

Interview with Brian Mackie, Kyoshi-Shihan Director & Chief Instructor Oceania-Bloc & Australia

Can you give us a little bit of your background here (as you feel comfortable):

Current License: Kyoshi

When Received: 2006

Current Rank: 7th Dan

When Received: 2001

Year Started: Judo in 1959, Penjak Silat in 1965, Goju Ryu since 1966

Where: Perth Western Australia

Birthday: 19-01-47

Family Info (Any): Married to Gail and we have two children Chantel and Ben, plus five grandchildren (all boys)



Could you tell us, a little bit about HOW and WHY you decided to learn Goju-Ryu, and in particular the Yamaguchi Way?

I started judo when I was 12 in Aberdeen, Scotland. Although I only studied Judo as a junior I find throws like harai-goshi (my favorite), and all the sweeping techniques useful in jiyu kumite.

The first book I bought "Karate in Pictures" by H.D. Plee motivated me to learn karate. After immigrating to Australia and settling in Perth I enrolled at the 'Karate School of Perth.' Unfortunately the Penjak Silat being taught there was very different to Japanese karate I had read about. As a result of this I left the club and planned to go to Japan as soon as I had sufficient finances.

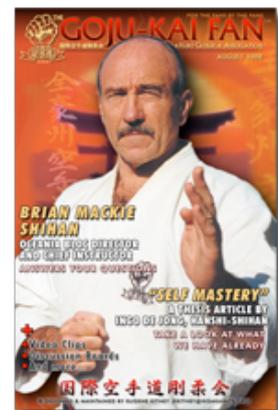
In 1966, Yasunobu Nagai, a 5th Dan was sent by Hanshi Gogen Yamaguchi to open a Goju-kai dojo in Perth. When the original owner's financial problems threatened its closure, Nagai sensei convinced me to purchase the dojo using the money I had saved for Japan.



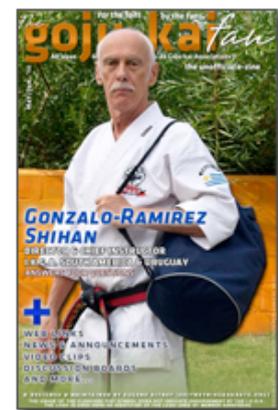
Nagai Sensei was a strong traditionalist, and I remember those early years not only for their physical demands but also for the high technical standard demanded by Nagai Sensei. After Nagai Sensei returned to Japan, I [Brian] became the principal instructor of the 'The Karate Academy of Japan'. Forty two years later the Academy is still at the same address in downtown Perth where students from the twelve affiliated suburban centres gather for squad training, seminars and gradings.

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Winner of two Australian Open Championships I was the first Australian to win a major international tournament when I won the heavy weight gold medal at the Asian-Pacific Championships. On my retirement from competition I was elected National Team Coach a position I held for over eight years. Now I am fully occupied with my position as director and chief instructor of the IKGA Australia and Oceania.

What were your impressions arriving in Japan, and was what the training like?

Nagai sensei always spoke of Gonnohyoe Yamamoto sensei so in 1971 on my first visit to Japan I contacted Yamamoto sensei. Unfortunately he had left the Goju-Kai and started the IKO, International Karate Organisations. Training was held in the evenings in unoccupied offices. Yamamoto sensei took me one evening to meet Hanshi Gogen Yamaguchi at the karate college in Suginami. Needless to say I was very impressed with Hanshi and the college. In 1974 Saiko Shihan visited Perth with Tazaki Shihan and invited me to join the Goju-Kai. I always believed that as Nagai sensei was sent to Perth by Hanshi to open a hombu dojo that we were always a branch of Goju-Kai. My mistake was in not contacting the Karate College on that first visit to Tokyo.



Apart from that Yamamoto sensei was very good to me and I enjoyed training with him and former Goju-Kai members such as Yabe sensei, Toda sensei, etc. In 1981 I had a memorable stay at the karate college training with Saiko Shihan, Masatoshi Yamaguchi Shihan and Iwan Pranatio Shihan for the forthcoming Asian-Pacific Championships.

At that time, who were the main instructors at Hombu Dojo?

Could you please share with us, some of fond memories you have of Gogen Yamaguchi-Kaiso? I did not train with Hanshi in karate. He was there at the dojo but training was with Saiko Shihan and

Masatoshi Shihan. One evening I did join Hanshi in a yoga session where we concentrated on breathing techniques etc. sitting in the lotus position or in my case as close to it as my long legs would allow. I always regret my limited knowledge of the Japanese language that prevented me conversing in a more in-depth way with such a master.

It is my understanding that you attend most of the International Events...could you share with us something about your current international involvement?

Perth is regarded as the most remote city in the world. Being isolated in this way you could only motivate and inspire yourself if you wanted to reach your potential. Since my first trip to Japan in 1971 I have been fortunate to train with many instructors that have influenced my training, none more so than Saiko Shihan Goshi Yamaguchi. I have consistently travelled interstate and overseas just to be able to train with Saiko Shihan whom I regard as one of the greatest masters of our age.



You regularly train with, and organize seminars with international all style champions and coaches...care to share and elaborate.

The guest instructors I have invited to run seminars at the Academy such as World Champions Wayne Otto, Junior Leferve, Gerry Flemming, Jim Collins are all inspirational people who have left a lasting impression.



I found the sporting side of karate helped motivate me to train harder. Despite the limitations of competition sparring as opposed to jiyu kumite, the shiai drills designed to improve fitness, speed, distance and timing, etc. are all worthwhile including in your regular training schedule. My student Craig Soley is proof of this having won four IKGA World Championship gold medals in ippon and jiyu kumite.

In our West Australian branches we run development tournaments for students of all ages from 10th kyu and up. They are divided into divisions that best suit their age and grade. Although I resisted the idea, the kata champions, provided they also compete in the kumite, are awarded the next grade up. History has shown that those who win the kata have always excelled in their grading tests. Offering students a progressive way to gain experience and confidence through these development competitions has resulted in my students winning numerous gold medals in the AKF National Championships and in the IKGA Asian-Pacific and World

Championships.

Do you have any last words of advice for our aspiring students and Karate-ka?

Well I was very self motivated. I didn't have to write down my goals or anything like that. However some people are not that motivated they should write down their short term and long term goals and constantly re assess their progress. Nothing succeeds like success. In karate it is well worth remembering that training is like running a marathon, you will not finish if you rush off at the beginning. You have to know where you want to go and what you want to be. Now that may be getting your Black Belt, or becoming a champion. The thing is to know what you want and then start working, and progressing, towards that goal. The target you set yourself must be obtainable and realistic. You cannot set yourself a

target like being world champion in six months or anything like that. It all has to be obtainable in the time limit you set yourself. Each stage of progression should not be too far along from the next so that you have a feeling of progress all the time. This helps you keep going to the next stage, and then the next, and so on.

In the words of the late grandmaster Gogen Yamaguchi "I will be happy if you understand that the essence of the martial arts is not the strength, not the art, but that which is hidden deep within yourself".

Thank you so much for your time and your effort to promote the vision Gogen-Kaiso had and Goshi Saiko-Shihan has, for the organization we all love.



**Eugene Kitney-sensei
Administrator – IKGA Fan Page aka "The Goju-Kai Fan"**



You can visit Brian Mackie-Shihan's Website for more information
Check www.karatewa.com for more.

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