

KENDŌ forum

by MUSASHI

Last month in this column we had a brief survey of the events in Japan marking the foundation of the Kokusai Kendo Renmei—or International Kendo Federation. Probably Kendoka would like to know something more of Roald Knutsen's observations on Japanese Kendo.

On the first morning before the other foreign Kendoka arrived in Japan, Roald Knutsen went along to the Saineikan Dojo, the exclusive dojo of the Imperial Palace Guard, sited within the walls of Tokyo Castle and quite out of reach of the public.

Founded some 70 years ago, this dojo retains many characteristics of feudal days, or perhaps we could say that these facets are here more accentuated. And yet the Kendoka, most of whom are *go-dan* or above, are friendly and genuinely want to help the less skilful fellows. Some dojo's, on the other hand, will train so hard that they discourage would-be students—or break them. From his special position as a visiting senior Kendo executive, Roald Knutsen was naturally invited into the *sensei*'s private room, where everyone took green tea and relaxed. But even here only the *sensei* sat near the tea kettle, any students who come in sit well back. Hanging from pegs up near the ceiling in this room are many Kendo armours belonging to very senior visiting *sensei* and looking as if they had been there time out of mind. Possibly the most decrepit of these belongs to Mochida *Hanshi*, 10th

dan, who even now, well on in his seventies, comes to the dojo two or three times each month.

In the dojo itself, with its polished black pine floor, there is a very large *taiko* (drum) which is beaten for the *rei* at the beginning and end of training. You might say that many dojos in Japan have a drum—but then, this one is thought to date from the mid-16th century! It certainly looks "right".

The Welcome Practice for all the international Kendoka was in the Saineikan Dojo the following morning (3rd October) and the Kendo half of the dojo was a mass of *kenshi* of every rank and wearing every possible type of equipment. While changing in the *sensei* room Mori Terao *Hanshi*, 8th *dan*, from the U.S.A., requested a practice with Roald Knutsen and so after a first training with Takizawa *Sensei*, these two crossed *shinai*. Mori *Sensei* has many really fantastic techniques and control of his opponents to a degree. To be taught by such a master is a tremendous compliment. After eight years of constant correspondence and exchange of ideas, at last Ben Hazard *go-dan* and Knutsen met — and what better place than the Saineikan! To show goodwill, of course, Hazard *san* beat hell out of our Kendoka, getting in one fine *tsuki* against a mistaken *Jodan*—no *kamae* . . . it deserved such treatment . . .

Down in Osaka, Arai *sensei*, took the Australian Kendoka, Jim Paterson *nidan*, and Knutsen along



Alexander Knutsen, *nikyu*, receiving a special prize for Kendo from Mr. Jack Solomons at the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the Brighton Boys' Club. In the background Mr. Barry Widdowson, Chief Coach Brighton Giants Basketball team, compere of the display.

to the Shudokan Dojo in Osaka Castle. Here the building was only opened four years ago—built in the traditional style—and yet con-

trasting sharply with the ramshackle agglomeration of the Saineikan. But the same spirit and friendliness is common to both.

The children Kendoka in Osaka-jo are just the same as those in England. That was one relief to our observer. They work hard, play up, talk out of turn, but always enjoy themselves and Kendo—but where in Europe would they rush out immediately after the *rei*, grab mops, then dash back in to clean the dojo floor before the next students arrived? Some of the smallest were tots of about four, and there were many girls among the 30 or so youngsters training.

At Osaka, Knutsen fought twice, defeating an American *yudansha* first before going down before one of the powerful Japanese team. This last fight was perhaps the most interesting and certainly a violent one. Kayaba *Sensei*, who is 7th *dan Kyoshi*, is a famous *Nito-ryu* master, who uses the long sword in the left hand and the short sword in the right instead of the usual reverse way. Already at Osaka, Arai-*Sensei* had given

special training to Knutsen in *Nito-ryu* but to face a *Nito-ryu sensei* in *shiai* is quite a different matter!

To do anything constructive against this powerful style the *itto* swordsman must try to control his opponent at the throat. He must be very active on his feet to try to draw the long sword into a mistaken attack, but always alert to instantly reply. In this *shiai* Knutsen tried just about everything including *kote-uchi* against the raised left arm, reverse *do* which only just missed as Kayaba *Sensei* swayed back out of the contest area, our Kendoka puzzled over the perennial problem of Kendo—how to go forward against a senior *sensei* who himself always advances? Three times he tried *suriage-waza* against the deadly *yoko-men* attacks but at last the second *men* came through and after three long minutes the ordeal was over.



Warm-up calisthenics in the Todai Dojo, Tokyo University.

The reward was to be judged worthy of the special prize for *seishin*—fighting spirit—and congratulations from many of the very senior *sensei*. As Arai *sensei* said, it was a great experience to face such a master as Kayaba *sensei*.

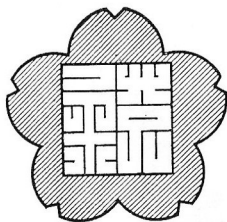
Kendo in the N.E.

The North East of England has some really active Kendoka at Blyth and Middlesbrough, and they are always on the lookout for newcomers. Now is the ideal time to start, so why not contact either Brian Muter, 77 Bondicar Terrace, Blyth, Northumberland; or John Sparkes, 12 Berkeley Road, Darlington, Co. Durham? Incidentally,

one of the Blyth kendoka won the individual *kyu* rank tournament down in London last June against some of the strongest opposition in the country. A strong team from the N.E. will take part in the Kendo Team Matches in Portsmouth on 9th December.

Hatsugeiko, 1968

The Hatsugeiko for the South of England will be held in the Nenriki Dojo, London, on Saturday afternoon, 20th January. As ever, all Kendoka are very welcome to attend together with their families and friends. Final details will be circulated to all dojos nearer the date.



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