

GOJU-RYU, KARATES WARMUP EXERCISES

Discover Their Hidden Applications *By Scott Lenzi*



There is a story of how karate legend Kanryo Higashionna (above) defeated an attacker without a blow by using the opponent's own momentum against him.

Most martial artists, regardless of what style they practice, participate in some form of warm-up exercises before beginning a class session. Such exercises are designed to stretch and strengthen muscles, and increase blood circulation throughout the body to better enable it to function in harmony with the particular martial art.

In the Okinawan karate style goju-ryu, students participate in a special series of warm-up exercises called daruma taiso, which emphasize proper breathing methods. Proper breathing is the essence of goju-ryu karate and helps develop internal energy (ki), separating goju from other karate systems in that it has "internal" or "soft" elements.

The daruma taiso are derived from the classical Okinawan forms (ko-ryu), so it should come as no surprise that these warm-up exercises also include kaisai, the applications or meanings (both obvious and hidden) of a kata (form).

Goju-Ryu Technique #1

One of the first exercises performed in daruma taiso is the "alternate toe raise." The student begins by placing his big toe on the ground and lifting the other four toes off the ground. Then he switches, raising the big toe while placing the other four toes on the ground. This exercise alternately lifts the inside and outside of the foot, strengthening the ligaments, tendons and muscles in the ankles, calves, and to a degree the knees.

More importantly, this exercise helps the student develop the proper sanchin kata stance. When stepping in sanchin, the feet are moved in a semicircular fashion. In order to properly grip the floor, the toes must separate as they step. The daruma taiso drill enhances the student's floor grip by strengthening the feet and toes. Although the exercise has obvious stretching advantages as well, its most significant benefit is to develop the proper sanchin stance.

One of the more dynamic daruma taiso exercises is the "Okinawan rattle" drill. The student assumes a relaxed standing position with his feet shoulder-width apart and the arms held loosely at the sides. The student then gently rotates his hips and allows his arms to swing freely. Although his feet remain planted, his body rotates in one direction, then the other. The unique rotational movement of this exercise improves balance and loosens up the hips, knees, ankles, torso and arms. Arm circulation is also improved by the centrifugal force created by the movement.

The Okinawan rattle exercise epitomizes the essence of goju-ryu karate: deflection and conversion of the opponent's force against him. The principle behind the drill is featured in the film *Karate Kid II*, and was the "secret" which allowed Daniel (Ralph Macchio) to win the climactic fight. Similar to the concept of "drunken" style kungfu, this movement allows the defender to give way or go with the flow of an opponent's attack and simultaneously convert his energy into a counterattack.

Goju-Ryu Technique #2

This principle is illustrated in a story about legendary karate master Kanryo Higashionna, who taught karate to Chojun Miyagi, the founder of goju-ryu. According to the story, Higashionna was fishing peacefully on a dock when, unknown to him, a young challenger was sneaking up from behind and planned to push the master into the water. The challenger could then claim to be the better martial artist. However, when the young man lunged forward and placed his hands on

the masters back, it was he, and not Higashionna, who tumbled into the water below.

The young man ended up in the water because the master did not resist the attack but simply gave way, causing the attacker to throw himself into the sea.

Goju-Ryu Technique #3

The principle of the Okinawan rattle exercise is found throughout the goju-ryu kata, most notably in the kururunfa, salfa and su-perempi forms.

As daruma taiso progresses, each part of the body is independently and synergistically stretched and strengthened. The wrists and fingers are of particular importance. Wrist-stretching exercises are necessary so that blows and blocks may be properly performed. If your joints are stiff and inflexible, it is difficult for internal energy to be transmitted through the meridians to your appendages.

Goju-Ryu Technique #4

Each wrist stretch also has a kaisai. In this case, the hidden application is a throw or a lock, so it is important that you position the hand and fingers properly when performing the stretching exercise. The downward wrist stretch, for example, prepares the hand for a ko uke (open-hand head block). It can also become a wrist lock, and because it improves wrist suppleness, there will be minimal damage to the joint if it is locked by an opponent.

Another exercise popularized by the Karate Kid films is the "praying hand" drill, a motion derived directly from the gaisho meditation position. Proper breathing is essential to this exercise. Always breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth, keeping your spine straight. This exercise produces both great relaxation and tension, teaching the student breath/motion coordination. This action is also practiced in the sanchin stance and allows the student to center his balance and energy.

Goju-Ryu Technique #5

The praying hands drill is in fact the fundamental basis for all blocking techniques in Okinawan goju-ryu. By simply closing one hand and raising the other, you have jodan uke (upward block). By opening one hand at solar plexus level and raising the other hand in a crane position, you have ko uke. Chudan uke (mid-level blocks) and gedan uke (low-level blocks) can also be applied out of the praying hands position. On a more advanced level, the praying hands motion can be utilized offensively for counterstrikes such as nukite (spear hands) and shuto (knife hands), just to name a few. With both hands moving as a single unit, a variety of blows can be discovered. On the surface, this exercise seems quite harmless, but as you uncover the hidden techniques, you see the many effective kaisai which lay underneath.

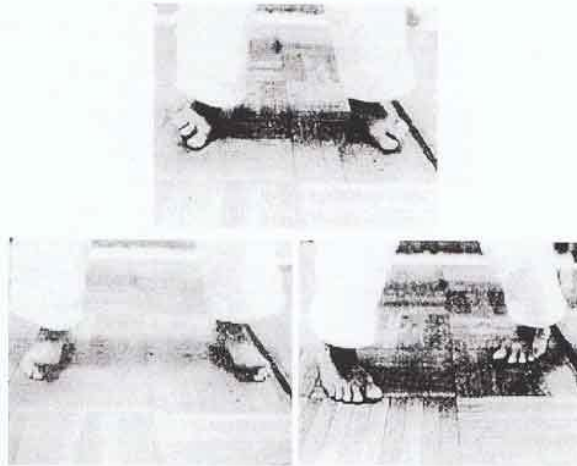
All of the exercises in daruma taiso have hidden meanings. Through practice and perseverance, students can discover for themselves the principles and applications of each drill.

Goju-Ryu Technique #6

As you can see, in the daruma taiso exercises of goju-ryu karate, there is more much more than meets the eye.

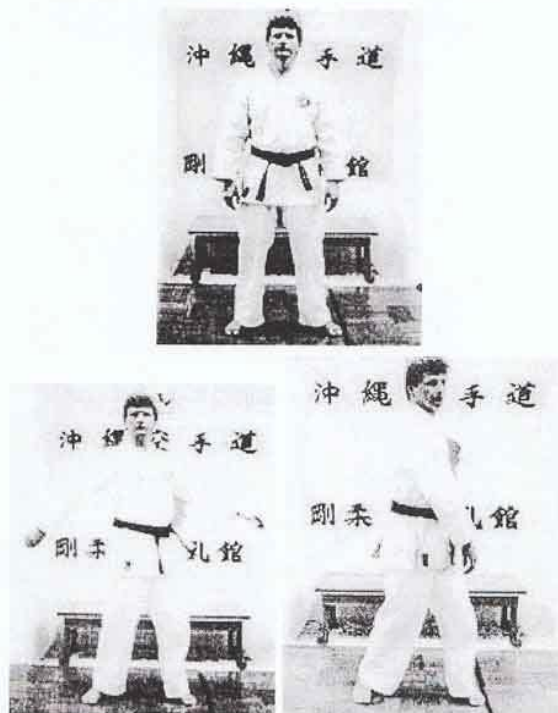


GOJU-RYU Technique #1



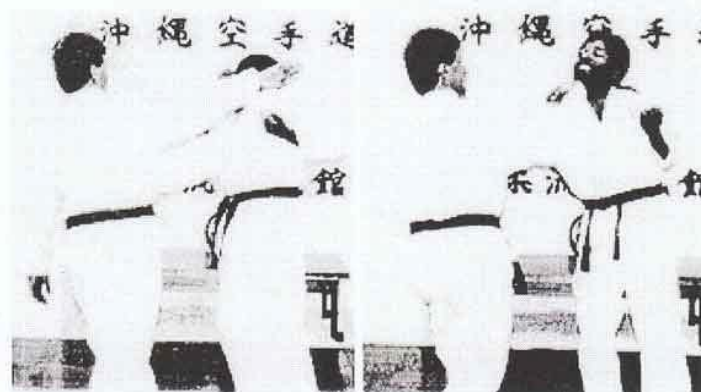
In daruma taiso's alternate toe raise exercise, the goju-ryu practitioner first places his big toes firm/y on the floor and raises (1) his other eight toes. Then he raises (2) his big toes and keeps his other eight toes planted on the floor. The drill improves the sanchin kata stance (3).

GOJU-RYU Technique #2



The "Okinawan rattle" exercise (1-3) teaches the goju-ryu stylist to generate power from the hips by having him rotate his hips back and forth while swinging his arms freely.

GOJU-RYU Technique #3



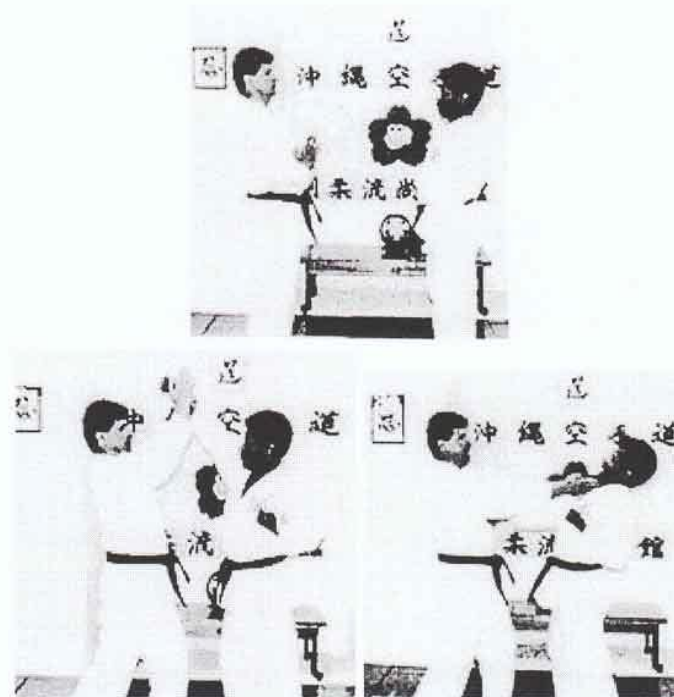
The drill has practical applications as well. The same movements can be used to deflect (1a) an opponent's punch and follow up with counterattacks such as a ridge-hand strike (2a) or crane strike (3a).

GOJU-RYU Technique #4



The "praying hands" drill (1-3) can be performed standing or in the lotus position. All of goju-ryu's blocking techniques and many counterstrikes are contained in the exercise.

GOJU-RYU Technique #5



When facing (1a) an opponent in the praying hands position, it is simple to employ an upward praying block (2a) to stop a punch, and then counterattack (3a) with a two-handed spear strike to the throat

GOJU-RYU Technique #6



The "praying hands" drill is the basis for goju-ryu blocking techniques, including the head block (1), chest block (2), and down block (3).