

The Article Part 1

Introduction

In this and future articles, I would like to discuss tactics in Kendo. What I would stress, from the start, is that this will never mean describing how to win at competitions by pushing the rules to the limit. The word “tactics” are quite often thought of by many people as a means of winning at any cost for “Shiai Kendo.” Japanese Kendo practitioners especially regard tactics this way, and they do not like teaching them. However, tactics are not practiced and used purely for striking an opponent and winning a Shiai; we can also learn a great many of the technical aspects of Kendo and develop our understanding of Kendo in the process of thinking, learning, practicing and creating tactics. In this article, firstly, some of the negative aspects that people imagine from tactics are described and then followed by the introduction of my experience of Kendo and tactics at the Fukuoka University of Education and a discussion of the effectiveness of learning tactics.

1. Tactics and Kendo

Tactics are an important element in the performance of sports and Budo as are other elements such as physical fitness, techniques, and mental strength. In Japanese Kendo society, however, tactics are quite often thought negatively by many peoples. It seems that the reasons are closely related to their ideologies of Kendo as Budo. For example, the results of the interviews with Japanese high school physical education teachers who were in charge of Kendo lessons revealed that fifty-three teachers out of fifty-five had negative thoughts about teaching tactics. Their negative reasons were strongly related to their ideology of this purpose of Kendo as Budo, the traditional training and teaching of Kendo as Budo, the posture and movement of Kendo as Budo, and winning and losing of Kendo matches as Budo (Honda, 2003). More concretely, some teachers take it for granted that doing Kendo for character building is the “correct Kendo” in their ideology of the purpose of traditional Kendo as Budo. For them, tactics are used only to win, and they are not compatible with real Kendo. In their ideology, they believe good posture and reasonable Shinai control that we need in Kendo are acquired as the result of following the traditional way of Shugyo (修行, training) which involves the repeated practice of Kihon again and again. They also take it for granted that correct Kendo is acquired as the result of following this process for a long time. The reason why tactics are rejected is that these are not included in the traditional Shugyo which makes for correct Kendo. Planning and using tactics means aiming for oneself and one's team to win even if the right posture and movement are broken, and therefore, the teaching of tactics is rejected by them. Finally, in some of the teacher's ideology about Kendo matches, winning and losing as Budo, they often see Kendo matches as being to grasp one's ability and progress, getting opportunities to find out about one's problems and to review the process of one's Shugyo. The contents of Kendo matches place emphasis on fighting by one's Ki and an opponent's Ki. Even if there is little exterior movement, there are active interior movements in two competitor's minds. They take it for granted that trying to overwhelm opponent's Ki by one's own Ki and to strike is the real Kendo. For them, planning and using tactics means bringing wasteful external Shinai and body movements into play which is not compatible with the correct Kendo as Budo. British people, especially those who play Western sports may think that the above opinions of the Japanese Kendo teachers as a bit strange. Needless to say that Kendo is a one-on-one combat activity through attacking and defending by using Shinai. Jan Kern (1998) identifies that one-on-one combat as sports activities like Kendo requires greater tactical acumen than non-physical contact activities like volleyball, tennis, swimming, etc. In fact, we all fight in Jigeiko with Shinai by making use of tactics, consciously or unconsciously, in attacking and defending against an opponent. The Kendo teachers who participated in the interviews commented that an expected way of fighting in Kendo would be that one did not rely on physical abilities, but one overwhelmed one's opponent by one's Ki and stroke. That is quite a high-level tactical act in a way. Beyond this level and to attack an opponent with the mental state of “Mushin” would be the ultimate level of fighting in Kendo, but this would also be the ultimate tactical act acquired through enough experience and a high level of technique. To think this way, it seems that the word “tactics” itself does not give a good impression to the Japanese Kendo teachers, but gives an impression that using tactics means allowing their students to aim for winning as the prime purpose at any cost. After all, whatever their reasons for rejecting teaching tactics and their ideologies of Kendo as Budo are, I believe coming from their love for Kendo that they want to pass on “correct Kendo” to the next generation as a pathway for self-cultivation and traditional Japanese culture.

2. My experience at Fukuoka University of Education

Although I had many Shiai practices and actual Shiai when I was a high school and a university student, I almost never learned from my teachers explicitly how to win and how to fight in a particular situation.

Is this because there exist negative thoughts related to tactics (or to the word tactics itself) in Japanese Kendo society? That was left to the student's independent-learning, and I acquired them naturally through watching other peoples Shiai and experiencing Shiai. I started thinking tactics in Kendo when I became a women's coach at Fukuoka University of Education Kendo club. My students were aiming to win the All Japan University Women's Taikai (Shiai) and so they were practicing for two hours five days a week. Two hours-five days a week practice itself is not too much at Japanese university Kendo clubs. After each practice, however, they always gathered together in the coach's room, watched a video of their Keiko and Shiai which I had taped, and we discussed their Kendo. The person who suggested watching the video was me, but they decided the focus on what to watch and what to improve as individual and team tasks. After continuing this for seven months, they began to grasp what each member of the team was expected to do at each position, how to fight and how they could fight according to the different situations. Their aim was achieved in November 1995. They did not win by using mean tactics, such as running away from their opponents who seemed to be stronger than they were, running away after scoring the first Ippon, using only surprise and tricky attacks, or fighting with bad posture. They always reflected on the content of their Keiko and Shiai after each Keiko, discussing what to do to develop, the choices they could use against various types of opponents in various situations in Shiai, trying to use something new in the next Keiko and Shiai practice, and developing their scope in Kendo. Three years later, two of them were selected as members of the Japanese team for the 11th World Kendo Championships, and one of them won the individual championship. Through the experience of being a coach at the Fukuoka University of Education, I started thinking seriously about tactics in Kendo. But it also might have related to the negative thoughts of tactics. Little was introduced and known about the application of tactics in Kendo lessons. Although there were only a few books and research which described tactics in Kendo, often the descriptions of the content were too abstract and difficult to understand and apply in practice. Therefore, in 1997 I came to the U.K. to look for a place I could study theories and practice of sports tactics. Here I studied theory, practice and the educational effect of teaching the tactics of games called "Teaching Games for Understanding" as developed in England and I attempted to apply it to Kendo. Through this study of tactics, in England, I realized that learning tactics would be useful not only for winning Shiai but also for understanding various aspects of Kendo. The following describes some of my ideas about tactics in Kendo.

3. Re-consideration of tactics in Kendo

Tactics play a role in connecting Kihon-geiko with Ji-geiko and Shiai. We apply techniques that we have acquired in Kihon-geiko into Ji-geiko and Shiai with tactics of, which technique, when, where and how to use it. Considering general Kendo Keiko in most clubs, it seems that a practice normally starts with a warm-up and Suburi followed by Kirikaeshi, Kihon Waza-geiko, Ji-geiko and tactical training, in which the aim to learn which technique, when, where and how to use, is left to self-development through experience. Of course, in Ji-geiko and Shiai where there are a lot of changes in attacking and defending and no one can predict what to do in advance, judgment of what to do is left to each practitioner. However, it is important to learn tactics in Keiko to make an appropriate judgment consciously or unconsciously in each situation and to execute an action chosen. There are some people, especially experienced Kendo-ka who believes that they do not need to learn any tactics, considering that to fight with Mushin is the best approach to Ji-geiko and Shiai. In the state of mental condition "Mushin," one's body will perform the best, unconsciously and automatically making the best choice of technique and movement. However, it will be impossible to do this if one does not work on developing choices of techniques and movements in various situations through Keiko. Choosing and executing Waza in the mental state of Mushin is an unconscious tactical act that is developed as the result of the conscious learning of tactics. There are also some people who insist, "I do not need tactics. I just do my Kendo whoever my opponent is." I am not sure exactly what they mean by "doing my Kendo." It has to be considered, however, that "doing one's Kendo" does not mean doing Kendo in which one attacks with the same timing and same Waza all the time against every opponent. To be able to do one's best Kendo against various types of the opponent, one must learn to change the way of Seme sometimes boldly and sometimes delicately and the timing of Waza according to each opponent. To be able to do this, one has to try to develop a choice of Waza and have a broader scope in one's Kendo. That does not only mean acquiring many different Waza but means that one should try to practice with consideration of how to use the Waza one has acquired. Sumi Sensei told me, "In my brain, there are hundreds and thousands of different patterns of Seme, striking, combination Waza in dealing with my opponents attacking. I can use these properly according to each situation and each opponent." Also, Sumi Sensei's Kendo taught us to use Waza from what we have acquired (less choice), and we end up attacking where Sensei is making us attack as if we were swallowed up in it. It is extremely hard (almost impossible?) to reach Sumi Sensei's level, but nothing happens unless we try to develop scope in our Kendo!

4. Effectiveness of Learning Tactics

Once you start thinking of tactics such as Waza, you will start thinking when and how you use it, or you want to use it in Ji-geiko and Shiai, or which Waza you need to acquire, or what you can do or cannot do at the moment. By thinking like this, you will be able to see the technical and psychological structure and mechanism of basic movements, each Waza and their interaction with your opponents. Also, in the process of acquiring Waza, you will feel the need to have a positive attitude and that you do not want to waste any unnecessary time in practicing: Waza-geiko, Kata-geiko, Ji-geiko, Kakari-geiko, Uchikomi-geiko and the whole Keiko. Moreover, you will also begin to think whether you are fit enough to achieve your tasks? Which part of your body needs to be improved? And whether you are mentally tough enough to execute your tactics? The traditional way of Keiko in Kendo is through repeated practice, which I do not reject. By considering tactics in Keiko, you will realize the meaning and importance of this repeated practice, and you will come independently to tackle Keiko rather than just doing in a parrot fashion or like clockwork, what your teacher tells you to do. In the next article, I would like to discuss the process of learning tactics according to practitioner's levels.

References

Kern, Jan. (1998) *Tactics in Sports* (translation M. Asaoka, H. Mizukami, and A. Nakagawa). Tokyo: Taisyukan Publishing Co., Ltd.
Honda, S. (2003) *Budo or Sport? Competing Conceptions of Kendo within the Japanese Upper Secondary Physical Education Curriculum*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Gloucestershire Park Campus Learning Centre

The Article Part 2

Introduction

In the previous article Part 1, the relationship between Kendo and tactics, my personal experience of studying tactics, and the effectiveness of learning tactics were introduced. In this article Part 2 and the next one Part 3, I would like to discuss the learning of tactics appropriate to the level of the individual practitioner. These two articles are to follow my two previous articles entitled "Attitudes to Ji-geiko Part 1 and 2." Before getting started, I would like to reiterate that I never want you to think of this as "quick fix," on how to win competitions by pushing the rules to the limit. I aim to provide you with some ideas and explore the opportunities to learn a great many of the technical aspects of Kendo and develop your understanding of Kendo by the process of thinking, learning, practicing and creating tactics. This article describes the learning of tactics for Kyu grade holders and 1st~2nd Dan grade holders.

1. Learning of Tactics for Kyu Grade Holders

It is quite often seen in Kyu grade holders in Ji-geiko, Shiai, and grading examination that they keep attacking big Men from the same distance and with the same timing. Similarly, their teachers are often seen advising to "Keep attacking" or "Give everything." When one side starts moving and tries to attack big Men, the other side soon reacts and starts doing the same. As a result, they keep hitting each other's Shinai before reaching their opponent's Men, and a successful strike does not happen for a long time. At this level, as described in Attitudes to Ji-geiko Part 1, (BKA online news Issue #11 April 2004) it is certainly important for them to try to use techniques they have learned in Kihon-geiko without hesitating and being shy. That would be their first simple, but an important tactic. However, you cannot learn opportunities for good attacking by repeating the same techniques from the same distance and in the same timing. Typically in Kendo, there are four opportunities for striking, which are: when the opponent begins to strike; when the opponent blocks a strike; when the opponent finishes a strike; and when the opponent moves back. In these, "striking when the opponent finishes a strike" would be an important tactic for Kyu grade holders to learn and try during Ji-geiko with other Kyu grade holders. Taking a concrete example, many Kyu grade holders tend to go through either side of an opponent after attacking, exposing their back completely to their opponent just like they do in Kihon-geiko. When this happens to your opponent in Ji-geiko, you should immediately follow him and attack as the opponent turns around. An additional merit of learning this tactic is that it will make them realize the importance of always trying to keep an eye on their opponent while fighting as well as realizing that there is an opportunity to strike when an opponent takes their eyes off, losing concentration. When Kyu grade holders have Ji-geiko with their seniors, they tend to feel, in many cases, difficulty in completing their attack and stop their attacks in the middle of an action or keep moving back. Then teachers and seniors shout, "Keep attacking" or "Give everything." Unlike Kyu grade holders, their seniors do not expose their back during Ji-geiko (or at least they are not supposed to). In this instance, it is not easy for a Kyu grade holder to execute the tactic of "striking when the opponent finishes a strike."

Tactics in Kendo

By Sotaro Honda sensei, Ph.D., University of Gloucestershire, British Squad Coach
Article retrieved from: <http://www.britishkendoassociation.com/tactics-in-kendo/>

Page 4 of 8

It is recommended, for Kyu grade holders in Ji-geiko with their seniors, that they try to kill their opponent's Shinai before they strike. That means you do not just attack straight but try to deflect the tip of the senior's Shinai by using Osae-waza (pushing the opponent's Shinai down). Or use Harai-waza before he strikes. The Harai-waza includes knocking the opponent's Shinai from right to left, left to right, lower right to upper left, lower left to upper right, upper right to lower left, or from upper left to lower right (see also Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo, pp. 30-31). Of course, it does not mean that you can score on your seniors if you use these Waza. You will still be blocked by them. At this stage, however, they are starting to learn "how to break the opponent's center" which is the most basic and important tactic in Kendo and is quite important no matter how simple it is. This simple tactic of "breaking the opponent's center" develops into more complicated and effective ones as you develop your footwork, Fumikiri, Fumikomi, speed and Te-no-Uchi (I will explain this in detail later). As I described in "Attitudes to Ji-geiko Part 2 (BKA online news Issue #12 June 2004)", Kyu grade holders should focus mainly on developing Shikake-waza. It is important not to be afraid of being dodged and counterattacked, and not to stop attacking in the middle of your action, but to try to complete your attack.

In this article, I would like to suggest the use of "Osae-waza (or Nayashi-waza)" and "Harai-waza" in your Ji-geiko (and of course you need to practice these in Waza-geiko as well). Although this may not directly relate to the tactics, here I would like to add something about defense in Kendo, which I briefly mentioned in "Attitudes to Ji-geiko Part 1". As a term "Bogyo no tame no bogyo nashi (no defense for sake of defense)" basically says that, in Kendo, the defense is supposed to be connected to the next attack and one has to do this attacking immediately after defending. The movement is also called "Ko-bo-icchi (攻防一致)" in traditional Kendo terminology. As described earlier, however, even if Kyu grade holders try to attack immediately after defending their senior's attack, they will not be skillful and fast enough to counterattack with Oji-waza or Kaeshi-waza against the seniors obviously. I suppose, on the contrary, that they have not learned and acquired the basic skills of how to defend an opponent's attack. Strangely enough, methods of defense are seldom taught but left to a practitioners' self-learning thru experiences in many clubs. Because of this, I think that many Kyu grade holders try to defend their own (uneconomical) ways when they are attacked by their seniors, and they have no opportunity to learn the idea of "Bogyo no tame no bogyo nashi." Okajima sensei (1992) points out that beginners' anxiety and fear of opponents' attack would prevent them from finding opportunities for a strike. I suggest, therefore, that teachers show basic defense techniques to beginners before they are allowed to join Ji-geiko.

Here what I mean by basic defense techniques is not to defend only by blocking an opponent's Shinai by just using one's own Shinai. What one has to learn are "Metsuke (positioning of the eyes)" and "defense with Ki-ken-tai-no-itchi." Beginners tend to stand and gaze only at their opponent's Shinai, and their hands tend to move as the opponent moves their Shinai. Therefore, they are quite often easily caught by a feint action such as "pretending to attack Men by lifting the arms up and attack Do." According to the Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo (2000, p. 62), Metsuke is explained as "The act of paying attention to the opponent's whole body while looking into their eyes." Also, there is another term to teach us the positioning of the eyes called "Enzan-no-metsuke (looking at a far away mountain)." The Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo (2000, p. 24) explains, "It is important to look at the figure of the opponent as a whole rather than at a particular point as if looking at a far away mountain." As for "defense with Ki-ken-tai-no-itchi," when one defends, one needs to try to defend by keeping a positive mind using the Shinai, footwork and body movement. The term "Ki-ken-tai-no-itchi" is normally used for expressing the striking action, but its concept should also be applied to the defense. It is not easy for beginners to do this. However, it is in your best interest that you develop your Kendo through being struck over and over again, keeping proper posture and effective defense position, which will not necessarily be effective at first. In the future, you will develop the skill to make a defense most efficiently. Okajima sensei (1992) argues that strong defense is an important element in performance in Kendo. If that is so, then learning defense techniques with an understanding of "Bogyo no tame no bogyo nashi" at this stage will be quite useful towards helping execute high-level tactics in the future.

2. Learning of Tactics for 1st-2nd Dan Grade Holders

It is assumed that practitioners at this level can make a sharp strike with small and quick hands, body movement, and powerful Fumikiri and Fumikomi. Therefore, I suggest that practitioners develop the simple tactics of Osae-waza and Harai-waza and try to attack with feint actions. As the practitioners at this level probably already know, even if you try to strike Men after Osae against someone at the same level or senior, in most instances their Shinai will be blocked before your Shinai reaches the target, unless your attacking speed is very fast.

Tactics in Kendo

By Sotaro Honda sensei, Ph.D., University of Gloucestershire, British Squad Coach
Article retrieved from: <http://www.britishkendoassociation.com/tactics-in-kendo/>

Page 5 of 8

The same thing will usually happen when you try to strike Kote after Harai from left to right. This suggests that using feint actions before striking becomes an important tactic. Of course, learning feint actions progress from simple ones to complicated ones. What I would like to introduce here for the practitioners at this level are quite simple feint actions and a slightly complicated one. Some examples of simple ones are, “pretend to attack Men after using Osae-waza, make the opponent defend Men, and then actually attack Kote or Do” and “pretend to attack Kote after using Harai from left to right, make the opponent defend Kote, and then actually attack Men.” This tactic develops into slightly complicated ones such as “pretend to attack Kote-Men after using Harai from left to right, make the opponent defend Men, and then actually attack right Do or left Do (Gyaku Do).” What has to be remembered for trying to use these feint actions at this level is act smart, “outwit the opponent properly, and then strike.” You need to lift up your Shinai with a big motion after using Osae-waza, for example, to make your opponent believe that you are coming to strike Men. And make the opponent defend Men, and then actually attack Do, because it is easy to defend it in the case of “pretend to attack Men after using Osae-waza.” When trying to use “feint action then strike,” many practitioners tend to try to do it too quickly. That will result in not being able to act properly, and your opponent will not defend as you wish. The practitioners at this level should remember that what is important for them is not to move fast, but make their opponents easy to defend the target by using their Shinai only, using skillful and slightly exaggerated acts. It is also assumed that practitioners at this level have some **Tokui-waza** (Waza that they are good at and use with confidence to score). In addition to the tactics with feint actions, what practitioners at this level are recommended to try is to develop their Ji-geiko with the thoughts of when or in what situation they should use their Tokui-waza (or favorite waza). Here, I would like to ask you to stop reading for a while and think the followings:

- 1) *How long do you attempt using your Tokui-waza after the start of Ji-geiko or Shiai?*
- 2) *What are the conditions (e.g. distance, timing) of attempting your Tokui-waza?*

I would also like you to think about what type of opponent you think you can or cannot score by your Tokui-waza. Can you picture a particular situation(s) and type(s) of opponent(s)? How much you know depends on how clearly you can imagine the pictures in your mind. Even if you don't think you have any Tokui-waza, I suppose at least you would have your favorite Waza. I suggest that you start thinking about using your favorite Waza in your tactics effectively in Ji-geiko and Shiai. If you cannot bring any picture of a situation and type of opponent, then use your Tokui-waza in your mind; I also suggest that you start reflecting how you fight after each Ji-geiko. As described in the previous article, thinking about the above things will not only help you develop your tactical ability but also help you develop greater scope in your Kendo and deepen your understanding of the technical and psychological structure, the mechanism of each Waza and its interaction with others.

There are “**Sute-waza**” and “**Mise-waza**,” as well as those Waza using feint actions that you can use to develop your Ji-geiko and Shiai. Literary “Sute” means to “throw away,” and “Mise” means to “show.” The meanings of these words here as tactics in Kendo are Waza that are used for the purpose not to score but to plant Mise-Waza in your opponent's mind so that you can make your Tokui-waza, different from the “Mise-waza, more effectively in a later attack. For examples, you can attack simple Kote-Men a couple of times, make your opponent think of your Kote-Men and make the opponent defend by using only hands, and then you score by your Tokui-waza, Kote-Do attack. Another example, you attack a powerful and sharp Kote a couple of times knowing they get blocked and then score by Katsugi-Men later. The important point is that you should not attack by using only your hands but should attack with your whole body even if the Waza that you use is “Sute-waza” or “Mise-waza.” Otherwise, you will not be able to plant in your opponent's mind the fact that you are attacking Kote, and you may get counterattacked easily. Here again, you need to show “realistic acting.” Your Sute-waza or Mise-waza might reach a target even if you didn't intend it. In that case, of course, you need to make it Ippon, so you need to use your “Sute-waza” or “Mise-waza” with Ki-ken-tai-no-itchi.

Summary

As you gain experience, you are expected not only to develop your Tokui-waza and favorite techniques but also to improve the Waza that you are not good at and to become able to deal with people whose type of Kendo is hard for you to handle. For this reason, continuing to avoid practicing with people who are hard for you to deal with is not a good attitude as described in “Attitudes to Ji-geiko Part 2.” That will remain as your weak point. You should try to do Ji-geiko with them more often than with anyone else. Your attempt will fail, and you will be struck again and again, but you cannot overcome this unless you keep trying. Learning through being struck is the way of developing Kendo.

Of course, it is also important to try new techniques. However, do not try to do too many things in one Ji-geiko, but have an appropriate task(s), considering your current ability and referring to your teacher's teaching and advice. The next article will discuss learning of tactics for 3~5th Dan grade holders, and 6th Dan grade holders and above.

References

The All Japan Kendo Federation (2000) Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo, Tokyo: Sato-Inshokan Inc.
Okajima, H. (1992) "Kosei-teki na Waza-zukuri no Sido-ho (Teaching that aims to develop pupils' favorite techniques)," in Zenkoku Kyoiku-Kei Digaku Kendo Renmei (the National Kendo Federation of Universities with Education Faculties). Zemina-ru Gendai Kendo (The Seminar on Modern Kendo), pp. 140-148. Tokyo: Madosya Ltd.
Honda, S. (2004) "Attitudes to Ji-geiko Part 1"; Honda, S. (2004) "Attitudes to Ji-geiko Part 2"

The Article Part 3

Introduction

In the previous article, the tactics for Kyu grade practitioners and 1st~2nd Dan practitioners were considered. In this article, tactics for 3rd~5th Dan practitioners are discussed. Firstly, I will describe methods of Keiko that 3rd~5th Dan practitioners are recommended to try out, to discover and to develop their tactics against various types of opponents followed by the continuation of "four opportunities for striking in Kendo." In the previous article, two opportunities, "strike when the opponent finishes a strike" and "strike when the opponent blocks a strike" were covered about tactics. In this article, two other opportunities, "strike when the opponent begins to strike" and "strike when the opponent moves back" are discussed through ways of making an opponent attack or through the ways of making an opponent move back using Seme with the right foot.

1. Methods of Keiko for Discovering and Developing Tactics for 3rd-5th Practitioners

At this level, it is important to think how to develop Ji-geiko tactically when considering your "type of opponent" and "your opponent's type of Kendo" while trying to extend the scope of your own Kendo. The "type of opponent" may be described in the following categories: 1) who are taller or shorter, 2) whose Kensen is higher or lower, 3) whose Kensen is straight or slightly to the right, 4) whose stance is big, small or wide, 5) whose back foot is diagonally facing out or not, 6) whose weight is more on the right-foot or on the left-foot, 7) whose posture is straight up, leaning forward, or leaning backward, etc. The "opponent's type of Kendo" may be described in the following categories: 1) who holds shinai tightly or softly, 2) who doesn't use Te-no-uchi, but relies on power, 3) who moves fast, 4) who is good at Debana-waza or tries for it, 5) who is good at Kaeshi-waza or tries for it, 6) who is good at Hiki-waza or tries for it, 7) who is good at Renzoku-waza or tries for it, 8) who is good at feint techniques or tries for it, etc. As the above examples imply, when you think about your opponent, it should include both elements. To be able to do your Kendo, it is quite important for you to consider, try, develop, and to acquire tactics for fighting against both types. Here, as I asked you to do in the previous article, I would like to ask you to stop reading for a while and instead think regarding the above examples, about the Kendo or your Dojo members.

How are you fighting against various types of the opponent and their Kendo type? What footwork, shinai and body movements, Waza and combinations of Waza are you using? As I described in the previous article, also try thinking of the process of using Tokui-waza [your favorite Waza]. How much in your Kendo depends on how clearly and quickly you can picture all of the possibilities in your mind. Thinking the above things will also help develop the tactics you will need to create and develop the scope of your Kendo against various type of the opponent and their type of Kendo. As described in the Article Part 1, "doing your own Kendo" does not mean doing Kendo in which you attack with the same timing and same Waza all the time against all types of opponent. How you fight changes, and you must change your tactical methods of fighting accordingly to your opponent, their type of Kendo and the situation. That does not mean, however, you should try to do something you do not normally do. You must choose the best option, for the best option may be unconsciously made from a variety of choices. Of course, a person who does not have any choices can only do one sort of Kendo. Such a person may easily beat some particular type(s) of the opponent with the type of Kendo but is no match for some others. Such a player is difficult to select and use speaking of a position of coach.

What tactics can we use and how can we fight? Here, it is not my intention to describe what to do against every type of opponent and their Kendo, but I would like to describe some methods of Keiko that 3rd~5th Dan practitioners are recommended to attempt, reflect, revise, develop, and to refine their tactics. The importance of pursuing Ji-geiko with people who are hard for you to deal with was described in Attitudes to Ji-geiko Part 2. To keep avoiding practicing with them is not a solution. Your problem will remain. It is suggested that you should try to do Ji-geiko with them more than with anyone else and try to overcome the fear and problems, by being struck, again and again, reflecting on your Ji-geiko with them, planning and creating your tactics. In addition to this, here, I would also like to recommend trying to copy their Kendo. I think we all have had this experience of trying to copy someone's Kendo that we admire. Try to copy that person's way of Kamae, footwork, posture, attacking, and try to be that person to gain something. By doing so, you are trying to grasp the feeling of that person's attacks and also the type of Seme that person may not like being attacked against, i.e., Men, Kote, Do, etc., where there may be weaknesses. By adopting a style of Kendo that you find difficult, you may also get insights into the strengths of that style while practicing with a junior and you may be made aware of those weaknesses when you practice with a senior.

2. Learning Seme to Make Your Opponent Either qqStrike or Move Back

Previously, I referred to "four opportunities for striking" and said that "striking when the opponent finishes a strike" would be an important tactic for Kyu grade practitioners to learn and try during Ji-geiko with other Kyu grade holders. I also talked about attacking with feint actions and attacking with Sute-waza and Mise-waza that makes use of one's Tokui-waza for 1st~2nd Dan practitioners. These are related to "striking when the opponent blocks a strike" within the four opportunities for striking. In addition to these, 3rd Dan and the above practitioners should learn two other opportunities for striking, "striking when the opponent begins to strike" and "striking as the opponent moves back." Things that are expected of practitioners at this level are to have acquired the proper technique of Te-no-uchi in both Shikake-waza and Oji-waza. I don't mean that you should be able to execute both Shikake-waza and Oji-waza with the proper technique of Te-no-uchi in Ji-geiko, but that you should at least be able to do them in Waza-geiko when there is normally no resistance from your partner, and you know where they are going to attack. In my experience, however, less than half of practitioners at this level in the U.K. can show the proper technique of Te-no-uchi in Waza-geiko. We can attack and defend without relying too much on our physical power by acquiring proper Te-no-uchi; therefore, practice kendo throughout our lifetime with anyone irrespective of the difference in sex, age and physique. It is no exaggeration to say that acquiring Te-no-uchi is vital for lifelong Kendo. However, the purpose of this article is to describe tactics and not to describe methods of acquiring the technique of Te-no-uchi. The following focuses on the two opportunities for striking, "striking when the opponent begins to strike" and "striking as the opponent moves back" and proceeds on the premise that practitioners have a proper understanding of the technique of Te-no-uchi.

2-1. Seme in Kendo

It should be fairly obvious that striking when the opponent begins to strike or moves back does not just mean waiting for the opponent's action. 3rd Dan ~ 5th Dan practitioners are required to learn methods of Seme that will make the opponent strike or move back. Let's examine what the Seme is before discussing methods of Seme. According to the Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo (A.J.K.E., 2000, p. 83), Seme in Kendo is explained as "To take the initiative to close the distance with the opponent with full spirit. That puts the opponent off balance mentally and physically and prevents them from moving freely." This definition gives the impression that Seme occurs in only one situation. However, it is my opinion that the pressure generated by Seme can be felt at all distances and in all situations. That is, even if you are at a very close distance such as Tsuba-zeriai, where you cannot get any closer or at a far distance. It is quite important to give Seme with full spirit and the action that aims to overwhelm the opponent to take an advantage. Due to page limits, some methods of Seme in situations where you and your opponent are facing each other in Kamae are not covered here. However, the following methods of Seme are quite important and are related to how you make your opponent move for a strike or move him back.

2-2. Seme from Kamae: Use of the Right Foot

There is an infinite number of methods of Seme in Kendo. Here, attention is paid to the practical use of the right foot and some of the methods of Seme that include making your opponent move for a strike or move back.

Tactics in Kendo

By Sotaro Honda sensei, Ph.D., University of Gloucestershire, British Squad Coach
Article retrieved from: <http://www.britishkendoassociation.com/tactics-in-kendo/>

Page 8 of 8

Traditionally in Kendo, the right foot is called “**Seme-ashi** (foot used for Seme),” and the left foot is called “**Jiku-ashi** (foot used for supporting the body, a stem or an axis of rotation).” You need to use the right foot softly, smoothly and freely to give pressure and invite the opponent to initiate an attack. You need to feel as if your left foot, left leg, left hip and left side body is connected by one line, and you also need to make your left foot ready for push off and follow to the right foot with Fumikiri (left-foot push off) anytime. However, you will not be able to use the feet as described above if the distance between your right and left foot is too wide from front to rear, for example. Or the center of gravity moves forward and backward, or from backward to forward, or your upper body leans forward and backward in the Kamae, while you are trying to apply pressure to your opponent, inviting the opponent to initiate an attack. When the stance of the feet is too wide, and movement of your center of the gravity is also wide, you will not then be able to see your opponent in a fixed position, and the timing of your striking will be easily sensed by your opponent. It is important, therefore for practitioners at this level, to understand how to use “Seme-ashi” and “Jiku-ashi” and develop their Kendo so that they give Seme with smaller and more effective movements. What follows next is a description of some methods of Seme-ashi.

Firstly, it is important for you to be physically and mentally prepared to attack your opponent and to react to your opponent’s attack from the moment you take Kamae after the stand up from Sonkyo. It is said that Kendo starts with Rei and finishes with Rei. I don’t think that this only refers to the matter of etiquette. From the moment you face your opponent and bow, your fight begins, and it is important to remain focused until the final Rei with your opponent. If you attempt to do your Keiko with this attitude, you will discover the most suitable methods of putting your weight on the feet. Take the stance between the feet, keep your Kensen middle, stretch your left leg, and bend your right knee and so on. If your attitude to how you take Kamae changes, your footwork will change, your posture will change, your Seme will change, and your Kendo will change. Earlier I described the use of the right foot as Seme-ashi. The right foot is also used as a kind of radar that can detect the opponent’s intention. Ji-geiko, Shiai and grading examinations normally start with the two practitioners trying to “search out” and discover each other’s type of Kendo and intention, as well as trying to give pressure with their tactics. For this “searching” and “pressurizing” bring your right foot slightly (only slightly) forward, without leaning forward and losing the feeling that your left foot, left leg, left hip and left the side of the body are connected. At the same time, try to give pressure together with invitations to your opponent to attack you by using the Shinai in the following ways; Osaе, Harai, straight in, raising the Kensen up or lowering it. In the situation when your opponent does not react to your Seme, or you feel uncomfortable with the timing, distance and body balance, bring your left foot up and slide the right foot forward again, searching and pressuring or bring back your right foot and start over again. In addition to this, there are other ways of practical use of the right foot. For example, you stamp on the floor quickly and strongly with the right foot or bend your right knee quickly and slightly to make the opponent agitate or initiate an attack.

Use Tsugi-ashi technique if you would like to get closer to your opponent, someone taller for example, without him knowing (bring your left foot next to your right foot before stepping the right foot forward). As the result of or in the process of the above “searching” and “pressurizing” you find an opportunity, and then you must immediately go for a strike. If your opponent feels strong pressure from you and moves back, you immediately follow and give your opponent bigger pressure or follow and strike. Use Debana-waza or counterattack with Oji-waza if your opponent begins to strike or strikes. What you should be very careful of is the timing as you bring your left foot up (**Hiki-Tsuke**, pulling up the back foot). It is quite difficult to react if your opponent attacks at this point. In fact, top-level kendo-ka is looking for this point and can score wonderful Tobikomi-men. All of the top-level Sensei that I know check that they are standing firmly by keeping a line between the left foot, left leg, left hip and left the side of the body and are in the position that they can attack and react to their opponent’s attacking at any time. Moreover, their skillful use of the right foot and Shinai handling make their opponent’s initiate an attack (for example Men) enabling them to counterattack beautifully (for example Kaeshi-Do). Their skillful use of the right foot and Shinai handling also gives their opponent strong pressure and makes them move back. Then they are immediately followed and struck by wonderful Men or Kote-Men. In conclusion, there are infinite numbers of methods used for Seme in Kendo and the above methods are just some examples. I think, however, that these patterns of Seme are well worthwhile practicing to acquire a higher quality of Kendo and Kendo that you can continue throughout your life.