



Uechi-Ryu Journal

Professional Uechi-Ryu Academic Forum

Article Title: A Frustrating Rant

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Abstract: When a Sensei spends more time letting his/her instructors teach, they can often feel an undue burden or responsibility. The club in turn can suffer. This article is by no means restricted to Uechi-ryu; it was included in this journal edition as it contains a powerful message as to the effects on an instructor who seems both stuck teaching all the time, and disappointed in the lack of guidance by her Sensei.

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes class instructors can feel taken advantage of or find themselves in a bad situation on the dojo floor. Sometimes sensei rely too much on their junior instructors, ease out of teaching the classes & things can start to fall apart.

A while back I was contacted by a fellow Uechi-Ryu stylist. We were friends, although not at the same dojo. She asked me for advice as she was having some problems at the club. She was feeling miffed, used, and I think on the border line of Karate burn-out.

I saved the email and decided to post excerpts of the conversations with my responses. To be quite honest I really didn't know how to respond to the situations or the questions that were asked. Perhaps that is why I decided to write this article in the first place; as a means of to help me come up with the right answers for my peer.

The names have been left out. I am not trying to write any type of inflammatory article; I am just hoping to pass on this conversation in hopes that Sensei will stop and ask themselves if they are relying on their junior teachers too much; and to check how their club is running if they are seldom on the mat. We all train because we love the art form. What a terrible situation it is when a regular teacher feels used by their sensei; and the quality of training drops.

Email #1

“It’s been about a year since I have seen *, a year since I have seen ***, a year since I have seen awwwww hell anyone for a class....excuse my bitterness, but it’s the truth, I teach A LOT...”**

“They have been these ranks say for about 9 months...there are Yonkyu’s that can't even pronounce their kata (Seichin) let alone even take the first step into it yet they have the rank. It doesn't make sense; all the kids do is kick and punch, never Sanchin, or Kumite 3, 2 or 1, NEVER, they all....well....suck. That is VERY harsh to say I agree but the worst part is that it is partly my fault. They haven't been taught it. What happens is * will decide one night a whole bunch of people will be tested, none of them even have time in their rank, or they are way overdue, he just randomly selects using his memory of who he thinks was tested last.”**

“I notice if he has a few students doing their kata that they are looking around at everyone else, but he'll still promote them, then he'll ask me what I think and I'll say “no”. But he does it anyways. Now I am never asked to assist in tests anymore, he'll get * to help because they do what ever he says. It’s sad really. But all of this is really starting to show, no one know what’s going on.....what do I do?”**

Reply to Email #1

Hi ***

It's great to hear from you, although it's too bad that you're having a rough go right now. You ask me what you are to do. Well I first have to say that it's obvious your club is in trouble. Shoddy form, neglected techniques and undeserved promotions are the makings of a really bad joke. Remember at camp when we had that talk with *** about McDojo and crappy clubs?

If you really want to fix the problem, then address the problem. Talk to *** and see what's up. Maybe grab a coffee outside of class. Maybe he doesn't have time to prepare class or he is preoccupied with other things. Either way you need to point out what you told me. But hey, if you do not want to teach classes...then don't! Take a few nights off or show up late so someone else has to take the class. This is volunteer right?

What do the other BB's think about classes?

Email #2

“I haven't been tested or even seriously looked at since my black belt test. Never in Sanchin, never in Kanshiwa, never in Kumite. I guess if you are our club and you are a BB then there is no need of being tested anymore. Well I believe that is the total opposite of what should be happening. And the mirror at home, well you can only pick out so many things. I practice at our club about 4 nights a week (teaching 3 of the 4) it's pretty bad I love to teach, but I love to be picked on.”

“Well last night I taught karate, yet again. But last night at the end of class a student came up to me who is a brown belt and told me that I focused too much on the basics last night, that person feels that if I am "going on about the basics" there isn't going to be a good workout. Let me tell you * I was really crushed. But at the same time I was put in a very uncomfortable position. The person said he doesn't think that he should be paired up with another brown belt to work on Kanshiwa Bunki with two white belts as we did last night.**

I don't think by coming up to your instructor after class and politely say "your class sucked and it wasn't a good class" it is showing any type of respect. I could imagine if it was all the time they were expected to work on "the basics" with white belts than sure he has a point. But, if it wasn't for higher ranks such as myself and you for example then he would even know it to teach. Frankly *, I was and am very offended, and I have the least of self esteem, I am taking a break from teaching for a while. I think that *** & *** can handle the load quite easily. I can't focus teaching a class knowing that there are people thinking that way about me. It hurts. And yet again I ask for your advice, am I wrong for feeling like this?"**

Reply to Email #2

Hey ***;

Listen you do not need to be putting yourself through this garbage on a regular basis. There is nothing wrong with feeling upset by this.

You should take a well deserved break. While students should show restraint if they found a particular class boring, they should also try to make the most of it and work on methods or techniques fitting their level, even if they are working with a lower rank!

You really need to talk to *** to see what's what. If you are noticing a lack of direction and organization to the club, then its up to you and the other BB's to bring it to ***'s attention. Demand things get sorted. Either that or you can drive down here and train at the center with us!

CONCLUSION

Sensei have to realize that while they may be the senior rank & hold whatever degree; but unless you treat your instructors well your school will suffer.

Sensei take the time to talk with your instructors if you do not teach regular classes. If you want competent teachers then lead by example!

Just because you have a strong club membership wise, this doesn't mean your school is producing strong Uechi-Ka. Students can likely pick up when a class is unorganized or a teacher is having a bad workout. I can only imagine what the older students must have thought if they seen my friend having a stressed out evening when the Sensei didn't turn up (again).