

MUKEN Annual General Meeting 2015 President Report

Prepared by Jularaj Suthibutr

Welcome

2014-2015 has been an important landmark year for the Melbourne University Kendo Club. Marking the club's 25th anniversary, it signaled both a time for celebration and reflection. We celebrated the achievements of the club throughout the 25 years, on the successes of its members, and acknowledged the contributions of all involved, especially that of its founder Yakov Macak Sensei to say the least.

But anniversaries also offer a time for introspection, for us to look at ourselves and see where we are going. We are not a club that is content with our past, but a club that is constantly striving to grow, and improve. We wanted to be the best that we can be, not just in terms of competition results, or the strength of our members, but in our quality as a club.

To this end we have consistently strived to look at ways to improve various aspects of our club, including membership retention and experiences, club governance, and training quality.

Membership

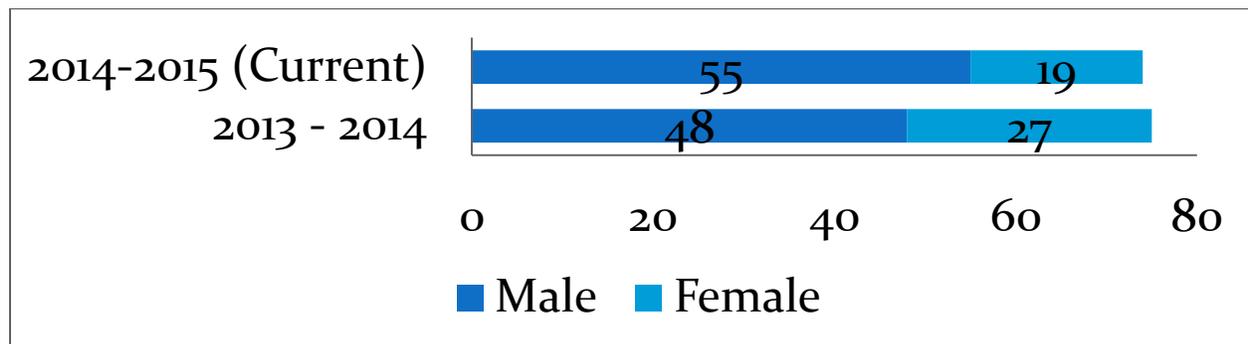


Figure 1. Membership by Gender

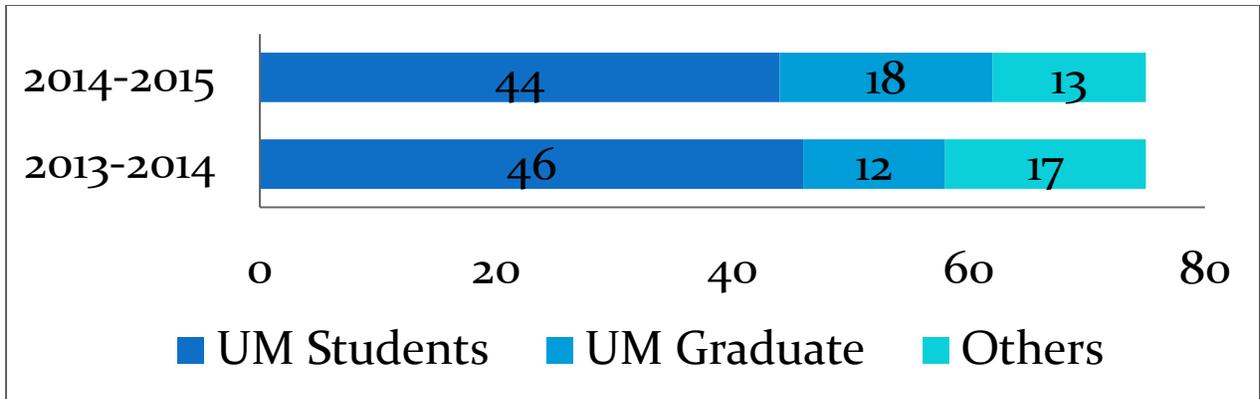


Figure 2. Membership by Student Status

The membership numbers have not changed significantly from the year before. The drop in female numbers can be attributed to students graduating and returning to their countries, as the majority of female members are enrolled students.

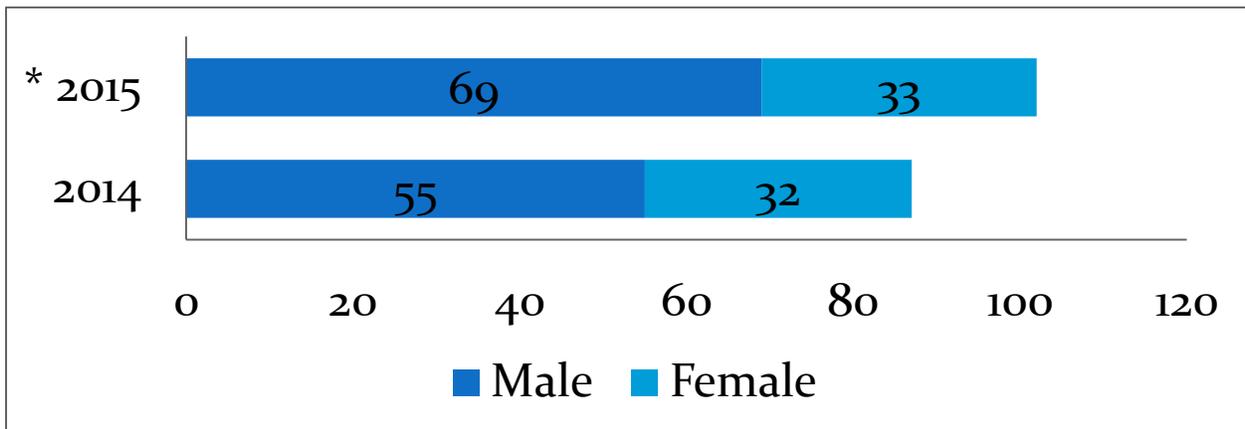


Figure 3. Introductory Course Attendance

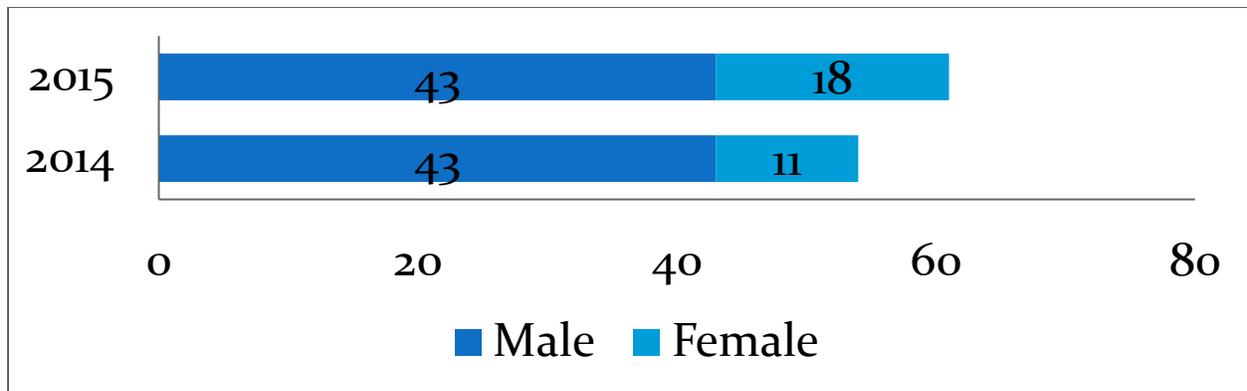


Figure 4. Beginner Course Enrolment

This year a number of changes have been made for the beginner's course.

- Allowed two days of free trial to accommodate class scheduling difficulties, work commitments, etc.
- Increased the price to \$120, including a shinai and shinai bag (\$95 without)
- Increased the duration to 10 weeks.

The number of people who decided to enroll after attending the introductory course:

2014

- Male: 78%
- Female: 34%

2015

- Male: 62%
- Female: 55%

Figures are inconclusive, as many factors may contribute. It is recommended that data be collected over the next 5 years at the least.

25th Anniversary Taikai and Dinner

The 25th Anniversary Taikai was held in place of the annual MUKEN Taikai, with the same format. This year, we succeeded in using LCD scoreboard displays and the management of two shiaiijos. There were 76 competitors.

This was followed by dinner at the Café Italia. Despite initial setback regarding table availabilities, we managed to fit everyone inside. A presentation put together by Faiz and Viet Hoang was shown.

2014 Camp

The camp was held in Ballarat, a change from Apollo Bay in 2013. We were lucky to have the presence of Hyun Hong Cho Sensei and Gary Oliver Sensei. The female kendokas in the group benefited greatly from the guidance of the former.

One main change was the lack of a kitchen due to changes in the accommodation. This prevented us from continuing the Iron Chef tradition. While we were able to order pizza and pasta in its place, it is a costlier and less enjoyable alternative. Luckily this year, the change in accommodation would allow us to resume the Iron Chef program.

Participants

MUKEN

- **Seniors**
 - o **Male: 20**
 - o **Female: 7**

- **Beginners**
 - o **Male: 13**
 - o **Female: 11**

- **TOTAL : 51**

MONASH

- **Seniors**
 - o **Male: 2**
 - o **Female: 1**

- **Beginners**
 - o **Male: 16**
 - o **Female: 5**

- **TOTAL : 24**

OTHER : 5

TOTAL MALE: 51

TOTAL FEMALE: 24

CAMP TOTAL : 80

Practice Shiai

Continuing from last year's practice shiai with Victoria University, 2014 saw the expansion of the plan with MUKEN visiting MBK and Monash University. Regardless of the results, a number of benefits were found from this endeavor. New beginners were allowed to experience and learn about shiai in a less stressful and demanding environment, competitors were given more realistic shiai experience, and in the case of MBK, Yano Sensei was able to incorporate this with Shinpan training. Ultimately, this expanded MUKEN's relationships with other VKR clubs and allowed members to meet and play with people outside of their usual environment. The intention would be to continue this practice this year, with more VKR clubs.

Saturday Trainings

In line with the intention of being more competitive and more prepared, monthly trainings were organized on a Saturday at the North Melbourne Recreation Centre. Led by Sugimoto Sensei and Jeong Sensei, focus was centred on shiai and gave competitors additional opportunities to prepare themselves for competitions. Attendance ranged from 15 – 25 people, including non-MUKEN kendokas.

One point to be made was that those who attended these sessions continued attending the regular training and not in place of it. This may be a reflection that for those who prepare for competitions, there is a need for additional training opportunities. In addition to the practice shiais, these trainings have been seen to be beneficial for competition preparation and the club will look to enabling such endeavour in one form or another for the future year.

Kata Training

An additional one hour was added to Thursday trainings to be used for Kata. This was held at the Mind Body Studio, and allowed members to focus on Kata on a more consistent basis. Prior to this, kata training opportunities were erratic, and many members were not able to progress to later forms due to lack of retention. Despite being on a carpeted floor, the presence of mirrors benefited the learning greatly.

This extra training found a steady number of participants, increasing before grading and dropping afterwards. The benefit to newer members were great as most were able to proficiently perform up to the 3rd form at their first year.

While the benefits are clearly evident, it is unlikely that this can continue as it is in the next year due to financial limitations and the burden to pay facility hires. Training may be reduced to once a fortnight or a month depending on future decisions.

Social Events

There was at least one social event organized every 2 months in 2014, a continuation of the plan implemented in 2013. Due to changes in budgeting, subsidies were removed from such events. However, this did not seem to impact attendance drastically, with each event having on average 20 attendants. The social media officer, Cheryl Low, has done an outstanding job in identifying activities and locations that cater to the needs of the members. It is to the club's benefit that this practice be continued and expanded upon for this year.

One change to the tradition however, was the removal of the Band Night from the calendar. This was due to the change in ownership of the venue. While previously there was no need to pay venue hire, the newly reinstated hire fees made organizing the event too costly and ineffective as a means of raising funds for AUG. We will be looking at bringing back the band night, but most likely as an event in and of itself and not as a fundraiser.

Victorian Kendo Championships

MUKEN was given the task of organizing the VKC in 2014, a task that the club accomplished successfully under the meticulous planning and leadership of Kenji Sugimoto Sensei and Yakov Macak Sensei.

In addition, MUKEN also had an outstanding success in the competition, winning a number of events.

Australian University Games

Held in Sydney, MUKEN prepared a team consisting of Team Coach Son Nguyen, Team Manager Jularaj Suthibutr, and competitors Takeshi Hartono, Yaya Bonggotgetsakul, Justin Ireson, Faiz Jais, Joanne Chow, Cheryl Low, Clio Liu, Han Yang Pay, and Sam Day.

Out of those, 3 members have had less than 7 months experience. Compared to the past year, the team put out a markedly improved performance, owing much to the preparation leading up to the event.

One of the changes made this year was the decreased subsidy, but in its place the club supported the team in their fundraising endeavours. As a result, the team was able to raise more funds than they received in the previous campaign, not to mention the benefit to team cohesion through their collective efforts.

Results

25th Anniversary Taikai

- **Beginner Division**
 - **1st: Yaya Bonggotgetsakul (MUKEN)**
 - **2nd: Aiden Dang (MUKEN)**
 - **3rd: David Turner (MUKEN)**
 - **3rd: Ethan Wang (MON)**
- **Junior Kyu Division**
 - **1st: Justin Ireson (MUKEN)**
 - **2nd: Yaya Bonggotgetsakul (MUKEN)**
 - **3rd: Aiden Dang (MUKEN)**
 - **3rd: Tuan Tran (VUKC)**
- **Senior Kyu Division**
 - **1st: Justin Ireson(MUKEN)**
 - **2nd: Richard Zhou (MUKEN)**
 - **3rd: Joanne Chow(MUKEN)**
- **3rd: Yoshio Kaburagi (FUD)**
- **Junior Dan Division**
 - **1st: Richard T'en (MUKEN)**
 - **2nd: Nicholas Chan (MON)**
 - **3rd: Takeshi Hartono(MUKEN)**
 - **3rd: Jeffrey Khor (MUKEN)**
- **Senior Dan Division**
 - **1st: Richard T'en (MUKEN)**
 - **2nd: Son Nguyen(MON)**
 - **3rd: Liam Jodana(MBK)**
 - **3rd: Trent Reeve (MUM)**
- **Fighting Spirit**
 - **Richard T'en (MUKEN)**
 - **Justin Ireson (MUKEN)**
 - **Yaya Bonggotgetsakul (MUKEN)**

Nagae Taikai

- 1st: Kazuya Kimura (MBK)
- **2nd: Kenji Sugimoto (MUKEN)**
- 3rd: Hiroshi Yoshinaga (MBK)

Otsuka Taikai

- 1st: Duncan Pilcher (FUD), **Jularaj Suthibutr (MUKEN)**, Hoey Yein Goh (MON)
- 2nd: **Faiz Jais (MUKEN)**, Lachlan Webb (BAL), Trent Reeve (MUM)

Victorian Kendo Championships

- **Men Kyu**
 - **1st: Jularaj Suthibutr (MUKEN)**
 - 2nd: Nol Arabit (VUKC)
 - 3rd: Hieu Nguyen (VUKC)
 - **3rd: Justin Ireson (MUKEN)**
- **Women Kyu**
 - **1st: Meera Chandrananth (MUKEN)**
 - 2nd: Melinda Tan (MBK)
- **Men Dan**
 - **1st: Daniel Kwang Yul Jeong(MUKEN)**
 - 2nd: Kazuya Kimura(MBK)
 - 3rd: Tarl O'Mara (FUD)
 - 3rd: Takafumi Kumagai (FUD)
- **Men Kyu Team**
 - 1st: Fudoshin
 - **2nd: MUKEN**

- **Women Kyu Team**
 - 1st: MUKEN
 - 2nd: MON
 -
- **Men Dan Team**
 - 1st: MUKEN
 - 2nd: MBK

Australian University Games

- **Men Kyu**
 - Justin Ireson (Quarter Finals)
- **Women Kyu**
 - 1st: Ionna Levins (USYD)
 - 2nd: Yaya Bonggotgetsakul (MUKEN)
- **Kyu Team**
 - 1st: USYD
 - 2nd: UTS
 - 3rd: MUKEN
- **Open Team**
 - 1st: USYD
 - 2nd: UTS
 - 3rd: UNSW
 - 4th: MUKEN

Mumeishi 3s

- 1st : MUKEN A: Jularaj Suthibutr, Son Nguyen, Kevin Chin
- MUKEN B: Richard Zhou, Richard Loi, Richard T'en

Australian Kendo Championships 2015

- **Men Dan Individuals**
 - 3rd: Richard T'en
- **Men Kyu Team**
 - 2nd Place: Lachlan Webb, Duncan Pilcher, **Jularaj Suthibutr**, Paul Chow, **Jamie Shen**
- **Women Kyu Team**
 - 1st Place: Yaya Bonggotgetsakul
- **Men Dan Team**
 - 2nd Place: Trent Reeve, **Richard T'en**, Kazuya Kimura, Tarl O'Mara, **Kenji Sugimoto (captain)**

While a point can be made to the success of the club in 2014 based on the results and membership numbers, it is important to look at the factors that contributed to that. Effort should be made to continually examine ways that can improve the club's performance in every way. This is not limited to just performance in competitions, but performance in how the club functions – the experience it provides to the members, the efficiency of its operations, and the achievement of its goals. It is essential that the club continues to look forward and strive to be the best club that it can be.

That we are able to do so is testament to the quality and commitment to our members. I personally wish to thank members of the committee that made life a bit easier for me in running a club of this stature and size. Our secretary, Justin Ireson, who is diligent in his minute taking and always available to assist and deal in club issues despite his demands of school and work. Our treasurer, Yaya Nutchapurida Bonggotgetsakul, who I believe works the hardest of us all in making sure the club is financially sound, in addition to collecting and counting money each training, and keeping my spending decisions in check. Our armourer, David Turner, who works equally hard to

manage the armoury and making sure training runs smoothly and on time. It is a job that is easily taken for granted, but he is the person that is the first to arrive and last to leave ensuring that all our equipment is stored in the best possible condition. I wish to thank Faiz Jais, the media and publications officer, who took the time to record and upload all our matches last year. Cheryl Low, the social events officer, whom I mentioned before, is integral in the organization and facilitation of events for our members' benefits. Tony Shearer, the IT Officer, assists in the management of our website and online communications. And finally, our General Representatives Joanne Chow, Vincent Laiwin, and Michael Yeung, who offered their assistances whenever help was needed, especially in running bigger events.

Finally, I'd like to thank Yakov Macak for his guidance in training and in running the club, Senseis Kenji Sugimoto and Daniel Jeong, and all the seniors for their presence in training. All the members and beginners who attend, without which we cannot function as a club. The presence of all of you is essential in making MUKEN what it is, as you attend trainings, create and build relationships, and contribute to the club. Thank you.