

REFLECTIONS OF THE 2008 MIDWEST BUJINKAN TAI KAI

By Jeff Ochester
08/14/08

From August 8-10, 2008, 120 people showed up at the Dayton Bujinkan Dojo to participate in a training event designed to bring together Bujinkan students & Shidoshi for one purpose: sharing in the Bujinkan Community. Called the 2008 Midwest Bujinkan Tai Kai, the event was successful on many fronts:

- It was the first time in Dayton, Ohio that a Bujinkan Tai Kai training event was held since the mid-1980s.
- The proliferation of 1st, 2nd & 3rd generation US instructors offered attendees the unique perspective of seeing how training has evolved, but the principles have remained the same.
- More than \$900 was raised for the Red Cross, the Warrior Foundation, and the Bujinkan.
- No one was injured.
- New and old relationships were kindled with Bujinkan Shidoshi & deshi alike; the sense of a Bujinkan community was apparent both on and off the mats.

Who knew such a concept could be so successful?! I guess Soke...

The idea of holding such an event originated from Marty Dunsky, co-owner of the Dayton Bujinkan Dojo and 10th Dan in Bujinkan Budo Taijutsu. In fact, the concept wasn't thought of as a "Tai Kai" until speaking with other Bujinkan seniors, such as Craig Olson, who managed the Canadian Tai Kai.

Marty's idea was simply to get a bunch of instructors together from the Ohio area, and have them show what methods they were using to 'train' on different Bujinkan concepts. Not a teaching seminar, but a training seminar. Second to this was finding volunteer instructors from the same area; they all had to be Bujinkan Shidoshi, but that was it. In fact, the more disparity in training experience, time in the Bujinkan, and unique business backgrounds, the better.

In March of 2008 while training at the Bujinkan Hombu, Soke (with the help of Doug Wilson) was asked by Marty about letting the Dayton Bujinkan Dojo hold a Dayton Tai Kai training event.

Among other things, Soke stressed the importance of a "Bujinkan Community" when training and that "good people" should be part of it. One of his last comments was "good luck on your Tai Kai!" as Soke had Marty demonstrate techniques for class.



With consideration for Soke's perspectives, work began in early April to contact multiple Bujinkan instructors from across the area. In short time, Shidoshi from Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky were agreeing to participate. 1st generation US students such as Larry Turner and Kevin Schneider volunteered immediately. As discussions continued, it became apparent that the "Dayton Tai Kai" really needed to become the "Midwest Tai Kai", due to the number of volunteer Shidoshi and students willing to participate. Instructors such as Gabe Logon of UP Michigan, Ethan Capers of Minnesota, Mike Russell of Wisconsin and Patrick Lee from St. Louis committed to attending the event and instructing as necessary.

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One final decision still needed to be made about the Tai Kai – was it going to be free, or would there be a cost to attend? After considering options, the event was made free for all Bujinkan students, with the hopes of raising some money for charitable organizations. It also quickly established that, for the inaugural event, money and politics would not be participating.

By July 30th – ten days before the event – there were 130 attendees registered, 30 people on a waiting list, and folks attending from Germany, California, Oregon, and across the Midwest.

Friday, August 8, 2008 – 08/08/08 – was the opening evening of the Tai Kai. More than 100 students checked in by the 7:00 PM start time. With Marty Dunsky as the TKMC (Tai Kai Emcee), the event started with a large circular bow-in and a great session on groundwork. Training included knife and firearms ground training, proper methods for getting up after being knocked down, and ways to compare and contrast hip movement when standing verses on the ground. By 9:00 pm, everyone was tired but excited for the rest of the weekend!



And what a weekend it was. A total of six training sessions, each 90 minutes long, were held on Saturday and Sunday for 120+ attendees. The sessions were shared by multiple instructors, each with their own interpretation and dichotomy of movement, yet all similar in the principles applied. Even during the breaks, folks continued training, asking questions, and working together. Many instructors offered training concepts on what Kata are for, the importance of the San Shin & Kihon Happo, Solo training, etc. The instructors seemed to feed off of each other, building on what the previous person showed. I believe volunteer instructor Shidoshi Gabe Logon summed up the training very well: “I am still hung over with the ideas, concepts, and feeling of the event.”

From the perspective of Soke’s message about Bujinkan Community, it is my opinion that the 2008 Midwest Bujinkan Tai Kai was all about working as a Bujinkan Community, and it worked! I believe these types of events will become the norm in today’s Bujinkan. Regardless of geographical location - from the Bufest events in Illinois to the Buyu Camps on the East and West coasts - there are lots of opportunities to train with different Shidoshi Kai instructors from across the US. Events like this offer a great way to expand your training and evolve your taijutsu.

As for the 2009 Midwest Bujinkan Tai Kai event: it is being planned for somewhere in Middle America!

Train safe,

Jeff Ochester
Dayton Bujinkan Dojo