



# Hartlepool Wadokai

## Kita-Kasushika Area Karate Championships

February 8<sup>th</sup> 2009



*The English intern tag-team!*

Yesterday was the Kita-Kasushika Area Karate Championships held at the Asukaru Centre in Sattē City. I thought this was going to be a small local competition; I was therefore pleasantly surprised to find out that there was over 500 entrants and a reasonable number of competitors in my own divisions.

Anyway, back to the story...

The competition was organised by Arakawa Sensei and Masuda Sensei from the local Shotokan dojo. Shiramizu therefore helped setup the competition on the Saturday night. Team Gaijin was taken away from 'set-up duties' by Okano-san, to talk us through our Karate acting debut in what would be part of the Shiramizu Taikai at the end of the month. I'm still not sure of the details but to give you a glimpse, here's a picture of some of those involved (from the blog of Arakawa Sensei).



Thankfully, Team Gaijin *don't* have to dress up in any Lycra costumes, we can get away with our karate gi and sunglasses!

After the setup was complete, Arakawa Sensei took *Team Gaijin*, that being Carl, Amy and Lawrence to a local chinese restaraunt, accompanied by Kikuchi Sensei and a few other Shiramizu students. The food was delicious and Lawrence enjoyed laughing at my fumbling with the chopsticks.



# Hartlepool Wadokai

## The Competition

I managed to miss the 'team warm up' because I took too long taping my competitor numbers on my back, but I got there in time for opening ceremony. In typical fashion, there was a number of speeches and the Roman salute (one student says a short formal speech to the main organizer of the tournament that all the athletes will do their best in a sportsman like manner) and then the competition started across 8 mats. Shiramizu entered approximately 150 competitors into the competition, but only three seniors - those being Amy, Lawrence and myself aka - Team Gaijin, so there was plenty of expectation resting on our shoulders, and I'm pleased to say that we didn't disappoint!

## Kata

In typical fashion, after my own brief warm up to loosen up my body, I found a corner to fall asleep in, iPod playing, oblivious to the world...

...until I was woken up by a kick to the shins of either Amy or Lawrence to tell me that our Kata division had been called.

Our kata category had 17 people in. I've been working on 'fixing' my Chinto kata since I came to Japan, and it was that kata which I chose to perform. Despite this I personally didn't think I'd get past the first round. My competition kata isn't particularly great and with it being an open competition, I thought a Shotokan or Goju exponent would get the better of me.

Anyway, by some random fluke of luck I got through the first round with a '*blink-and-you'll-miss-it*' performance of Chinto, with no less than 5 flags! The next round I was not surprised to *lose* by 5 flags to the other guy. Lawrence was disappointed with not getting past the first round, but he lost to the guy who went onto the finals (finishing in 2nd) so we both ended up with a certificate for finishing in the 'best 8'.

Amy lost to a lady who went onto the finals of her division too, but there were only 8 people in her category so she didn't get a certificate for her placing.

Whilst we were waiting for our kumite divisions, I tried to steal myself away again and sleep but some of the little Shiramizu girls had different ideas. They thought it would be a good idea to use me as a warm up instrument, at one point I had a dozen trying to beat me up! I eventually managed to convince them to fight Lawrence and Amy instead so I could escape!

## Kumite

Amy was up first from Team Gaijin...



...and she fought very well.



Amy 'high fiving' her opponent during a match!



# Hartlepool Wadokai

Making her way comfortably to the finals to win her *first ever* individual Gold Medal, in Japan of all places!!!



*Amy with her FIRST EVER individual Gold Medal!*



*Lawrence in action...!*

Not wanting to be out done, Lawrence and I made our way to the area. There were 21 competitors in the division and both Lawrence and I had been seeded into the 2nd round. Our referee was the coach from Saitama Sakai high school, where I sometimes train on Sundays, so I was conscious not to mess up.

Lawrence was up against someone much taller, but he held his own for most of the fight scoring with some solid counter punching. His opponent managed to keep his lead until the end, winning 4-3.

For my first fight I was matched against a gentleman who at first glance appeared to be of 'aging years'. Any false notions I had that this would be an easy fight were wiped away with two lightning fast lunge punches that I barely saw coming and could do nothing about. As I walked back to the line the second time, I remember smiling at Lawrence and getting a knowing smile back, something like '*well, we didn't expect that!*'



*Winning punch*



# Hartlepool Wadokai

After that, I found my stride but the match went onto sudden death were I took the win with a head punch.

The next round was a little easier, I settled straight into the fight, measured and scored with a head punch straight off my line. After a little bit of trading, scoring another point, I launched in with a solid hook kick to the head to get 3 points.



*Carl mid-flight, a moment before the right leg connects to his opponents head*

I felt comfortable going into the finals, my opponent shook my hand before hand and we lined up. We traded well, scoring a point, then losing a point. He wouldn't let my bring my legs fully into the game, I scored with a solid body kick that nearly split him in two...



*...and a reverse punch that put him on the floor.*





# Hartlepool Wadokai

However, in the last few seconds, being one point down, I couldn't get through his guard to get the point, I landed a few techniques, but none good enough to get the score. My opponent took the win, 4 points to 3. I would have to settle for 2nd place!

After I'd bowed out of the match, I realised that our fight had been the last of the day. Most of the other areas had already been cleared away and everyone had been stood watching the fight. I was disappointed with the 2nd place, but it could well be the extra motivation I need get ready for the Wadokai Kanto Taikai in March!

## **Summary**

The competition was very well organised, ran smoothly all day and finished on time. The volunteers were all great, and the whole day was fun! Though I don't yet have any exact figures, Shiramizu did very well with a lot of competitors taking gold. This competition has proved to be a great warm up for the Shiramizu club competition in two weeks time.

Team Gaijin brought home 4 awards from 3 competitors, so it was a good result for the foreigners!

For me, it's showed what areas I need to get to work on in time for my next competition. Meanwhile, I must get back to my junzuki...

## **Thanks...**

I'd like to thank Chris Heinmiller, the latest addition to 'Team Gaijin' for taking most of the photos during the competition, leaving us free to concentrate on our karate. Keep an eye on this blog for an exclusive interview with Chris coming soon, as he is a 2nd Dan Taekwondo student from Canada now training at Shiramizu.

Additional photo's from Lawrence...!