

Seminar with Soke Brian Dossett, Spirit Combat – 16 November 2008

I arrived late at The Village Hall dojo of Sensei Chris Shepherd and Sensei Graham Sergeant's in East Tilbury. Sensei Brian Herbert 7th Dan, Head of Jikishin had arranged a seminar by Soke Brian Dossett, 10th Dan and Founder of Spirit Combat.



As I went through the Outer Doors, I heard emanating from the dojo within, both verbal instruction and the sound of bodies hitting the mat before I entered, and upon entering the dojo proper, I immediately spotted a very fluent and mobile gentleman in charge of the mat and teaching a flowing drill of block, move, strike, enter, distract, misdirect, manipulate, re-direct and Finish.

All clearly articulated and with both spry movement and obvious good humour. This was Soke Brian Dossett enjoying himself in teaching very high quality Ju Jitsu, which was wholly Close Quarter Combat in nature. At any one moment, his knowledge and Application allowed him to demonstrate Groin Strike, Elbow to Chest, Standing Shoulder Lock, Back Elbow to Ribs, Pressure to Clavicle and more before he indicated how our JJ could then despatch the Uke with a variety of Throws.

Soke then built on this by showing simple Body Movement and Stance to amplify the effect desired on the Uke. For example, he opened up his Body in a Standing position that brought pressure to the gentle Arm Lock that allowed him to move, well, spin really, the Uke and place in a position for Break or Throw. This showed his deep understanding of how to integrate Position as an understated but essential element of his technique. It also alluded to proper Tai Chi, of martial intention rather than the fluffy dance taught for Health by those unaware of its fighting heritage – more under.

Soke Dossett then decided to improve our Fighting Stance, by showing a more correct boxer's Defensive Posture and encouraged us to keep our Hands high to cuddle the ears. He built on this by issuing Single Jabs, followed by Double Jabs and repeated with a Right Cross to finish but all with the idea of Movement firmly in Mind. He encouraged us to Relax and this implicitly conserves energy



whereas for most of us, the opposite is all too true and causes us to burn far too much

energy, nervous and otherwise, leading to early cardio and adrenaline overload. This became very apparent in a later drill – more under.

He allied this to **Footwork** and showed the ease at which he could Enter and Retreat whilst in a combat situation and then knitted this to another simple drill of single tap to the Head with a short interval before the Uke also issues a single tap. This was a Technical Sparring exercise – cleverly disguised – and allows the student to LEARN and improve. It also avoided the meleé that all too frequently results in a Sparring drill – and in which the student learns nothing. It just leads to the Common “Row”, you have when some bolshy person decides to bully you for no likely accountable reason – usually in the Pub or at the Taxi Rank. Soke was very clear on the value of Footwork and took time to draw out this thread.

Moving on, we then put on the Gloves and Head Guard and tried to put these ideas into practice. From my recollection of Sensei Rick Alder, I was overwhelmed (no surprise there, then) by multiple strikes. I think Memories of his 4th Dan Grading in the same dojo may have informed his technique... So, we all got to practise and see what we could remember with how to move and evade yet maintaining a successful Defence; it was not easy. One delightful little girl also sparred and reminded me that I have a Belly (Nooooooo!), yes.



Keeping the Head Guard on, we then took up Shield and Padded Escrima stick and translated these ideas. Again, we were encouraged to single strike but to use both the Shield and Stick to mislead and/or distract to allow us to get in the Strike. Similarly, we all rotated and got to experience some of the thrill of combat because we started to lapse into a free-for-all. Ok, we didn't really but it certainly felt like it when I paired off with Sensei Rick Alder (again). In

addition, some of us became very aware of oxygen debt owing to cardio overload and adrenaline input. There was some sweating, and panting and gasping etc – see my point above? Now you know. This showed the value of the structured drill. By the way, congratulations to Sensei Ricky Izod for winning the decision over Sensei Rick Alder. It's just unfortunate that Rick dropped his stick so Sensei Ricky could batter him. Well, it was OK, it's in the Rules(!)

We then swapped over to apply the same ideas with Foam Nunchukas. Thankfully. I say this because we used the same idea of Distraction to Fake a Head shot to disguise an intended Actual Body/Leg strike. See? Reinforcement of the principles and a reminder of Basics.

Soke Dossett then switched gear to touch upon Stunt Work and set out a 15 minute slot in which he showed how to Act – he did 2 versions of a coffee advert and asked

us to pick one – and then translated that to his martial sequence. He emphasised the need to “feed the camera” and how camera angle and body movement need to be factored in. We all got to practise a sequence in both strike(s), freezing into our best Bruce Lee “Enter The Dragon” pose – remember when he finishes off O’Hara? Whilst as Uke(s) we had to ‘sell’ the effect with suitable Breakfalls. All good fun. He also took the time to remind us to watch the film on ITV at 8PM next Wednesday while pointing to his Chest. I checked the TV guide when I got home and it showed Football: England v Germany (yes, really, apparently, it’s a scheduled “Friendly”).

Soke then slowed things down to allow us to prepare for leaving the dojo – preferably without being in a heightened state – and did a short Tai Chi sequence. He did this slowly and carefully as he talked us through the idea of each move and its transitions. After we had done this a few times and had grasped the idea, he then did a very different version full of Martial Intention. Very much the Steel Bar within the Cotton Wool, for those of you with some awareness of Tai Chi.



This helped to close out the Seminar, in which Soke Dossett was ably assisted by his Team so my thanks to them for all their help in making the seminar such a success. It was thoroughly enjoyable with thought-provoking implications of that taught, with very useful drills and all in a friendly, good-natured and good humoured atmosphere. Not many of us get to train and be taught by such a Master so when the opportunity comes, you have to grasp it. By the way, he’s fighting next month – yes, really. He nearly started early because the Police came in to check on the hall and were immediately spotted by Soke who asked them: “Wanna Fight?” They were wise not to and with good Grace retired to continue their patrol.



Thanks must go to Sensei Brian Herbert, 7th Dan, Head of Jikishin for inviting Soke to provide the Seminar and here’s looking forward to Soke’s return.