

Melbourne University Kendo Club

President's Report AGM, 24th April 2014

Delivered by Viet Hoang

2013 proved to be a very busy year for the Melbourne University Kendo Club. The club concentrated on the social calendar, which proved to be majorly successful. However, a drop in competition performance – particularly in the AUG – highlighted the current skill gap that the club is experiencing: there are more yudansha in the club than we have ever had, and there is a strong increase in the number of beginners recruited, but there are almost no high-kyu grades remaining. This is an issue that is being addressed in 2014. MUKEN continued to contribute to MUSA, MUS, VKR and AKR issues with regular attendance at meetings and events. Membership levels increased and we had the most kendo members of any VKR club for 2013. The club strengthened ties with other university clubs, particularly with Victoria University Kendo Club. MUKEN remains a healthy, large, and active club as it enters its 25th year of existence.

Orientation Week and Beginners' Course 2013

- *Orientation Week 2013*
Greater effort was put into promoting the club during Orientation Week days. Through the support of both seniors and juniors of the club, coupled with a well-presented, audio/visual equipped booth, and strategic positioning on the South Lawn, the club was able to recruit many beginners for the course. The club was awarded for its effort with a \$500.00 cash prize by MUS. The club did experience minor difficulties with security on the South Lawn, who took issue with the display and use of weaponry. MUS has promised to rectify this issue in future years – in 2014 they provided us with pre-filled forms allowing us to display and use equipment.
- *Beginners Course 2013*
The number of beginners who appeared on the first day rose slightly from the previous year at 75. 37 signed up for the Beginners' Course, which is an increase in registrations from the previous year by twelve. Interestingly, the number of females outnumbered the males slightly. The course was once again run by Andrew Lam. About 5 beginners are regularly training in the club to date.
- *Beginners Course 2014*
A number of changes occurred for the Beginners Course in 2014. Firstly, it was moved to the first week of Semester rather than the usual 2nd week, in an effort to recruit more people. Secondly, with the departure of Andrew Lam, the course was run by Yakov Sensei with the support of Thomas Mendelovits and Tony Shearer. The changes – in particular the change in commencement date – has resulted in greatly increased numbers: approximately 90 for the first day of the Course, and 57 registrations for the rest of the course. 41 have ordered ICHIBAN packs. Given the increase in numbers the committee may wish to consider continuing to start the Beginners' Course from the first week of semester.

Gradings

Once again, MUKEN's grades continue to rise. A few members achieved shodan and joined the ranks of the yudansha, while many beginners graded in their first grading in September. Of particular note is Kenji Sugimoto, who attended the Kitamoto Seminar in August and successfully graded to Fifth Dan, which makes him a sensei at MUKEN. The club would like to congratulate Kenji and all successful grading applicants.

- *5th Dan:* Kenji Sugimoto

- *2nd Dan*: Richard T'en, Vincent Laiwin
- *1st Dan*: Russell Tran, Yan Ling
- *6th to 1st Kyu*: 25 MUKEN members

The skill gap that became evident in 2012 continues into 2013, with the lack of high kyu grades in the club. Once again this is due to the low retention rate of past years, but it may also be due to the 3 year course structure of many Melbourne University Bachelor programs. This skills gap finally made an impact on the club's performance at the AUG where an entirely new team was sent to compete.

MUKEN "MIYAZAKI" Camp

The club tried a change of scenery and held the 2013 camp in Apollo Bay (as opposed to the usual Ballarat). This came about through a prior visit organised by the VKR to the Apollo Bay Kendo Club. 66 members from MUKEN and Monash travelled 3.5 hours down the Great Ocean Road to train in the scenic Apollo Bay. A number of Apollo Bay KC beginners joined in as well. The camp maintained its difficulty as members trained for 2 days under sustained conditions. Beginners experienced kata, waza, bogu, and many new kendo techniques, which helped skyrocket their kendo skill. A shiatsu massage, the wonderful sea air, and the excellent cooking by the Iron Chefs provided the perfect counterbalance to a tricky weekend. A post-camp survey was conducted which showed general satisfaction of the camp, but the journey was too long leaving little time for training or recreation. As a result, MUKEN will be returning to Ballarat in 2014.

MUKEN and MUSA

MUKEN continued to attend and strongly contribute to MUS and MUSA meetings and developments. Andrew Lam was re-appointed as the Instructional Clubs representative on the MUSA committee. MUKEN continues to tackle issues of clarity and transparency in MUS processes and procedures, and in early 2014 Viet Hoang was appointed a member of the newly formed Sports and Clubs Working Group. The SCWG aims to provide direct input and feedback over the policies and processes that are current and will soon be created. MUKEN maintains its reputation amongst the sport clubs and MUS.

MUKEN "SHIBUYA" Band Night

The annual Band Night tradition continued in 2013 with spectacular performances from a number of bands formed from club members. Chibi Ghibli, an all-classical ensemble backed by an amazing vocalist, was a fantastic and new addition to the jazz, rock, and pop line-up, and was very well received by members. We also saw Milk and Chauffeur, consisting of first-time band members (and in some cases first-time musicians) perform various pop songs. Tony Shearer, Thomas Mendelovits, Kenji Sugimoto, and Jularaj Suthibutr, talented musicians by trade, provided jazz and rock relief. The night was extremely successful and Yakov-Sensei commented that he was "impressed" by the talent in the club, staying all the way to the end of the night (a first?). The club experienced some minor issues in the organisation of the event when it was realised that the night was going to be on the same night as the AFL grand final weekend. This caused some problems with the venue (Pugg Mahones) but this was eventually resolved. The committee may wish to consider holding the night earlier in 2014 to avoid this situation re-occurring.

Social Calendar

Thanks to the fantastic work of the social representatives, the club had social activities every month. These events served to bond the club together outside of training and to raise the retention rate of beginners. Events included paintball, rock climbing, bowling, barbeques. There was strong attendance at all these events. This is in addition to the end-of-semester dinners and the many casual post-training dinners. Beginners have commented that the social element of the club has differentiated MUKEN from other sporting clubs.

Fitness Program

Throughout 2013, MUKEN trialled a fitness program primarily consisting of jogs and runs held twice weekly. This program was created in an attempt to increase the overall fitness of MUKEN members, which was deemed to be lacking in some areas. The jogs saw regular attendance from a few members. During different points in the year the number of people attending rose and fell. Jogs were typically 3 to 5km in distance, while the runs were designed to train leg power through sprints. Though it was quite a time-consuming activity, it did help improve the fitness of the members who did train regularly, and was also a good bonding activity. The new committee may wish to consider resuming this program in 2014.

Osaka Fudai Prefectural University Kendo Club Exchange

In early 2014 MUKEN was visited by the Osaka Fudai Prefectural University Kendo Club. A delegation of 40 members (15 students, 5 high-ranking sensei, 20 OBs/OGs) visited Melbourne for the purposes of a cultural exchange. Members befriended the students and accompanied them around Melbourne, helping them experience many things uniquely Melbourne. Two trainings were organised, one at MUKEN and another with the greater VKR. Beginners who were four weeks into the course were allowed to train with the Fudai, and they greatly benefitted from this. Hamaguchi Sensei, the delegation leader, was particularly supportive of the beginners and encouraged them all to continue training in Kendo. MUKEN is extremely thankful for the visit and would like to thank Osaka Fudai for their time and experience. MUKEN is keen to repay the favour by organising a club visit to Osaka in 2015.

Interclub trainings

In 2013 and early 2014, trainings and shiai programs were formed with close friends Monash and Victoria University Kendo Clubs. These were created to build relations among Victorian university clubs, and attempt to raise shiai performance in preparation for the Australian University Games.

Competition Results:

- *Australian Kendo Championships, April 2013, Sydney*
 - 6 members from MUKEN Attended: Kenji Sugimoto, Andrew Lam, Son Nguyen, Jularaj Suthibutr, Dhanish Dangkomen, Yan Ling.
 - Individuals: Kenji Sugimoto out of the Pools, losing to Kirby Smith (UNSW) in the Knockout Rounds
 - Dan Team: Kenji Sugimoto (MUKEN), Stan Corrigan (MBK), Kazuya Kimura (MBK), Yoichi Miyamoto (MON), Brett Smith (FUD), Andrew Lam (MUKEN), Nicholas Chan (MON). **Achieved Second Place, losing to NSW**
 - Kyu Team: Dhanish Dangkomen (MUKEN), Jularaj Suthibutr (MUKEN), Haruki Reid (FUD), Yan Ling (MUKEN), Viet Luan Le (MBK), Hiroki Sato (FUD). **Achieved Second Place, losing to NSW**
 - Kata Pairs: Son Nguyen (MUKEN), Stan Corrigan (MBK). **Achieved First Place, beating NSW**

- *Victorian Kendo Championships, July 2013, Victoria University*

There was some great successes for MUKEN at the Victorian Kendo Championships:

 - Yan Ling (**1st place Kyu Individuals**)
 - Joanne Chow (**3rd place Kyu Women's Individuals**)
 - Meera Chandrananth (**3rd place Kyu Women's Individuals, Fighting Spirit Award**)
 - Andrew Lam and Son Nguyen (**1st place Kata Pairs**)
 - MUKEN Kyu Team A - Russell Tran, Meera Chandrananth, Yan Ling, Jularaj Suthibutr, Joshua Chan (**2nd place Kyu Teams**)

- *Australian University Games, October 2013, Gold Coast*

MUKEN sent a wholly new team with almost every member a first-time attendee to the AUG. As a result, the team did not achieve the same success that it did in previous years. Highlights included:

- Justin Ireson in the Top 16 for the Kyu Individuals
- Joanne Chow in the Top 7 for the Womens Kyu Individuals
- Yaya Bonggotgetsakul competing in the AUG in her first year

- *MUKEN 5th Annual Taikai, May 2013, The University of Melbourne*

MUKEN and the Melbourne University Sports Association hosted the 5th MUKEN Taikai in May. There was close to 50 competitors from all VKR clubs competing in a number of divisions. There was plenty of strong performances, and MUKEN achieved many successes. Of particular note is Joshua Chan and Jularaj Suthibutr, who claimed places in both the Beginners and Junior divisions, and Haruki Reid from Fudoshin who gained places in both the Senior Kyu and Junior Dan divisions:

Beginners Division

- 1st: Joshua Chan MUK
- 2nd: Jularaj Suthibutr MUK
- Equal 3rd: Justin Ireson MUK
- Equal 3rd: James Dougan BAL

Junior Kyu Division

- 1st: Joshua Chan MUK
- 2nd: Hieu Nguyen VUK
- 3rd: Nol Arabit VUK
- 3rd Jularaj Suthibutr MUK

Senior Kyu Division

- 1st: Yan Ling MUK
- 2nd: Haruki Reid FUD
- 3rd: Russell Tran MUK
- 3rd: Hieu Nguyen VUK

Junior Dan

- 1st: Nick Chan MON
- 2nd: Haruki Reid FUD
- 3rd: Clement Guo MBK
- 3rd: Richard T'en MUK

Senior Dan

- 1st: Kenji Sugimoto MUK
- 2nd: Andrew Lam MUK
- 3rd: Nick Chan MON
- 3rd: Kevin Chin MUK

- *Nagae and Otsuka Taikai, July 2013, The Kenshikan*

A number of MUKEN members competed in the Nagae and Otsuka competitions. The competition was strong, but Richard T'en saw some success in the winning team of the Otsuka Taikai alongside team members from Fudoshin and MBK.

- *Mumeishi 3s, December 2013, Mumeishi*

MUKEN sent two three person teams:

- MUKEN A (Yaya Bonggotgetsakul, Meera Chandrananth, Son Nguyen)
- MUKEN B (Jularaj Suthibutr, Richard T'en, Ka Man Wong)

MUKEN team A won the team Fighting Spirit Award.

- *Club Championships, November 2013, Melbourne University*

First year Division

- First Place: Yaya Bonggotgetsakul
- Runner up: Aiden Dang

Kyu Division

- First place: Jularaj Suthibutr
- Runner up: Justin Ireson
- Equal third: Brian La, Meera Chandrananth

Women Division

- Winner: Meera Chandrananth
- Runner up: Yaya Bonggotgetsakul

Junior Dan Division

- Winner: Yan Ling
- Runner up: Vincent Lai
- Equal third: Richard T'en, Takeshi Hartono

Senior Dan Division

- Winner: Yan Ling
- Runner up: Andrew Lam
- Equal third: Richard T'en, Tony Shearer

Fighting Spirit

Cheryl Low, Eddie Nagul, Viet Hoang

- *First MUKEN/VU meet*

Meera Chandrananth	- M	Hieu Nguyen
Yaya Bonggotgetsakul	D - K	Mariah Alorro
Jeffrey Khor	M - M	Steven Ta
Eddie Nagul	M -	Katherine Deppler
Jacky Ngo	K -	Tuan Tran

- *First MUKEN/MONASH meet*

Cathy Xu - MD Candy Wan
Joanne Chow - MM Hoey Yain Goh
Cheryl Low MM - Vivian Thang
Justin Ireson - MK Keegan Almeida
Aidan Dang - M Sam Baudinette
Richard Loi - MM Nick Chan
Takeshi Hartono - MM Trent Reeve
Kenji Sugimoto M - KD Yoichi Miyamoto

- *Club Awards 2013*

These novelty awards were awarded at the end of year dinner in November 2013.

Earthshaking Fumikomi - Andrew Lam

Most Original Kiai - Viet Hoang

Scariest Kiai - Meera Chandrananth

Most Fragrant & Best Dressed - Kaman Wong

The Suffocator - N/A (Award removed due to the possible emotional trauma it might inflict upon the recipient, to be recognised for having the most pungent "biohazard" kendogi. This was voted upon, but the winner shall never be known!)

The Early Riser (highest attendance to morning training) - Tony Shearer

The Sweep-you-off-your-feet (most consistent cleaner of the dojo floors) - Aidan Dang

The Flash (speedy footwork) - Kenji Sugimoto

The Battered (most significant bruises) - Yaya Bonggotgetsakul (A fellow kenshin quipped that her win ought to have the subtitle, "according to Facebook statuses".)

The Imaginary Shinai (always practising suburi, anytime, anywhere) - Jularaj Suthibutr.

Order of Merit

Nam Viet Hoang

Most Outstanding Improvement

First-Years: Yaya Bonggotgetsakul

Kyu-Grader: Jularaj Suthibutr

Dan-Grader: Yan Ling

MUKEN Dream Team

Senpo: Kevin Chin

Jiho: Son Nguyen

Chuken: Andrew Lam

Fukusho: Thomas Mendelovits

Taisho: Kenji Sugimoto

The Future

2014 has proved to be a very busy year already. With many events happening, including the Osaka Fudai exchange, many seminars and sensei visits that have already occurred, and the 25th Anniversary coming, the club and new committee will have a big but fulfilling year ahead. The 2012 fear that the re-introduced SSAF had yet to be fed down to clubs continues to be a concern, but with the financial profit that has arisen in 2013 this may not be an issue. However, the club will need to address issues with MUS and venue hire fees, which currently are not clear and potentially unfair. The club will also need to rectify the skill gap and the under-performance of our student teams. The committee may wish to look into organising an official club visit to Osaka to return the favour to the Osaka Fudai KC. The club enters 2014 in a very stable position both financially and with membership rates, and it will be up to the new committee to maintain this stability and continue its growth.

Yakov Sensei and the Assistant Instructors

MUKEN must thank Yakov Sensei, Kenji Sugimoto Sensei, and Andrew Lam for their huge contributions to the club. Yakov Sensei continues to offer the club his instruction, wisdom, and advice, and has been doing so for the 25 years that MUKEN has been in existence. There is something about the fact that the club is older than many of its members that promotes a sense of achievement (perhaps grandeur?). It is fair to say that MUKEN has lasted so long, and has had so many successes, primarily due to his devotion and commitment to the club and to kendo; without his support we may not have lasted into the 25th year. His position as founder and head Sensei belies his kind, friendly, and sometimes juvenile personality; I have often come to Sensei asking for advice in matters outside of kendo. Through our casual chats I have discovered his love of science-fiction,

his Vespa-riding, Beatnick past, and his uncontrollable sweet-tooth. I have come to see Yakov Sensei as a second dad. On behalf of the club I would like to thank Yakov Sensei for his great service to MUKEN.

MUKEN must also thank Kenji Sugimoto Sensei, who has juggled his work, his family, and a myriad of other commitments, with the club. He lives a very, very busy life but is still able to find time to instruct us and to help administrate the club. He has been key to many club initiatives, including the Gotanda Project and the Osaka Fudai exchange. He continues to be one of the club's strongest members. We would like to thank Kenji Sensei for his services to the club.

Farewell to Andrew Lam

In early 2014, long time member Andrew Lam left for London to pursue a change in career. During his time in the club, Andrew has served in the committee as Secretary and Vice-President. He has run the beginners' course numerous times and has created extremely strongly kenshi. He has been instructing the club for many years and has imparted much wisdom on members. He has served on the MUSA committee as a representative for Instructional Clubs. He has competed for the club at numerous competitions and with many successes. He is a role-model for all members, and he is something of an idol for beginners. His impact on the club and on the kendo scene has been immense, and while we are sad to see him leave MUKEN, we are happy that he is advancing in his career and life in London. The club wishes him all the best in his future endeavours.

Personal Thanks

I would like to thank the committee and members of the club for a successful year. A club (or indeed many things in life) can not be managed single-handedly; you need the help and support of your friends. I would like to thank Andrew Lam for his advice and wisdom as Vice-President of the club – he has been instrumental in building the strong connection between MUS, MUSA, and MUKEN over the previous few years. Thanks to Jularaj Suthibutr for his secretarial expertise and his co-management of the club. Thanks to Joanne Chow for taking on the tricky task of managing the club's treasury and accounts. Thanks to Justin Ireson for organising and managing the armoury, to Tony – once again – for his endless administration of the club's website and IT. To the general representatives Dhanish Dangkomen, Brian La, Simon Wang, and Meera Chandrananth, thank you for your help in running the club. And a special thanks to the social representatives Cheryl Low and Vivienne Tran who have done an absolutely fantastic job with the social events calendar. I feel extremely fortunate to have you all as fellow committee members and the club will definitely not be in such great shape without your service.

I would finally like to thank all members, both the seniors and the juniors, for without your attendance at training and support of club events and initiatives, the club would simply not exist.

Viet Hoang
President
Melbourne University Kendo Club, April 2014