

2014-15 SAUK Squad Management and Structure

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Management**
- 3. Structure**
- 4. Squad session format**
- 5. Participation**
- 6. Selection criteria**
- 7. Club assessments**
- 8. Fitness testing**
- 9. Conclusion**

1. Introduction

The Shodokan system includes a competitive format of training. Therefore, it is assumed that all Shodokan UK registered club instructors include in their weekly training both kata and randori training with the intention of encouraging some of their members to participate in inter-club, regional, national and international events.

All players should aspire to participate and succeed at some level in both randori and kata. It is the responsibility of club instructors to foster the enjoyment of competition, and promote participation in formal and informal events.

The purpose of the squad is to dramatically increase the skill level of those members of SAUK that are deemed to have the appropriate characteristics and potential to succeed in high-level competition.

Competitors who attend squad sessions will benefit greatly through access to high-level instruction and development of their skills, and through training with the best competitors nationally. Developing squad members will also benefit the clubs whose members attend squad sessions, as their skills cascade down.

It is not the purpose of the squad to teach members of SAUK the basic skills required for embu and shiai events. That responsibility lies with each club instructor.

The majority of sports teams at international level are drawn from the pool of players in their respective country. These elite competitors represent the apex of a pyramid whose base is the large pool of players enjoying the sport. Progress is made through increasing ability, leading to regional and national competition success.

This is not to say that international aikido festivals are open only to a select few; currently they are open to everyone. But the pyramid system is necessary to ensure the progressive development of the sport, as skills are increased upwards and filtered back down to the rank and file. **For this reason, entry into the national squad sessions is by recommendation or invitation only.** (see *regional and national squad sessions, pg 7*)

All SAUK club instructors can recommend some of their members for inclusion in the squad sessions. The squad management team assumes that recommended players have shown enthusiasm and potential to be considered for selection.

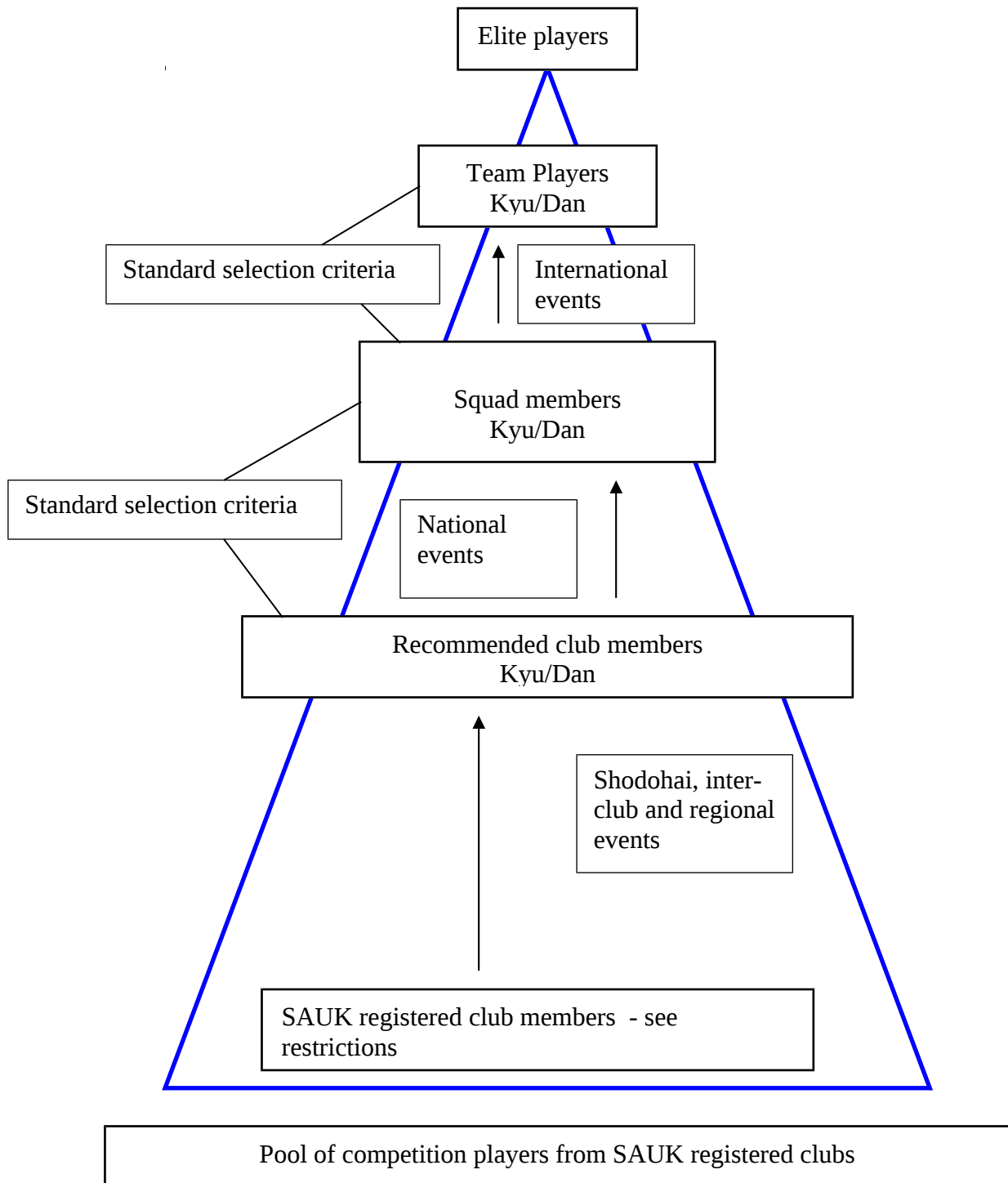
Since the squad sessions will always follow the same general format, it will be easy to see whether a recommended player can manage and benefit from them. Players who are deemed unsuitable for squad sessions will be returned to their club with the reasons for the decision. The purpose of this is to give the club instructor a guideline of what is missing from the player, and/or to give the player a chance to improve in agreed areas.

2. Management

The squad management team comprises the following posts:

- Senior squad coach
Current appointment - Scott Allbright
- Assistant coaches
No current appointments
- Assistant instructors (Players and instructors deemed able to make a significant contribution to squad sessions from time to time as requested by the coaches)
- Squad Manager (selected by the squad coaches to manage the dates, times, venues, funding and any other administrative business pertaining to the squad)
No current appointment

3. Structure



4. Squad session format

All squad sessions will follow the same general format.

The format is as follows:

Warm up – sport specific, to include pulse raiser, shikko, ukemi and dynamic stretching

Embu practice – formal practice of kitei and/or jiyu embu

Free practice – individual skills specific work with a partner

Embu bouts in pairs with feedback.

Lunch

Rewarm – using taisabaki, tegatana bogyo, tsuki work, hontai no tsukuri for atemi waza and hiji mochi no kuzushi for kansetsu waza.

Shiai practice – formal practice of elements of shiai skills and drills

Free practice – individual skills specific work with a partner

kakarigeiko – 4 timing opportunities for atemi and hiji mochi no kuzushi for kansetsu waza

Hikitate geiko – combination work

Soft randori – developing speed and timing, datsu and to itsu ryoku

Stretching – sport specific, PNF, etc.

Debrief and details of next session

5. Participation

There are 2 types of squad sessions.

1. Regional squad training
2. National squad training

1. Regional squad training

Regional squad training takes place in a month either side of a national squad training month. There will be a North and South regional squad session available (dependent on clubs hosting the events) to attract local players to a higher level of training with the view to progressing to the national squad training. Regional squad training is hosted by a local club instructor who may ask any instructor/player to assist them in delivering the session. All monies taken by the host club is kept by them to cover running costs and any other costs deemed necessary. The regional squad session will assume the same general format as national squad sessions. Anyone who meets the below criteria can attend regional squad sessions.

2. National squad training

National squad training takes place in between regional squad sessions, and is held at the Kyogikan dojo, Sheffield, S1 4GT between 11am and 3pm. The first national squad training of the year is an "open" squad session for 2nd kyu and above men and 3rd kyu and above women, after which players should be invited or recommended. National squad training is run by the senior national squad coach.

There are 2 SAUK national teams:

1. SAUK national team
2. British Universities national team

These two teams will comprise of members of SAUK and students of a British university registered with an SAUK club.

Participation in the SAUK squad sessions is available to all SAUK registered members who are:

- 18 years old and over
- Nikyu for men (*blue/brown belt*) or above at the time of recommendation

- Sankyu for women (*green belt*) or above at the time of recommendation.

(There is a lower entry requirement for women in recognition that there are fewer women players. The national squad is a way to encourage women in their individual clubs to participate more.)

- Have been recommended by an SAUK registered club instructor and approved by the squad management (*recommendation does not mean immediate approval*)
- Have been invited by the squad coaches. These may be either:
dan grades running clubs who also compete competently at national level
or
those players deemed able to make significant improvement to participate in national and international events.

Please note: members who have, in the view of the squad coaching team, already achieved their best level, will not be invited unless they have specific skills to offer to current squad members. Squad is not an old boys network of ex competitors, but a melting pot of new talent who will accelerate their learning and experience by participating within the national squad.

SAUK recognises that the best period for competition is between the ages of 18 and 35 and the grade of 1st to 3rd dan, and that our national squad should generally reflect that belief. It is expected that players who continue on to higher grades will share their knowledge and experience through coaching and officiating.

6. Selection criteria

There are three selection procedures for the SAUK national squad:

Entry into the squad by recommendation and approval

1. Entry into the squad by invitation
2. Entry into a team to represent SAUK at international events

1. The senior instructor of each SAUK registered club may recommend to the squad coaches any number of SAUK registered members from their particular club who they feel meet the participation criteria.

Club instructors should assess their own members on their appropriateness for inclusion in the squad and work on areas they feel might better their chances of approval.

Each recommended player must attend the next 2 squad sessions (regional and national) during which he/she will be assessed against appropriate selection criteria.

When a member is deemed suitable for inclusion in regular squad training, he/she and the club instructor will be informed by the coaches.

If a member is deemed unsuitable for squad sessions, the coaches will explain why and inform the relevant club instructor of their decision. In this way, the member can train to improve in a particular area at club level before being recommended again. The squad coaches may also state a period of time before the player may be recommended again, but at the minimum it will be 3 months.

2. The squad coaches reserve the right to invite SAUK registered members into the squad sessions.

These members will be dan grades only, already a club instructor and therefore unable to recommend themselves, or already have a proven track record of competition at national or international level.

3. All members of the squad will be considered for selection into a national team to represent SAUK at an international event.

It is assumed that all members of the squad aspire to and are working towards the goal of selection into the team. Otherwise their appropriateness for squad training may be brought into doubt.

The squad is a commitment.

There are clearly defined criteria for selection into the national team. Indeed, SAUK members yet to join the squad can readily see the criteria which will be held by each club instructor.

The criteria include:

1. Fitness
2. Ability
3. Attendance
4. Attitude

1. The fitness of the squad players is largely their responsibility. It is not the purpose of squad training to increase people's fitness. However, a high level of fitness will be assumed and unfit players will be asked to increase their fitness before being approved for squad training. The squad will adopt a standard fitness test that tests for aerobic capacity, muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility. This test comprises 2 levels, a basic squad entry level and a team entry level. A player hoping to be selected to represent his/her country must complete the team entry level (See 8.fitness testing).

Help and assistance will be given to players to help them achieve appropriate levels of fitness and at the right times (periodisation).

2. Ability of squad players will be largely assessed through competition results. Medal ratings of 4th, 3rd, 2nd and 1st places at all SAUK recognised events will receive point values of 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. A player hoping to be selected to represent his/her

country in embu or shiai must achieve sufficient points in the relevant category [to be calculated].

3. Squad players hoping to be selected to represent their country must attend a minimum of 70% of national squad sessions in the 12 months prior to a major international event.

4. Players' attitude is an important element of their training. We practise shodokan aikido, that is a very skilful and dynamic sport. There is no place in our sport for bad sportsmanship, violent conduct or malicious behaviour. Players are expected to train to their absolute limits within the spirit of the sport and Japanese budo.

7. Club assessments

The vast majority of one's randori and kata practice should take place at club level. The competitive format of training is a key component of the shodokan grading system from 5th kyu to 3rd dan. Even if a member of SAUK never takes part in a competition, he/she should be able to demonstrate an understanding of all the basic principles of embu and shiai. Squad players should promote and develop good randori and kata practice in their own clubs and encourage the development of their own club players.

Once a year, there will be an "open" squad session. The open session will take place during a quiet period in the competition calendar, at the beginning of the year.

This will provide a way of talent spotting (e.g. promising students with a club instructor not too interested in competition who doesn't think to recommend them) and of reinforcing the 'elite' status of the squad, making it more appealing as an aspiration. It also helps to spread enthusiasm and interest in competition throughout a wider number of clubs.

8. Fitness testing

A high level of fitness will be expected of regular squad members and they will be largely responsible for their own fitness training.

However, there will be professional help available on request to develop fitness plans for each individual in the squad.

Before selection to the national team, all prospective players must carry out a fitness test under supervision by the senior coach and/or the assistant coaches.

Below is the standard CV test squad members will be expected to be able to pass. It is meant as a guideline, since selection into the national team will require a higher level of fitness. All squad members should ensure they have a minimum level of fitness equivalent to the times below.

1. 3k run – as fast as possible
2. 2k row – damper 8 for women / damper 10 for men
3. 2.5k cycle – level 8 for women / level 10 for men on a 25 level bike

These 3 cardiovascular activities should be done in the above order within these times and with no breaks in between:

32 minutes for women / 30 minutes for men

To be considered for selection to a national team representing SAUK these 3 cardiovascular activities should be done in the above order within these times and with no breaks in between:

29 minutes for women / 27 minutes for men

The fitness test is not the only criteria for selection, but an underlying high level of fitness increases ones chance of performing aikido at the highest level.

Conclusion

We are all training to improve our aikido. Tomiki sensei developed a competitive system of training to accelerate our learning. A small part of that learning may be participation in competitions.

If a young player shows appropriate traits for competition, they should be encouraged by their club instructor to take part in club and regional events. This may lead to participation in national events, and ultimately international events.

This will only be true of a small percentage of our aikido membership, between the ages of 18 and 35 and the grades of 1st dan to 3rd dan. These players have the most to gain by participating in aikido competition at all levels.

Tomiki sensei developed the existing 1st to 3rd dan examination syllabi to demonstrate randori skills, but they stop at 3rd dan. Also, players generally over 35 years old will be asked to perform the nage no kata at the dan examination rather than doing randori. So it can be seen by the shodokan syllabi that randori, and by extension competition, is for our young players.

The SAUK national squad training reflects this ethos. The regional squad sessions offer a way into squad training and a way to train with like minded players from one's own region. The national squad training brings the best players from the various regions together.

For international competitions, SAUK squad coaching team will select a team to represent SAUK, and this team will comprise players who have regularly attended regional and national squad training.

I invite SAUK instructors who want to get involved as coaching assistants, squad managers to come forward.

I look forward to training with SAUK club members from around the country at National Squad.

Scott Allbright
Senior squad coach