



ZenQuest Martial Arts Center

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 An Okinawa Karatedo Association, the Demian Maia Jiu-jitsu Network and Sitydong Boston Affiliate

NEWSLETTER December 2015



Breathe Again

Many martial arts utilize breathing exercises to help the student develop their mind-body connection. These strengthen the muscles and mechanisms used in breathing, which is extremely important for combat sports in particular. But, they can also help the student learn to stay calm and focused under pressure, and help them move more efficiently.

Breathing exercises are common in yoga, chi-kung/qigong, and other forms of meditation. In the martial arts, these can range from prescribed techniques incorporated into forms to separate exercises performed on their own. There are breathing methods used in Karate during drills, Kata and meditation. Some Jiu-jitsu practitioners, including the legendary Rickson Gracie, do specific exercises as part of their training. In Muay Thai and boxing, they may simply be a series of grunts or hisses used when striking.

When Senseis Connie and Mark arrived as the Chief Instructors at the Okinawan Karate School in August of 2002 it quickly became obvious that few, if any, of the students there were employing the commonly accepted breathing methods used in Uechi-Ryu/ Shohei-Ryu. Despite being able to recite that breathing was one of the important aspects of training, virtually no-one understood what that meant. Only an occasional *Kiai* or spirit yell was included in training . . . but, even that was typically not performed correctly. In some cases, students actually felt exhausted or dizzy from misinterpreting the prescribed breathing, or even holding their breath during rigorous exercises.

After months of trying to help students breath properly in their training, Senseis Connie and Mark wrote an article on the subject for the dojo's newsletter in June of 2003. This seemed to clarify the issue for many students and help them get on the right track. The Flynns didn't think much of the article once it was placed in the newsletter . . . until their first visit to Okinawa in November of that year. After training one night Master Shigeru Takamiyagi turned to the Flynns and asked "who wrote the article on breathing in your newsletter?" They looked at each other and said "well . . . we did . . . why?" He proceeded to tell them that he thought it was very good . . . so good, in fact, that he had translated it into Japanese (by hand at that time) and shared it with his students. Of course, Senseis Mark and Connie were surprised to hear this, being validated by such an authority on what had become a somewhat difficult issue back home.

Thanks largely to Sensei Takamiyagi versions of this write-up have appeared in Uechi-Ryu and Shohei-Ryu books, videos, and websites. Here is the original article unchanged. Enjoy!

Proper Breathing Technique?

The five factors of Sanchin development are concepts Shohei-Ryu students are exposed to in the early stages of their training (even if only to be able to recite them for promotions.) "To

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Coming, Up, Next

In early 2016 Team ZenQuest will be returning to the mat, ring and cage for some exciting events! First, we are looking at a national karate tournament and Muay Thai fights on February 21 at the "Battle of the Sun." This is an event that has been held for years at the Mohegan Sun Casino complex in Uncasville, Connecticut. After a brief hiatus, promoter Peter Rogers is restarting the event, and promises that it will be bigger and better than ever.

Senseis Connie and Mark are encouraging ZenQuest children AND adult karate students to participate in the tournament portion of this event happening that day. More information will be available soon, but based on past events, there will be different kata and kumite events available. This will be great for kids who've already been to the ZenQuest "in-house" tournament, and are looking a "next level" challenge.

If all goes well Neil Von Flatern and Keith Sansoucy will have Muay Thai matches the that evening. Although Neil is already undefeated with four wins in amateur MMA, he is looking to improve his "striking" skills by challenging himself in this way. This will be Keith's first time stepping into the limelight in preparation for a debut in the cage later this year.

On Saturday, March 12th Neil Von Flatern and Matt Bienia are planning to step into the cage again for another Kaged Kombat event in Saratoga, NY. Matt will be looking to push up his record of 2-0 with another big finish. If all goes well Neil will be fighting for the 170 pound belt that night!

So, mark your calendars and plan on kicking off the new year with Team Z at these exciting events!!



Schedule Changes

Beginning in January, some changes will be made to our class schedule that are important to note. First, we will convert our current boxing classes on Monday and Wednesday to Sityodtong Muay Thai. This is being done to bring the gym more to focus on what we consider is a superior and more diverse striking art. Basically, we feel that there is nothing in boxing that you can't get from training SMT, and that Muay Thai is MORE valuable for street defense, competition training, mixed martial arts, or just as a fitness program. Lastly, this is out of loyalty to our parent group Sityodtong Boston, Kru/Master Mark DellaGrotte, and the long legacy of Sityodtong Muay Thai.

Also starting in January the Friday evening Adult Uechi-Ryu class will be opened up to our Cobras/teens group. This will make the class similar to the Monday evening Karate class, with adults and teens training together.

Please take advantage of these adjustments in the new year!



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master the proper breathing technique" sits in the very center of the five (listed as the third) creating a perfect balance between the other factors before and after it. It is very important to know how to breathe. Not just the everyday, involuntary breathing we do to maintain our life, but as an essential and fundamental factor in the development of concentration, spirit and power!

In Sanchin kata, a prescribed pattern of breathing is employed by the student as a means to train the body to coordinate their breathing with their movement. The correct technique is to drop the breath into the lower abdomen or *hara* and use the diaphragm to drive a circular pattern between one-third and two-thirds of the lung capacity. Inhalations are drawn silently through the nose with any pulling or drawing motion (moves into the body.) When applying strength (usually during an extending movement) additional tension is used to bear down on the *hara* for an explosive focus of power known as *Kime*. While recovering to the guard or ready position a short burst of air is exhaled through the mouth. During the exhalation, the student should place the tongue against the roof of their mouth and make a short and forceful "hissing" sound.

Sanchin exhalations are "noisy" not JUST for the sake of noise, but for several training purposes. The "noise" should be an audible representation of air being released deep from within our *hara*, passing through our tongue and the roof of our mouth, out of the mouth. If done properly, pushing your tongue against the roof of your mouth can help to engage the diaphragm and abdominal muscles (all part of the physical region which represents the *hara*) in the act of breathing. Making this audible is important because it allows you and your

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Jack Ginsberg 12/1
 Owen Joseph 12/3
 Christopher Kupernik 12/6
 Steve Curtin 12/7
 Michael Anthony 12/7
 Christopher Lenfest 12/9
 Steven Leonard 12/9
 Elaine Cook 12/10
 Tony Riello 12/12
 Frank Scago 12/12
 Devon Smits 12/14
 Elizabeth Vaughan 12/15
 Reid Maciogge 12/17
 Lauren Regnier 12/17
 Kim Bolio 12/18
 Lillian Colvin 12/21
 Parker Smith 12/21
 David Wildgoose 12/21
 Sharon Gittzus 12/23
 Henry Rimmner 12/23
 Stephen Taglieri 12/27
 Michael Pierce 12/31
 Stephen N. Taglieri 12/31

IMPORTANT DATES

December/January

Saturday, December 12 - Demian UFC Fight

Sunday, December 13 - No MMA Class

Happy Holidays! NO CLASSES -
 Thurs., 12/24, Fri., 12/25, Sat., 12/26, Sun., 12/27

Happy New Year! NO CLASSES -
 Thurs., 12/31, Fri., 1/1/16



Sunday, January 10, 1:30 - Kyu Test

Sat., January 23 - Possible
 Muay Thai Seminar



WELCOME NEW STUDENTS!

YOUTH:

Kyren Hanson, Dante Bartini, Ayden Tyer, Jahim Solomon, and Alex Cestone

ADULTS:

Lauren Miller, Katie Soules, Alyssa Forzano, Mike Heck, Sam Lyons, Kirsten Protrowski

WELCOME BACK:

Nicole Viale

RECENT PROMOTIONS

TIGERS:

8kyu - Sebastian Manrique, Olivia Monti,
 Parker Hoff, Blake Hoff, Bryce Hoff
 9kyu - Nicoletta Monastroyov, Oliver Lamb, Cadence Staebler

DRAGONS:

9 kyu - Nina Lamb

YOUTH JIU-JITSU:

Grey/white - Charlie Guyer

*To all of our students,
 friends and families ...*



Happy Holidays

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instructor to provide feedback on ways to improve the breathing process.

This breathing technique has multiple purposes that should develop over time:

- to maintain an appropriate oxygen supply to the body
- to maximize the body's defensive position by keeping the lungs in their strongest position
- to aid in focus and concentration
- to develop calmness and relaxation even in the most stressful situations
- to develop an understanding of the importance of silence (i.e. no talking)
- and, ultimately, to develop important aspects of the zen mind (zanshin/ mushin.)

Some experts believe that by performing regular breathing exercises similar to Sanchin breathing over long periods of time, the student is able to achieve deeper and greater concentration and control of their bodies. This is due to the fact that breathing can be controlled by both the involuntary and voluntary or conscious part of the mind. By increasing the ability to control the breath, the student can tap into the "involuntary" mind, and learn to control other aspects of the body. This is how students of certain schools of meditation are able to voluntarily lower their heart rate, or body temperature! The average student may never achieve THAT level of consciousness, but Sanchin breathing will, at least, provide them with the ability to concentrate better, have more intense spirit, and be stronger.

It is not uncommon for students to resist performing the Sanchin breathing initially . . . particularly the audible part. They may feel embarrassed or foolish about making a noise that the average person does not understand, but this concern of being judged by others has no place in the dojo. It is driven by the ego, which must be minimized along the long road to true development of the Zen mind. The student must let go of these uncomfortable feelings and connect their breathing to their concentration and spirit. Sanchin breathing should ultimately become similar to the *Kiai*, as an EXPRESSION of the student's intensity, determination and awareness.



Holiday Gift Ideas



Now is a GREAT time to treat yourself or a loved one to some new gear for the holidays! Grab a new Gi, some training shorts, a custom rashguard, some new sparring gear, or just a gift certificate.

NEW custom Karate Gis/ uniforms are now available at ZenQuest! These are high-quality middle-weight 100% cotton uniforms that feature a large color print of the ZenQuest dragon logo on the back. On the front, the left chest has a full color logo for the Okinawan Karatedo Association, and the school name in gold (see right.) These will be phased in as the standard for training in all Uechi-Ryu classes at ZenQuest. A limited number of these Gis are available for \$50 each for both adults and children!

The "Black Ice" version of the Team ZenQuest rashguard/ training shirt (see left) is now on it's way! These will be of the same

color scheme as the popular board shorts, which are also on their way! The rashguards and shorts are available at \$64 each.

New Demian Maia/ ZenQuest Jiu-jitsu uniforms are already available. These are high quality "Gold Weave" Bad Boy brand uniforms. They feature embroidery of the DMJJ logo on the jacket front and back, and on the right lower leg. Professor Demian prefers to make the Gi available in traditional white only for now. The ZenQuest version of this Gi also comes with two team patches. This Gi is being phased in as the standard for Gi Jiu-jitsu training at ZenQuest, with a date of January of 2017 as a cut off for other Gis. The price for this Gi is \$175.

These and other gift items can all be purchased or ordered at the front desk at ZenQuest. Stop in now!

