

## 'Understanding What It's All About'

Previously, in **Part 1** (*Newsletter 2/08 August 2008*) we explained the rules and protocol regarding Kyu Grades. In this Newsletter, we do the same with Black Belt or Dan grades.

### **Part 2.1 : Dan Grading.**

As it is with kyu grades, it is important to have the correct perception and attitude to Dan gradings, keeping in mind that a Black Belt is an irreversible grade, but, being a symbol of a person's physical ability and a '*pie in the sky*' or example for kyu members, **a Black Belt member who has not trained for six months or more, wears a White Belt until he/she reaches the required level of proficiency again:**

- Grading is a personal matter and aimed at giving you an indication of your own progress.
- Every individual has his/her own personal reasons for practicing karate - your own '**Why**' - all of us are differently talented, of unequal ability.
- Gradings are important in the sense that you are placed in a '*stress*' situation, away from your comfort zone, maybe similar to an assault or confrontation in a civilian environment.
- It's aimed at helping you break through personal '*barriers*' (get over your fears) that will ensure your future progress, maturity and development.
- It's yourself vs. yourself - never try to 'compete' with fellow karate ka.
- Don't attempt grading when you have not prepared for it - it's counter productive for your own esteem and motivation.
- Achievements in Tournaments have no bearing on grading assessment.

### **Realities:**

- A person who trains more than the minimum three sessions per week, puts more effort into every session, self-trains regularly, tries endlessly to correct his/her technique, will, at some stage or another, progress faster - it's your own decision/choice, based on your '**Why**'
- You need to goal-set for a Dan grading and feel 'extra' physically ready and mentally confident when it is due, this implies additional effort from your side in the period before the grading. (*This is why we have a Dojo schedule available in the beginning of the year - to help you plan!*)
- A grading can be failed! You still need to produce on the day. We are moving in a society or culture where failing is impossible and dysfunctional productivity is the norm, unfortunately, not in the Martial Arts, '*not on my watch!*'
- Instructors do not '*push*' or pamper a student to attempt a grading - a student needs to put up his/her hand and show hunger!

### **Rules: extracts from 'The IOGKFSA Handbook' – (our organization's management plan or standard operating procedures).**

#### **SOME GENERAL TECHNICAL GUIDELINES**

##### **Elements scrutinized:**

1. **Execution of Kata** - no hissing, snappy ('no-power'/weak) techniques where *muchimi* is required, no '*prettying*' of techniques requiring *muchimi*.

**Muchimi** = the constant state of muscle tension in whole body ('*heavy sticky hand*') in synergy with correct breathing technique.

**Kime** = Focus of entire technique and breathing at one point with complete dynamic body tension:

**Zanshin.** = The '*mind of complete action*'

2. **Sanchin/Tensho'** performance: correct Posture, Balance, Distribution of Weight, sufficient Power and Strength fitting the grade attempted, presence of the three elements of the *Haishughata -Muchimi, Kime, Zanshin combined with strong and correct breathing*.
3. **Hojo Undo:** It must be evident that the candidate is completely familiar with the apparatus and that he/she uses it on a regular basis to enhance his/her Karate.
4. Candidates awareness of **Budo principles and Dojo etiquette**, such as:
  - No cool drinks, etc., whilst grading.
  - No stopping due to fatigue whilst grading.
  - No walking off the floor whilst grading to go to wherever.
  - No coaching or cheering from instructor and or other candidates.
  - Sitting in the correct position when not performing.
  - Folding gi in the correct way when doing Sanchin.

## PHILOSOPHY

It is assumed and accepted fact that persons who train daily (such as full-time/part time instructors), and **regularly in classes conducted by a senior instructor in the area**, never misses Gashukus, etc., will progress at a faster rate than 'ordinary' members training twice a week. Gashukus, time periods of non-training due to injuries etc, are also considerations. It is therefore possible to either progress faster or slower than the laid down requirements.

5. **Junior Black Belts.** Our organisation accommodates two categories of **junior Black Belt** - at 14 years of age (highly exceptional, but possible) and 16 years of age. In both cases the member has to retest for senior Black belt when reaching 18 years of age.

6. **Time and Age Requirements.** The minimum time requirement guidelines, based on the assumption that a member is **training a minimum of three (3x) times per week under senior supervision**, are the following:

### SENIORS

Before Sho dan	-	Minimum three (3) years)	-	18 years old
Ni dan	-	Minimum two (2) years since Sho dan	-	20 years old
San dan	-	Minimum three (3) years since Ni dan	-	23 years old
Yon dan	-	Minimum four (4) years since San dan	-	27 years old
Go dan	-	Minimum five (5) years since Yon dan	-	32 years old
Roku dan	-	Minimum six (6) years since Go dan	-	38 years old
Nana dan	-	Minimum seven (7) years since Roku dan	-	45 years old

### JUNIORS

A minimum of **six (6) years training** since starting Goju Ryu, before attempting Jr. sho dan.

7. **Gashuku requirements.** The minimum number of Gashukus required:

- **Sho dan/Jr Sho dan** - A minimum of three (3), Provincial, Regional, National or International Gashukus during a person's Brown belt period of which the last one was in the same year of the grading in the period **since** his/her test for 1<sup>st</sup> Kyu (in other words, **excluding** the Gashuku where he/she graded for 1<sup>st</sup> Kyu).
- **Ni dan/Jr Ni dan** - A minimum of three (3) Provincial, Regional, National or International Gashukus since the candidate's last grading of which the last one was in the same year of the grading in the period **since** his/her test for Sho dan, in other words, **excluding** the Gashuku where he/she graded for Sho dan.
- **San dan** - A minimum of four (4) Regional, National or International Gashukus since the candidate's last grading of which the last one was in the same year of the grading in the period **since** his/her test for Ni dan, in other words, **excluding** the Gashuku where he/she graded for Ni dan.
- **Yon dan** - A minimum of five (5) Regional, National or International Gashukus since the candidate's last grading of which the last one was in the same year of the grading in the period

**since** his/her test for San dan, in other words, **excluding** the Gashuku where he/she graded for San dan

**GENERAL NOTES:**

- Experience in other styles can, but does not necessarily qualify as experience in Goju Ryu.
- A minimum time of one (1) calendar year is required since testing for 1st Kyu before Sho dan test can be attempted.

Next issue: **Part 2.2 – Criteria for different Dan rankings**