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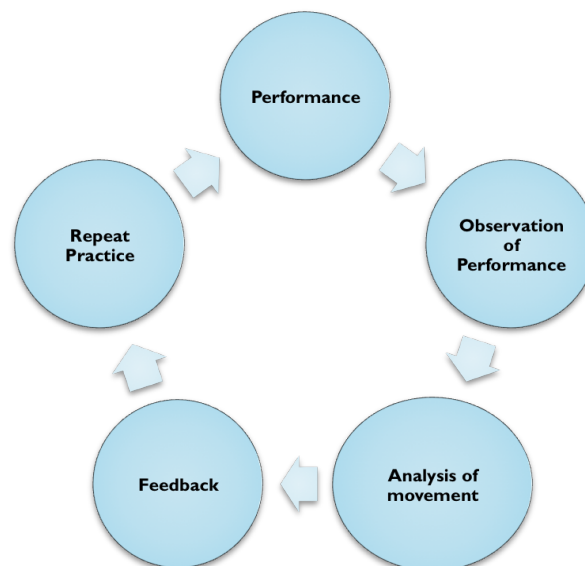
Starting with the Basics Part 2

We must always remember that in any physical activity, “practice does not make perfect, “it makes” permanent”. Poor instructors only produce weak Aikidoka and the only way of learning a Martial Art or Martial Sport is to seek out high quality coaches and learn from the best. It is important that beginners are taught good basics in whichever art they follow. Once bad practice is instilled in a practitioner it is difficult, sometimes impossible to rectify. Beware of the myth that all “black belt” coaches are correct and are therefore followed unquestioningly by students. It is incumbent on coaches to continuously learn, attend courses with higher grades and improve themselves, in order to, in turn pass on that knowledge, skills and understanding to their students.

Martial Arts are often based on pyramid teaching with a few instructors at the top cascading information downward to an ever-increasing number of students. At each level the messages are diluted and often lost in interpretation. Students of any art should seek out the best instruction they can find and not be satisfied with only what they are presented with.

Quality coaches are able to demonstrate high levels of knowledge and understanding, have keen technical, analytical and communication skills.

A sound approach to Coaching would be to utilize the “Observation Cycle”



This is a useful tool for coaches and students to help improve technique. First provide a sound model of what you want students to achieve then observe performance. The observation may have to be done more than once and from different angles to get a true perspective of the performance. Conduct an analysis of the performance against the model originally provided and identify potential improvements. Provide feedback to the students on potential action to help improve the technique, this can often be done through questioning rather than simply providing the answer. Questioning helps develop the students’ ability to self-analysis.

Further practice with observation should take place to ensure the student has understood the remedial actions to be implemented.

In Aikido there are a huge number of techniques, over half a million at my last count with a huge number of variations and adaptations. This does not mean that any technique an instructor teaches is good, some Aikido instructors mask poor technique by calling it a variation. The saying “Kyu grades make mistakes whilst Dan grades make variations” by and large is true but not universal.

Martial Arts cannot be learnt from books. They are a dynamic interaction between two, or more people, whether it be grappling, striking or throwing arts it is an organic interaction between attacker and defender that can only be mastered by constant and consistent practice.

My advice is to seek out the best coach you can and not be content with the nearest dojo.

Basics Techniques numbers 6 to 10 (Oshi Taoshi to Waki Gatame)

Hiji or Elbow techniques provide the focus for this section of basic throws. The five techniques outlined all rely on the manipulation of the elbow joint as the prime focus of the throw.

Elbow techniques are difficult to apply in free play, as they require high levels of accuracy and skill. In comparison to other joints, including the neck, the elbow is more readily protected by the defender by keeping it close to the body.



GBs Doyne Ogunbiyi about to throw with Waki Gatame at the Worlds in 2013

I am going to revisit the basic technical principles in greater depth and illustrate them throughout the explanation of the first of the elbow techniques Oshi Taoshi or Ikkyo.

Throughout the series of articles, I will describe the techniques right sided, although all techniques should be practised on both sides. Right posture would usually require the right leg to be in front of the left, the back foot angled at forty-five degrees. The basic attack is an open handed upper cut strike (Shomen Ate) to the head.

Within the Sport Aikido system there are five elbow techniques within the basics.

Oshi Taoshi (Elbow Push Down)

Oshi Taoshi in traditional Aikido would be known as Ikkyo (form one) and is the manipulation of the elbow toward the head before taking it toward the ground. During the execution of the technique Tori (thrower) must demonstrate a range of skills including Shizantai, (posture) Tai Sabaki, (avoiding movement) Tsukuri, (entry movement) Osae, (pinning action) Kuzushi (breaking balance) and Kake (completion)

Tori must ensure that throughout the technique their balance is maintained. This is achieved by maintaining a shoulder width distance of the feet and keeping centre. Indicators of poor posture are Tori leaning forward to make contact with the opponent with the back foot heel raised off the tatami (mat).

Once attacked Tori grasps the opponent's forearm with both hands, simultaneously moving backward to their left maintaining right posture. (Fig 1(a) This avoiding movement is known as Tai Sabaki and is to ensure the safety of the Tori before the execution of the technique. Tai Sabaki comes from the origins of Aikido where blocks could not be employed against the Katana (sword), so avoidance was the only possible survival tactic.



Fig 1 (a)

This avoiding movement also helps Osae, pinning the attacking front leg. This brings the opponent's weight onto the front foot and restricts movement.

Once this has been achieved Tori drives the elbow up and toward the opponent's head by moving forward and slightly to the right. Fig 1 (b) This provides the entry movement or Tsukuri, creating correct positioning and distance. By driving the elbow toward the opponent's face balance is broken.



Fig 1(b)

This should force Uke into one of two reactions. Either be pushed over backwards or twist their body away. On twisting the elbow is further exposed and Tori can then drive downward toward the floor and lock (Kake). Fig 1 (c)



Fig 1 (c)



Mick Pratt 4th Dan demonstrating the basic grip for Oshi Taoshi on Bob Jones during a course in Belfast



GBs Sarah Fletcher demonstrating kneeling version (Suwara Waza) of Oshi Taoshi at the World Championships in 2013 with GBs Andy Rigby.

Ude Gaeshi (Turning Arm Lock)

For the basic technique Ude Gaeshi starts the same as Oshi Taoshi, copying the same initial movement (Tai Sabaki), catch and pinning action (Osae). Fig 2 (a)



Fig 2 (a)

At this point adjust the technique by stepping to the left (outside) of the opponent breaking balance to the back left. Fig 2(b)



Fig 2 (b)

This is done by entangling the left arm and driving the locked arm over the opponents shoulder. Fig 2 (c) Maintain the drive backwards and downwards and throw the opponent to the floor.



Fig 2 (c)

Hiki Taoshi (Elbow Pull Down)

Tori makes avoiding movement to their left and slightly to the rear, maintaining right posture and absorbing the opponents forward attacking movement. Tori maintains their centre and balance keeping their strong posture facing the opponent.

Tori grasps the opponent's attacking arm, right hand on top of wrist with palm down and left hand from underneath, palm upwards. Fig 3 (a). Tori rotates the opponents arm at the elbow in an anticlockwise rotational direction to break balance. Fig 3 (b) The movement continues until the opponent's elbow is in line with Tori's belt.



Fig 3 (a)

Tori should then place their right hand on opponent's elbow and continue the downward movement whilst sliding backward in right posture.



Fig 3 (b)

The backward movement should continue until the opponent is fully restrained. Fig 3 (c)



Fig 3 (c)

Ude Garami (Arm Entanglement)

Tori makes avoiding action to the left whilst retaining right posture, copying the previous technique. Fig 4 (a)



Fig 4 (a)

Fig 4 (a) Opponent must react at this point before Tori has a chance to apply the technique

Before Tori can apply the Hiki Taoshi the opponent retracts their arm and pulling away. Instead of turning the technique into a tug of war Tori steps forward with their left leg and absorbs the pulling motion. Simultaneously they entangle their right arm with their opponent's right arm to produce a lock. Fig 4 (b)



Fig 4 (b)

Once the arm is locked Tori pivots to the right and drives the opponent's arm across and up their back. For the basic technique, once the lock is applied, allow the opponent to role out of the technique.



Vanda Fairchild 5th Dan performing a variation of Ude Garami with throwing arm coming from underneath

Waki Gatame (straight Arm Lock)

Tori makes avoiding action to the right stepping in right posture. Deflect the attacking arm with left hand by catching just above the wrist on the forearm. Fig 5 (a)



Fig 5 (a)

Tori reinforces the catch with right hand and continues to move to the right breaking the opponent's balance. Fig 5 (b)



Fig 5 (b)

Once balance is broken Tori secures the elbow under their left armpit. Fig 5 (c)



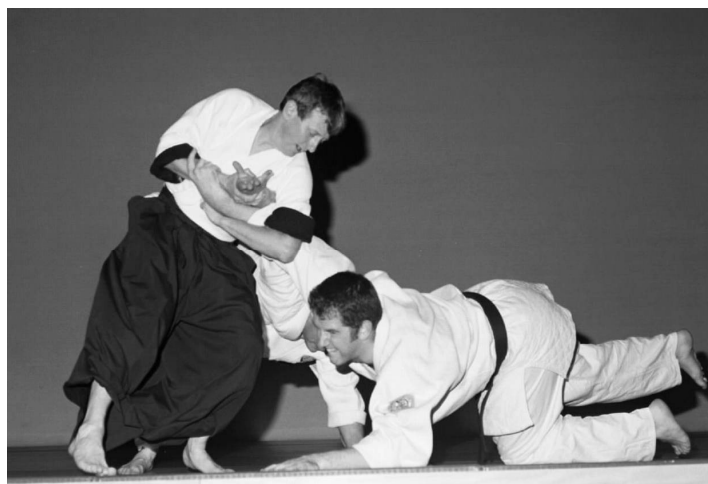
Fig 5 (c)

The opponent's arm should be then locked straight across the chest with their hand blade little finger upward, thus ensuring the arm is fully rotated.

Tori makes a further forward movement in right posture and secures the attacking arm with their right elbow. Fig 5(d)



Fig 5 (d)



A younger Bob Jones applying Waki Gatame on two opponents simultaneously

Combinations and Counters

In free practice, Tomiki Aikido has developed a series of counter and combination techniques. These were initially outlined in the previous article.

To produce effective free play there must be an interchange of movement between Tori and their opponent. Counters and combinations occur during natural weaknesses in technique or if an opponent makes a mistake during application of technique. Weaknesses are turned to advantage during free practice.

Examples of counters and combinations from the elbow section of basic techniques can include: -

Waki Gatame into Ai Gamae Ate as a combination

Start with attempting to apply Waki Gatame to the point of trying to pin the opponent arm under your elbow.



Fig 6 (a)

At this point the opponent resists the technique by pulling backwards and away and standing upright. Tori doesn't resist the movement but works with it turning to follow the opponent's movement. The drive the opponent right arm down, turning and striking the head with the free right arm as in Ai Gamae Ate. Fig 6 (b)



Fig 6 (b)

Hiki Taoshi into Gedan Ate as a counter

The opponent tries to apply Hiki Taoshi. Fig 7 (a)



Fig 7 (a)

As they attempt to break balance to the left rotate your arm in a downward direction and travel with the movement of the technique stepping behind the opponents leading right leg with your left. Tori is now in a position to apply Gedan Ate. Fig 7 (b)



Fig 7 (b)

During free play, care must be taken when applying elbow locks and restraints. Injury can occur during Randori and especially in competitive Aikido by over zealous application on exposed joints. Juniors must be protected against over exposure of any locking actions on any joint and to this end locks are not permitted in junior and youth competition formats

Photographs by Geoff Allen and Mark Cheevers

Written by Bob Jones