



# Uechi- Ryu Journal

Professional Uechi-Ryu Academic Forum

**Article Title:** Uechi-ryu Karate shines at this Florida Dojo.

**Author:** Editor Contributed

**Abstract:** In a new project kicking off for the 2007 year, the Uechi-ryu Journal is presenting articles based on interviews of a number of Uechi-ryu instructors from around the world. The goal is to explore the differences & similarities between dojo and the elements that make them individually unique.

The first essay in this series features Sensei Kevin Bryce and his dojo in Palm Harbor, Florida USA. <http://www.1elitemartialarts.com/uechiryu.html>

## INTRODUCTION

Everyone knows good things come in small packages. This is true of a Uechi-Ryu karate dojo just 45 minutes from downtown Tampa called Elite Martial Arts Academy (EMAA). Located in a suburb community called Palm Harbor on the west coast of Florida, the school is home to many styles of martial arts including Uechi-Ryu, Tae Kwon Do, Kung Fu, Kali and Tai Chi.

The chief instructor of the Uechi-Ryu karate program at EMAA is Kevin Bryce.



Kevin runs the Uechi-Ryu program only part-time. His full time job is as the owner of a full service advertising and graphic design company based in the Tampa Bay area. Kevin holds the rank of Yondan, with certifications through the Okinawa Karate-Do Association and the Jiteki Jyuku Association. He began teaching at EMAA in 2005 after working previously as an instructor at World's Gym and the local YMCA. In 2006 his dojo became a member of the International Uechi-Ryu Karate Federation (IUKF) based in Eustis, Florida.

Kevin's interest in martial arts began with the study of Shotokan in the '70s while attending college. In the early 90's he began studying Uechi-Ryu karate at the Clearwater Shubukan under Master Frank Gorman. He has also studied under world-renown karate masters George E. Mattson, Ken Nakamatsu, and Shin Yugashi. These early experiences laid the foundation for what has turned out to be a life long study of traditional martial arts.



When conducting classes at his dojo Kevin remains focused on helping his students understand the depth of the Uechi-Ryu system while maintaining a flexible perspective on the evolution of technique. “Although each student’s training goals are different, they all look to their instructor as their primary (and sometimes exclusive) source for guidance and leadership in this area. Some martial arts practitioners see ‘traditional’ martial arts as out-of-date and ‘old school’ thinking. They believe ‘mixed martial arts’ is the proper replacement. This makes me believe they don’t understand the meaning of ‘traditional martial arts’ or what it has to offer”.

“I think traditional martial artists, in part, look at their art as a vehicle for self discovery. They get to examine not just the physical dimension but also the spiritual dimension. But don’t get me wrong, my students like to be in top physical condition and karate training helps them reach that goal. They

also know they can come in to train for a few hours each week and put aside their cares and worries. One of my senior students told me recently he practices his karate daily – especially the sanchin kata. He said it allows him to be relaxed and focused during the day at work. It would be safe to assume that karate training has given him the ability to effectively manage his stress.”

Kevin also thinks respect is an essential part of traditional martial arts. “For years the Japanese have revered their old and seniors. In Japan these individuals are considered to be ‘living treasures’. In many schools this has been lost, this is why I consider it such an important aspect of our karate training. Without exception, Kyu rank students should bow and respect the senior ranks and vice versa. You don’t command respect and build trust through intimidation and abuse. I also think every class should begin with a bow in and end with a bow out.”

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Kevin concludes: “In the end, as an instructor I’m just a catalyst. I can teach karate but it’s up to the student to assimilate it and do the hard work. When I was a white belt my Sensei told me: "In Uechi-Ryu karate it’s not the black belt you earn that’s the ultimate goal – it’s the journey you took to get there that counts”.

So true.