



## Irish Times

By Jerry Figgiani

Last year I was asked by Sensei Patrick Beaumont to teach a seminar in Ireland for his organization, Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu International. The hospitality and enthusiasm of this group are second to none. During this seminar, Sensei Beaumont asked me if it was possible to bring Takeshi Tamaki Sensei over the following year. Tamaki Sensei is the most senior practitioner out of the Nagamine Matsubayashi Dojo in Okinawa. He is also the technical director for my organization, Shorin Ryu Karate-do International. I called Okinawa from Ireland, and Tamaki Sensei agreed to visit.

Fast forward to 2016. From June 13-20 Ireland turned Okinawan for eight days. Not only did Tamaki Sensei come, but so did three other Okinawans: Masahiko Tokashiki, Sadahiro Makino, and Tsutomu Daiku. I also travelled to Ireland, along with five Shorin Ryu Karate-do members. This would turn out to be a tremendous week for Shorin Ryu Karate-do. At the time of our visit, the sixth WUKF World Championships were taking place in Dublin, Ireland. Beaumont Sensei arranged for Tamaki Sensei and Tokashiki Sensei to be guests of honor. There were nearly 3000 competitors at this championship, and Senseis Tamaki and Tokashiki gave a demonstration to an excited crowd of about 5000 people. This was the biggest competition ever held in Ireland. It was an outstanding event that hosted nearly forty different countries. It was also a little overwhelming for the Okinawans to be among so many people.

Before the demonstrations, the Senseis were warming up backstage, and I noticed a number of competitors gathering around them. The Senseis started going through their kata, and I could see the curiosity in the eyes of the competitors. A few came up to me and asked if they could perform their kata in front of the guest Senseis from Okinawa. The competitors could see that their own kata were very



different from those of the Okinawans. In the Okinawan kata, the stances were higher, and there was a looseness and flow to the techniques. The tempo and execution of the techniques actually projected from each of the Okinawans to the surrounding group. The Okinawan practitioners possessed much more of a whip-like snap in the motions that was missing from the kata of the competitors. As the competitors were asking me what type of kata they were doing, I tried to explain that there was more of a function in the kata of Senseis Tamaki and Tokashiki—it was more than just performing the movements. A few competitors received a first-hand lesson in some of the application techniques that couldn't be executed in a performance-based kata. Some were surprised to learn that for the Okinawans, kata is not just a performance; there must be form with function.

The Senseis also gave seminars in Athlone, at the Saint Mary's Karate Club, which also was celebrating its 30th anniversary. During this time, Ireland celebrating its 100th year of independence from British rule. The atmosphere across the country was electric. It seemed everywhere you went, the morale of the people was so high. For me personally, it couldn't have been a better time to expose Shorin Ryu to the Republic of Ireland, and to the world.



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