

2024/2025 WA Kendo Campaign

Squad Training #5

SUMMARY

Version: 1.3
Last Updated: Mon 16 Dec 2024

Lesson Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The 2024/2025 WA Kendo Campaign aims to engage the entire WA Kendo community and develop everyone’s skills. Everyone including beginners are welcome (see requirements).Campaign theme is <i>kihaku</i> (physical and spiritual vigour), which will be continually revisited through the application of supporting themes and concepts at each session.Squad Training #5’s theme is <i>maai</i>, <i>connection</i>, and <i>aiki</i>.Goals for Squad Training #5:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Understand the meaning of <i>ma</i> (interval) and how it relates to <i>maai</i> (distance).Understand the necessary points to build up before striking.

TRAINING SCHEDULE

Time		Description
1:00pm	15m	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overview of the campaign objectives, goals, and theme.Recap of previous squad training themes:<ul style="list-style-type: none">1: Thoughtful, purposeful <i>kihon</i>; building <i>tame</i>. Learned Squad warm-up routine, focused on basics.2: <i>Professionalism</i>. What does it mean to train, eat, rest, etc. like a professional. What can we do to improve our Kendo?3: <i>Zanshin</i>. Meaning, purpose, and how to display it in our movements, strikes, and attitude.4: <i>Yūko datotsu</i>. Understand the requirements / criteria of what constitutes a scoring point.Introduce this squad training’s theme:<ul style="list-style-type: none">5: <i>Maai</i>, <i>connection</i>, and <i>aiki</i>. Understand how <i>ma</i> (interval) affects the build-up (<i>tame</i>) before the strike.
1:15pm	20m	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Warm-up routines.
1:35pm	15m	<p>Squad warm-up in <i>bōgu</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>kirikaeshi</i>.3x big men, 3x small men.3x kote, 3x kote men.

2024/2025 WA Kendo Campaign – Squad Training #5

Time		Description
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3x <i>dō</i>, 3x <i>gyaku dō</i>. • 3x <i>tsuki</i>, 3x <i>tsuki men</i>. • <i>men taiatari hiki-men</i>, <i>men taiatari hiki-kote</i>, <i>men taiatari hiki-dō</i>, <i>men</i>. • 3x <i>jigeiko</i> rotations.
1:50pm	30m	Practise with distance in mind: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>kirikaeshi</i> (no blocking). • From <i>issoku-ittō-no-ma</i>, <i>men</i>. • From <i>tō-ma</i>, <i>aite</i> steps in, <i>men</i> (from <i>issoku-ittō-no-ma</i>). • From <i>issoku-ittō-no-ma</i>, <i>aite</i> steps in, <i>men</i> (from <i>chika-ma</i>). • From <i>tō-ma</i>, <i>aite</i> steps in, <i>kote</i> or <i>kote-men</i>. • From <i>issoku-ittō-no-ma</i>, <i>aite</i> steps in, <i>dō</i> (from <i>chika-ma</i>).
2:20pm	10m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break.
2:30pm	30m	Practise with distance and timing in mind: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ai-uchi</i> (mutual, simultaneous) <i>men</i>. • “4 steps back-and-forth” to <i>debana men</i>. • “2 steps back-and forth” to <i>debana men</i>. • <i>aite</i> holds centre, <i>kakarite</i> “assails” to strike. Group exercise – 2 lines (<i>motodachi</i>) face a person in the middle (<i>kakarite</i>). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>motodachi</i> steps in, <i>kakarite</i> attacks <i>men</i>. • <i>motodachi</i> attacks <i>men</i>, <i>kakarite</i> attacks <i>debana men</i>. • <i>motodachi</i> attacks <i>men</i>, <i>kakarite</i> attacks <i>debana kote</i>. • <i>motodachi</i> attacks <i>men</i>, <i>kakarite</i> counters with any <i>waza</i>.
3:00pm	10m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break.
3:10pm	30m	<i>Mawari-geiko</i> / free <i>ji-geiko</i> .
3:40pm	10m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish and cooldown.
3:50pm	10m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap and debrief.

SQUAD TRAINING #5 NOTES

Campaign Theme: *Kihaku*

The purpose of the 2024/2025 WA Kendo Campaign is to engage the WA Kendo community and train together to help develop everyone's Kendo skills.

The overall theme for this campaign is *kihaku*.

The *All Japan Kendo Federation's Kendo Dictionary* defines *kihaku* as:

The strength of spirit to face any situation. A strong mind capable of responding properly to a pressing matter or an attacking opponent.



Kihaku, sometimes also translated as “vigour”, is about:

- Having the mental preparation and clear plan of action, even before entering the *shiai-jo* (court).
- Achieving a state of readiness and being able to choose to act reactively or proactively.
- Giving a focused physical and spiritual effort in the movements and actions that matter.

Examples of practising or implementing *kihaku*:

- Maintaining concentration throughout set-up, execution (striking), and *zanshin*.
- Display of *sutemi* (striking in full spirit with “complete abandon”).
- Having a *tokui-waza* (best / favoured technique) to aim for during *jigeiko* / *shiai*.
- Management of stress and competitive arousal (avoid being over- or under-aroused).

Recap of Previous Squad Trainings' Themes

#1: Thoughtful, purposeful *kihon* means actively thinking about how you perform your basic techniques, focusing on one specific part at a time. Examples: how you hold your *kamae*, gripping with your toes, pushing with your left foot, pulling up the back foot quickly, ensuring *tenouchi* at the point of impact, loud *kiai*, etc.

Tame refers to the time and effort you need to “build” or “charge up” when preparing to strike. We need to be conscious on when we enter and exit the different phases of readiness and concentration. Applying this when doing our *kihon* will significantly improve the quality of your strikes.

#2: Professionalism is about dedicating time and effort into activities that better ourselves in a specific skill, such as Kendo. “Acting like a professional means working and behaving in such a way that others think of them as competent, reliable and respectful.” Think about how to play, train, eat, sleep / rest, prepare, and behave like a professional.

#3: *Zanshin* refers to a state of awareness or relaxed alertness. There are many ways of displaying *zanshin* – such as running through, *tai-atari*, *hiki-waza*, and how they are done in *Bokutō-Waza* and *Kata*. Understanding and displaying *zanshin* allows you to: relax / reset your mental state, complete your strike as part of *yūko-datotsu* (setup, execute, follow through), and avoid the opponent's follow-up.

#4: *Yūko datotsu* (legitimate strike) – understanding the definition allows you to work backwards and consider the formula to preparing and executing a strike that is more likely to score – i.e. fulfil the criteria that the referees are looking for.

Squad Training Theme #5: *Maai*, *Connection*, and *Aiki*

Maai (間合) is usually translated to mean “distance”, specifically between two players. We commonly use and describe the terms:

- *issoku-ittō-no-maai*: “One step, one strike” distance.
- *tōi-maai* (commonly shortened to *tō-ma*): “Far” distance where it is difficult to strike with one step.
- *chikai-maai* (commonly shortened to *chika-ma*): “Close” distance where it is not safe.

Other terms include:

- *shokujin-no-maai*: The distance where both shinai are just touching.
- *kojin-no-maai*: The distance where both shinai are crossing.

Because everyone has a different build, *maai* is personal; i.e. someone’s “one step, one strike” distance will likely be different from someone else’s, due to factors such as height, arm length, flexibility, etc.

The *ma* in *maai* can be translated as “interval”, that is not only physical distance, but also timing. *All Japan Kendo Federation’s Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo* defines the following:

ma

The space or distance between two objects, events, or times. An important and distinctive concept focussing awareness on time and space; the term which expresses this concept. In Kendo, *ma* more or less refers to temporal distance, and *maai* is used in contrast when referring to spatial distance.

maai

The spatial distance between one’s self and the opponent. The gap between two opponents. The establishment of *maai* through the relationship with the opponent is a subtle and important matter.

That means the following factors can affect a player’s *ma*:

- The ability to read / perceive the opponent’s intention.
- The ability to pressure the opponent (*seme*) and assail their senses to create an “illness” (*shikai*).
- The confidence and willpower to pick the right time to strike or execute the *waza*.
- The physical ability, flexibility, and speed to do the *waza*.
- The opponent’s ability to do all of the above.

Which brings to one more definition from the dictionary:

uchima

One’s optimum distance and opportunity for striking the opponent.

By understanding these definitions, we will understand what is necessary to achieve the perfect strike.

Don’t strike then win; win, then strike.

打って勝つな、勝って打つ。

Next Sessions

- Squad Training #6: Sunday, 12 January 2025, 1:00pm – 4:00pm, Murdoch University.

CONTACT

Visit www.WAKendo.com.au for more details, or contact us on Contact@WAKendo.com.au