

**Bokken Class**  
**Presented by Master Joe Saunders**  
**Presented At Family Martial Arts, Washington, Missouri. Master Norm Leeker.**  
**Class Notes for 2/22/08**  
**Revised Notes: 1 September 2010**

Warm Ups:

1. Hold the bokken flat and in front of you. Do straight-arm rises over the head in *joon bi* stance.
2. Hold the bokken behind your back with the bokken hooked inside your elbows. Twist right and left.
3. Same as #1 but add a press behind the neck, then return.
4. Hold the bokken like port arms (left hand on top). Swing your arms until the left hand is above your left shoulder and the right arm is straight and in front of you. Butt of the bokken rotates from the 5 to 11 o'clock position. Reverse the hand position and repeat in the other direction. Holding the bokken in both hands with a slow, even pace, rotate the arms from left to right, then right to left. 1<sup>st</sup> is 1 o'clock to 7 o'clock. 2<sup>nd</sup> is 5 o'clock to 11 o'clock.

Terms:

1. *Iaijutsu*: Often translated roughly as the "art of mental presence and immediate reaction", is the Japanese martial art of drawing the sword. "One draw, one cut, one kill"
2. Parts of the Bokken:
  - Kissaki*: the tip
  - Mune*: the back of the blade
  - Monouchi*: the cutting portion of the edge, the 1/3 closest to the *kissaki*
  - Chu-o*: the middle third of the blade
  - Tsuba moto*: the third of the blade closest the handle
  - Tsuba*: the guard, not present on most Aikido *bokuto*
  - Tsuka*: the handle
  - Shinogi*: the ridge between the *mune* and the edge
  - Shinogi-ji*: the flat plane between the *mune* and the *shinogi*
  - Jigane*: the flat plane between the *shinogi* and the temper line (edge)
  - Ha*: the edge
  - Tsuka gashira*: strictly the pommel fitting, butt end of the *bokuto*
3. *Chiburi*: Literally translated as 'blood flick' this is the term for the action of cleaning the blood from the sword.
4. *Noto*: Sheathing of the sword. Sword always goes into belt blade up.
5. *Seiza*: Sitting on the knees. When in *Seiza*, the sword is placed on the left side, blade out. This sequence is approximate (details may not be accurate). Sequence:
  - a. Sitting:
    - i. From *shizen tai* remove the bokken (or sword) from the belt. (This is probably done with the left hand.)
    - ii. Hold the bokken (or sword) at your left side.
    - iii. Kneel first on the left knee.

- iv. Kneel on the right knee and assume a good Tae Kwon Do sitting position.
- v. Place the bokken (or sword) flat on the floor on your left side with tip pointing backwards and the edge pointing outward.
- vi. Both hands in your lap.
- b. Bowing:
  - i. Place both palms flat on the floor in front of you, palms down, and the tips of the index fingers touching and making a "V".
  - ii. Bend forward with your head between your arms face down.
  - iii. Return to the original sitting position.
- c. Standing:
  - i. Grab the bokken (or sword) with the left hand, rise so you are kneeling on both knees, and transfer the bokken (or sword) to the right hand holding it vertically in front of you.
  - ii. Place the left foot flat on the ground.
  - iii. Stand up and place the right foot next to the left in *shizen tai*.
  - iv. Hold the belt with the left hand while replacing the bokken (or sword) into the belt.
  - v. Grab the bokken (or sword) below the *tsuba* and hold in the horizontal position.
  - vi. Bring the right hand down to the right side.
- 6. *Shizen Tai*: Basic posture (feet shoulder width apart, straight posture) but for Master Saunders you should have the feet together. Eyes straight ahead. Left hand holding the bokken at your belt.

#### General Information and Techniques:

1. Master Saunders recommends removing the *tsuba* (guard) from the bokken to get a longer handle (should be 12 inches rather than the 10 inches with the *tsuba* in place).
2. Carrying the Bokken:
  - a. Behind the left shoulder:
    - i. Bokken is held in the left hand.
    - ii. Bokken is positioned behind the left shoulder with the handle down, tip pointing straight up, and the edge of the blade pointing backwards.
  - b. In the belt: Bokken is gripped by the left hand just below the *tsuba*. Bokken is held horizontally with the blade edge upwards
3. Grip:
  - a. The upper hand goes ½" below the *tsuba* (on the sword) OR have the first finger at the *tsuba* indentation of the bokken (preferred by Master Saunders as the *tsuba* on most bokkens is too far down). Grip with the back of the bokken in the "V" notch between your thumb and 1<sup>st</sup> finger (similar to a tennis racquet).
  - b. Grip the lower hand with the 5<sup>th</sup> finger under the end of the bokken.
  - c. Grip mainly with the last three fingers as with other weapons.
4. Front Stance:
  - a. Front stances are deeper and wider than in TKD

- b. The outer edge of the back foot points straight ahead.
  - c. The stance is the key to a good cut. Practice moving into a good front stance.
5. Cutting:
- a. First 2/3 of the cut is adding power to move the bokken. The last 1/3 of the cut is guiding the moving bokken to make the cut.
  - b. Stay relaxed. "Let the bokken do the work."
  - c. With any cut bend the front knee slightly. Keep the back straight, the chest forward and good balance. Don't lean forward!
  - d. In all forms move into the stance first then do the cut.
  - e. Typically the right arm will be fully straight at the end of the cut.
6. Upon completing a form the following procedure is followed:
- a. Hold the last move for 3 seconds
  - b. Execute *Chiburi*
  - c. Hold for 2 seconds
  - d. Execute *Noto*, ending by placing right hand on end of sword while the left hand continues to grip the sword below the guard (and holding the sword horizontal in the belt), and then bringing the feet together facing forward
  - e. Hold for 2 seconds
  - f. Drop right hand to your right side
  - g. Hold for 2 seconds
  - h. Take 2 steps back: left foot takes one step back, then the right foot steps back, then the left foot moves next to the right foot.
  - i. Hold for 2 seconds
  - j. Bow 1/3 forward with the eye looking forward at your opponent
7. *Chiburi*: The end of the form. In real fighting this move removes the blood from the sword prior to re-sheathing the sword.
- a. Right hand holds the bokken over the left shoulder with the blade up.
  - b. Bokken is moved diagonally across the body in a straight line until the right arm is straight out at the side and angled downward at a 45° angle. The tip of the bokken is even with your mid foot.
  - c. The blade should "whistle" if the cut is done correctly.
  - d. Do NOT hit the bokken on the floor.
  - e. Master Saunders does *chiburi* at the end of a double overhand downward cut by rotating the tip of the bokken toward the right foot (holding the bokken with the right hand only), continuing to arc the bokken 360° to bring the bokken above the left shoulder and then completing *chiburi* as above.
8. *Noto*: Re-sheathing the bokken. In real fighting this wipes off the blade and returns the sword to the sheath.
- a. With the left hand turn the sword sheath 90° with the sword edge side of the sheath pointing outwards. (With a bokken the sheath does not exist; therefore, this move is really just the left hand position.)
  - b. The right hand swings the bokken horizontally across the body to bring the back of the blade just below the *tsuba* between the thumb and first finger of the left hand.

- c. With the right hand pull the blade through the fingers to wipe the blood from the blade. The left hand continues to hold the sheath, so the left hand does not move.
  - d. When the tip of the blade reaches the left fingers, guide the tip of the bokken into the “sheath” (in this case pulling the belt out and guiding the tip under the belt).
  - e. Turn the “sheath” (blade) 90 so the edge is upward and fully insert the blade in the sheath.
9. Un-sheathing the Bokken: Four parts (Master Saunders counts each part during training):
- a. “One”: Use the thumb of the left hand to push the *tsuba* forward and release the sword from the scabbard.
  - b. “Two”: Turn the scabbard 90° so the blade edge faces outward.
  - c. “Three”: Grasp the grip with the right hand.
  - d. “Four”: Unsheathe the sword and bring it to the first position of the form.