

Members' Comments & Views

Contributed by James Perry Zammit
Friday, 09 January 2009
Last Updated Sunday, 15 March 2009

We all have doubts when starting something new, so here on my website are comments which were sent to me via email relating beginner's views after just a few months of practicing kendo. Here is what they had to say.

Dear James,

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you that last Saturday's training session I felt was really necessary. I felt that my kendo level boosted up by arranging just one little detail, by poking the ceiling. Now as you said it's only a matter of time before I find myself facing another problem in my kendo development. I only hope that when such a moment arises I will be able to confront and overcome it.

You said that you were sorry for giving us such a hard time during these last two months, but I actually thank you for that. It's just what we needed. Now when it came to shinai kendo and armor I always felt myself at a loss especially during ji-geiko. I worried too much about not getting hit that I could not even execute one proper cut, but after last Saturday's session I thought about nothing but big kiai and big MEN. I used to walk into the shiai jo, at the end of each month, with fear of not doing well but now I feel confident not to face an opponent and win but at least to do a proper cut.

I hope that this session helped all those who were present and all those who will be attempting to understand it in the coming sessions.

I thank you a lot for these past weeks so we could be able to push ourselves to the next level and to be able to do beautiful kendo. Thanks. Cu Tuesday.

Regards

Timothy (aged 16, email sent 15th March 2009)

The following email was sent in December 2008, a few days after the Maltese Kendo Federation Christmas Kendo Seminar which was held in Gozo.

Good morning Dear James,

I'm taking the opportunity to send you this e-mail to thank you for having the courage to send that e-mail to Paul in the year 2002 and perusing your dream.

A dream, passion that has effected others and not just, it's also making a great difference in people's lives. Anyone out there would see kendo as a fighting art but once in and living it first hand one can see that it has nothing to do with fighting or hitting. It's more about connection, understanding and making a move, a difference. Becoming one with your opponent and reading his mind. Now I am no professional in kendo and I won't pretend to be one but I notice a lot and in our last practice I experienced a lot. Also talking to the members that have been practicing for longer I could see how Kendo has effected their lives and has helped them overcome great challenges even in their personal lives.

Having the privilege to practice with Matsuda sensei gave me a lot. She is an awesome woman. I could see that her cuts were smooth and targeted rather than boom boom. The focus she has is just incredible. Now I understand what you used to tell me about her.

About our experience this Christmas and New Year, I want to thank all the group. Honestly speaking I don't remember my last Peaceful and enjoyable Christmas season. This was just awesome. Our Seminar and meeting at Omar's house gave me the boost I needed even in my personal life. So thanks again. Now I feel like a sister to you all rather than just a member.

When we were in Gozo you spoke a lot about learning Kendo over a beer or a glass of wine. That is so true. Again it's not like I have this long experience in Kendo in fact I haven't even started but I already can feel the difference compared to when I did not understand and just carried on with it. When relaxed one can absorb more info and for some a cuppa will do for others it has to be a beer or a good glass of wine. Haha and with you!!!!

Again thanks for introducing me to Kendo and for everything you and all the members do for the MKF. Looking forward for Saturday (which I consider HOLY). Until then Have a great weekend and God bless

Regards

Nadia GSant The following was sent the weekend before the MKF Christmas Seminar.
Good afternoon James,

First of all I would like to apologize for not turning up last Saturday but in all likelihood I will not be in a position to attend

neither this coming Saturday in Gozo (and I know I'll feel sorry). I would also like to point out that I am however very appreciative of your efforts with regards to this art, you are indeed going to great lengths not only to promote this noble art form but to also promote its true spirit. I also intend, god willing, to continue this training as I feel that only good can come out of it. This however brings me to my second point. Basically I'd like to follow the very precept you communicated to us when I attended the first session at your Dojo. I am into Kendo for the spiritual and mental path it offers through training.

I want to give it my best shot simply because I feel I owe it not only to myself but also (respectfully) to all those who would eventually train with me. In Kendo I have noticed that you cannot simply improve as an individual you need to improve as a team. When my training partner is weak or offers a weak spirit, my own spirit wanes as though dispersed. I feel as though my mind is all over the place. If my training partner is not sure of the technique or how it should be executed within the scope of the training exercise, then I too will hesitate and the technique will be executed badly or poorly. On the other hand if the training partner offers a strong spirit and knows how the technique should be executed then it becomes easier to summon my own spirit and to execute the technique better. Maybe I am stating the obvious here, but for me this is still a learning process. Having said that I still find it hard to shout, it doesn't come naturally and it takes effort to overcome the little imp in my head that foolishly tells me not to. When Sensei Chapman came over, I think his guidance went a long way toward helping me understand the importance of Kiai.

I would like to state up front therefore that I am not into Kendo for the Dan grades or the "hitting", for me it is more important to master the basic techniques and to execute them in a way that is adequate and according to form. There would be days when I would be feeling under the weather but still this will remain my aim. Then if time will give me sufficient skill to face a Dan grade and pass, then so be it, but I will not be the one to force the matter in any way.

To tell you the truth this year I would like to make it my prerogative to learn the ceremony and etiquette associated with Kendo. More importantly I need to learn the words used because not knowing them are still getting in the way of understanding the techniques and executing them.

That's basically all I had to say, and I'm saying it here because usually at the gym time flies and there is no time to waste on chatting...and I'd rather be doing Kendo myself.

Thanks for your (and your team's) support so far, Kendo is indeed a fascinating martial art. Will be looking forward to training with you in 2009.

Best Regards,

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Colin McElhatton