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A Karate Kick To The Ego — World Oyama Karate

School



The last time I took a karate class, I was 14 years old. I wasn't taking it to learn how to fight as much as my mom wanted to help me get rid of all that extra energy that was driving her nuts. What I remember from that year in Karate was doing a lot of kata's (a series of choreographed punches and kicks to help perfect your fighting technique) rather than putting any of it to use. In other words, no sparring. Stepping into the Matsumoto Dojo at World Oyama Karate, I received a hearty handshake from Sensei Daisuke Matsumoto, a 4th degree black belt, who trained directly under Soshu Shigeru Oyama, creator of World Oyama karate, a classic full-contact style of karate. While showing me around, everyone who passed or talked to him said "OSU," an important word he explained that meant respect, patience, and appreciation. After putting on a karate uniform, I went into the karate studio with the other students ranging from white belt (beginner) to black belt (master). Everyone lined up facing a mirror, and the dojo master had us do various stretches to warm up, then kata's which I followed as best I could. The one thing I began to realize after awhile was that the movements and stretches we were doing were very much like yoga, with techniques that focus on the control of body, mind, and breath to get the most out of the poses and stretches.

What was different about this style of karate as opposed to the one I took when I was a boy was that in this class, we paired up with another student and began practicing our kicks. At this point I was given sparring gloves and shin guards. We started by practicing sidekicks and blocking. First, you kick, then block, then push the leg to the side, all in a fluid movement. After the stretching, kata's and practicing on one another, the natural progression led up to sparring. Oh yes, after working up all that testosterone, we paired up again. I began to try to put some of the punches and kicks I learned to good use as my first opponent helped me focus on where to hit him. After a minute or two, everyone had to pair up with another student. This opponent was not as kind, hitting and kicking me very hard. But that's what real fighting is about, which is why I enjoyed this karate class. I got everything I wanted out of it; stretching, learning several fighting techniques, and then putting them to use. Something that I never got to do when I was a brief Karate student. Not that one style is better than the other, but having dojo masters who incorporate all of this into one class makes for an excellent way to not just learn how to defend yourself, but it's a fantastic all-around workout for the body and mind.

Reported By Dave Lipp

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