

Sunday 31st March 2013: FREE DAY

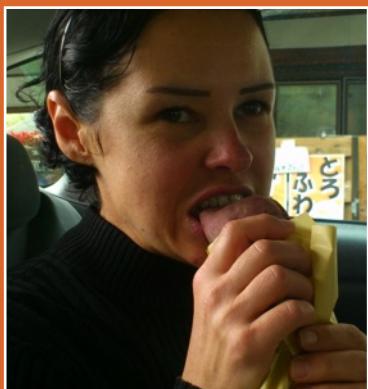
We have one 'Free Day' on our training schedule. Trond Sensei, Jodie and I were going to go to Musashi's Cave (Reigando), however Soke Sensei offered to take us to the Onsen. Whilst we wait for 12:00pm to come about I've enjoyed a bit if a sleep in, caught up on washing and doing a little more work on my training journal.



On the way to the Onsen, Soke Sensei treated us to some hot sweet potato. Delicious. Then we had a quick trip to the 'Tabaruzaka Battlefield Park, Kumamoto'. To learn more about this be sure to do a google search. It was great a great experience to see this site during Autumn. Finally time to enjoy another Onsen experience. I don't know how many Onsen's there are in Kumamoto, but I have been taken to a different one every time. About an hour at the onsen and then grabbed a bite for lunch. Back to the Sohonbu and Trond Sensei and I decided to take a trip to Suizenji Park. Trond Sensei chose to enjoy the sites of Suizenji whilst I chose to explore gift shops whilst I had a chance. Once we wrapped up at Suizenji Park I was on my way back to the Sohonbu to have some time with Martin and the kids on skype.



HAPPY SNAPS



Jodie eating sweet potato



Tabaruzaka Battlefield Park, Kumamoto



A quick stop for lunch on the way back to Sohonbu

Monday 1st April 2013: Lunch & Shopping

A little hard to get moving this morning. I think I've over indulged on the food over the weekend. All the more reason to push a little harder with training to clear the cobwebs. Morning training was great as always and I felt much better after training. Today Trond Sensei, Jodie and I took Minowa Sensei and Takasu Sensei out for lunch. Well, they chose the restaurant and we paid.

Soon after lunch we went for a shopping adventure at the

Tsuruya. We spent most of our time in the food section.

Then we all had a bit of free time.

It is Takasu Sensei's birthday on Wednesday so I spent some time finding a birthday card.

Back to the Sohonbu with a bit of time to spare so I thought I'd better start packing my bags to see how I was going for space. And I'm getting excited to see my family again.

Monday night training. SPEED!

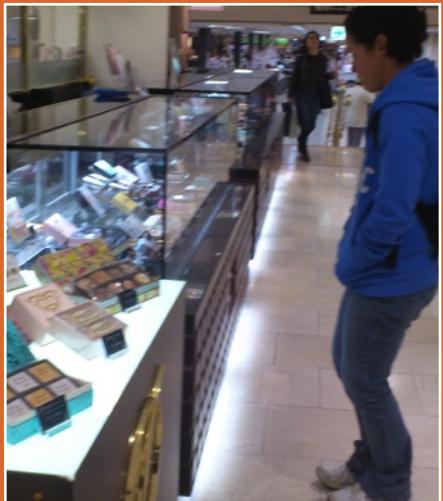
Go, Go, Go!!! Pushed even harder with my training this evening. We had Marc Sensei come and train tonight as well. I am finding much of my spare time is about fuelling myself the best I can so that when it is time to train I can give my best and get the most out of every training experience. What helps me the most is a quick power nap were I focus on breathing. Second to my breathing time is keeping my nutrition 'clean'. I'll allow myself some sweets on my last day or so as I wrap up our training adventure.



HAPPY SNAPS



Too many sweet things to choose from at Tsuruya (Department Store)



Still deciding....



And we have a WINNER!

Tuesday 2nd April 2013: Mister Donut & Dinner with Miyazaki Sensei

Waking up to the sound of rain..... Love it. Training was amazing. I have a whole lot more to do with my training journal but it is becoming very clear as to what I need to be working on to ensure that I progress to the next level of my studies.

We have a free morning so I took Jodie to Suizenji Park in the rain. It was a great morning out with a bit of gift shopping. Back to the Kamitorii to organise a gift for Takasu Sensei (his birthday tomorrow) and then off to the Onsen to meet Trond Sensei.

Trond Sensei and I were a little disappointed as the Onsen was closed today so we just walked back to the Sohonbu for some time to relax before meeting up with Marc Sensei. We had a few hours to enjoy the company of Marc Sensei. A couple of those hours were enjoyed at Mister Donut. A great place for our coffee drinkers. Marc Sensei is always a great help when we are in Japan and it is always great to catch up. Marc Sensei then took us on an interesting joyride to Miyazaki Sensei's house. If you ever get to Japan be sure to hook up with Marc Sensei. Great karate, humour and very helpful.



Dinner with Miyazaki Sensei and his wife and daughter. A great fun night and great food. Miyazaki Sensei's family shared many of their family photo albums with us of their previous trips abroad. Some great memories.

I especially enjoyed reviewing the 1992 Soke Cup photos as there were some familiar faces from my hometown. Time for some photos together and we were taken back to the Sohonbu to get our rest in preparation for our final morning training session.



HAPPY SNAPS



Mister Donut with Marc Sensei



Miyazaki Sensei in his home dojo



Miyazaki Sensei in his home dojo

Wednesday 3rd April 2013: Takasu Sensei's Birthday

Our final morning training session today and..... I hit Jodie with a Shinai. I thought I was doing so well taking care of her on this trip. Thankfully Jodie returned back to the dojo for some extra play time. As I keep on writing, training was great and I am especially grateful to be taking away a load of basic training ideas PLUS Tonfa, Sai and Shinai training ideas.

There was also much excitement in the dojo today as Takasu Sensei arrived to the dojo with our new gi's (it is also Takasu Sensei's birthday today). We had to go and try them



on and make sure they were 'perfect'. Takasu Sensei is extremely fussy with his gi ordering. I can't remember how many times he sized me up for my gi, I lost count after the third attempt. If you are after a new gi, be sure to order with the help of the Sohonbu Team. Very helpful and they go above and beyond to make sure your gi is the best quality and fit.

Soon after getting to have a play in our new gi's we were off to a Tonkatsu Restaurant to help celebrate Takasu Sensei's birthday.



HAPPY SNAPS



Trond Sensei & Jodie outside of the Tonkatsu Restaurant



Marc Sensei helping Trond Sensei with green tea



Marc Sensei, Trond Sensei & Jodie deciding what to order

Wednesday 3rd April 2013: Final Moments of our Adventure

More food. More really good food. This tonkatsu restaurant had an all you can eat, rice, tsukemono and salad. The food was delicious and once again we were with some great people. Next up Marc Sensei offered to help us do a little bit of running around. Once we



did our final errands we took Marc Sensei out for a coffee and cake. Yes..... Jodie found chocolate cake, Trond Sensei found some kind of strawberry slice which required a knife and fork to eat and I had a castle of sweets (it is my last day...). I couldn't choose one thing so I chose the castle which gave me the opportunity to sample a variety of sweets. You can see it in the above photo to the right.

Then it was time for our final training at the Sohonbu. Kids class was up first. I had the opportunity to do some teaching in this class and then watch the kids enjoy some candle punching. And then my little friend 'Reina' came in to say hello so I got to enjoy her company for a little while as well.



You can do it
Jodie!

HAPPY SNAPS



My little friend Reina. Marc Sensei's daughter.



Marc Sensei & Reina



Guess who is taking a photo of me? It's Reina!

Wednesday 3rd April 2013: Final Moments of our Adventure

A short break and then it was time for the adult class. Training tonight was great and the room was buzzing. We got to train with Takasu Sensei, Minowa Sensei and Trond Sensei. This was one of the first times I have been able to train with Minowa Sensei and Takasu Sensei.

It is great to be able to train with students of Chito-Ryu Karate-Do that are way above my level (so much to learn). The picture below was taken at the end of class. It was a fast paced class once again followed by some partner training. I got to work with Takasu Sensei and I found him very helpful.

After training, photos and souji (dojo cleaning), we were in a race to get to the Onsen. Big thank you to Minowa Sensei and Takasu Sensei for once again giving us this final opportunity to enjoy the Onsen. This time we went to a family onsen and it was a little colder at this onsen (it was an outdoor style onsen). But Minowa Sensei showed us a trick or two as to how to warm up quickly. It is great having people with you that know what they are doing. I have been to this onsen previously with Martin, Sami and Steven but it was much warmer weather. Our kids love this onsen as it has a load of toys that they can take into the bath with them.

Takasu Sensei took us back to the Sohonbu, and then it is time to get our clothes washing wrapped up and start the drying process. Will our clothes dry before 11:00am tomorrow morning? I volunteered to stay awake a little later than usual tonight in order to help get our gi's dry for the morning. We have the heater assisting and I just need to rotate clothes every so often. You can see a photo to the right in the orange sidebar.

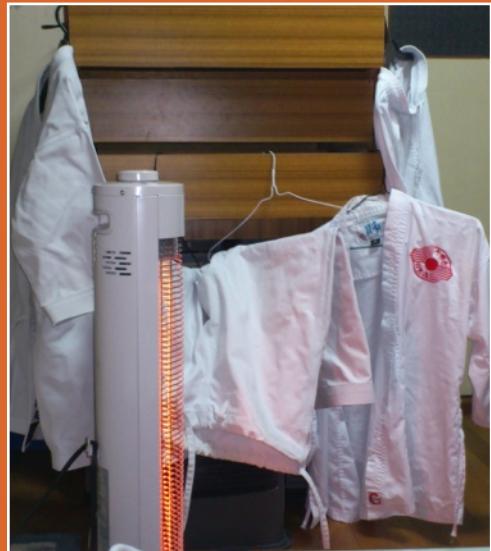
Whilst I'm watching the heater do its thing (2:00am), Jodie and Pooh bear are sound asleep. Time to wrap up for the night and get to bed. Another great day with great people.



HAPPY SNAPS



Jodie & Pooh Bear Snoozin'



Washing drying in front of the heater

Thursday 4th April 2013: On Our Way Home

Up earlier than expected after a late night watching the heater dry our gi's. Cleaning, garbage, washing....everything is all done. Even got out for a quick walk this morning and had some playtime in the dojo. Just waiting about until 11:00am to be picked up and to be taken to the bus station.

Before we knew Soke Sensei had dropped us off at the bus station and we were on our way home. We arrived at the airport quite early but it was great to wonder about and check out the gift shops and of course try some other foods that I haven't as yet tried.



Time to hit the sky on our flight to Taipei. It was a pretty quick trip. I decided I'd enjoy a movie this time, 'The Peaceful Warrior'. As per my usual form with movies on flights I missed the last part of the movie (10-15 minutes). It's OK though, I have another flight and I'll skip straight to the end of the movie.

Time for a walk about Taipei airport to get my body moving a little after the flight. You'd never guess where I ended up..... the massage chairs and then back to my secret hideout. There is always time to enjoy the massage chairs and then to settle into a good book and a bit of journal writing. Waiting, waiting, waiting for our next flight. The late night finish took its toll. My breathing time turned into a rock solid sleep whilst I was waiting for our flight. I awoke to Jodie tapping me on my head with her plane ticket. OOPS... everyone was starting to board.



HAPPY SNAPS



Lunch at Fukuoka Airport



Our plane is almost ready for boarding



Massage Chairs at Taipei Airport

Friday 5th April 2013: Are We There Yet?

After a long evening flight we find ourselves at Brisbane Airport safe and sound and ready to reunite with our families. Martin picked us up from the airport. First stop is Jodie's place. It was great to pull up at Jodie's house to see her family run outside to meet her. Very special moment.



We were soon home and as we got closer I was welcomed by two very smiley kids, a welcome home gift and a welcome home sign on the garage door. It is such a special moment in time when you realise that you have been missed by your family and they have gone to a great effort to welcome you home. Thank you Martin, Sami and Steven, and thank you to Martin's parents for helping Sami and Steven with their welcome back surprises. A little overwhelmed by all the attention and presents but very grateful. It was then time to break open the 26kg bag of gifts. Nana and grandpa stayed around a little longer so we got to share some Japanese sweets with them whilst Sami and Steven went super crazy enjoying their gifts.



HAPPY SNAPS



Smiles all round! Martin picking us up from the airport



We are on our way home



Jodie meeting up with her family

Friday 5th April 2013: Enjoying Family

Nana and grandpa are now on their way home and Sami and Steven have explored their selection of gifts. Now it was time for a quick rest before going to the dojo but Sami and Steven had another idea. Martin had a quick nap whilst I enjoyed a game of playing school with Sami and Steven.

They were the teaching team and I was the student sitting on the floor in front of them. We got to sing, receive awards, do some drawing and they even gave me a quick 30 second nap time.



Time now to get ready to go to the dojo. Back to teaching straight away today and when I wasn't teaching I was enjoying Sami and Steven and catching up with our karate family. I'm not sure I was on my game 100% this afternoon with teaching but it was great to get back into the dojo so soon after returning home.



HAPPY SNAPS



Steven getting started with his presents



Sami overwhelmed by the many presents from her karate family in Japan



And then there is Martin.... Enjoying some green kit kat