

Sensei Ohta - A profile.

Written by Brian Gwyther

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Sensei Yoshinobu Ohta was born in Chiba, Japan on 3rd November 1959.

Upon joining high school at the age of 15 he and a friend enlisted into the school Karate club and began training with Sensei Shinomiya 7th Dan. Two years later at the age of 17 he received his black belt. Sensei Ohta also won his local area championship and consequently went on to compete in the all Japan high school championships. It was also compulsory within the school curriculum at this time to study either Judo or Kendo. During this time Sensei chose to practise Judo twice a week for two years.



After finishing high school Sensei went onto university. Unbelievably he made the decision not to continue with Karate. However, the Takushoku University had a tremendous reputation as one of Japan's strongest Karate clubs and it wasn't long before the club coach, Ishikawa Sensei encouraged him to join and continue training. Man Sensei Ohta found himself training five hours a day, before and after his daily studies. He sometimes wondered what he was doing and why he was doing it but recalled that all the karate students would encourage and be supportive of one another. During an interview with Shotokan Karate Magazine in 1999 Sensei admitted that he would not give up if the others in the group didn't give up. This strength of character and competitive edge kept him going.

of the JKA's top sensei's including Masters Nakayama and Enoda. After leaving university he was unsure what to do with his future and so decided to continue with Karate at the JKA. Sensei Tsuyama encouraged him to take the morning classes at the dojo and then to finally join the highly prestigious JKA instructors course. Sensei Ohta soon found himself training alongside such respected names as senseis Shoji, Asai, Abe, Tanaka, Osaka, Kagawa and Yahara.

It was also common practice at this time for Sensei Nakayama to teach and assist during classes. Sensei Enoda had previously graduated from Takushoku. Ohta Sensei recalls that Master Nakayama was totally different to the other instructors. He was quite gentle and wouldn't shout. He would concentrate on explaining the details of each movement and would make sure that everything was performed technically correctly. His classes would often be less physical than the other instructors, but his eyes would not let you escape.

In 1982, Sensei Ohta was recommended to Sensei Enoda by Tsuyama Sensei as a possible assistant. Sensei Enoda's assistant at that time, Sensei Tomita, was due to leave England and return to Japan. At first Sensei Ohta was worried about living up to the very high standards set by Sensei Enoda. As a teenager growing up in Japan, he would often hear stories about the legendary Enoda. However, he need not have worried. Sensei Enoda retained him as his personal assistant for the next twenty-one years up until his death in 2003.

During those two decades, Sensei Ohta earned himself the reputation as an outstanding Karate-ka and one of the most popular and technically skilled shotokan instructors in the world. He worked tirelessly for Sensei Enoda teaching twice daily at the Marshall Street dojo in

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London's west end. He also spent a great deal of his time travelling all over Great Britain and Europe conducting special courses and working as a grading examiner.

In 2003, following the death of his mentor and close friend, Sensei Ohta was appointed as the chief instructor and chairman of JKA England. Just prior to this appointment, Sensei Ohta had taken and passed the examination for 6th Dan in front of JKA's most senior technical committee in Tokyo, Japan.

Sensei Ohta's primary objective is to respect the wishes of Sensei Enoda and that is to continue spreading authentic JKA Karate throughout the world. He has also worked hard in unifying Karate in this country by affiliating JKA England to the English Karate Governing Board.

Despite being one of the busiest and most sought after instructors around, Sensei Ohta always makes time for his own personal students at London's Oasis and Budokwai dojos.

Sensei Ohta is a true gentleman blessed with a cheeky sense of humour and a great ambassador, not just for the JKA but for karate across the board.