

IKO President's Message to IKO members

I hope all the IKO members are in good health and spirits.

It is now just a few short months before our most anticipated event, “The World Open Karate Tournament” takes place. It has been four years since Shihan Hitoshi Kiyama championed the last World Open Tournament and the world is wondering who will be next. The Kyokushinkaikan currently has many strong contenders from all over the world and particularly from Brazil, Russia, Europe and Japan. I expect to see a very tough competition all around; and hope all the participants will do their best to perform well in Tokyo.



It is quintessential for our organization to make the World Tournament a success. We have already selected most regional teams and will welcome approximately 200 competitors from 60 countries. Additionally traveling to Japan for this momentous occasion will be thousands of IKO members of all ranks, from IKO Committee members to Branch Chiefs, coaches and students. It is our duty and responsibility for all our IKO members to make this the biggest and most successful Kyokushin event ever; I look forward to welcoming you to Japan to be a part of this historical Kyokushin event.

You should have a reason or purpose for whatever you do. Recall when you first started Kyokushin. You joined the Kyokushin family for a certain reason or purpose. You might have joined spontaneously, or because a family member or friend recommended Kyokushin. It does not matter how you began, it is important to continue towards your goal without giving up.

Everyone has something they would like to have or to accomplish. If you verbalize your dreams, you make your intentions very clear. By joining a Kyokushin Dojo you actively find the time to train and make an effort to learn and grow strong. When you participate in a training camp, you ought to be aware of why you chose to take part in the camp. Some people might attend a camp to fill a testing requirement, others to study intensively with a particular instructor. Whatever the reason is, it is important for you to make any event an active and positive experience. The same concept corresponds to daily Kyokushin training. You must follow the instructor's direction during class but it is up to you to be passive or proactive about what you do. When you attend training, I'd like you to make clear why you are there, what you would like to accomplish and what you need to do to accomplish it.

In many cases, things you should do often seem to be exactly what you do not like doing. It is human nature to avoid things that appear difficult. If you keep avoiding those things, you will never be able to reach your dream.

If you have a real desire to reach your goal, you must try to build towards it step by step.

Through Kyokushinkaikan events, we have a unique opportunity to meet instructors and students from other Dojos, other areas and countries around the world. By meeting new people, you obtain new ideas to broaden your horizon. Again, it is up to you whether these new encounters become worthwhile or worthless.

This concept can apply to your training hall. Many Dojos are not permanent spaces, but leased space shared by many activities, such as children's play room, a gymnasium, conference room or sports hall. As soon as you begin Kyokushin training there though, these public spaces become very sacred, as we Kyokushin practitioners revere our training hall as an environment where we develop ourselves. A Dojo becomes a Dojo when we make it so; our spirit communicates to shape our environment.

The most important thing you should gain from Kyokushin training is the ability to communicate. Karate technique cannot exist without an opponent, so it is important for you to harmonize with your opponent's movements and respect your opponent's skill and capacity. In addition to harmony and respect, you must control or overpower the opponent. You end up learning how to communicate with people in your daily life through Kyokushin training. If you just work out very hard without thought, you might be able to reach a certain point of strength physically, but not necessarily will you develop mentally and spiritually. There is no meaning if you just build a strong body by training. You can be stronger than someone physically, but there will always be someone stronger than you. I'd like you to think carefully what real strength is, and what it means to be strong.

I'd like you to be open-minded, with a broad view towards keeping your aspirations high. It might be relatively simple for you to become quite famous in our microcosm of Kyokushin, but very difficult to gain notoriety in society. Karate is not an elite activity in the eyes of our society. Karate is not one of the Olympic Games. Karate does not have a professional division either. As you know, Glaube Feitosa and Alexander Pichkunov challenge K-1 championships, but even K-1 is considered amateur when you compare it to the likes of professional baseball, soccer, football or Sumo wrestling. We as Kyokushin members should always strive to pursue a higher quality of self. Our aspirations should reach above those of professional athletes, beyond the realm of arts as profession.

We gave a physical test for our Japanese National Team before the 4th World Open Karate Tournament. The outcome was stunning. Most of the team members performed as well as, and in many cases exceeded the results of the Olympic top athletes of the day. We are not professionals but amateur athletes, yet I hope all Kyokushin members believe in yourselves, keep your aspirations high and your goals clear.

With great expectation comes great responsibility. If someone gives you love, you have a responsibility to

reciprocate love. Friendship to friendship; trust to trust. Once you fulfill an expectation, you may find more expectation has fallen on you. Trying hard to fulfill those expectations will give you the opportunity to grow. We currently have many junior members in Kyokushin and this segment is growing. I believe all the parents have hopes and dreams for their children to become respectful, strong in body and in mind. I'd like to tell all our young members to try hard to fulfill their parents' expectations and become healthy in mind, body and spirit. To be healthy means to be sensible, be thoughtful for those around you and harmonize your feelings with others; it is common sense.

Karate is actually technique for combat and for self-defense, but one of the most important elements we learn is, how to avoid a fight. If you become a very strong World Champion, your capacity as one person is very limited. Even though you might be considered as the strongest in the world, you might not be able to win a battle in some situation or circumstance. If you think this way, then one of your strengths is to sense danger in advance and have an ability to find a solution to avoid it. I'd like all our youth members to learn how to sense danger through Kyokushin training.

In 2007, all members in our organization are working together as a whole towards one goal, the World Open Tournament, which we hold only once every four years. Many officials, students and staff behind the scenes began preparation for this long ago to ensure the event's success. Managers, coaches and members for the Japan National Team have held many training camps to keep the world title in Japan, yet I am sure all the world regions have done the same to try and take the title away. This competition not only brings to light the world's strongest individuals, but strengthens us all as a whole. I hope everyone trains harder to prepare for this tough competition and I look forward to seeing the 9th World Open Karate Tournament break ground to become another milestone in martial arts history.

Thank you for your participation, your effort and your support, OSU,

Kancho Shokei Matsui

President, International Karate Organization Kyokushinkaikan