

# President's Report

## AGM, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2013

2012, the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of the Melbourne University Kendo Club, proved to be one of its most active and successful in recent years. The club experienced growth in all aspects, including membership numbers, skill level, and competition results. Additionally, a busy social calendar and active participation in MUSA and VKR/AKR issues has strengthened the club and improved its reputation and standing in both the University and kendo communities.

### Orientation Week and Beginners' Course 2012

- *The Gotanda Project*  
Identifying a shortfall in beginner retention rates from previous years and a potential downward trajectory in membership numbers, the club established a semi-secret committee known as the "Gotanda Project", tasked with improving beginner recruitment and retention. Through research and analysis the Gotanda identified several problematic areas in various club processes, and formulated strategies to rectify the situation, including (but not limited to)
  - the focus on three main areas of physical/competitive, the spiritual, and the social,
  - a greater promotional effort at Orientation Week, with an audio/visual setup, more focused volunteers, and a restructured demonstration to be more interesting and engaging to the audience,
  - a concerted effort to include beginners into the club earlier on, achieved through the early bulk order of uniforms and zekken,
  - a more engaging beginners' course, including a demonstration of a shiai between two high level kendoka on the first day,
  - early social nights including a "meet the seniors and each other" event at the Clyde and a bowling night at Strike, followed by other social events throughout the year,
  - an effort by seniors to be friendlier and more approachable both within and without the dojo.
- *The Beginners' Course*  
There were 69 people present on the first day of the Beginners' Course, showing a significantly greater proportion of females (39) to males (29). Twenty-five signed up to full membership following the Course (10 of whom were female). Ten are regularly training today, with a further 5 appearing occasionally. These figures demonstrate a 20% retention rate, which is greater than the standard 10% or lower seen in previous years.

### Gradings

MUKEN's skill continues to rise. 2012 saw a large number of members successfully attaining Dan grades – shoDan in particular. At the same time, a large number of juniors achieved their first grade at 6<sup>th</sup> Kyu.

- *3<sup>rd</sup> Dan*: Son Nguyen
- *2<sup>nd</sup> Dan*: Jeffrey Khor
- *1<sup>st</sup> Dan*: Benjamin Tran, Takeshi Hartono, Richard Loi, Richard T'en, Vincent Lai
- *1<sup>st</sup> Kyu*: Yan Ling, Dhanish Dangkomen
- *6<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> Kyu*: 23 MUKEN members (16 to 6<sup>th</sup> Kyu)

MUKEN is currently experiencing a skill gap, with a large number of Dan grades, a large number of juniors, but very few senior Kyu. This is due to the low retention of the previous years. This skill gap will possibly present a problem in Kyu level competitions for the next couple of years.

### Melbourne University Blues Awards

Three MUKEN members were awarded the prestigious Melbourne University Blues award for outstanding performances in sport (primarily based on results from the AUG). The awarding of Blues is a long standing tradition of the University dating from the establishment of MUSA in 1904. Past winners of the award include Kenji Sugimoto, Kevin Chin, and Thomas Mendelovits.

- Takeshi Hartono, *Full Blue*
- Viet Hoang, *Full Blue*
- Jeffrey Khor, *Half Blue*

### **MUKEN “KANAGAWA” Camp**

MUKEN once again headed up to Sovereign Hill in May for the annual training camp. In attendance were 65 people from MUKEN, Monash, and Ballarat Kendo clubs. The camp allowed members to practise in a sustained and intensive format. Seniors had the chance to practise unusual training methods and focus on the psychological aspects, while juniors experienced a quantum leap in their kendo learning with the opportunity to wear dogi, bogu, practise new waza and keiko, and kata. The nights gave all campers the chance to mingle and play games. The Iron Chef competition uncovered some of the club's hidden culinary masters, with some fantastic and amazing courses.

### **MUKEN and MUSA**

In 2012 MUKEN increased its involvement in dealings with Melbourne University Sport and the Melbourne University Sport Association. MUKEN has been very vocal during MUSA council meetings, pushing for clarity in MUS decisions (including funding, venue hire) and for fairer treatment of “instructional” and “non-competitive” clubs. MUKEN has provided official responses to MUS's Sport and Clubs Select Committee Report and their Sports Capital Improvement Plan (one of the few clubs to do so). Andrew Lam has been appointed the Instructional Clubs representative on the MUSA committee. MUKEN's efforts in this scene has helped elevate the club's status at Melbourne University.

### **Coaching and First Aid**

A couple of our most senior members underwent coaching and first-aid courses. MUKEN subsidised the training of Kenji Sugimoto, Andrew Lam, Josh Orth, and Kevin Chin. Their coaching accreditation and first-aid training brings MUKEN in line with other sporting clubs in Australia, where accredited coaches are a requirement.

### **MUKEN “SHIBUYA” Band Night**

MUKEN hosted its annual Band social night in August at the Pugg Mahones, with the aim of raising funds for the Adelaide AUG team. Members from all Victorian Kendo clubs were in attendance to enjoy a night of fantastic music and games. Members of MUKEN demonstrated their musical genius with slick and funky jams. People competed in the blind and interpretive kata competitions, the results of which caused much laughter. Of particular note was Ben Sensei rocking his ¾ guitar in a washed out denim trenchcoat, and Shinoda Sensei teaming up with Richard T'en to perform an almost perfect blind kata demonstration. The night was a great success.

### **Other events**

- MUKEN members participated in the VKR club crawl, visiting clubs far away from the city centre, including Benalla and Apollo Bay kendo clubs.
- A number of Japanese Sensei have visited the club during the year, including Fujiwara Sensei. MUKEN members greatly benefitted from their experience.
- MUKEN performed a number of demonstrations for schools, exposing the art to young students. MUKEN also drew large audiences for its demonstrations and Melbourne University's Open Day and O-Weeks. Our demonstration was a featured event on the Open Day schedule.

- MUKEN commissioned two Japanese artists, one a calligrapher, the other a mangaka, to produce artwork for the club. The work of the calligrapher has been developed into a new tenugui that is just being sold to members as of this report. The manga work of the other artist is still being considered for club use. These are contributing to a “visual and graphical revolution” of the club.
- MUKEN assisted in the planning of the inaugural VKR ball, held at the Melbourne University Boathouse. MUKEN members comprised of over half of the ball attendees.
- MUKEN had many social events, including end of semester dinners and pizza nights. The end of year dinner for 2012 at the Korean restaurant Gunhg was a memorable and classy occasion.

## Competitions

MUKEN had many successes in competition during 2012.

- *Australian Kendo Championships, April 2012, Canberra*  
MUKEN sent four members as part of the Victorian Squad: Kenji Sugimoto, Andrew Lam, Kevin Chin, Richard T'en.
  - Kenji Sugimoto was a member of the winning Victorian Dan team.
  - Richard T'en was a member of the winning Victorian Kyu team.
  - Richard T'en was also awarded the Fighting Spirit award.
  - Kevin Chin attained his yonDan at the gradings following the tournament.
- *Australian Kendo Championships, April 2013, Sydney*  
MUKEN sent 6 members as part of the Victorian Squad, with a large number of our members comprising the Kyu team: Kenji Sugimoto, Andrew Lam, Son Nguyen, Jularaj Suthibutr, Dhanish Dangkomen, Yan Ling.
  - Kenji Sugimoto and Andrew Lam were a part of the Victorian Dan team which came second overall.
  - Son Nguyen was a part of the Victorian Kata pair that came first.
  - Yan Ling, Dhanish Dangkomen, Jularaj Suthibutr were a part of the Victorian Kyu team which came second overall.
- *Victorian Kendo Championships, July 2012, Victoria University*  
MUKEN saw amazing success at the VKC with a total domination of the Kyu teams and close second in the Dan teams, and similar successes in the individual competitions.
  - In the Kyu individual competition, Richard Loi placed second and Richard T'en placed equal third.
  - In the Women's Kyu competition, Meera Chandrananth placed first.
  - In the Kata pairs, MUKEN placed second.
  - In the Kyu teams, MUKEN teams A and B placed first and second respectively, resulting from an all MUKEN Kyu team final.
  - In the Open teams, MUKEN team A placed second, losing to MBK in a very close battle.
  - Jing Hui Chan (Joshua) won the Fighting Spirit award.
  - Of the 21 member MUKEN squad, 18 received at least one medal.
- *Australian University Games, October 2012, Adelaide*  
Though MUKEN lost the Kyu team division that it has come to dominate in the past years, we managed to claim a clear and decisive victory in the Open team division, placing first against UTS. Coupled with victories in the individual divisions, MUKEN became overall champions of the AUG Kendo tournament for 2012. The last time we won this title was in 2009 in Melbourne.

- Takeshi Hartono placed first in the Kyu Individuals.
  - Viet Hoang placed third in the Dan Individuals, with Jeffrey Khor a close fourth.
  - MUKEN placed second on the Kyu teams.
  - MUKEN placed first in the Open teams.
  - Takeshi Hartono was also awarded the Green and Gold award.
  - MUKEN were overall champions of the 2012 AUG Kendo competition.
  - Takeshi Hartono and Viet Hoang were awarded the prestigious Full Blue award by the University of Melbourne for their results in the AUG, and Jeffrey Khor was awarded a Half Blue.
- *MUKEN Annual Taikai, May 2012, The University of Melbourne*  
MUKEN and the Melbourne University Sports Association hosted its annual MUKEN Taikai in May, drawing 48 competitors from a number of clubs around Victoria to compete in a variety of divisions. Some particularly strong kendoka performed on the day, and were able to place in multiple divisions.
    - Haruki Reid from Fudoshin was able to place first in both the Beginners and Junior Kyu divisions despite only having a year's experience. Darren Page of Mumeishi placed second in the same two divisions behind Reid with the same amount of experience.
    - Meera Chandrananth and Michael Yeung placed equal third in the junior Kyu division.
    - Takeshi Hartono placed first in the Senior Kyu division and second in the 1 & 2 Dan division.
    - Jeffrey Khor and Son Nguyen placed equal Third in the 1 & 2 Dan division.
- *Nagae Taikai and Otsuka Memorial, July 2012, The Kenshikan*  
A number of MUKEN members participated in the Nagae and Otsuka competitions. Our members were randomly mixed up with members from other clubs to create 3 person teams in the Otsuka taikai, while our high ranking members fought in the individual-based Nagae Taikai.
    - Andrew Lam placed third in the Nagae Taikai.
- *Mumeishi 3's, November 2012, Mumeishi*  
As usual, MUKEN fielded two three man teams with an even blend of skilled yudansha and new juniors.
- *Club Championships, November 2012, Melbourne University*  
MUKEN members, both experienced and new, performed some excellent shiai at the internal club competition. Some of the juniors played kendo above and beyond the norm, especially considering that they have only practised kendo for 8 months.
    - *Beginners:*  
1st Place - Jularaj Suthibutr  
2nd Place - Joshua Chan  
3rd Places - Justin Ireson, Rallas Buttriss
    - *Womens:*  
1st Place - Meera Chandrananth  
2nd Place - Joanne Chow  
3rd Places - Vivienne Tran, Cheryl Low
    - *Kyu:*  
1st Place - Vincent Laiwin

2nd Place - Meera Chandrananth  
3rd Places - Jularaj Suthibutr, Joshua Chan

- *Dan:*
  - 1st Place - Kenji Sugimoto
  - 2nd Place - Richard T'en
  - 3rd Places - Kevin Chin, Son Nguyen
- *Fighting Spirit:*
  - Justin Ireson
  - Joanne Chow
  - Meera Chandrananth

### **The future**

MUKEN will face many challenges in the coming years. 2014 marks the club's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and is a monumental occasion. The club will continue to tackle the MUS/MUSA situation which continues to become more difficult for clubs to operate within, especially as the reinstated Student Services and Amenities Fee has yet to be fed down to clubs. The club must tackle a skills gap with the lack of high level Kyu grades, while other clubs' are beginning to strengthen theirs.

### **Yakov Sensei and the Assistant Instructors**

MUKEN would like to thank Yakov Sensei, Kenji Sugimoto, and Andrew Lam for their immense efforts in running and instructing the club in 2012. Since the club's inception in 1989, Yakov Sensei has worked tirelessly, coming to almost every training, to teach us kendo. His great experience and wisdom has shaped our kendo and our lives. It is because of him that the club is as large, strong, and forward-facing as it is today. MUKEN is truly privileged to have him as our Sensei.

Andrew and Kenji have also worked tirelessly and endlessly to push the club and its members in the right direction. Andrew has put in a lot of effort to lead the beginners' courses. He has volunteered for the MUSA council. He has helped coach the club's members for the various competitions that the club has been involved in. Kenji has had to tackle his work and family life, but he has still managed to find the time to teach the club. He has represented the club in almost every competition, and he remains one of our strongest players, if not the strongest. His ideas have helped improve the club, including the formation of the Gotanda Project. He will be heading to Japan to participate in the Foreign Kendo Leader's summer school where he will undertake further leadership training.

Once again, the club would like to thank Sensei, Kenji, and Andrew for all the work they have put into MUKEN.

### **Personal Thanks**

2012 was a great success for MUKEN due also to the hard work of the committee and its members. I'd like to thank the members of the 2012 committee for helping me run the club during the year. Thanks to Takeshi Hartono for his management of the secretarial, administrative, and PR aspects of the club, to Andrew Lam for his wisdom and advice as the Vice President of the club, to Kevin Chin for handling the difficult task of managing the club's treasury and accounts, to Brian for his management of the armoury, to Tony for his endless administration of the club's website and IT, to Richard T'en for his well written publicity articles to MUS, to Slavco for his efforts in organising social events for the club, and to the general representatives Dhanish, Yan, and Meera for their help in smooth running of the club.

Running MUKEN is not an easy task – it cannot be done single-handedly, but requires a strong and focused team. Without your help this club would surely not be as successful as it is today. I feel very fortunate to have had you all as fellow committee members.

Finally I'd like to thank all the members of the club. Though it may sound cliché, MUKEN can't exist without its members. Your involvement in competitions, events, and just regular trainings has helped the club grow in strength and size. It is considered a large club both in the AKR and in Universities because of you.

Viet Hoang  
President  
Melbourne University Kendo Club, April 2013