

Sunday 24th March 2013: Tournament Day

Up early and off to Kikuchi City for the Kumamoto Prefectural Tournament. The Spring tournament is for team events only and the Autumn tournament is for individual events. The gymnasium was pumping when we arrived. Many competitors already on the floor warming up and spectators taking their seats in the viewing area. We were seated in the guest area to observe the tournament and were taken care of very well.

Kata was featured before lunch, followed by lunch and demonstrations, preliminary kumite and then wrapping up the day with Kumite finals (+ Kumite presentations)

It was a great pleasure to attend a tournament where I was purely there to observe and learn and not need to do official duties. It gives you a whole different perspective of the tournament environment. I feel especially fortunate to observe the quality of this event in terms of its operations, team work amongst all officials/volunteers and the standard of competition of all competitors.

Back to Sohonbu with the Osaka Team and then off to the Onsen (public bath). The Osaka Team were extremely helpful guiding us step by step to ensure that we enjoyed our Onsen experience.

Time now to head off to a special dinner with the Osaka Team and Takasu Sensei.

Takasu Sensei organised a reservation at a Yakiniku Restaurant in Kumamoto. We paid one price for all you could eat for 2 hours and all you could drink for 2 and a half hours.

An amazing experience with great people. Very grateful to have the opportunity to enjoy time with Takasu Sensei and the Osaka Team. I highly recommend that all visitors to Japan try a Yakiniku Restaurant at least once.

Rather than heading back to the Sohonbu for the night, Takasu Sensei invited us back to his house with the Osaka Team for a sleep over. It was great to have the evening with everyone, and watching a bit of Dark Angel before calling it a night.

Tomorrow we are going to take part of a dojo tournament at the Sohonbu. I'm looking forward to seeing how these tournaments work.



Yaki Niku is the BEST!

HAPPY SNAPS



Marshalling/Warm Up Area of Tournament



Competitors line up in dojo teams



Ready for kumite finals

Monday 25th March 2013: Another Tournament?

The big weekend is starting to take its toll. Back to the Sohonbu this morning with the Osaka Team ready for a dojo tournament. I'm not entirely sure what they call these tournaments but I'll try to explain.

This tournament is between 3 dojos (Yoseikan, Osaka and Aso). This is an annual event between these three dojos and has taken place since 2011.

The Sohonbu is set up into a competition area including seating for spectators and mats on the floor to seat the competitors who are waiting their turn. There are a few teams. From memory there were three Sohonbu teams (A, B, C), two Osaka teams (A, B) and one Aso team. Each team has 6 players. Five judges (using flags) and parents assisting with score board. Two teams bow in. First competitor from each team step up and perform a kata of their choice. Referees judge, 'aka', 'shiro' or 'hikiwake'. The winner stays in and goes against the second team member of the opposing team. Each time a person wins (stays in) they must perform a different kata each time. The winner of this year was the Osaka Team. Everyone did a great job and it was a great experience judging this event.

Today we also got to meet Trond Sensei. Trond Sensei is from Norway and he is also in Kumamoto to further his training at the Sohonbu with Soke Sensei. Time for lunch...another delicious lunch at the Ajisan Ramen shop with Trond Sensei and Soke Sensei. This time Jodie and I tried the half size ramen which was accompanied with other items which were pretty amazing.

A bonus training session this evening with Soke Sensei. It was great to finally train with Trond Sensei. I am looking forward to sharing more training experiences with Trond Sensei and Jodie as we aim to complete all scheduled training sessions together before we leave on Thursday 4th April 2013.



Perpetual Trophy: Ribbon per year acknowledging the winner

HAPPY SNAPS



Getting ready for tournament



Teams waiting their turn



Tournament Champions: Osaka Dojo

Tuesday 26th March 2013: Cleaning Made Fun!

Morning training, souji (cleaning dojo), breakfast with Jodie and Trond Sensei and into the washing before heading out to top up supplies.

Washing clothes was the easy task this time as I had used the washing machine before but hanging up the clothes was a little more tricky as I had to share with both Trond Sensei and Jodie.

I was left standing there scratching my head for a little while looking at how I was going to fit everything on the clothes line..... Then I had an idea! Maybe Minowa Sensei may have an idea. Anyway, to cut a long story short check out the picture below to see what we come up with to fit everything on the clothes line.

After having a good laugh at myself doing the washing I decided I had earned a trip to the Onsen whilst Jodie and Trond Sensei were enjoying the Kumamoto Castle. I also managed to find a book store and I just had to buy a book (many book stores stock bilingual books; Japanese/English). There is a picture to the left (bottom) of the two books I brought. One of the books is clearly a Japanese book, but the other one is a secret. Maybe you can guess what it is....

Jodie returned to the dojo before 4:00pm (pewh) so I didn't need to send out a search party. Lucky because I wouldn't have known what to say anyway. But don't tell Jodie. Training tonight was with Naoyuki Sensei (Soke Sensei's son). We enjoyed some training as a group and then I had the opportunity to work with some orange belt kids. Great kids who not only trained hard but they also helped me expand my Japanese vocab in the dojo.

It is always great to have the opportunity to teach the kids at the Sohonbu. Sometimes it can be a little challenging because of my limited knowledge of the Japanese language but much like at home I think I learn more than the kids themselves.

And finally at the end of the evening, we had a souji race with the kids. Naoyuki Sensei said 'go' and everyone took off except one person. Yep, that was me, at the start line all alone thinking what just happened. All in good fun and once again smiles all around. I seem to have a way of helping others keep the smiles smiling.



Clothes Line Creativity

HAPPY SNAPS



Trond Sensei & Jodie



Onsen (white building on left)



More books ... I love reading

Wednesday 27th March 2013: It's Raining

Woke up to the rain and Trond Sensei knocking at our door to let him in to the dojo. Not as cold today but still a little cool for a Sunshine Coast mum. Trond Sensei mentioned that it was about 8-9 degrees for morning training. Morning training (amazing as usual) followed by the after training party in our room before breakfast with Todd Sensei and Trond Sensei.

Today I have opted to stay at the Sohonbu to catch up with Martin, continue my studies and sharing my experiences. Jodie is off to the Kamitori with Trond Sensei this morning. Had planned on sneaking out to the onsen after lunch today but I had the opportunity to catch up with Sami and Steven after school and play Moshi Monsters. Woohoo!

It's always great to see Martin, Sami and Steven together and smiling from ear to ear. Catching up with them regularly is a great gift and is something I look forward to each day (or as we are able to match up our schedules). Big thank you to the staff at the Sohonbu for helping us access the internet in our room. It really makes life that much easier to keep in touch with family.

Today I got to watch Jodie try some donuts. I get the feeling she enjoyed them. Watch out Mister Donut, here comes Jodie. Bonus training with Takasu Sensei at the start of the kids class today - sai basics. I need to practice more... Then we did a stance dance which you will certainly get to test out at SCK when we get back. Jodie is keen to share her groovy stance moves with everyone.

I was fortunate enough to get to teach the kids class with the help of Trond Sensei and Jodie. I tried to use mostly Japanese the entire time which made it more interesting but I love learning and am always up for a challenge. Soke Sensei taught tonight's adult class and as always gave me lots of things to think about and go and work on. Some more notes after tonight's classes - Japanese language and training ideas and off to bed ready for more morning training. Feeling a little fatigued this evening so will see how I pull up in the morning.

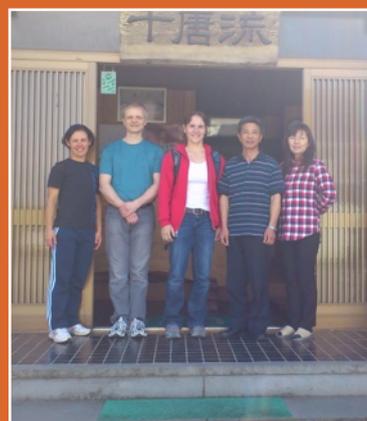
Front of Sohonbu
'Chito-Ryu'



HAPPY SNAPS



After Training Party
(before breakfast)



Front of Sohonbu
Jodie, Trond Sensei, me,
Toyodome Sensei, Minowa Sensei



Front of Sohonbu
Tomoka, Runa, Minowa Sensei,
me. These ladies are a great help
and Runa keeps us smiling

Thursday 28th March 2013: Site-seeing with Toyodome Sensei

Morning training with Todd Sensei as Soke Sensei had to go out for meeting. Then I got to watch Jodie try on gi's and do a gi order with Takasu Sensei. If anyone is after a gi they need to order one when they are at the Sohonbu. Takasu Sensei is very thorough.



Afternoon out with Toyodome Sensei. Amazing, amazing and amazing.

We went for a drive to enjoy some sight-seeing of the area surrounding the Kumamoto Airport. Stopped for a game of miniature golf. The miniature size golf course worked a treat for Jodie scoring 'TWO' hole in ones.

Off to a Soba restaurant. A restaurant for Ninjas.(Toyodome Sensei has a great sense of humour and entertained us regularly throughout this site seeing adventure with some cool ninja moves amongst other things). There is something about Japanese food. I just can't seem to get enough. Not only is the food amazing the dining experience and atmosphere was something else and at the end of our meal Toyodome Sensei treated us to some light entertainment. Toyodome Sensei has a great talent with the Harmonica. If you ever visit Kumamoto and meet Toyodome Sensei, see if you can listen to him play the harmonica. His karate technique is also something else. We were fortunate to watch him do a sai demonstration at the recent tournament.

Back to the sohonbu for a short rest and Minowa Sensei just dropped in a whole lot of food for us including a home cooked curry. Can't wait to get into this after training tonight or for breakfast tomorrow. Big thank you to Minowa Sensei who has been so helpful with our time in Japan and helping us feel comfortable throughout our stay.

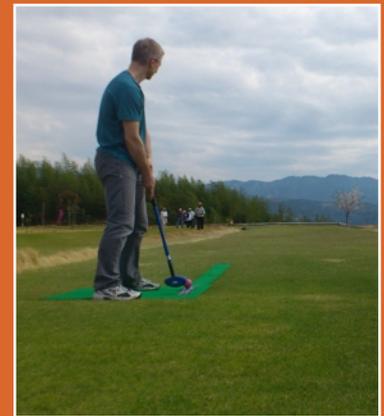


Toyodome Sensei playing the Harmonica

HAPPY SNAPS



Toyodome Sensei near the Kumamoto Airport



Trond Sensei playing Miniature Golf



Meal at Soba Restuarant served on a hot tile.

Thursday 28th March 2013: Training with Miyazaki Sensei

We were picked up from the Sohonbu at around 7:30pm by Miyazaki Sensei. A short drive to his dojo and we were on the floor training. We had Miyazaki Sensei to ourselves with the exception of one of his students. We worked through kihons in the following format.

x 4 slow + 20 speed (we did this for tsuki, geri, uke). This was followed by a short break and then we were into kata training. Another short rest break and then we joined Masuda Sensei's students for some kumite. See picture below. The picture was taken at the end of the kumite section of the class. The final segment of training was a little more kata, Shi ho hai, Seisan, Ni seishi dai and bassai..

Training with Miyazaki Sensei was a great experience. He trained with us for most of the time and it was amazing to feel the energy and explosive power. He was also very welcoming and warm throughout our training session.

Back to the Sohonbu and off to bed so we can prepare for early morning training with Soke Sensei.

Friday 29th March 2013: Mt Aso Magic

Up we get for another day of morning training. Lost the spring in my step this morning after last night's training (9:45pm finish). This morning's training was perfect for me after training with Miyazaki Sensei. A highly productive class without too much speed training. Soke Sensei always seems to know what needs to be done. I'm very grateful how Soke Sensei is able to guide us with our individual journey's.

After training we once again met up in our room with Todd Sensei and Trond Sensei. Always some interesting discussion around the heater. And today we had a special breakfast, Japanese curry and rice that Minowa Sensei prepared for us. A great way to start the day.

It was a pretty high speed morning after training to tidy up, recharge phones and get our washing done before going to Aso. 10:00am we were on our way to Mt Aso with Takasu Sensei and Minowa Sensei.

Training with Miyazaki Sensei & Masuda Sensei



HAPPY SNAPS



Trond Sensei & Jodie learning about Mt Aso



Mt Aso



Mt Aso

Friday 29th March 2013: Mt Aso Magic

On the way to Mt Aso we witness many Cherry Blossoms which was truly amazing. A quick visit to the Aso Dojo. Matsuzaki Sensei wasn't home but we were still able to get an idea of the facility. I have been there twice previously and really enjoy visiting this dojo.

Next stop: Ice-cream. Takasu Sensei took us to the Aso Farm Land where we got to enjoy sweet potato ice-cream. Sounds strange..... but, it tastes amazing. I'm not sure if you'll find this ice-cream in Australia so you'll have to come to Japan and try it yourself. Just when we thought things couldn't get any better we found a great restaurant which served 'dengaku'. As you can see in the picture to the right. There is a pile of hot coals and surrounding that is a variety of foods on sticks. Every so often you turn the food so that it cooks evenly and when it is done you eat it. What you can see is only part of the meal.

There were other things like rice, soup, tsukemono etc which were also included in the meal. I was quite happy to lay down for an afternoon nap after eating. Having a nap was a great idea, but Takasu Sensei and Minowa Sensei had a better idea. We are off to the onsen (public bath). The onsen has been amazing for me on this trip as my body has been feeling a little out of balance.

Time to go back to the dojo. By the time we get back to the dojo it is time to start training straight away. Teaching kids class first up coupled with getting sized up for a new gi and then.... playtime with kids. Marc Waterfield Sensei and his daughter Reina came in so I had to play with Reina as well. What a special girl. Lots of fun and then....more food. Tomoko-san, cooked us dinner. We ate this between classes. Takasu Sensei also joined us (Trond Sensei, Jodie and myself) for this meal. I now know why I don't eat before I train. Soke Sensei was asking for speed and I... I was full of food and felt like a Kumamon bear (see bottom right photo) but I did my best. Would have loved to be a fly on the wall watching Kumamon doing speed training.

Wrapping up the night with a chat with Martin and journal writing. Looking forward to a rest tomorrow morning before training.

HAPPY SNAPS



Minowa Sensei showing us how to cook and eat 'Dengaku'



Jodie being brave and trying 'Dengaku'



Time for a Souji Race. Who will win!



'Kumamon'
Kumamoto Mascot

Saturday 30th March 2013: Friendships & Family

Kicking off the day was some family time. I really look forward to catching up with Martin, Sami and Steven as we can align our schedules. Sometimes our kids (Jodie and I) leave us hanging on the computer chatting to ourselves so we thought that today we'd do breakfast whilst they chatted to each other via computer (photo to the right).

Time for training. I have been fortunate to get to teach again today. I've had a couple of sessions with these kids so I have a feel for where they are at and what I may be able to do to help them with their training. It wasn't a highly physical class but hopefully some of the key points were valuable for the kids.

Free time: What are we going to do today? I chose to get out and about and do some gift shopping in the Kamitori and Shimitori.

Back to the Sohonbu for a quick power nap and ready for the Welcome Party. We went to a

restaurant called Watami. And once again there was food coming out of my ears. I really enjoyed the company of all instructors in attendance and am grateful for their warmth and generosity.

Takasu Sensei, Minowa Sensei, Goshi, Trond Sensei, Jodie and I then went for a quick visit to see Dominic (he Canadian who owns a wine bar in Kumamoto). We got to enjoy some Australian wine and although I don't usually drink, I had a small glass to celebrate our friendships. I'm not sure where Takasu Sensei, Minowa Sensei and Trond Sensei went to next, but Jodie and I were then taken back to the Sohonbu by Goshi and his family.



HAPPY SNAPS



Marriott and Phillips Family chatting whilst Jodie and I eat breakfast



Jodie, Trond Sensei and Sohonbu kids



Great times at the Welcome Party!



In the Shimitori: Dancers