

**When did you get your Black-belt?**

In 1993. It took me a little longer than most — seven years — due to the fact that my instructor used to hold gradings on Saturdays, and I worked on Saturdays. I graded to *Yondan* (4th Dan) in March 2002.

**Who has been your mentor?**

When I was 16 years old, Hanshi John Taylor came all the way to Griffith from Sydney to take the grading (I was going for 9th Kyu). After the grading he performed *Kanku kata*. Just watching how effortlessly he moved was amazing, he held everyone in awe. I'm not saying he made the *kata* look easy, he did more than that; he made it look natural. At that point I knew I had found my mentor.

**Do you think tradition is important?**

Yes. If you don't know where you've come from, how can you know where you're going? For me, tradition means recognising where our roots are and paying respect to those who came before us. As a traditional Japanese style, we use Japanese terminology. This actually removes language barriers, which is especially important in an international style. By using Japanese, officials and coaches can always communicate at a huge event like the World Tournament. Also, the world is a much smaller place these days, so if you had the

opportunity and wanted to train in Russia, Jordan, Spain or wherever, you would not need to worry about your lack of local language getting in the way of your training.

**What are the distinctive characteristics of Kyokushin karate?**

If you were to ask that question to a martial artist who has never trained in Kyokushin, they would probably just describe our style of knockdown competition, not our actual style. Kyokushin is much more than knockdown fighting! I believe its most distinctive characteristic can be summed up by its very name, *Kyokushin*, which means 'The Way of Ultimate Truth'. In other words, it is a system based in practicality, not aesthetics. This is what makes it such an effective method of self-defence.

**You also teach situational awareness — what does this mean?**

Basically, don't walk around with your head in the clouds! The Japanese have a word for it: *zanshin* (total awareness). I say to my students that this state of mind can and should be employed in everyday life, and whether we are in our local shopping centre or driving our car, with *zanshin* we will notice something out of place and act accordingly, not letting our emotions dictate our actions.

**How long would it take before a beginner Kyokushin student could competently defend themselves?**

Of course, it's different for each person. I try to train each person to their strengths, but I would say that after about one year to 18 months of solid training, a person would be technically ready to defend themselves. Although I teach them to use their brain over brawn.

**How important are tournaments?**

I believe tournaments are very important. It doesn't matter whether it is non-contact, full-contact or *kata*, because they all teach you one thing that you can't get in the comfort of your dojo — how to deal with nerves and self-doubt. Personally, I always got more nervous competing in *kata* than I did when I competed in full-contact *kumite*. The way I see it, if you have a bad day while fighting, but your opponent has a worse day, they can make you look good. However, in *kata* competition, if you have an off day, there's no one there to save you — you just look bad.

**So what is your record as a coach?**

I'm not sure of the statistics, but since I moved to Canberra in 1995 our dojo has had champions in just about every kind of competition and at all levels. Two of my

