To AJKA-International
AJKA-I of PA
Instructor Trainee's Report #17

Subject: **"Kicking Techniques"**

To AJKA-International
AJKA-I of PA
Instructor's Trainee Report #17
Subject: "Kicking Techniques"

In Karate we train to make our feet/legs as equally a weapon as our hands. In no other sport are feet training as rigorously – this is a unique feature of karate.[1] Since we do not use our feet in a large variety of ways as we do our hands they must be forged into effective weapons. This is not an overnight task, but must be worked up over the karate-kas lifetime.

Kicking techniques (geri) are very powerful and dynamic. This is due to (1) the relative size of the muscles in the legs as compared with those in other parts of the body, and (2) the superior ability of the gluteus muscles to connect the hips' movement to the leg's technique as compared with other muscles of the body. However, muscles must be made strong for kicks. One very important principal is that strength is more important than flexibility when delivering an effective kick.

In addition to possessing this greater relative power, kicking techniques also have the potential to deliver that power over a longer distance since the legs are the longest of the body's limbs. However, kicking leaves the karate-ka vulnerable because they are standing on one leg (sagi ashi dashi – one leg stance).

All karate techniques are generated by a moving hip and kicking techniques are no exception. The body action which generates this hip movement during the execution of a kick, when the axis of rotation is horizontal, is known as a pendulum movement. A characteristic common to all kicking techniques is that of the driving support leg. This driving support leg coupled with the pendulum motion of the hips propels the body toward the target so that, at the moment of impact, the body's center of gravity is between the support foot and the target. The use of the pendulum motion allows the karate-ka to kick with his whole body instead of just the leg.

Special attention must be paid to the stationary leg, shifting of balance and the withdrawal of the kicking foot. Since the stationary foot must bear the full weight of the body the feet must be flat to the floor and must be in a strong stance – facing the direction of the kick. You must then shift your balance past center of gravity towards the target when kicking to give it striking force. The kick bears none of the weight and simply thrusts in the direction of the target.

When kicking it is important that you deliver 80% power into the kick and you use 100% power to retract the kick. This will avoid having it grabbed by an opponent and will enable you to prepare for the next technique. Also, the height of the kick is directly related to the height of the knee.

[1] Nishiyama, Hidetaka, Karate The Art of "Empty –Hand" Fighting, Tuttle Publishing 1960 p.118

Momentum is necessary to create force and this is especially easy with kicking techniques because of the size and strength of the legs and the direct connection between the legs and the hips. To convert momentum to force an abrupt change in speed at the end of a technique is necessary. It is also important to deliver the force of the blow to the smallest possible striking area. This concentrates the impact on a single point, and delivers the impact in the shortest possible period of time.

While there are four kinds of kicking techniques (snap-kicking, thrust-kicking, striking and special kicks) the two main categories are thrust kicks and snap kicks. With either thrusting or snapping actions the proper use of the muscles and control over the supporting leg and hips to maintain balance is necessary to create techniques with maximum force.

Snap Kicks:

Snap kicks are very practical kicks for karate-ka of any level. A snap kick uses the powerful muscles of the legs; their greater mass and the long distance traveled by the leg during a kicking action allow a kick to develop a large amount of momentum. Snap kicks then utilize sharp recoil to reverse the direction of the strike just at the moment of impact. Because of the short contact time of the foot during the strike the force of impact is not reabsorbed into the body. This delivers the maximum impact force to the target without destroying the karate-ka's balance.

When delivering any kick, the karate-ka is vulnerable because kicks are delivered while standing on one leg. This is especially true when kicking for higher targets which are within the opponent's arms reach. Snap kicks overcome this because the recoil retracts the kicking foot before an opponent has a chance to grab the leg. The recoil also allows the karate-ka to draw the body together quickly and then use the drive from the supporting leg to deliver a powerful follow through technique after the kick.

Types of Snapping Kicks:

Front Kick	Mae Geri Keage
Side Snapping kick	Yoko Geri Keage
Roundhouse Kick	Mawashi Geri
Outside Crescent Kick	Mikazuki Geri (soto)
Inside Crescent Kick	Mikazuki Geri (uchi)
Back Kick	Ushiro Geri Keage

The front kick can be delivered from the front or rear leg. Kicking with the rear leg is more common and more comfortable for most practitioners. The rear-leg front kick is a natural motion; it’s easier for kickers to shift their balance and put their weight behind the kick. The rear-leg kick, especially from a relatively deep stance, often enables kickers to crash right through an opponent’s block. The lead-leg front kick is quicker but considerably less powerful than its rear-leg counterpart. Its main use in self-defense is as

a stunning setup technique that off-balances an adversary and paves the way for heavier blows. It's also used in free sparring primarily as a range-finder and setup technique.

Thrust Kicks:

The thrust kick is the more powerful of the two variations. It uses not only the snap of the lower leg but also the drive and follow-through of the hips. As with the front snap kick, the knee is brought up quickly. But to recruit more power, the knee lift is preceded by a thrust of the hips. This motion brings the largest muscles of the body into play, and instead of producing a snapping impact, it generates penetrating, disabling force. A thrust kick utilizes the same principles as a punch. A thrust kick brings the leg to an immediate stop on impact with the target, locking the kicking knee into position so there is no give on impact.

The three main kicks in this category are side thrust kick, back thrust kick and Stamping kick. As in all karate techniques proper control over balance, correct synchronization of muscle groups and proper direction of force is necessary to create powerful kicks. Like the snap kick, thrust kicks create momentum by putting the body weight into motion. However, unlike snap kicks which use a very short contact time upon impact, thrust kicks lock the body and kicking leg into position to redirect the counter-shock of the blow to the floor.

Because of the longer contact time with the kicking foot and the vulnerable position of the person delivering a thrust kick, the most practical targets for thrust kicks are low. However to develop muscle strength and flexibility, as well as coordination and balance thrust kicks are typically practiced while kicking for higher targets. Also, because of the high risk of knee injury to training partners, thrust kicks usually are aimed above the belt during kumite practice

Types of Snapping Kicks:

Side Thrust Kick	Yoko Geri Kekomi
Back Kick	Ushiro Geri Kekomi
Stamping Kick	Fumikomi
Hook kicks	Kage geri

Other kinds of kicks:

There are two other kinds of kicks that a karate-ka should practice: **Striking Kicks** and **Special Kicks**. The use of knees (hittsui-geri) are all part of the Striking category. The karate-ka utilizes the pendulum motion to execute a front knee kick, round house knee kick and flying knee. The knee strike is effective for close in fighting. The straight knee (also known as a front knee) is a typical knee strike, and involves thrusting the front of the knee into the head or body of an opponent. The straight knee can be applied from a stand-up position.

The roundhouse knee is similar to the front knee except that it does not use a forward thrusting motion, but is instead rotated from the outside. Whereas the front knee needs some space in between the individual to be performed, the curved knee can be executed from a minimal. Typical targets include floating ribs, hips, and the side of the abdomen.

A flying knee is a knee strike very similar to a front knee, except that it is performed in stand-up fighting by jumping, and often by rushing towards the opponent. A more reckless application of the flying knee strike can be applied by rotating the body so that the side of the knee strikes the opponent. Generally, flying knee strikes can be effectively applied when the opponent is off-balanced, recovering from previous strikes, or as a counter to a strike by the opponent. It can also be used as a follow-up maneuver after delivering a particularly incapacitating strike.

Jumping kicks are part of the "special" kicks that should be learned. The primary use of the jumping kick is a surprised attack to the solar plexus, chin or face. The two types of jumping kicks are: flying front kick (single or double) and flying side kick.

Despite the prevalence of high kicks in competition, the best targets for kicks are the solar plexus and ribs. The head isn't a feasible target for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the trajectory of the kick itself. The path for a well-executed kick goes straight ahead, not upward. And an opponent's body is in front of the kicker — not suspended above him. Therefore, kickers should kick into their target. This is the most common mistake practitioners make. Instead of trying to nail a small, mobile and well-guarded target such as the head, practitioners should attack the opponent's body. Inevitably, there are exceptions to this strategy — kicking to the throat or under the armpit after controlling the arm, for example. Nevertheless, a kick is designed to fold an opponent's body, not knock his head off.

AJKA-I of PA
Instructor Trainee #E027
Andrew Spivack