

## PRACTICING JUDO WITH A PURPOSE

By Sid Kelly 8<sup>th</sup> dan judo

(May 2011)

Imagine for a moment two identical twins named John and Ben. They grew up in the same house, went to the same school, had the same teachers, read the same books and magazines, had the same hobbies, watched the same movies, had the same taste in girls, clothes, and food, worked in the same office, did the same work, had the same boss, and are identical in looks and weight. At the age of twenty they were as identical as any two human beings could be. But all that changed one day when Ben decided that he wanted to improve his vocabulary and John said, "he didn't." Because Ben desired to have a bigger vocabulary John began calling his brother Big Ben. And since they had similar tastes in humor, Ben countered by calling his brother Little John. Whatever triggered the desire to improve Ben's vocabulary no one knows. But to quench this desire he took it upon himself to do the following at least five days week:

- 1) Learn three new words a day by writing out their definitions, practicing them in a written sentence, and make a conscious effort to use them daily in conversation.
- 2) Every new word he came across, whether it be from a book, a newspaper, a magazine, a film, television, radio or during conversation, he would also: look up the meaning of the word, write it out and use it in daily conversation.

Now Ben had read somewhere that nothing comes easy, especially when you first try out something new. So bearing this in mind, Ben just plodded along learning and practicing new words, disciplining himself to the task in hand. And sure enough, during the first six months or so there was no obvious difference in his daily use of words. But after six months to a year there was, to the discernible ear, a slight difference in Ben's choice and use of words. After two years or so everyone began to notice a difference. Then as the years passed by, with Ben still sticking to his three words a day routine, the difference between himself and his brother John was overwhelming. Ben ended up sounding like a Yale professor; eloquent on every subject imaginable. Whereas John sounded like the same old John, congenial as ever, but his verbal sentence structure sounded more or less like it did when Ben first set about improving his vocabulary. But it should be noted that John's vocabulary also changed during the years, just as everyone else does. It's a natural evolution that new words are picked up and used. Through the mediums of television, radio and newspaper, certain words become vogue and mainstream in their use. And so it was with John, he picked up new words consciously and unconsciously by osmosis.

Although the above story is hypothetical no one can doubt the fact that over a long period of time a person can improve skills and knowledge by practicing a specific subject with a purpose. In this case the subject was vocabulary improvement. But what about some other subject? What about something with a wide range of activities, like a martial art?

Let us consider two people who practice judo. One, like John, whose vocabulary improvement was by osmosis, and the other, like Ben, who vocabulary improvement was by practicing with a purpose. It should be noted that about 95% of judo practitioners practice judo like John. They turn up and just practice. Some turn up regularly, some irregularly. Some work very hard, some do hardly anything at all. And the rest are somewhere in between. But the fact is they turn up and just practice. And by the very act of turning up and practicing, something does get picked up along the way, and improvements, although slowly, do happen; just as John improved his vocabulary by picking words up here and there from his daily activities of reading and speaking.

Let us now consider practicing judo, in a way that Ben practiced vocabulary improvement; practicing with a purpose. The problem that faces judo practitioners when they randori is that there are so many different skills that have to be applied. There are all the skills that are required to apply throws, holds, chokes and armlocks, then there are combining, countering them, defending them, and the setting up skills of maneuvering and gripping.

Practicing with a purpose is done by isolating a skill and is known as the isolate to educate method. For example, when a student favors a particular throw, he or she can isolate a component or element of that throw and focus on it; whether it be the best grip to apply the throw, the actions of one of the arms or legs, opportunities to apply the throw, and the right timing or explosive movement of the throw. A certain amount of time could be used during standing randori to focus on the activities of an element of the throw, such as the power arm. The student should decide that when he or she makes an attack all his or her mental energy and physical focus will be completely on the power arm. Nothing else. At the same time the student will of course be applying the other elements of the throw, but these are not focused on. In this exercise the focus is on the power arm. How the other elements are applied, or the success of the throw itself, are secondary. Considerations should be given to what is the best grip for the power arm, when is the best time to apply the power arm as grips are changing, was the power arm snapped quickly enough, was it in an effective position, how did it effect the breaking of balance, was it continued all the way to the completion of the throw? This method of isolation and focus can

then be used for the other elements of the throwing action, the locking arm, the driving leg, the active leg, and the angle of attack. Then isolation and focus can be used on the combined actions of the power arm and the locking arm. Then the combined actions of the driving leg and active leg. Then the combined actions of all the elements. This is just an example of how isolating to educate can be used to improve specific judo skills. Below is a list of specific skills that can be isolated and practiced on with a purpose.

(A) STANDING RANDORI:

- 1) Analyze walking patterns for throwing opportunities.
- 2) Attack continually for 5,10,15, or 30 secs.
- 3) Avoid and defend attacks at the last moment.
- 4) Combine sequences using 2 or 3 throws.
- 5) Correct positioning.
- 6) Counter throw every attack.
- 7) Defend holding with one hand.
- 8) Defend holding with one hand and eyes closed.
- 9) Defend without holding.
- 10) Defend without holding and eyes closed.
- 11) Distant judgement.
- 12) Different postures.
- 13) Encourage to be attacked and defend by body blocking.
- 14) Encourage to be attacked and defend by body avoidance movement.
- 15) Explosive attacks.
- 16) Feel the partners movements.
- 17) Feint in the opposite direction before attacking.
- 18) Fighting spirit --- maximizing effort.
- 19) Follow through.
- 20) Grip and attack after 5secs.
- 21) Grip and attack immediately.
- 22) Grip fighting.
- 23) Grip very gently.
- 24) Grip very stiffly.
- 25) Harmonizing.
- 26) Left side only.
- 27) Move freely and uninhibited.
- 28) Move freely and uninhibited using large steps.
- 29) Move freely and uninhibited using small steps.
- 30) Off balancing.
- 31) Only Ashi-waza.
- 32) Only Koshi-waza.

- 33) Only Ma-sutemi-waza.
- 34) Only Te-waza.
- 35) Only Yoko-sutemi-waza.
- 36) Practice with eyes closed.
- 37) Right side only.
- 38) Select a specific throw and an element(s).
- 39) Spinning entries.
- 40) Standing arm locks.
- 41) Throwing power --- speed x distance.
- 42) Throwing using opponents movement.
- 43) Throwing using opponents reaction.
- 44) Timing.
- 45) Transition --- Standing to holds.
- 46) Transition --- Standing to chokes.
- 47) Transition --- Standing to arm locks.
- 48) Tussling.
- 49) Use only a high collar and sleeve grip.
- 50) Use only a lapel and sleeve grip.
- 51) Use only pocket grips.

(B) GROUNDWORK RANDORI:

- 1) A specific arm lock.
- 2) A specific choke.
- 3) A specific hold.
- 4) Attack from the guard.
- 5) Be held before escaping.
- 6) Be nearly arm locked before escaping.
- 7) Be nearly choked before escaping.
- 8) Be nearly held before escaping.
- 9) Change holds every 10 secs.
- 10) Complete a full circle using holds.
- 11) Complete a half circle using holds.
- 12) Defend from the guard.
- 13) From a choke attack with an arm lock.
- 14) From every hold attack with an arm lock.
- 15) From every hold attack with a choke.
- 16) Guard only --- no legs wrapped around.
- 17) Practice at full speed for a determined time.
- 18) Practice from a straddling position.
- 19) Practice only from a head position.
- 20) Practice only from a side position.

21) Standing to ground --- remain down until a score.

If one of these skills were focused on every week it would take well over a year to complete the list. And obviously skill development would be hardly noticeable, since not enough time would have been spent on each subject. For Practicing With a Purpose to be effective the student should first select half a dozen or so favored topics. Then during each randori session, 5, 10, or 15 mins should be set aside to focus on the selected topic. Depending on the subject(s), 1, 2, or 3 subjects could be selected during each randori session, because some subjects do not require as much time as others. Naturally, the longer a subject is practiced on with a purpose the quicker results will begin to show.