrated book by clicking this link to the Uechi-Ryu store.

=====

**Attention all IUKF dojo owners. IUKF will pay your full participation fee to the George E. Mattson's Winterfest, beginning in 2019!  
Click Here to register!**