



AJA NEWSLETTER

Volume XLII, Issue I

Spring 2019

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Ground Fighting: The Ups and Downs

By Jeff Wynn

That title is a deliberate wordplay, of course, but it leads to a crucial point at the end. I will attempt to address ground fighting, emphasizing the reasons why it is sometimes necessary, often dangerous, and how different arts that I have personal acquaintance with teach it. For the purposes of this article I will restrict my discussion to the grappling arts I am familiar with: sombo, Brazilian jiu jitsu (BJJ), traditional Japanese jujitsu, and its offshoots.

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AJA Update

by Dave Boesel

AJA's Board of Director met on Saturday, January 5 and made a number of decisions regarding the safety and security of its members:

1. Sexual Harassment Policy. The #MeToo movement has made clear that sexual harassment, especially of women, is widespread. Sports and other organized activities that involve physical contact and unequal power relations between mentors, such as coaches, and students bear a special responsibility. Recognizing this obligation, the Board empaneled a committee to develop an AJA policy on sexual harassment. The committee will be chaired by Thomas Salander and will include Paul Klara, Harold Zeidman and at least two black-belt women, who are being contacted. Once the policy has been developed and approved by the Board, the committee will develop implementation procedures.

2. Criminal Background Checks. To help ensure the security of its members, AJA requires that senseis in dojos applying to become members indicate whether they have ever been convicted of a violent crime or a sexual offense. Until recently, however, AJA has not conducted actual criminal background checks. Now Brian McClernan, AJA's Director of

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Japanese for Jujitsuka

by Samantha Finley

Although American dojos differ in how closely they adhere to Japanese practices, most still use a fair amount of Japanese language, both for traditional phrases and the names of techniques. This article is intended as the first in a series geared toward jujitsuka whose contact with the Japanese language in the martial arts context has been scattershot and would like a somewhat more systematic take on this aspect of the jujitsu tradition.

Lesson One: Pronunciation

The decision of how hard to work at pronouncing Japanese words in a Japanese way is a personal one; some degree of Anglicization is inevitable. Fortunately for those wishing to approach a native-like accent, Japanese has a relatively straightforward set of sounds for English speakers to pick up.

Vowels

English is burdened with over ten vowel sounds (the exact number depends on the dialect) that are represented by the letters a, e, i, o, and u, with the same letter representing different sounds depending on the context. In a stroke of luck for those writing Japanese using the Latin alphabet (a process known as romanization), Japanese has only five vowel sounds, each of which maps to one of those five letters. The letter a represents the a sound in “father,” e the e sound in “bet,” i the ee sound in “meet,” o the o sound in “story,” and u the oo sound in “food.”

These vowels are lengthened in some words. When this is represented in romanized Japanese, the vowel may be doubled (“yuudansha”) or written with a line over the lengthened vowel (“yūdansha”). An o can be lengthened with another o or a u, and an e can be lengthened with an e or an i.

Consonants

Seventeen consonants show up in romanized Japanese: k, g, s, sh, j, t, ch, ts, n, h, f, b, p, m, y, r, and w. The biggest pitfall in the consonants for English speakers is the r, which represents a sound called an alveolar tap, in which the tongue briefly touches the alveolar ridge (located just behind the top front teeth) to articulate the sound. The tt in “better” is usually pronounced by Americans as this sound. A g always makes the hard g sound in “get.”

Like vowels, consonants may be lengthened, indicated again by doubling the letter. When sh, ch, and ts are doubled, they are written as ssh, cch, and tts, respectively.

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Recent Yudansha Promotions

Name	Rank	Date	Dojo
Lawrence Boydston	Hachidan	October	Quest Academy
Michael J Jordan	Yondan	October	Maru Martial Arts
Valerie Wade	Sandan	October	Reston Virginia YMCA Jujitsu Dojo
Daniel D. Duran, Jr.	Nidan	December	Budoshin Jujitsu Yudanshakai
Campbell Watkins Gray III	Shodan	December	Arlington Budoshin Ju-Jitsu Dojo
Darrin Fox	Shodan	December	Ho'on Dojo

Recent Mudansha Promotions

Name	Rank	Date	Dojo
Rainee Bananto	Shichikyu	September	Towson Daitobukan Dojo
Adam Auerback	Ikkyu	October	Ho'on Dojo
Robert Aitken	Sankyu	October	Reston Virginia YMCA Jujitsu Dojo
Tien Peng Ho	Sankyu	October	Kaiwan Budokai
Vince Mench	Yonkyu	October	Kaiwan Budokai
Gabe Duque	Rokyu	October	Kaiwan Budokai
Nate Jenkins	Rokyu	October	Kaiwan Budokai
Dylan Grieco	Ikkyu	November	Towson Daitobukan Dojo
John Grieco	Ikkyu	November	Towson Daitobukan Dojo
Bill Dzeda	Nikyu	November	NOVA Jujitsu
Bert Roepe	Nikyu	November	Reston Virginia YMCA Jujitsu Dojo
Erika Deckard	Nikyu	November	Kaiwan Budokai
Bill Dzeda	Nikyu	November	NOVA Jujitsu
Mike Tyler	Sankyu	November	NOVA Jujitsu
Steven Dreiss	Yonkyu	November	NOVA Jujitsu
Ashraf Faden	Yonkyu	November	NOVA Jujitsu
Matt Cheesman	Shichikyu	November	Kaiwan Budokai
Gavin Cheesman	Shichikyu	November	Kaiwan Budokai
Joshua Felder	Shichikyu	November	Kaiwan Budokai

Sensei

To have your students' unregistered promotions featured in the newsletter, please send them to
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Japanese for Jujitsuka

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Words

In English, the vowel sounds in unstressed syllables are often pronounced as “uh” regardless of how they are spelled, like the a in “about.” Japanese does not indicate stress in a word by changing the vowel sound; every vowel should be pronounced according to the guide. Reading a completely phonetic system can be surprisingly tricky for English natives to get a hang of.

Conclusion

This has been a simplified introduction to pronouncing Japanese words that have been romanized with the popular Hepburn system. For jujitsu students whose linguistic interests only cover reading the names of techniques, this guide may suffice; for those who want to explore further, I recommend jisho.org as an excellent Japanese-English dictionary with audio.

Upcoming Events

2019 Budoshin Jujitsu Summer Camp

Old Orchard Park

Newhall, Santa Clarita, CA

Late July or August 16-18, 2019 (tentative)

**Contact George Kirby at senseigk@budoshin.com
for more information or if you're interested in
teaching at camp.**

Budoshin Jujitsu Seminar

Arlington, VA

November 4, 2019

**Contact Thomas Salander at salander@mac.com
for more information.**

The annual **Northern Region Shiai** in Towson will be held on July 21 this year. Details TBA.

If you would like your event featured in the AJA newsletter, please send it to
Newsletter@AJA-email.org

AJA Update

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Recruitment and a private investigator, has volunteered to do so. The Board accepted Brian's offer, empowering him to conduct background checks on all instructors in dojos applying for AJA membership. To ensure equity, the Board also empowered Brian to conduct background checks on its own members.

In another initiative, President Dave Boesel is working with Jeff Wynn, Vice President and Chair of the National Standards and Certification Board (NSCB), to draft standards and procedures for black-belt promotions made by the board. NSCB members (Regional Directors Paul Klara, Thomas Salander, and Harold Zeidman) will then weigh in to produce a final document for approval by AJA's Board of Directors.

Concussion Awareness Training

The American Ju-Jitsu Association's insurance policy requires us to have an "adequate system of concussion training" for our coverage to be in effect. The policy defines an "adequate system" as:

"The communication, in written or electronic form, of education materials to participants, parents, and coaches about the nature of risk of concussions, including but not limited to how to recognize concussion symptoms."

At a minimum, AJA must provide education materials on the risk of concussions to participants (students), parents, and coaches/senseis. To fulfill this requirement, AJA asked its senseis to pass this [Concussion Information Sheet](#) (note: PDF link) from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) along to the participants in their dojos, to their parents (if the students are minors), to instructors, and to any others who are active in the dojo.

Beyond this minimum requirement, other Japanese martial arts organizations – among them the United States Judo Association (including the Jujitsu Division), Judo USA (the governing body for Olympic Judo), and the American Traditional Jujitsu Association – require their senseis to be trained and certified in CDC's concussion awareness program. AJA's Board of Directors is considering a similar proposal. It would require AJA senseis to be CDC-certified in concussion training and to renew certification regularly (for example, every two years). CDC's [free online concussion training course](#) is brief, and passing a simple quiz at the end provides trainees with a downloadable certificate.

In March 2019, AJA sent the Board proposal to all senseis and asked for comments. All of the comments were supportive, and the Board will soon vote on finalizing the proposal.

Recent Yudansha Promotions

Name	Rank	Date	Dojo
Jesse Strom	Nidan	January	Reston Virginia YMCA Jujitsu Dojo
Matt Hampton	Nidan	January	Towson Daitobukan Dojo
Barry Stebbins	Nanadan	February	Midori Judo Club
Jess Strom	Sandan	February	Reston Virginia YMCA Jujitsu Dojo
Matt Clark	Shodan	March	Ho'on Dojo
Keagen Grace	Shodan	March	Full Circle Jujitsu

Recent Mudansha Promotions

Name	Rank	Date	Dojo
Sebastian Shapiro	4th Level	January	Quest Academy
Wayne Hill	Gokyu	January	Ho'on Dojo
Marco Kirikos	Gokyu	February	Towson Daitobukan Dojo
Anna Sovich	Shichikyu	February	Towson Daitobukan Dojo

Ground Fighting

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Sombo

Sombo (Самбо) is a Russian martial art originally developed by the Spetsnaz, the Russian military equivalent of the US Army Green Berets. Imagine training how to kill someone with an entrenching tool – that's Spetsnaz. Sombo is best described as collegiate wrestling with jujitsu submissions added – you do want to get your opponent to the ground, but you get maximum points for throwing them there. If it's a "clean" throw (you remain standing and his back touches the mat), the match is over and you have won, as in judo. Otherwise, you must wrestle them to the mat and get both shoulder blades touching to win, as in freestyle wrestling. Competitors operate at full speed – the safety protocols are built into the competition by limiting where you can do things to your opponent. For instance, in sport sombo your opponent's neck and head are off-limits. In both combat and sport sombo, you also cannot do anything that involves techniques against either hands or feet, to minimize sprains and breaks.

You can see that sombo restrictions are more limiting than those in UFC fighting. Of course, in sombo, as in most other martial arts, you never see a single contestant defending against multiple attackers in open competition, as might be the case in a street confrontation. And you're most vulnerable to multiple attackers when you're on the ground. Some see this as making sombo

impractical for self-defense, but the upside is that most practitioners can attend more than one competition – and can operate at full speed on the mat.

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu

About one third of the time in my dojo is spent in ground fighting or randori, and it usually involves techniques such as trapping people in your guard and trying to gain a submission from either on top or from underneath. It's hard to imagine this working on a dark street in Chicago, of course. There's no striking in BJJ, and an elbow to the solar plexus from an opponent in your guard would probably disable you. In our dojo we compensate for this by allowing simulated striking and kicking. As in sombo, competition (as opposed to practice) is conducted at full speed with only two participants. Brazilian jiu jitsu evolved from Kano judo imported to Brazil in the early 20th century. Most BJJ techniques are derived from judo, but they are generally very pragmatic. Even at the colored-belt level, the most distinctive thing taught is to get your opponent to the ground. Some untrained bully on the street will be disoriented and focus on trying to get up, while you will be in your element. You can now have your way with them. The downside, of course, is that there is only one attacker and no weapons are permitted in competition, though we occasionally use a rubber knife or rubber gun in practice sessions. This means teaching potentially dangerous habits.

Traditional Japanese Jujitsu and Taiho-Jutsu

I have had black belt students from Hakkoryu and Danzan-ryu in my school. While they come from different ryu, they're quite comfortable with Budoshin jujitsu. It's really all Japanese jujitsu; visit a dojo half a continent away, calling themselves something you may have never heard before, and you will still find

Content

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We're always looking for

- Articles about jujitsu, your students, or your dojo
- Upcoming events
- Personal interest events

that what they teach is very familiar. Just about all Japanese jujitsu dojos teach responses to simulated attacks to develop muscle-memory reactions to specific threats. This is basic self-defense training. In my dojo we also practice randori to apply those responses in a dynamic context... but under close black belt supervision for safety.

Taiho-jutsu is the arresting art of the Japanese police, and much of it involves ground fighting, primarily to control and restrain an arrestee. Part of my Taiho training involved how to properly truss someone whom I had taken down, including how to use ropes, cable ties, and handcuffs. Two centuries ago, Japanese police training even used ladders! It turns out that if you encounter a drunk samurai on the street waving a razor-sharp katana, two police officers on both ends of a ladder can smash that samurai up against a wall and very roughly disarm him... then pin him to the ground, all with a ladder.

Taiho-jutsu ground fighting is very relevant to self-defense on the street. It doesn't involve extensive fighting from your back, as BJJ does. After police take an opponent down, they're usually on top – the arrestee face-down – controlling from a crouched position with a knee in the back. If other attackers were present, it would be fairly easy to disable the perp on the ground, stand up quickly, and confront the others – or escape.

Military Jujitsu

By Military jujitsu I am referring mainly to the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP). Have you ever seen a Marine with a gray belt on their MARPAT uniform? A green, dark brown (as opposed to khaki), blue, or black belt? That means they have earned that rank in formal (and not gentle) jujitsu training. The MCMAP program was developed by Master Gunnery Sergeant Cardo Urso and others, including Bruce Jones, at the Quantico Marine Corps base in Virginia in the 1990s. A particularly distinguishing characteristic of jujitsukas with military background is that they do not spend a lot of time on the ground. In fact, ground fighting is anathema to people within and from the military, because remaining essentially stationary for an extended amount of time makes you an easy target for someone with a rifle.

The Issue of Weapons

Weapons are real, and in a fight, they are generally the rule, rather than the exception. Making your tai sabaki moves in East Baltimore against someone waving a Glock says loudly that you come from another planet... and you are not going to do well, no matter what color belt you are wearing.

Interestingly, police fear a knife more than a bullet because a knife wound can bleed out faster. A police officer's safest defense against a knife is to stand and shoot the offender. Your safest defense against a knife or a pistol is to run like hell

while yelling “This man has a knife/gun!” A knife is ineffective at range, and every step you take in running away reduces a shooter’s chance of hitting you.

If you can’t get away, jujitsu disarming techniques may work, but they should be a last resort against any weapon. The common wisdom among knife experts is that if you confront a knife fighter unarmed, you must first accept the fact that you’re going to get cut and then preoccupy yourself with defeating the attacker and taking the knife away. When you do this last part, be certain that the knife handle is placed under your arm-pit with the blade pointing backwards. This protects you from two things: an additional attacker jumping you from behind, and police arriving and then mistaking you for the bad guy. The latter kind of tragedy happens far too often, and you can prevent it this way.

Getting Back to the “Street”

The usual qualifying mantra of ‘will it work on the street?’ must be framed in terms of what you are realistically dealing with on said street. Keeping someone in your guard is a non-starter in most inner cities because there usually will be more than one attacker, and weapons are likely also involved.

The first step in self-defense is avoidance – just staying away from potentially dangerous places. If you can’t do that, situational awareness will help. Recognizing and evading specific risks such as blind alleys, deserted streets, and desultory male bystanders will reduce your vulnerability. If confrontation can’t be avoided, command presence and command voice – “Stop! Don’t come a step closer!” or “Don’t make me do this!” – may be enough to get a bully or harasser to back off.

If it comes to a physical confrontation, though, it’s best to remain standing, if at all possible, because it increases your chances of responding to more than one attacker and getting away. In stand-up grappling, there’s nothing like a good hip throw to a concrete sidewalk to end a confrontation quickly. However, the vast majority of such confrontations end on the ground, often because someone is going to lose his balance and drag the other down. If you are female and fighting a male aggressor, you really need ground fighting skills, because you’re likely to end up on the bottom due to strength and mass differences. But regardless of gender, you’ll need to know how to disable an attacker on the ground, extricate yourself, stand back up as quickly as possible, and get away. Going reflexively to the ground because that has been your training could be a death sentence.

About the American Ju-Jitsu Association

The American Ju-Jitsu Association was founded in 1972 by George Kirby and William Fromm at the request of their sensei, Jack Seki, for the purpose of bringing different ryu of the art together in an atmosphere of mutual cooperation and respect. Since that time it has grown from two dojo to approximately twenty-four, plus international affiliates. The AJA has established itself as a reputable organization within the martial arts community and works closely with other major Ju-Jitsu organizations in the United States and internationally in areas of mutual concern.

The AJA is a non-profit amateur athletic association registered with both the state of California and the United States government [IRS code 501(c)(3)]. It is a non-profit corporation with a charitable foundation status. Although originally recognized by the IRS as a "social club" because there was no other way to recognize the AJA as an amateur athletic association, formal recognition of the AJA as a true amateur athletic association, according to the criteria of the United States government, was secured in 1976 under the Sports Act of that year. To our knowledge, the AJA is the only martial arts organization in the U.S. that is classified by the IRS as an amateur athletic association.

Board of Directors

Position	Name	Email
President & Chairman	David Boesel	President@AJA-email.org
Vice President	Jeff Wynn	VP@AJA-email.org
Secretary	Barry Stebbins	Secretary@AJA-email.org
Treasurer	Marc Tucker	Treasurer@AJA-email.org
Western Region Director	Harold Zeidman	WRDirector@AJA-email.org
Southern Region Director & International Competition Coordinator	Thomas Salander	SRDirector@AJA-email.org
Northern Region Director	Paul Klara	NRDirector@AJA-email.org
Director	Gene Roos	Director@AJA-email.org
Director	Scott Finley	Webmaster@AJA-email.org

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Historian	Mike Balog	Historian@AJA-email.org
Membership Director	Tom Dineen	Membership@AJA-email.org
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