

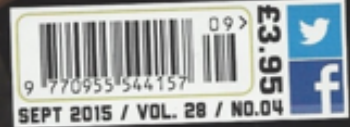
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SEPT 2015 / VOL. 28 / NO.04



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## Sport Aikido: Staring with the basics : Part 1

Sport or Tomiki Aikido is taught through a system of Kata, this system mirrors the development of Judo under Jigoro Kano (1860 -1938). Kenji Tomiki (1900 - 1979), a student of Kano emulated the system of judo Kata replacing the Judo with Aikido related techniques. Tomiki was a student of both Moriho Uyeshiba (1863 - 1969) and Kano and both of their teachings are evident in the Tomiki system.

The Randori no Kata, the basic seventeen movements provide a simple range of movements that can be quickly adopted and used for free practice and randori.

These basic techniques are the corner stone of the system and provide an opportunity for students to learn and apply the technical principles of Posture, Avoidance, Distance, Balance and Direction as outlined in the previous article.

Analysis of the Randori no Kata provides a unique insight, with nearly fifty percent of the techniques employed having a Judo and not Aikido heritage, this demonstrates the close relationship between the world of Judo and Aikido within the Tomiki system.

The basic seventeen techniques, originally designed with fifteen like Nage-no-Kata, are divided into sections. The first section Ate Waza or striking techniques, second section Hiji or elbow techniques, third Kote or wrist techniques and finally Otoshi or dropping techniques.

The focus of this article will be on the Atemi Waza section and will look at the application of the technical principles plus adaptations including counter and combination techniques.

Before this, five pieces of generic information to help set the background to the techniques and the sport focused environment where they are employed.

### Informal Kata or formal Embu.

Kata is informal sequence of techniques undertaken for the purposes of learning technique in a logical sequential and progressive order. It provides a structured approach to learning and the mastery of the principles. Kata can be performed as class teaching or as part of grading examinations. In competition it is Embu a formal military demonstration.



**The GB Team of Mick Pratt 4<sup>th</sup> Dan and Paul Carr 2<sup>nd</sup> Dan performing Embu at the World Championships 2013**

### **Free practice and Randori.**

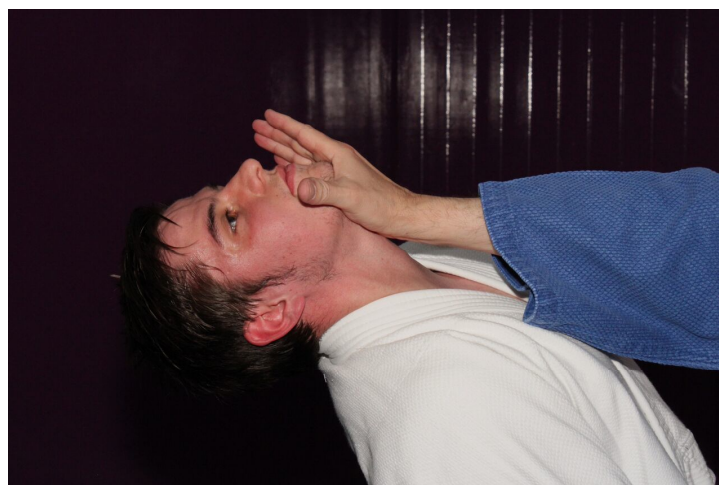
Free practice, either Kakarigeiko (free practice without resistance) or Hikitategieko (free practice with light resistance) provides for the introduction of counters and combinations within free moving practice. How dynamic this practice is, will depend on the abilities of individual. Free play is also a learning tool, engaging students and developing their reaction and counter reaction in a free moving exercise. Free practice Randori training can lead to full contact Aikido usually performed during competitions.



**Vanda Fairchild 5<sup>th</sup> Dan performing Gedan Ate in free practice**

### **Atemi Techniques**

Historically Atemi or striking techniques have been used to describe the initial section of the Randori no Kata, However due to the modern nature of competition these techniques have evolved into open handed pushing techniques. These are just as effective and safer in application.



**Atemi (Figure 1)**



## **Atemi Waza**

The atemi is applied with an open hand fingers at one side of the jaw and the thumb at the other. This provides for greater control during the throw. (figure 1)

## **Counters and Combinations.**

Once the basic techniques have been learned counters and combinations are employed to enhance free play. Sport Aikido never makes the assumption that the first technique will always be successful and therefore develops a range of follow on movements. It also does not assume that Uke (person being throw) is passive, if a weak technique is employed then Uke can take advantage and counter the attacking technique. So the role of Tori and Uke can be interchangeable.

For the purpose of the article a right-handed attack will be assumed, although all techniques should be practiced left and right sided.

## **Technique One: Shomen Ate (Front Head Strike)**

Uke attempts to strike an opponents head with an open handed upper cut on the right. Tori must respond quickly by moving in posture to their right, inside the attacking arm. Ensuring the correct distance Tori must strike under the opponent's chin pushing the head backwards, disturbing Uke's balance.

(figure 2) Tori must then drive through the centre using the hips and lower body to attack along Uke's weak line. Tori's pushing right arm must maintain its shape, the whole body driving through to execute the technique.



**Shomen Ate (Figure 2)**

Uke is pushed over backwards with their neck the main focus of the throw.

To ensure kuzushi (balance breaking) Uke must be looking upward toward the ceiling. There is no impact or striking action on the head by Tori's attacking arm. During the throw the left arm also aids the execution of the technique by pushing at Uke's attacking arm to the rear.

A useful analogy would relate to Knights jousting in Medieval England. Tori's body and head representing the knight, the thinking element, the arm representing the lance and the hips, thighs and legs being the horse, the real power to unseat the opponent.





**GBs Doyne Ogunbiyi about to throw with a variation of Shomen Ate at the Worlds in 2011**

**Ai Gamae Ate (Reverse Posture Strike)**



**Ai Gamae Ate (figure 3)**

**Ai Gamae Ate**

Tori moves to the left ensuring that they are on balance in left posture (left leg forward). Avoid the attacking arm and restrict its movement at the elbow and draw the arm down with your left hand. After exposing the Uke's head, strike with the right hand and push the opponent head backwards and slightly to your left. Once the opponents balance is broken drive hips through into right posture to complete the throw. (figure 3)

**Gyaku Ate (Reverse Head Strike)**

When attacked avoid to the left hand side but maintain right posture. Take the attacking arm and pull down sharply to belt height.

Strike with opposite arm along the opponent's jaw line pushing the head backwards and breaking balance. Step through and behind the opponent with your left leg to complete the technique. (figure 4)

Ensure your body remains centred at all times and move your whole body in the direction of throw.



**Gyaku Ate (figure 4)**

Of course there are many adaptations, Aikido is one of the most diverse and flexible of all Martial arts, not only being performed standing but can also be performed kneeling as from the Japanese dinner table.



**Bob teaching Gyaku Ate from Suwara Waza (Kneeling)**



**Driving through during free practice to perform Gyaku Ate**

**Gedan Ate (Low Strike)**

Avoid the attacking arm by dropping the body and come up under the body in left posture. Ensure the lead arm is low and drive upward and backward to throw. (figure 5)



**Gedan Ate (Figure 5)**

**Ushiro Ate (Rear Strike)**



**Ushiro Ate (figure 6)**



Following the attack avoid to the right and catch the attacking arm at the wrist. Continue moving to the right and rotate the arm at the wrist turning your opponent. (Figure 6). Once the opponent has been turned and is off balance, place both hands on their shoulders and move to the rear pulling Uke down and backwards.

### Combinations

When using these techniques in free practice emphasis is given to movement. Both participants neutralize the opponent's attempts to throw through employing avoiding actions and dynamic movement. In the case of combination techniques Tori initiates technique and Uke moves to prevent the throw. This forces Tori to perform a follow up, continuation or combination technique.

An example of a combination would be Tori attempts Shomen Ate, Uke realizing the danger steps backwards, with their right leg, in an attempt to maintain posture and avoid the throw. Tori immediately follows the natural movement and applies Gedan Ate in right posture. Thus combining Shomen Ate and Gedan Ate into one continuous movement. Combinations work best when they follow the natural movement of the opponent and force is not met with counter force.

See photos graphs 1 to 4



**Shomen Ate combining with Gedan Ate**

## Counters



### **Shomen Ate countered by Waki Gatame**

Counter techniques take place when there is a natural weakness within a technique such as the changing of the grip or when an opponent makes a mistake. These weaknesses can then be exploited to take advantage and throw the opponent.

The timing of counter techniques is crucial, some are taken early during the initial techniques and some are late during the execution of technique. Again counter techniques are best employed as part of natural movement.

The example illustrated in Photographs A-C show the opponent attacking with Shomen Ate. At this point the opponent is fully committed to the throw. Tori avoids the technique catching the attacking arm from beneath. Tori then turns and applies a straight-arm lock or Waki Gatame.

The ideal is to learn the principles of technique through Kata, then progress to apply the techniques through free practice. There is no set form for free practice techniques; individuals have to learn what is effective and works for them. It is certain that a failure to apply the basic principles will result in poor ineffective techniques.



### **Ushiro Ate**

Bob Jones teaching Ushiro Ate the close proximity of Tori and Uke again reinforces the link between Sport Aikido and Judo

Photographs by kind permission of Geoff Allen and Mark Cheevers  
Photograph Uke Daniel White 1<sup>st</sup> Dan

**Written by Bob Jones**