A photograph of a karate dojo. In the foreground, two young girls in white gi with black belts are practicing with a yellow resistance band. In the background, other students are visible, some in sparring or practicing kata. The floor is blue and white mats.

What are the training methods of the Powerful Dojo ?

Best Series

Multiple ZENSHO winners and prize winners !

Prestigious Dojo Practice Menus Exploring

Helps you build your daily practice menu !

This article on "Exploring the Practice Menu of a Prestigious Dojo" is currently being published in a popular series. This month, I would like to introduce you to **YOSEIKAN** (Numazu City, Shizuoka Prefecture), which is run by Takato Watanabe, who took over the dojo from his father at the age of 33. His first priority is to train the mind and body of the students, and he has developed the dojo into a large dojo through his creativity and ingenuity in the management of the dojo with his research spirit. In recent years, YOSEIKAN has produced many winners and prizewinners at intra-prefectural and regional tournaments, as well as at national tournaments such as the **ZENSHO** Tournament. This time, we asked him to introduce the YOSEIKAN style "kizami-zuki", "basic practice of kumite", "training leading to kata", "basic practice of kumite", etc. from the practice he usually does at YOSEIKAN.

YOSEIKAN in Shizuoka Pref.

ZENSHO is the abbreviation for a national karate tournament for elementary school students held in Japan. Representatives from each prefecture compete to be the best in Japan in each grade for kata and kumite.



In ZENSHO, YOSEIKAN has won the most prizes by dojo in Japan for 7 consecutive years !

■ By building the mind, the athletic performance improves !

YOSEIKAN was founded in 1968 and is the oldest dojo in Numazu City. Yoseikan is training daily under the supervision of Kancho Takato Watanabe and two instructors (Sensei Kiyomi Watanabe and Sensei Tetsuichi Shimabukuro) with the goal of winning the national championship. Takato Watanabe is also the author of the series of articles in this magazine, "Let's challenge ZENSHO!"

Takato Watanabe took over the dojo from his father at the age of 33. He has developed the dojo into a large dojo as a result of his ingenuity in managing the dojo with his research spirit.

"We use "lifestyle cards" to teach children how to respond, greet others, arrange their shoes, do their homework, and help others, so that they will have the right mindset. **By building a correct mind, children's athletic ability will also improve. And through competitions and tournaments, the children's minds are further strengthened.** In terms of technique, when I took over the dojo, I studied JKFan's technical features and DVDs, and combined them with my own theories to come up with

training and teaching methods." said Watanabe.

We produced our first national champion in the Zensho tournament in 2010, and have produced many more Japan's best players since then.

In 2018, 16 athletes from YOSEIKAN represented their prefecture at ZENSHO, and 5 of them won medals.

YOSEIKAN has become a dojo with the most medal count in Japan for 7 consecutive years. In 2017, nine students won medals, setting a record for the most medal count, a record that has yet to be broken.

This time, Director Watanabe introduced some of the practices that he usually does at Yoseikan, such as "relaxed kizami-zuki", "attacking after off-balancing" and "sen no sen (initiative on initiative)" in kumite, and "obi (belt) pulling practice to make a solid kime" and "how to move and relax the shoulder blades" in kata. These may give you hints on how to set up your daily practice menu at your dojo.



Nagisa Eto (3rd year junior high school (9th grade) student): 2015-2016 15th All Japan Boys & Girls Karate Championships (ZENSHO) 4th grade & 5th grade female kata Champion.



Honoka Kuraoka (3rd year junior high school (9th grade) student): 15th All Japan Boys & Girls Karate Championships (ZENSHO) 4 year female kata 2nd place.



Aoi Katsumata (6th grade elementary school student): 15th All Japan Boys & Girls Karate Championships (ZENSHO) 1 year female kata 2nd place.



Sanji Takeuchi (4th grade elementary school student): 2017 17th All Japan Boys & Girls Karate Championships (ZENSHO) 1 year male kumite 2nd place.



Eiichiro Mitsui (4th year elementary school student): 2018 18th All Japan Boys & Girls Karate Championships (ZENSHO) 2 year male kata 2nd place.

※ There have been dozens of winners of ZENSHO tournaments in the past, so I will limit the list to those who have placed third or higher in the last five years.

Special Thanks



Members of YOSEIKAN. The interview was conducted with the cooperation of dojo students of the advanced and strengthening classes.

EXERCISE

Main training exercises from Yoseikan's practice menu

●Kizami-zuki practice

- Knee relaxation (hip joint relaxation)
- Timing of tsuki (knee relaxation and Tsuki at the same time)
- Timing of hikite (landing and pulling at the same time)
- No telegraphing before tsuki (complete relaxation)
- Do sound when stepping in.

●Practice of Kumite

- Off-balancing to attack
- Sen-no-sen (initiative on initiative, timing training).

●Kata practice

- Pulling the obi (kosa-dachi, nekoashi-dachi, shiko-dachi)
- Single legged squats
- Stretching for shiko-dachi
- Using the pushing power of the back leg
- Den-den drum (Japanese pellet drum punch)
- Scapula (shoulder blade) stretching
- Raise your little finger and tighten your elbow for shime (tightening of body)



Souta Katsumata (2th year of high school student): 15th All Japan Boys& Girls Karate Championships (ZENSHO) 6 year male kata 3rd place.



Riku Kimikado (6th year of elementary school student): 16th All Japan Boys& Girls Karate Championships (ZENSHO) 2 year male kata 3rd place.



Yui Mochizuki (1rd year junior high school (7th grade) student): 2019 19th All Japan Boys& Girls Karate Championships (ZENSHO) 6 year female kata 3rd place.



Koto Akaike (2th year of elementary school student): 19th All Japan Boys& Girls Karate Championships (ZENSHO) 1 year female kata 3rd place.



Riichi Serizawa (2rd year junior high school (8th grade) student): 17th All Japan Boys& Girls Karate Championships (ZENSHO) 5 year male kumite 3rd place.



Daiki Ito (5th year of elementary school student): 17th All Japan Boys& Girls Karate Championships (ZENSHO) 2 year male kata 3rd place.

1 Yoshokan style "kizami-zuki" practice

1.

Nuki of Knee

Exercise

Hip joint nuki

→In reality, it is a "hip joint nuki (relaxation)," but to make it easier for the children to understand, I teach and practice it as a "knee nuki."



Start in heiko-dachi. ① Raise your shoulders. ② Relax your shoulders at once. ③ Raise shoulders. ④ Relax your whole body (including your legs) at once and kneel on both knees. ⑤ Relax your shoulders. ⑥ Relax both legs at once. ⑦ Stop at half squatting position. Pull out your knees using the principle of the Dharma drop (Japanese toy).

2. Timing of tsuki

Exercise Knee nuki (relaxation) and tsuki at the same time



① Tighten your shoulders in heiko-dachi. ② Relax. ③ Bend your knees only. ④ Next, do punch at the same time as falling (knee nuki).



① Stand in a narrower position than moto-dachi and bend your front knee. ② Put it on the floor. ③ ④ Bend your front knee, stop just before it touches the floor, hold it, and move your front leg out like a pendulum.

[Explanation] →Knee relaxation and tsuki is at the same time. Don't move legs too early. (Vector is diagonally downward.)



The vector (direction of force) is diagonally downward.

Feel the hand moving first.

Shoot the hand out first, and then the body shifts its center of gravity in a forward direction to do tsuki.

3. Hikite timing

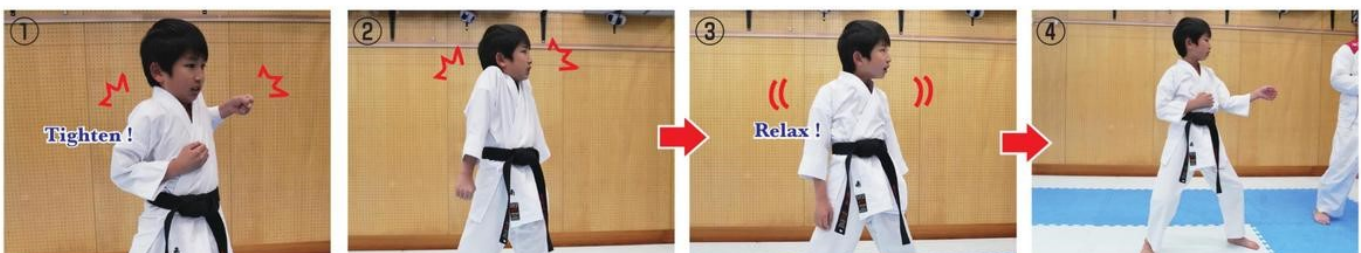
Exercise The landing of the legs and the hikite are simultaneous



① Guard position. ② Stop with your knees relaxed and your arms extended. ③ When stepping in with the front leg, do hikite. ④ Then pull in your back leg up.

4. No telegraphing before tsuki

Exercise Complete relaxation



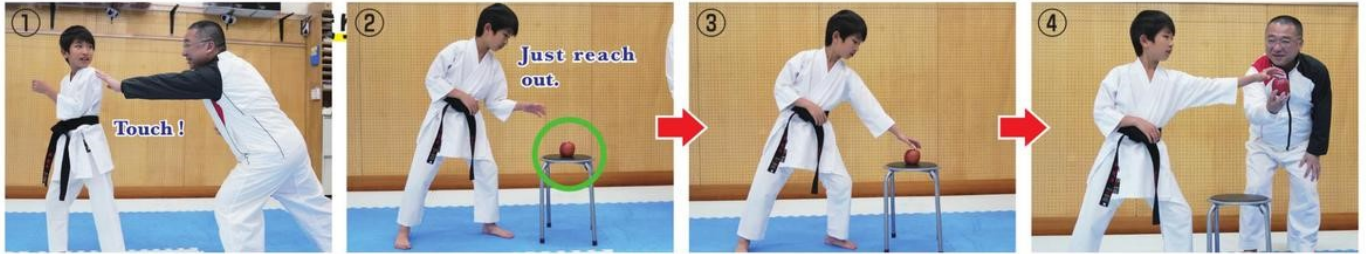
① The more you try to do tsuki well, the more you tighten and telegraph your punch. ② Tighten your shoulders first. ③ Then, do a nuki (relax). ④ Then guard to learn the most relaxed position.

Exercise Relaxation, no okori (telegraphing movement)

→The opponent's reaction will be delayed by one tempo due to relaxation (no telegraphing movement).

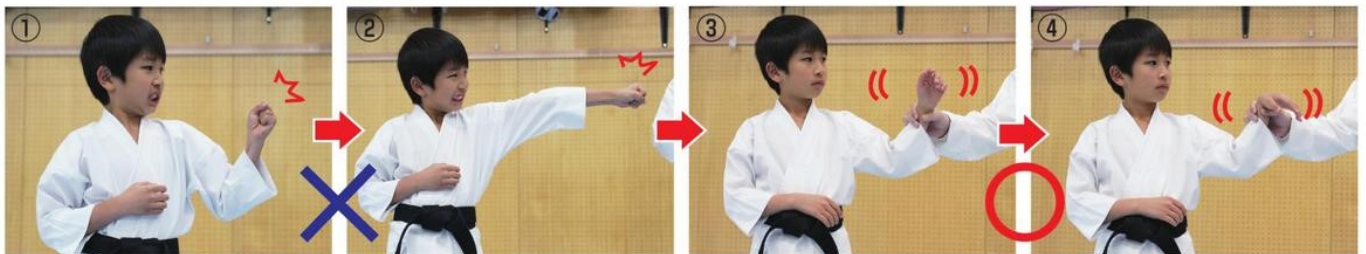


①② Don't try to "hit" opponent. ③④ Just stretch your elbow.



① Think of playing tag (We never pull back when tagging = no okori (telegraphing movement)). ②③④ Think of grasping an apple (don't pull back and grasp. Just reach = don't make okori).

Exercise Do not clench fist



①②③④ Do not make a fist before or during tsuki. Do not tighten your hands and wrists. (Shaking the hands shows that it is completely relaxed).



①② Stand in relaxed position and raise your hands into guard position. ③④ Do tsuki while performing knee nuki (relaxation).

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5. Don't stomp intentionally when stepping in



①② Perform jump, and absorb the impact from the floor to not make a sound upon landing. ③④ If you make a sound, the tsuki will stop there. It becomes a short tsuki.

Exercise Learning how to absorb shock from the floor



①② Advanced fighters use their knees to absorb the impact from the floor, even when they step with their weight on their front leg. Imagine sinking into the floor. ③④ When eliminating sound, you can increase the reach of the tsuki more and more.

2 Yoseikan Style "Kumite Practice"

Yoseikan focuses their training to make the students think thoroughly about the "appropriate timing" and "when to perform the technique". What is good timing? Some factors may be: technique, body usage, opponent's state of mind, point difference, and remaining match time. There are many ways to approach this, depending on the situation. If the techniques are too complicated, it will not be useful in a match. Therefore we focus on two things to make it simple for kids: first is to "break the timing down" utilizing faking techniques and pressure, and then attack. The other is the idea of "sen no sen," a valuable technique passed down by our grandmasters in the martial arts.



kumite instructor:
Tetsuichi Shimabukuro

1. Off-balancing to attack

(Effect)
Many players rush in when attacking, so it is important to make sure they practice awareness.

Exercise Ask your opponent to do a chudan-zuki. Make them commit then counter tsuki



①② Feint and pressure. ③ Tsuki comes. ④ Let him commit. ⑤⑥ Counter Attack after breaking timing. (kizami-zuki) ⑦⑧ After tsuki, quickly take zanshin (awareness posture).

Exercise Lure uramawashi-geri, and counter with chudan-geri



①② Similar to ① and ② above, use faking techniques and pressure into opponent. ③ Make them commit uramawashi-geri. ④ chudan-geri counter.

2. Sen no sen

<Point>

Sen no sen means: When the opponent's mind commits to attack and his body prepares to move forward, we have finished attacking first. (initiative on initiative)



①② Ask your opponent to fight on opposite side. ②③ The opponent will use his back leg to chudan-mawashi-geri, and you will instantly react to his okori (telegraphing movement) and counter it with kizami-zuki. ④ Take out zansin (awareness position).

→ Practice following up your techniques. → If your timing is off, immediately follow up with another technique. Practice scoring even after committing at the wrong timing.



①② Keep a little longer distance. ② Ask your opponent to perform kizami-zuki with two steps. ③④ After the first step and perform the kizami-zuki. (If you execute the technique too early, follow up with next attack immediately).

3 Yoseikan style "kata" practice

※The following is an explanation of Shito-ryu katas.



<Point>

The obi binds at the "iliac crest" slightly below the waist, which increases abdominal pressure and strengthens the walls of the abdominal cavity (inner muscles).

1. Obi pulling (kousa-dachi, nekoashi-dachi, shiko-dachi)

Exercise Bassai-dai 1st movement soto-uke • kousa-dachi



① Practice for people who tend to lean backward. ② In pairs, pass the obi in the back as seen on photo. ③④ Pull the obi from behind at the same time when finishing technique to practice kime (focus). Hold distance to prevent falling backwards.

Exercise Bassai-dai 22nd movement shuto-uke • nekoashi-dachi



①②③ Pull the obi back at the same time as the movement finishes. ④ On the second pull, stand with only one leg (base leg) and balance by stabilizing center of gravity.

Exercise Bassai-dai 27th movement gedan-barai • shiko-dachi



①② If athlete tends to lean backwards: Pull the obi backward at the same time technique is executed. ③④ If leaning forward: pull the belt from the front as you move.

Exercise Nipaipo 22nd movement shuto-gedan-barai • nekoashi-dachi



①②③ Pull the obi from the front at finishing moment. ④ Practice preventing yourself from leaning forward due to the momentum of rotation.

[Explanation]



① ② Poor posture in nekoashi-dachi is caused by strain. ③ Stand up, relax, and reset. ④ Sink slowly and straight down to the correct place.

2. Squat

Exercise Squat with both legs



① Put your hands in front in heiko-dachi position. ②③④ Repeat squats with both legs. (Maintain correct posture with arms and thighs horizontal. Look into the distance.)

Exercise Squatting with the wall



①②③④ Before doing the two-legged squats seen in previous exercise, do them with your head and back against the wall to learn how to keep head straight up.

[Explanation]



When squatting, "hachiji-dachi" with the toes facing outward and "shiko-dachi" with wide feet are ineffective because they are easy to do. Also, do not lift the heel of the base leg off the floor (it will be a good stretch on the ankle).

Exercise Single legged squat

<Caution>
Do not perform if you have knee pain or injury.

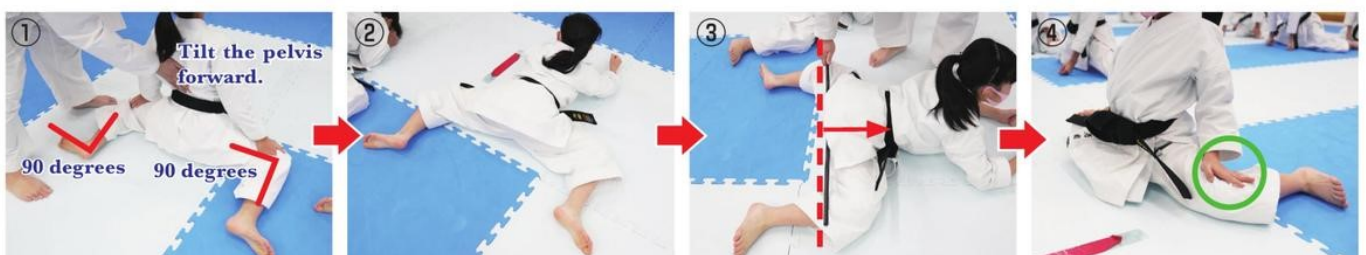


① From a heiko-dachi, raise one foot off the floor. ②③④ Repeat squat with one leg.



① Squat using a balance disc (made by Hata Sports Equipment Industry). ②③④ Repeat squatting with one leg in an unstable position.

3. Shiko-dachi stretching



① Bend your knees and ankles to 90 degrees and lean your pelvis forward in a frog leg position. ② Bend your upper body forward and place your chest on the floor. ③ Keep your hips in front of the parallel line of your knees. ④ Raise your upper body (hands on your thighs).

<Point>
Do not tilt the pelvis backward.



4. Use the pushing force of the back leg

Exercise Deep reverse lunge gyaku-zuki (chudan-gyaku-zuki with zenkutsu-dachi)



① Sink fully into back leg with weight on heel of base foot (Back foot). ②③④ Rotate on the heel, shift the center of gravity to the front leg, and then do tsuki. (Execute the tsuki with power pushing from back leg).

[Explanation]



When turning with the ball of the foot, your body falls straight down, and you cannot shift your center of gravity back and forth.

Exercise Execute chudan-gyaku-zuki in Zenkutsudachi starting from the back knee bent position



① Bend the back knee. ②③ Legs first, then tuki. (Transfer the pushing power of the back leg to the tsuki.) ④ If tsuki first → Straightening the back leg (tsuki will not be effective).

Exercise Press against chudan-zuki in zenkustu-dachi



① Execute chudan-zuki in zenkustu-dachi. ② Get into pairs and ask your opponent to push your fist. If you keep pushing, your punch is weak and will collapse. ③④ If you tap the thigh of the back leg three or four times before pushing, it will become stiff like a steel rod (Practice concentrating on the back leg).

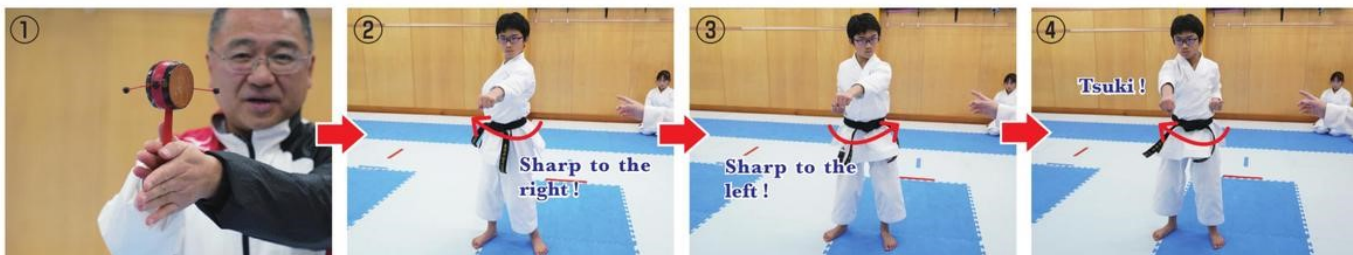
Exercise When nekoashi-dachi is performed, tap the back leg



① shuto-uke/nekoashi-dachi ② In pairs, ask the opponent to push the hand from the front. ③④ Strike the thigh of the base leg three or four times before pushing, to increase focus to make stronger (practice focusing on the back leg as above).

5. Denden-daiko punch

Exercise The faster you move the axis, the faster you can do tsuki

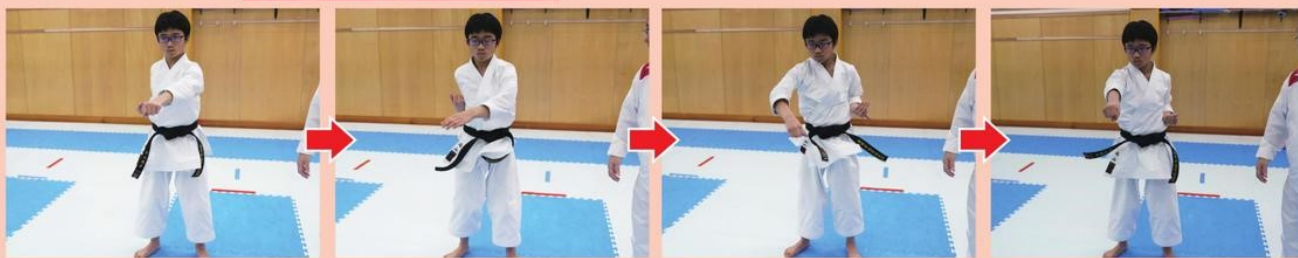


① Denden-daiko (Move the shaft faster to make the drum beat sharply). ② Move the hips sharply to the right. ③ Move the hips sharply to the left. ④ Perform tsuki when moving the hips sharply to the right.

※ Denden-daiko : A traditional toy drum. Also called Japanese pellet drum. When the shaft is rotated, a ball tied with a string spins and makes a sound on the drum.

[Explanation]

→Do three rhythms of tsuki.



First, use the rhythm "1, 2, 3" and do tsuki when you get to 3. Next, do it with the rhythm "1, 23" and do tsuki when it is 3. Finally, do it with the rhythm of "123" and do tsuki at 3. The photo shows tsuki with the rhythm of "123".

6. Scapula stretch(shoulder blade stretch)

Exercise Opening and closing of the scapula ①



① Place the back of your hand on your side. ② Place both elbows in front of you. (Open the scapulae.) ③ Put the haito (lateral wrist) on your side. ④ Attach both elbows from behind (close the shoulder blades).

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Exercise Opening and closing of the scapula ②



① Raise your arms to head height with the back of your hands. ②③④ Open your hands and turn them from overhead towards back. Move it up and down, pulling it far back as much as possible.

Exercise Learn to "hold" your scapula



① Keep your forearms in level with your shoulders. ②③ Pull back behind shoulders. ④ With a series of training, you will be able to "hold" your scapula.

Exercise Once the shoulder blades are stretched, perform a full range tsuki



① Rather than turning your shoulders to 45 degrees. ②③ Keep facing mami or irimi (Body facing straight forward) ④ Shift the shoulder blades front and back as much as possible.

[Explanation]

→ Instead of manipulating the body with muscles, always feel your frame (bones) moving.



Heian godan 2nd movement ①② Do not twist your body, stay in mami (body facing front). ③④ Instead of tilting the pelvis diagonally, split the pelvis in half on each side and shift it back and forth in mami position.

7. Raise your little finger and tighten your elbow



① Raise the little fingers of both hands and tighten the elbows. ② Raise the little finger side seen in ①. ③ Raise the little finger side and do a uchi-uke. (Bassai-dai, 4th movement) The hikite is also tightened by raising the little finger side. ④ If you don't raise the little finger side, the elbow will open.