

SPOTLIGHT ON

Denmark's Honbu Dojo

EUROPEAN GASSHUKU

First major event post-pandemic

REPORT

South American Gasshuku

IOGKF

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EXCLUSIVE P. 2

Sensei Linda on strength and flexibility



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FLEXIBILITY & STABILITY & STRENGTH

WRITTEN BY SENSEI LINDA MARCHANT (EGKA)

Why do any additional exercises in karate training?

Since I started training seriously – whether that was for rowing, hockey, squash or karate – scientific understanding of training, nutrition and body care processes have improved exponentially. However, there has been a core set of activities that has stayed with me. I've adapted some, and now understand how beneficial they are to my daily karate training.

These core activities have always included endurance training, but also explosive reaction training, agility training and making my body tougher. All these were interconnected in all the sports that I did. I trained for endurance with long runs, hours of rowing, burpees (now mountain climbers) thousands of skips (with a rope)

and a stack of weight training. My speed training included power lifts, jump squats up a wall, interval skipping and running, as well as sprint rowing on the water and on the rowing machine. My flexibility was down to genetics, yoga postures that I practised as well as yoga classes, and a number of karate-based partner and individual stretching exercises.

It feels like the right time for me to look a bit more closely at what I am doing in my training and teaching regime, and how I can improve and help my students.

We talk about flexibility, stability and strength, but why does it matter to us in karate training?

I see many people before a lesson – and afterwards – doing some form of stretching



for a few moments, or holding postures for a while. which is better?

To work that out, we need to consider what we do in our practice – warm up, aerobic exercise, techniques, moving basics, kata, partner work, kumite, hoju undo and so on. We also need to think about our ultimate aim. To get better at kata, faster at executing the techniques, more powerful in striking, more skilful in kumite, better at teaching or just to get through the session...?

In my experience, the IOGKF system provides us with one of the most complete training regimes possible.

We use a variety of flexibility exercises, which are integrated with hoju undo and partner work. This gives us safe strength training that we can take to any level and build on with our own supplementary self-training.

A bit of physiology

Movement is made up of lots of different elements: joints, tendons, muscles and ligaments. I think some of the key areas of stability and mobility for karate are feet and ankles, knees, pelvic girdle, hips, shoulders and of course the spine. (I won't cover the spine, as it is well documented in Mistry



Sensei's book on Sanchin.)

The feet and ankles need to be flexible and stable, the knees stable, the pelvic girdle stable, the hips flexible and the shoulder girdle flexible.

What is flexibility?

Flexibility is defined as the static maximum range of motion (ROM) available about a joint. The largest limiting factor is the joint itself, and joint structures can vary in everyone.

Most of the variability in static ROM is due to the elastic properties of the muscle and tendons attached to the joint. 'Stiff' muscles and tendons reduce the ROM while 'compliant' ones increase the ROM. It is these elastic properties that are altered after the stretching exercises.

Hypermobility means the ligaments around a joint become loose and have an unusually large range of movement. In addition, the muscles and joints can become painful and dislocate, and/or sprain easily. This is a condition to watch out for in yourself and your students.

And stability is...?

The way that the parts of the joints fit together depends on a number of factors. The most important is the strength of the ligaments and the tone of the surrounding muscles. Muscle tone normally prevents a severe strain on the ligaments being more

than momentary.

They work together:

Great mobility is essential at the shoulder, so the joint capsule (an envelope surrounding a synovial joint) is loose, and the large head of the upper arm bone (the humerus) fits poorly into the shallow bone part (glenoid fossa) of the scapula (shoulder blade). This instability is overcome by having the tendons of the small rotator muscles blend with the capsule, so that the anatomical deficiency is compensated for by muscle guarding. There is also the clavicle (collar bone) joining the scapula to the sternum and bearing part of the burden of the hanging arm. This is the shoulder girdle.

In the hip, stability is important; the femoral head (the head of the upper leg bone) is deeply buried in the socket of the 'ball and socket' hip joint (acetabulum) and therefore blending of the neighbouring muscles with the capsule is unnecessary. Minor supportive factors are interlocking of the bone ends, rarely very secure in itself, and the cohesion of atmospheric pressure. The two pelvic bones are firmly attached to the spine – the sacrum – at the sacroiliac joint. This is the pelvic girdle and only permits movement at the hip.

How can we stretch to maintain and improve flexibility?

Stretching can be divided into the following:



1. **Static stretching** – the muscle is stretched until you feel a gentle 'pull', held for around 10 seconds. It should be pain free and used to develop flexibility, particularly after a muscle strain injury.
2. **Dynamic or active stretching** – stretching your muscles by moving, for example, leg swings, or specific drills
3. **PNF stretching** - stands for 'Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation' and can take on several forms including hold-relax; contract- relax, either initiated by you, or your partner provides resistance whilst you contract the muscles.
4. **Ballistic-type stretching** – you stretch the muscle as far as it is comfortable to do so, then at the end range you bounce or force the joint a bit further. Extreme joint range requirements such as ballet and martial artists often include it in their routines! Be careful!
5. **Muscle energy techniques** - for therapists who move the athlete's body in positions to release tension and enable stretches.
6. **Neural stretching** – stretching structures of the nervous system, commonly neck shoulders and pelvis, This should only be performed under supervision of a physiotherapist.

What do we do?

In karate I think we use mainly the static, active, PNF and some ballistic exercises. There are different requirements depending on what we are doing. If we are doing kata, the static and active stretching may be more appropriate than PNF and ballistic exercises, which would cover more explosive techniques such as bag work and kumite training.

Some static stretches are also best done after a class, when the muscles are warm and already contracted, or set in a completely separate session, for example yoga or pilates. Active stretching, such as leg raises or high knee raises, may be included within a session and before practicing kumite drills. It is important to use the correct type of stretching for the activity to get the most out of your practice.

You need mindfulness to train flexibility and strength. You can't just go through the motions. Practice the techniques with intent and ask yourself if you can feel or see improvement. If you can't, then why not? It is always a good question to ask. Do you find it painful or have an injury? In that case, you may need an alternative exercise. If you don't have a standard-issue body, then again you may need something different. If you are not feeling well, then ask whether you should be training at all!

Instructors need to have some answers here

and it can help to have some knowledge to point both ourselves and others in the right direction. Some situations may be straight forward, and an alternative is obvious. Others may need an expert opinion from a physio, body therapy – Manuvison (Sensei Torben Svendsen, Denmark), chiropractor, osteopath or the like!

It's complicated to navigate through all the various parts of the body, their interconnectivity and what is best for each part. Coaches, karate instructors, and medical experts can really help with leading you down the right path to recovery, mobility and longevity, and I have been fortunate to have had much advice over the years, though I am not expert.

Junbi Undo

You'd be absolutely correct in thinking that our warm-up exercises in junbi undo take into account these key areas and more. But we are focussed on warming up and getting our bodies moving, rather than going full throttle, so you need to be careful not to push the exercises too much. The exercises are about karate training preparation and so if you were to spend a couple of hours on the full programme, rather than 20 minutes, you would see a difference in your performance.

We can be more mindful throughout our junbi undo, looking at our toe flexibility, ankle rotation and stability in balancing, hip flexibility in the stretching activities,

knee flexion and bending in squatting, hip flexibility in tai otoshi and our shoulder girdle mobility in the arm swings.

We need to ask ourselves: have I improved in junbi undo, or do I give it cursory attention for a quick warming up process only? Or don't I know? I believe this is also something that all instructors leading a warm-up can bring to everyone's attention. The details do matter!

In my experience, in junbi undo, progress looks like this:

1. the basic movement – remembering the order of the exercises and introducing your body to the practice
2. awareness of your range of motion – finding ease of movement and starting to improve speed and height, for example performing hiza geri and leg swings, accelerate both the swing up and return movements whilst engaging the core; include varying degrees of fast and slow swings of the arms, plus neck flexibility that is consistent and free in all directions
3. advanced mobility and full range of motion – use of core power and stability, maximum range of flexibility in all the exercises and a move into ballistic stretching (bounce type movement to exceed the static range)

This progression may not be obvious, but with the help of our instructor over time, the added details in the practice will lead to a better execution of the exercises. This in turn will affect our performance of karate moves.

In the next issue, I would like to cover some stretching exercises and strength methodologies that you can bring into your training to improve performance and recovery in karate practice. 📺





A photograph of a modern, two-story building with a light grey facade. A large red beam is visible in the upper left corner. The building has several windows and three black light fixtures mounted on the wall. A sign on the right side of the building reads "Nykøbing F. KarateCenter" in red, with "Karate · Fitness · Styrketræning · Motion" in black below it. A small white sign with a red 'X' is visible on the lower right wall. A paved area and some greenery are in the foreground.

Nykøbing F. KarateCenter
Karate · Fitness · Styrketræning · Motion

I OG KF DOJOS

AROUND THE WORLD

NYKØBING F.

KARATECENTER



WRITTEN BY EMILIE LARSEN (IOGKF DENMARK)

The Danish Honbu Dojo is located in the town of Nykøbing Falster, approximately 1.5 hours drive south from Denmark's capital Copenhagen.

Nykøbing Falster is a small provincial town with 18,000 inhabitants, located on the island of Falster.

In 1998, the city got a new and modern swimming pool. This meant that the old swimming hall lay empty and unused and because it was part of a larger hall, it could not be demolished. At this time, our local karate club (IOGKF) was one of the city's biggest clubs in the town and the hall approached us and asked if we would be involved in a development project of the old swimming hall.

At this time, we had major problems finding premises for our activities and we had developed a smaller Fitness Center alongside the karate dojo. This was therefore a great solution - if we could take over the old swimming pool, we could gather all our activities together in a place where we had 1,200 m² available to us.

We were given free rein to arrange the premises so that they were as optimal as possible, particularly in relation to karate. It ended up costing a lot of money, since basically everything had to be rebuilt. The club contributed a large amount to the project, as did the Municipality and various foundations. In 2000, the premises were completed and as our International founder said: "It is probably the best dojo in the world".

We let the pictures speak for themselves. 





2022 South American Gasshuku

WRITTEN BY KILDER GIOVANNI DE ARAUJO (IOGKF BRASIL)

On July 8, 9, and 10, 2022, the IOGKF South American Gasshuku for 2022 took place in the city of Vitória (ES) - Brazil, at the Nikkei Association of Vitória (association of Japanese descendants). The event was organized by Zé Mário Sensei, IOGKF Brazil representative, and had the honorable presence of Tetsuji Nakamura Sensei, IOGKF world chief instructor, who transmitted with sympathy and charisma the tradition of Goju-Ryu Karate-Do to the participants. The participation of representatives from South American countries, who also taught classes during Gasshuku, enriched the event and provided memorable moments that created connections between all the members, enabling a family, healthy and fun environment.

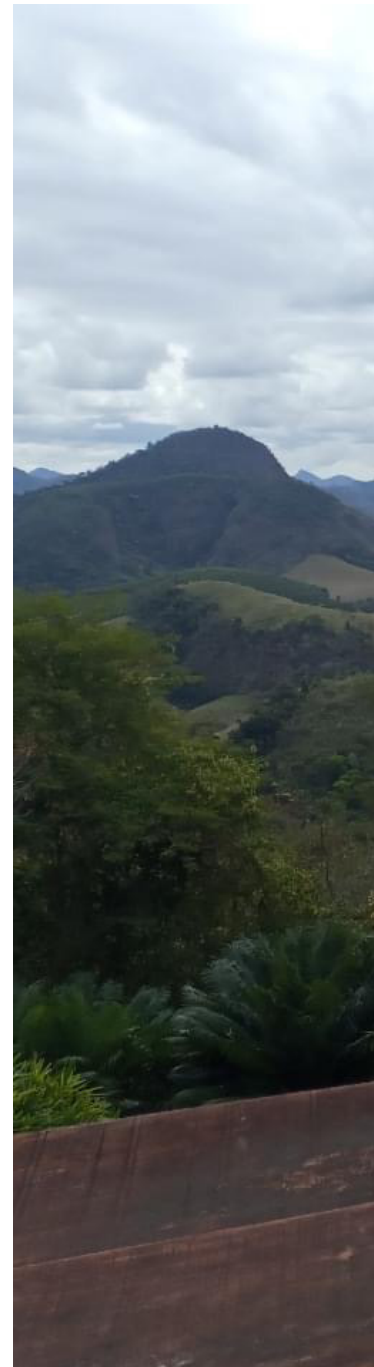
The activities began with Nakamura Sensei's "invitation" for morning practice on the sand of Vitória beach, where we greeted the day with Sanchin kata.

The calm water of the sea mirrored the first rays of the sun and this natural setting served as inspiration for the study of the "three battles", the Sanchin meaning.

Nothing better than the peace that nature gives us, you just have to stop and contemplate.

Founded in 1974, the Zen monastery Morro da Vargem was the first Zen Buddhist monastery in Latin America.

There, Gasshuku participants were able to visit its facilities, gardens, Tori's path, statue of Bodhidharma and the great seated Buddha, the largest Buddha statue in the West and the second largest in the world.



Nakamura Sensei replenished his energies admiring the beautiful Brazilian natural landscapes at the deck of the Zen Buddhist Monastery Morro da Vargem (temple of the light of Zen), a place for the practice of spiritual refinement.



The IOGKF South American Gasshuku 2022 was dedicated to the memory of Shuichi Aragaki Sensei, the first IOGKF master of Tetsuji Nakamura Sensei.

Tetsuji Nakamura Sensei briefly told us stories of Aragaki Sensei.

"Shuichi Aragaki was the last student of Chojun Miyagi and at that time An'ichi Miyagi Sensei was the senior of Shuichi Aragaki Sensei.

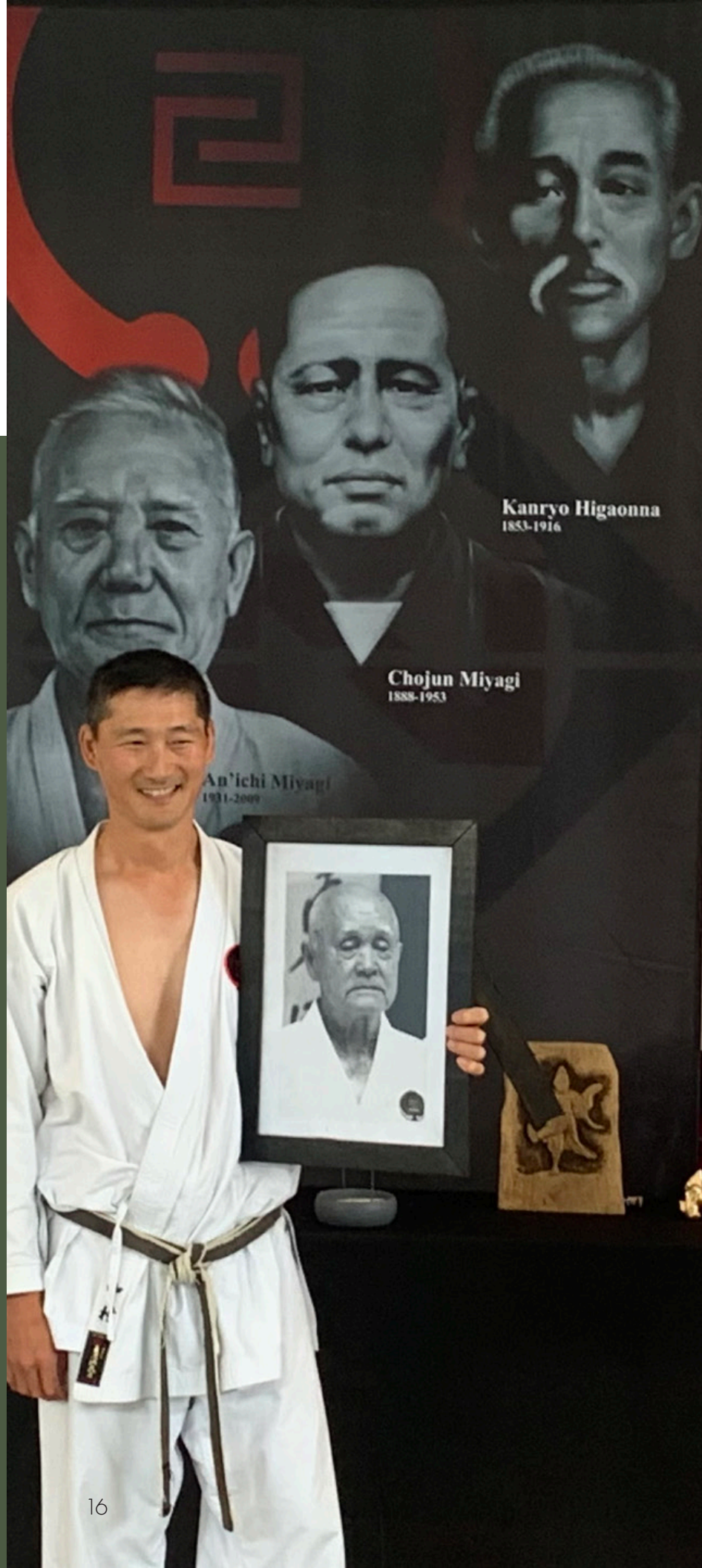
Aragaki Sensei always told me that An'ichi Miyagi knew all the essence of Chojun Miyagi Sensei's Goju Ryu. That the last part of Chojun Miyagi Sensei's life was lived with the presence of An'ichi Miyagi Sensei by his side.

Aragaki Sensei told me that in order to learn Goju Ryu well, I would need to train with Morio Higaonna Sensei.

If it weren't for Aragaki Sensei, I wouldn't be here.

And that's why I say: It's very important! If you meet a true master, grab them and keep them."

- Tetsuji Nakamura Sensei



Nakamura Sensei's smile is contagious! The atmosphere among the participants was relaxed, with great joy. Even the famous group photo lost its formal character and was spontaneously celebrated by everyone.

A Gasshuku's purpose is for knowledge and technical improvement, through close coexistence between friends in days of intensive training, which creates bonds that connect human relationships. The result of this are sincere smiles.



The activities were distributed in groups that had the participation of instructors from the countries present at gasshuku, who brilliantly conducted their training maintaining a high technical level.

During the 2022 South American Gasshuku it was emphasized that we need to educate our students and help them to become good people.

Tetsuji Nakamura Sensei tells how they were selected by the old masters, the beginner students of Karate.

"Goju Ryu techniques are very old and very dangerous. They were really created to destroy the adversary. Our organization wants to keep this knowledge, but not to use it on someone else. When we practice, we have to control our movements and respect our colleagues. Respect is the most important value to be taught at IOGKF!"

"In ancient times, teaching martial arts was like giving the student a weapon. First the Sensei needed to make sure the student had good character. The student spent months working in the master's house, doing household chores and socializing with Sensei. If he was a good person, he would learn Karate, if not, he would be excused from training Karate."



Today, we teach Karate to everyone who wants to practice. But it is important that we teach “respect” and that we make these students good people. Respect is the main teaching of our organization.”

Children are the hope of our future and the memory of our past.

Nakamura Sensei is dedicated to taking good care of children, giving attention and setting an example for them.

During the practice of Gekisai Dai Ichi, Nakamura Sensei moved everyone by showing affection when helping a child beginner in Karate.

Instructors from the countries present at the gasshuku taught high-level technical classes. It was a very productive exchange and presented the different views that each Sensei has on the IOGKF curriculum, which was well explored, having passed through the Kaishu Kata forms as the main focus of studies. The Heishu Kata forms (Sanchin Kata and Tensho Kata) were explored by Nakamura Sensei also.



In a relaxed interview, Zé Mário Sensei, organizer of the 2022 South American Gasshuku and IOGKF representative in Brazil, talks about the event:

Zé Mário Sensei, you are Portuguese and live in Brazil with your family, where you represent the IOGKF. How long have you been working in Brazil and how did this story begin?

Although I was already teaching in Portugal, in 2010 when I arrived in Brazil, I practiced alone for about 8 months only with my Hojo Undo equipment. After that period, I opened a small Dojo and started teaching. And the following year I went to the South American Gasshuku, in Caracas, Venezuela. During this Gasshuku, Sensei Morio Higaonna invited me to participate in the usual meeting of the South American IOGKF representatives and at that meeting he appointed me as the representative for Brazil. It was mentioned that he made that decision motivated by the description that my teacher, Jorge Monteiro Sensei had made about me, which I was very honored.

Where did you start learning Karate?

I started my karate in Portugal, already within the IOGKF, first with a friend and excellent karateka, Sensei Edmundo Silva and from a green belt, with the meticulous Sensei Mário Soares, from both I keep excellent memories of learning, although very different in the approach as Sensei's.

When I made it to brown belt "the Master appeared", Sensei Jorge Monteiro, head instructor of IOGKF Portugal. From that moment

on, my attitude and vision of karate changed radically and I never stopped training intensely, literally accompanying my Master wherever he went to teach classes or give seminars. I think that's why I arrived in Brazil prepared.

This Gasshuku was dedicated to Shuichi Aragaki. Congratulations on this sensitivity, Sensei!

This Gasshuku was an opportunity to recognize Shuichi Aragaki Sensei's importance to the IOGKF.

Our lineage goes through An'Ichii Miyagi Sensei, who was the master of Sensei Morio Higaonna, but Shuichi Aragaki Sensei was a contemporary of An'Inchi Sensei and practiced at Chojun Miyagi's "Garden dojo".

Aragaki Sensei has always been linked to the IOGKF as an advisor and more importantly, he was the one who took Nakamura Sensei to IOGKF. Nakamura Sensei recognizes Aragaki Sensei as his first Master and is very grateful to him, so I think this recognition and homage was well deserved and timely.

How does it feel to bring together the countries of South America at an event in Brazil?

I would say it was a goal accomplished. This event was supposed to be held in 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic, but as it was not possible, it was postponed without a date. As soon as the borders opened I made sure it was one of the first face-to-face meetings to be held, as I knew how important this was to motivate people to meet and practice in person.

Obviously, with all this scenario, I couldn't expect a "full house", but even so, we had the participation of the IOGKF countries from all over South America, to which I am very grateful to their head instructors, who managed to motivate their members to come to Brazil. They knew how important it was to help Brazil in this first South American Gasshuku. It was also a great opportunity to bring together all the members of IOGKF Brazil. I deeply appreciate the support shown by our members.

What is the legacy of this Gasshuku for IOGKF Brazil?

It will certainly remain in the history of the international IOGKF, not only as the first South American Gasshuku in Brazil, but also as a Gasshuku with lots of training and fun. All the participants spent a lot of time together and besides the intense training, they all had a lot of fun, in the best Brazilian way. Sensei Nakamura

was the "master key" of this event, due to his technical and administrative capacity and also to interact with everyone involved.

As a legacy, it makes clear that IOGKF Brasil has the ability to organize these type of events and also to organize itself internally with all its members involved.

I believe that there is IOGKF Brasil before the first South American Gasshuku held here and now there is IOGKF Brasil after the South American Gasshuku, both in terms of organization and growth.

At the end of the event, in the Brazilian style, the "Sayonara party" took place, with lots of samba, joy and unity among the participants of the South American Gasshuku 2022, an event which we have barely said goodbye and already I miss those who was present.




33RD IOGKF EUROPEAN GASSHUKU



WRITTEN BY JORGE MONTEIRO JR. (IOGKF PORTUGAL)

This year marked the 33rd IOGKF European Gashuku. This event was from the 26th to the 30th of July in Portugal and was organized by Sensei Jorge Monteiro (APOGK CI AND IOGKF Advisor) and his IOGKF Portugal team. It was an extra special event for the Portuguese practitioners because it is also the year that APOGK marks its 40th year of existence led by Sensei Jorge Monteiro.



European Gashuku's have been a core event of IOKF since 1979 and many karate-ka's travel to a different country for the opportunity to train with the most prestigious instructors for around the world. These events happen every year, with exception of the years where the world Budosai in Okinawa takes place. Besides from the training and learning experience, these events serve as a meeting point for friends and colleagues of many years that only see each other once a year, or less. However, never have we lived in times like this. Since the covid19 pandemic started in 2020, almost every country was shut down for a long time, and because of the strict rules it has been impossible to have events this big. Being so, this is the first European Gashuku in a long time, which made it very special.

Sensei Jorge Monteiro always believed in the success of this event, however, he was worried some people might not come to Portugal for the fear of travelling or socializing, since covid19 is still relevant. Even so, the event was a great success. It had a few hundred students learning from 10 different instructors.

Personally, I think this Gasshuku truly reflected what IOKF is all about. We had the best Sensei's in the world teaching us different types of training methods, correcting our form and technique and giving us new tools to improve ourselves as karate-ka and as a person. It was great to see many people from around the world that I haven't seen in a long time, which brought back many memories. There was time to train and sweat, but also to socialize and have fun. We were reminded that the training and sacrifice we do together with our international friends helps us improve ourselves and bond with each other. As usual, the last training session together after five days of hard training ended with countless punches in shiko dashi and some basic intensive training led by Sensei Nakamura, and after that we did Sanchin kata.

We also had an amazing sayonara party with all you can eat food and drink. There was a dance floor where several dancers showed everyone some traditional Portuguese dances and even invited some of the karate-ka's to join them, including Sensei Nakamura who was very happy with the outcome of the whole week. The food was also very characteristic of Portugal. All of this gave the karate-ka's the experience of some of the many Portuguese traditions.

Sensei Jorge was very happy with how the gasshuku turned out, everything was well

organized, the staff members were impeccable, and the conditions of the sports complex were amazing.

On the first day of training, sensei Jorge had a special surprise for us all, as he called Higaonna sensei to give us some encouragement words. And so he did, everyone was very happy to hear his voice and to have his approval. We hope this events success also serves as motivation for future LOGKF events. 🍷







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