

## *“My Ichi Kyu Brown Belt Test at The Gi Yu Kyo Kai Dojos”*

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As I have done in the past, I wanted to share some of my insights of my exam. The Gi Yu Dojo has a standard process for testing which consists of rank techniques, a written test and Randori (free receiving). Testing allows me to show my teachers that I have been listening to them and have been training to apply their guidance. Three years have passed by and I find myself taking the opportunity to challenge the Ichi Kyu Brown Belt rank material.

Personally, I like to have goals in mind when I test. These goals help me focus on different aspects of the techniques and my abilities. So below, I have written about those ideals I wanted to work on.

The first part of the test was in relation to the technical and skill showcase. That rank material was very challenging. There are many minute details in each technique. One of my goals during this part of the test was to affect my ukes body without sacrificing my stability or position. I no longer want to just make it through the movements we are learning, I want to know why and what part of the human body I am affecting. I want my Uke to be thrown and land in the location I want them to that is advantageous for me, much like a chess game. Consistent training with the guidance of our outstanding black belts is helping me to understand how to do this and control my body.

The second part of the test is the written exam. I still find this to be a nice break between technique skill set showcase and Randori. I like that our dojo makes knowing the lineages and history of our school a priority. I believe the written test also helps strengthen one's mind.

The last part of the test is Randori. My goals this year were to have better footwork, distancing and breathing. Overall, I felt better this year than last year, however there is always room for me to improve. For instance, at one point my opponent was able to reach out and grab my biceps. I dropped my hips and could feel how top heavy he was as he tried to attack my feet to throw me. As I am stepping to avoid his feet, it doesn't dawn on me till after Mate (halt) is called that I could've used his weight and gravity to my advantage. Another thought I had after the fact was, why didn't I think about attacking his arm as he reached for me. Another missed opportunity. The daily, weekly and monthly keiko (training) at The Gi Yu Dojo helps hone those skills to recognize and take immediate advantage of the opportunities that will be presented to me in martial conflict. I will continue to work on shifting my training mind toward a warrior's mind.

I am glad to say that I did pass my test. Regardless if I would have failed or passed, the opportunity to be in front of all these DAN (Black Belts) level Sempais (Sr. Students), who I respect greatly, who I have learned so much from and who have helped me be a better person, the feedback from all of the black belts grading my techniques was invaluable. To have that much experience focused solely on you for a brief moment in time is outstanding and humbling. Their comments as they grade my techniques only enhance my notes, which in turn, will only make me better. Going forward I want to instill more faith in my mind, body and spirit that our dojo's techniques are as efficient and devastating as they appear.

I look forward to challenging Sho Dan (1<sup>st</sup> Degree Black Belt) exam when the time comes. As always, I raise my tea cup to the Kamidama and all those who came before, you are in my thoughts.