

President's Report AGM, 22nd April 2009

2008 was an extremely successful year for UMKC in many respects. From average skill level to competition performance to administration to club numbers, UMKC has advanced greatly in the past year. We are continually strengthening, becoming a powerful kendo club in Australia. Our camps and many social events has allowed us to become a closer, tighter, and friendlier club, while simultaneously strengthening the club spirit, and this continues to be what differentiates us from other kendo clubs in Victoria.

Beginners' Course 2008 and 2009

- There were 75 people on the first day of the 2008 beginners' course. 63 registered for the beginners' course. 40 completed it. Although fewer people showed up on the first day, more people stayed on and became full members. This was attributed to the lack of an O-Week demonstration. A smaller beginners' course has proven easier to manage and conduct – there was no need to borrow shinai from members or used wrapped up ones like in previous years.
- There are about 14 2008 beginners continuing to train now. This is higher than the usual 10% retention rate. Furthermore, they are all students, the majority from Melbourne Uni.
- We have continued not to run a 2nd semester beginners' course, a trend continued since 2005. This has proven to be the best option providing more focus to seniors and juniors, and it is less taxing on resources.
- For this year's beginners course 78 turned up on the first day. 57 registered for the course, and roughly 35 are still attending today. This year's course has been run by Andrew, and I have noticed a very strong and spirited group.

Gradings

- UMKC's skill level continues to increase. With the last gradings, the number of yudansha has multiplied.
- Kenji Sugimoto was awarded yondan at the 2008 AKC in Sydney – the highest rank achieved by a born-and-bred UMKC member.
- Andrew Lam, Kevin Chin and Hiroatsu Hiwatari have all been awarded sandan, and they now join UMKC's elite ranks.
- Michael Dunn and Thomas Mendelovits have been awarded nidan in 2008.
- Kevin Houg, Andy Meier, Tony Shearer, Viet Hoang have all attained shodan in the recent grading.
- Ranks:
 - 4th Dan – Kenji Sugimoto
 - 3rd Dan – Chris Panagopolous, Andrew Lam, Kevin Chin, Hiroatsu Hiwatari
 - 2nd Dan – Josh Orth, Michael Dunn, Thomas Mendelovits
 - 1st Dan – Avinash Ganesan, Jon Teo, Kevin Houg, Tony Shearer, Andy Meier, Viet Hoang
 - 1st Kyu – David Tay, Masayuki Hasuoka, Russell Tran, Alex Lee
- There is a very large gap between the senior members and the junior members in terms of rank.
- Congratulations to everyone who graded this and last years!

Competitions

Australian Kendo Championships, March 2008, Sydney

- Kenji Sugimoto, Andrew Lam, Alvin Chen and Kevin Chin competed in the Open Individuals.
- Chiaki Kobayashi competed in the Womens Individuals
- Russell Tran, Kevin Houg, and Son Nguyen competed in the Kyu Individuals.
- Kenji was a member of the Victorian Open Team.
- Russell was a member of the Victorian Kyu Team, which made it into the finals and came 2nd.
- Andrew and Alvin were the Victorian Kata Pairs, which won first place.
- There was a group of supporters who followed the team to Sydney to cheer them on.

Australian Kendo Championships, April 2009, Adelaide

- Kenji Sugimoto, Andrew Lam, and Kevin Chin competed in the Open Individuals and were all part of the Victorian Open team. This is the largest UMKC representation in the Victorian Open Team to date; furthermore, they came second.
- Chiaki competed in the Victorian Women's Team and the Women's Individuals.
- Russell Tran competed in the Kyu Individuals and was part of the Victorian Kyu Team.
- Congratulations on all those who competed and also a big thanks to the shinpan and the organizers!
- 2010's AKC will once again be held in Melbourne.

Victorian Kendo Championships, August 2008, Ballarat

- A large number of entries from UMKC as usual, with members competing in all divisions.
- Congratulations to Masayuki Hasuoka for getting 2nd place in the Kyu Individuals, and Andy Meier for getting 3rd place.
- Congratulations to the UMKC Kyu Team consisting of Kevin Houg, Alex Lee, Andy Meier, and Masayuki Hasuoka for getting 1st place.
- Congratulations to Alex Lee for being awarded the Fighting Spirit award.
- Competitors:
 - o Kyu Individuals: Son Nguyen, Alex Lee, Audrey Kua, Viet Hoang, Tony Shearer, Peter Huynh, Andy Meier, Kevin Houg, Masayuki Hasuoka, Natalie Chiang, Nicole Shen, Paul Wu, Rob Halm, Russell Tran.
 - o Women's Individuals: Audrey Kua, Natalie Chiang, Nicole Shen.
 - o Open Individuals: Thomas Mendelovits, Chiaki Kobayashi, Hiroatsu Hiwatari, Andrew Lam, Michael Dunn, Kenji Sugimoto, Avinash Ganesan.

Australian University Games, October 2008, Melbourne

- Open Team: 1st Place (Kevin Chin, Kevin Houg, Alex Lee, Peter Huynh, Kin-On Tham)
- Kyu Team: 1st Place (Kevin Houg, Peter Huynh, Kin-On Tham, David Tay, Viet Hoang)
- Kevin Chin placed 2nd in the Dan Individuals and was awarded his second Green and Gold.
- Alex Lee placed 3rd in the Kyu Individuals.
- Squad: Kevin Chin, Kevin Houg, Alex Lee, Peter Huynh, David Tay, Kin-On Tham, Jeffrey Khor, Natalie Chiang, Audrey Kua, Viet Hoang. Coach: Andrew Lam. Team Manager: Viet Hoang.
- Strong training regime each Friday morning, run by Andrew.
- Team breakfasts and dinners were held to tightly bond the team together.
- Compared to 2007, where half the kyu squad was female (5 girls), 2008 only had two. The 2008 AUG saw the introduction of a Women's Individual competition.
- 2009's AUG will be back in the Gold Coast. Preparations and team selections will commence at the start of the mid year break.

Mumeishi 3's, October 2008, Berwick

- UMKC fielded two teams:
 - o UMKC A: Russell Tran, Avinash Ganesan, Kenji Sugimoto
 - o UMKC B: Audrey Kua, Tony Shearer, Hiroatsu Hiwatari
- Team A manage to reach the semi-finals.

Otsuka Memorial, July 2008, Kenshikan

- Jeffrey's team reached the semi finals, and was the furthest UMKC reached in the event.

Club Championships, November 2009, UMKC

- Junior Kyu Division:
 - o 1st: Alvin Ng
 - o 2nd: Richard Loi
 - o 3^{rds}: Richard Zhou, Quan Vu
- Senior Kyu Division:
 - o 1st: Kevin Houg

- 2nd: Tony Shearer
- 3^{rds}: Andy Meier, Viet Hoang
- Dan Division:
 - 1st: Josh Orth
 - 2nd: Kenji Sugimoto
 - 3^{rds}: Kevin Chin, Kevin Houng
- Fighting Spirit awards: Vi Dinh, Quan Vu, Edward Morrissey, Kevin Houng.
- Held later in the year than in previous years. This had both advantages and disadvantages. Traditionally held before the exams, the entire month was booked out so it could not be held then. Held after the exams, students were able to compete. However, international students were not able to compete as they had to return to their homes.
- Once again, we had enough yudansha to hold a separate dan division.
- Instead of prize donations from our suppliers, for the 2008 championships medals were awarded. This is more professional, lasts longer, and should be continued for future competitions.

Best Club Award

UMKC was voted “Best Melbourne University Sport Club” for 2008 by the University. This reaffirms the hard work and effort that not just the 2008 committee, but all past committees have put in. The award is granted to the club with the best performances, administratively and competition-wise, great balances, great membership numbers, and most efficient and effective. MUSA has stated that UMKC is one of a few clubs who have been running smoothly, strongly, and independently for many years and one of the few clubs that has performed very well during VSU. The Melbourne University Credit Union’s chairman Dr John Greene awarded UMKC a giant \$1000 cheque and a “Best Club” trophy at the MUSA Blues Presentation night.

Kevin Chin awarded Full Blue

Kevin Chin was awarded a Full Blue award by the University. The Full Blue award is the highest sporting award a university may grant its athletes, and is awarded to those who have performed excellently during state and nationwide competitions. This is an award granted in all famous universities around the world and has been awarded for centuries. Kevin Chin won all his matches in the 2008 AUG except for one, and was awarded Green and Gold twice. The club wishes to congratulate Kevin on this wonderful achievement.

Half blues have been awarded to Kenji Sugimoto and Thomas Mendelovits in the past.

Camp

Once again, UMKC held its annual training camp in Ballarat in May. In attendance was close to 60 members, both from UMKC, Monash, and Ballarat Kendo Club. Leaving Melbourne on the Friday night, all attendees spent the weekend intensively training, with beginners donning armour for the first time, seniors practising unusual kendo techniques such as gyaku dou and jodan kamae, and all doing the really fun massive high hit combo waza. It was again a major success, especially the ‘Iron Chef’ cookoff on the Saturday night – demonstrating the super culinary talents of some of our members, and fast becoming a staple of the camp.

Thanks to all who helped organize the camp, the drivers who helped transport our members to Ballarat, and to Sensei who hired and drove the bus, and was our mentor for the weekend, and finally to our Iron Chefs.

Fundraising Night

2008’s MenKoteDoh was a big and successful night. Unlike in previous years, there was less of an emphasis placed on fundraising and auctions, and more placed on bands and the fun. This was because fewer funds were needed to subsidize the AUG team’s costs, with the AUG being held in Melbourne. Interestingly, our talented artists and designers made fantastic pieces of art, including kendo postcards, kendo posters, and kendo calendars, each going for over \$50. The night raised close to \$1000 dollars.

A smaller band night was held earlier in the year to mark the end of the Beginners Course. Although wonder music was played (including a Monash band), not enough beginners came even though it was originally intended as a means for them to mingle with themselves and seniors. Nevertheless it was an enjoyable night.

Social Events

- UMKC went to dine at Han Guuk Guan and Ito for the end of semester dinners.
- A traditional pizza night was held midway through the beginners' course to allow a mingling between beginners and seniors. BJ
- There are often casual and unofficial post-kendo dinners, parties, etc, that bond the club together.

Other Events

- UMKC trained with Monash at the Monash Gasshuku in August. Unlike in previous years, it was held in Clayton for one day earlier, starting early in the day and finishing in time for dinner. It was the first shiai that some of the 2008 beginners performed in, and UMKC won the interclub shiai.
- Nittaidai did not visit in 2008, but will be returning in 2010. UMKC will likely be a venue that they will train in.
- UMKC has demonstrated a few times in 2008, including the Osaka twilight festival, where the kendo demonstration has become one of the main features.

The Future

- UMKC's 20th Anniversary will be held on Saturday May 23rd. It will include a tournament, presentations, and dinner. The tournament will be open to all clubs and will include divisions for juniors to the elite seniors. Dinner will be held at Café d'Italia. Invitations have been sent out – it is \$10 to enter the tournament and \$40 for the dinner. Please RSVP and make your payments to Michael as soon as you can.
- The Rudd government has reintroduced the compulsory student unionism scheme. It has been delayed a few times and will probably be introduced in 2010. MUSA will then use the increased funds from this to cover its current deficit. The next and future committees should continue to run the club as it has been, and treat any funding that may result from the scheme as a bonus.
- The 2008 financial statements have shown that UMKC has made a loss from the previous year. This may be attributable to increased subsidies for camps, memberships, more expensive shinai, and jacket/zekken subsidies. The next committee should look into rectifying this situation, perhaps by decreasing subsidies, tighter fee collections, or by fundraising, especially with the increased financial strain of the 20th anniversary celebrations.
- Future committees may wish to examine a block payment system.

Yakov Sensei

The success of UMKC in 2008 is largely attributable to Yakov Sensei, who has been the club's instructor, mentor for 20 years. Indeed, the club would not exist today or may not have existed as long as it has without him, who founded the club in 1989. UMKC is extremely privileged to have him as our Sensei, finding the time to instruct us amidst his full time work, work for the VKR and AKR, and as chairman of the Australian Kendo Board. We should all try and learn from his incredible commitment to UMKC and to kendo, and UMKC wishes to thank Yakov Sensei for all his efforts, and all the best for what the future may hold.

Personal thanks

The club has performed excellently in 2008 thanks to the committee's hard work in managing the club. It is by no means an easy task, especially with the club's numbers. Thanks to Peter as secretary for his management of secretarial, administrative, and PR aspects of the club, to Kin-On as treasurer for his diligence in managing the club accounts, to Andrew as vice-president for his guidance and advice to the committee, to Jordain for his help with managing the kendo armoury, to Tony for his great new website and for managing the IT aspects, to Jesslyn for organizing and taking care of social aspects and dinners, and to Audrey for organizing a wonderful fundraising night, and for other odd jobs and helping other club members. Once again, managing UMKC is not an easy task,

and definitely cannot be done single-handedly; it must depend on a strong and well functioning committee. I feel fortunate to have had these committees members work with me through 2008, and I feel that we have had great success as a team.

Also, the club continues to grow in strength and discipline because of the guidance, support, and experience of the yudansha, who train frequently despite their busy schedules at work. They have helped conduct trainings, especially when Sensei has been absent, and the club has run so smoothly because of them. The club wishes to thank the yudansha for their commitment and efforts.

Viet Hoang
President
April 2009