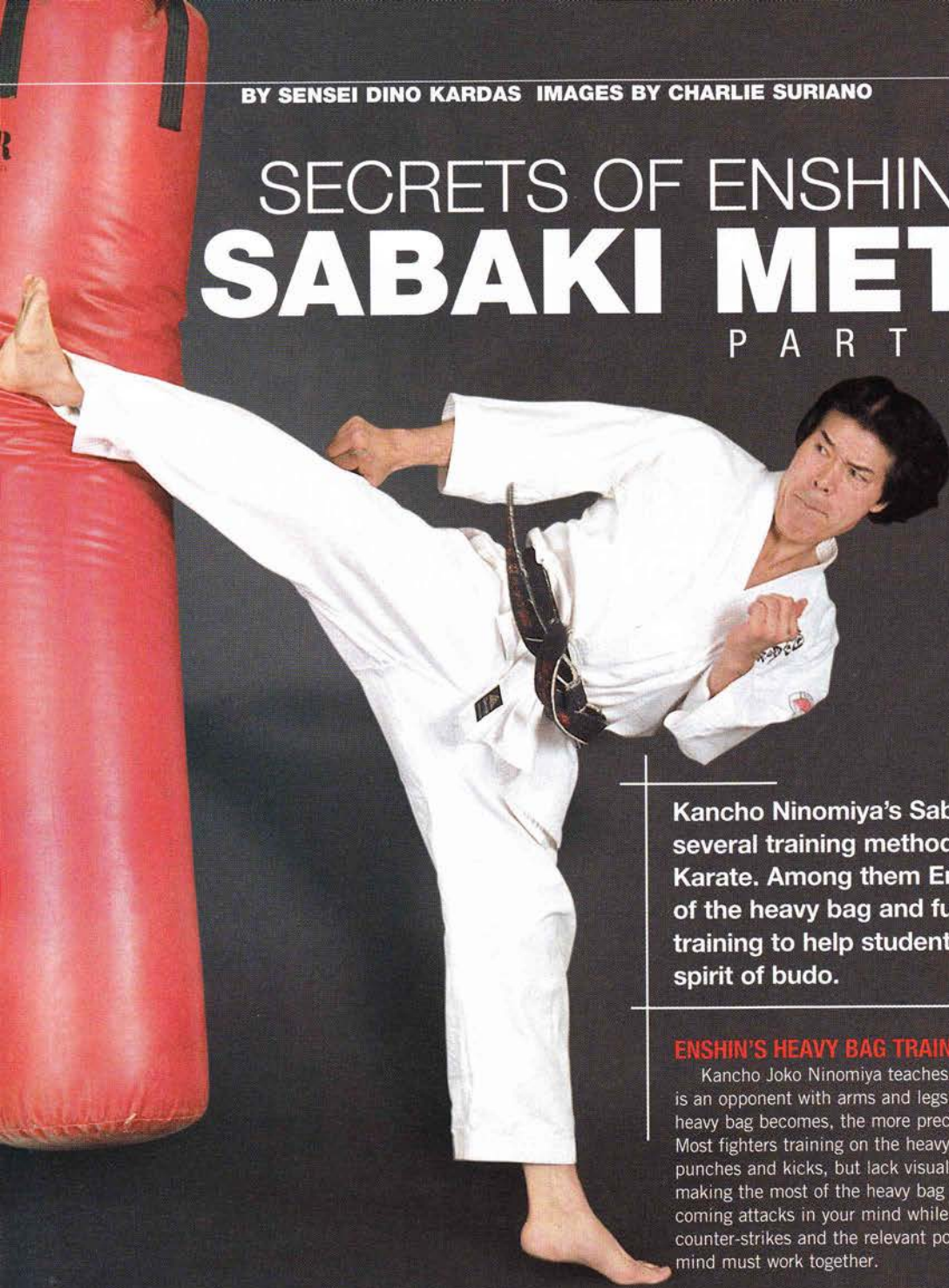


BY SENSEI DINO KARDAS IMAGES BY CHARLIE SURIANO

SECRETS OF ENSHIN'S SABAKI METHOD

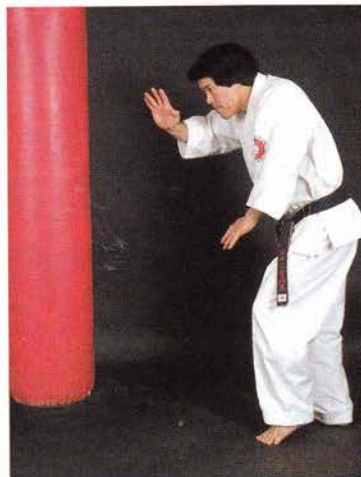
PART THREE



Kancho Ninomiya's Sabaki Method employs several training methods unique to Enshin Karate. Among them Enshin advocates the use of the heavy bag and full contact armshield training to help students forge the true skills and spirit of budo.

ENSHIN'S HEAVY BAG TRAINING

Kancho Joku Ninomiya teaches his students to imagine the heavy bag is an opponent with arms and legs. The more realistic your use of the heavy bag becomes, the more precise your timing and technique will be. Most fighters training on the heavy bag do a good job of targeting their punches and kicks, but lack visualisation of oncoming attacks. The key to making the most of the heavy bag is visualisation. Try to picture incoming attacks in your mind while using the heavy bag and practice counter-strikes and the relevant positioning for attacks. Your body and mind must work together.



It is always a good idea to use the heavy bag's swinging action to simulate an opponent's movement. Instead of stabilising the bag after each combination and breaking your rhythm, fit your techniques to the bag's natural movement. Kancho Ninomiya prefers to train with a bag that is at least five feet high. This allows the practice of low, middle, and high techniques at the same time. It is also a good idea to draw some thick lines around the heavy bag to identify these three heights.

When practicing new combinations, it's best to train at a manageable speed. It is also important to stay in rhythm and work your upper and lower body together. But the most important factor when practising on a heavy bag is the ability to visualise an opponent and target your techniques as accurately as possible.

To practice grabbing techniques, the Enshin practitioner will tie a spare belt around the heavy bag at about shoulder height to simulate an opponents arms and shoulders. The Enshin practitioner will grab the belt as they move to the outside to set up knee-kicks, roundhouse kicks and foot-sweeps.

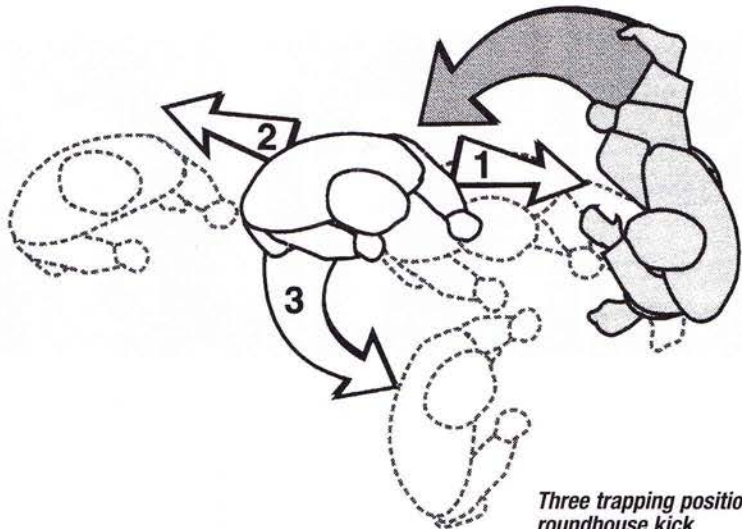
ENSHIN'S ARMGUARD TRAINING

The use of Armguards is an invaluable part of a Sabaki fighter's training regime. Sabaki training with armguards allows students to execute and apply the principles of Sabaki at full power in a realistic fighting situation without having the fear of being injured. By eliminating the fear factor associated with contact training, the student's mind is free to concentrate all their efforts in improving their technique and strategy, thus enhancing the development process.

The ability to train with full power against a mobile partner holding armguards greatly improves footwork, rhythm and timing. Armguard training is also a valuable tool for the person holding the armguards. By repeatedly seeing full-speed attacks from a fighting position, the student holding the armguards sharpens their eye reflexes and reduces their reaction time, as well as improving blocking technique.

Practising Sabaki combinations with armguards requires concentration, good form,

DIAGRAMS COURTESY OF SABAKI METHOD, KARATE IN THE INNER CIRCLE



Three trapping positions against roundhouse kick

and a mutual understanding between you and your partner, in order to simulate actual fighting as safely as possible. You set up different fighting combinations so both you and your partner know the sequence. This way, both defender and attacker can work repeatedly on footwork and timing. When training with armguards the Enshin practitioner fully extends punches, kicks and knee-strikes – the intent behind the techniques should be both real and explosive. When defending, the Enshin practitioner remains in a strong and balanced fighting stance and tries to react instead of anticipating their partner's attack.

Kancho Ninomiya stresses the importance of watching your partner's body as closely as possible and trying to adjust spontaneously, as you would in a real fight. Strong concentration and precise technique are of utmost importance, whether you are sparring or holding armguards.

THE KATA OF ENSHIN KARATE

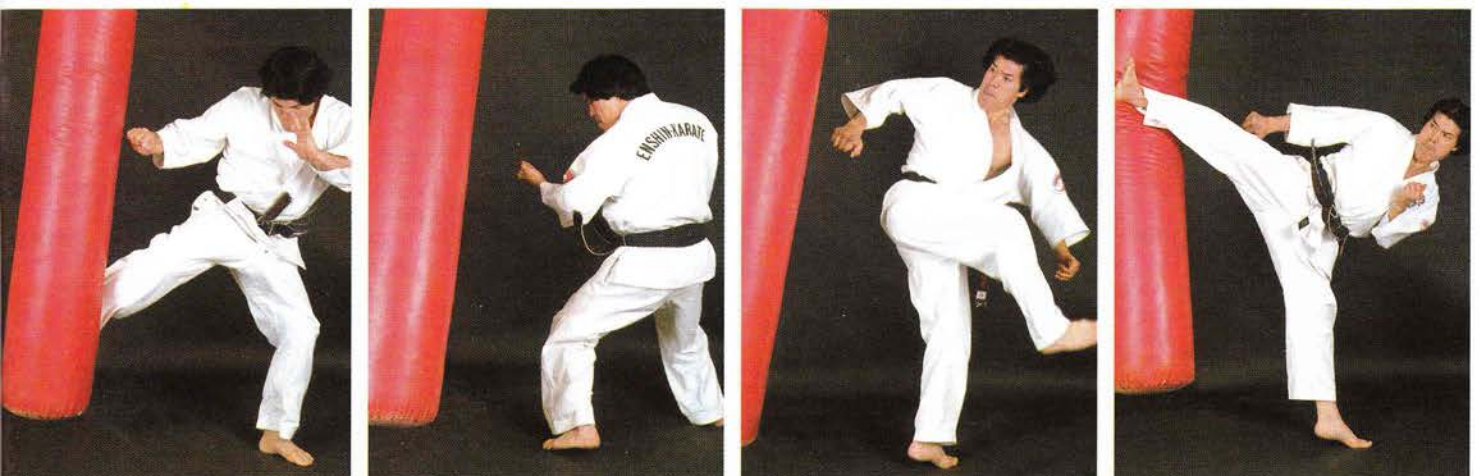
Enshin's kata consist of a series of blocks and counter-attacks against imagined multiple attackers. Enshin Kata uses a natural stance instead of a traditional wide stance. Although a wide stance is excellent for developing power

and balance, Kancho Ninomiya believes that the techniques practiced in kata should simulate real fighting and the principles trained in kata should not only focus on technique but rhythm, timing and footwork.

Enshin karate has only six kata and within those six kata all elements are explored – rhythm, timing, footwork, positioning, attack, counter-attack, focus and spirit. The advantage of only having six kata (in comparison to some styles having more than 20 kata) is that the Enshin practitioner has a chance to explore the kata more deeply and gain a better understanding of the underlying principles.

After White belt kata (Shiro Obi No Kata), the Blue-belt and Yellow-belt kata (Ao, and Kiiri Obi No Kata's) all emphasise short and middle distance techniques with foot sweeps and a greater variety in both the attacks and counterattacks. The Green belt Kata (Midori Obi No Kata) develops defence against combination attacks using Kyushu (absorbing the opponent's power), foot sweeps and more complex counterattacks at a longer distance.

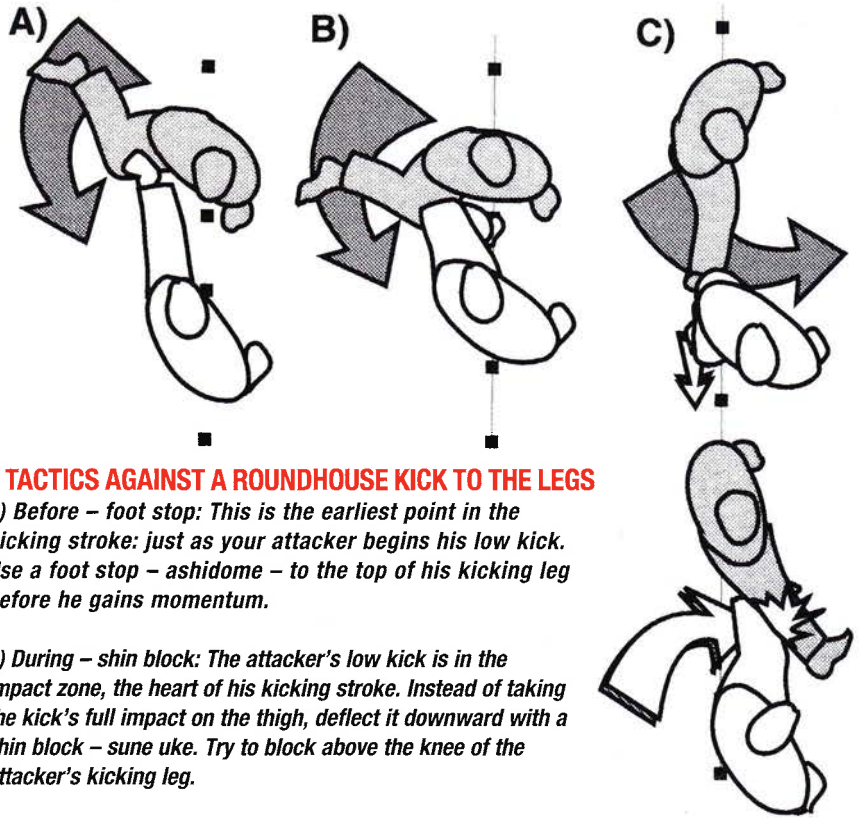
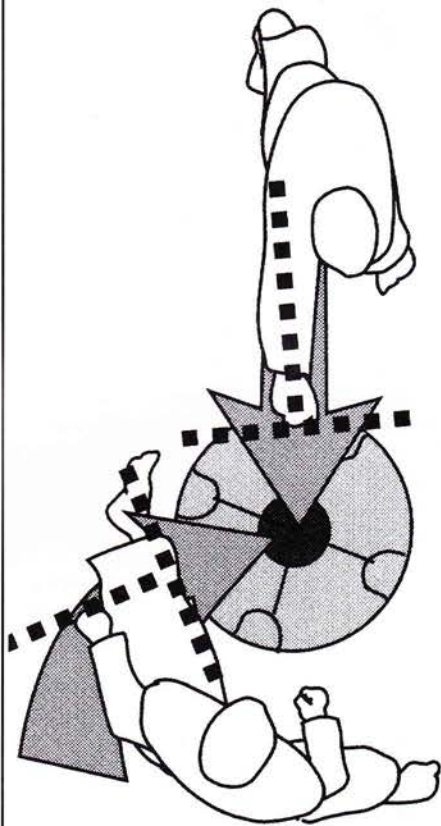
The Brown-belt kata (Cha Obi No Kata) uses stopping techniques and a more compact Kyushu against attacks at all distances. Finally, the Black-belt kata (Kogeki No Kata) works solely on developing attacking strategies.





HEAVY BAG TRAINING TIP:

Roundhouse kicks and straight punches make contact at 90 degrees. Their energy penetrates to the core.



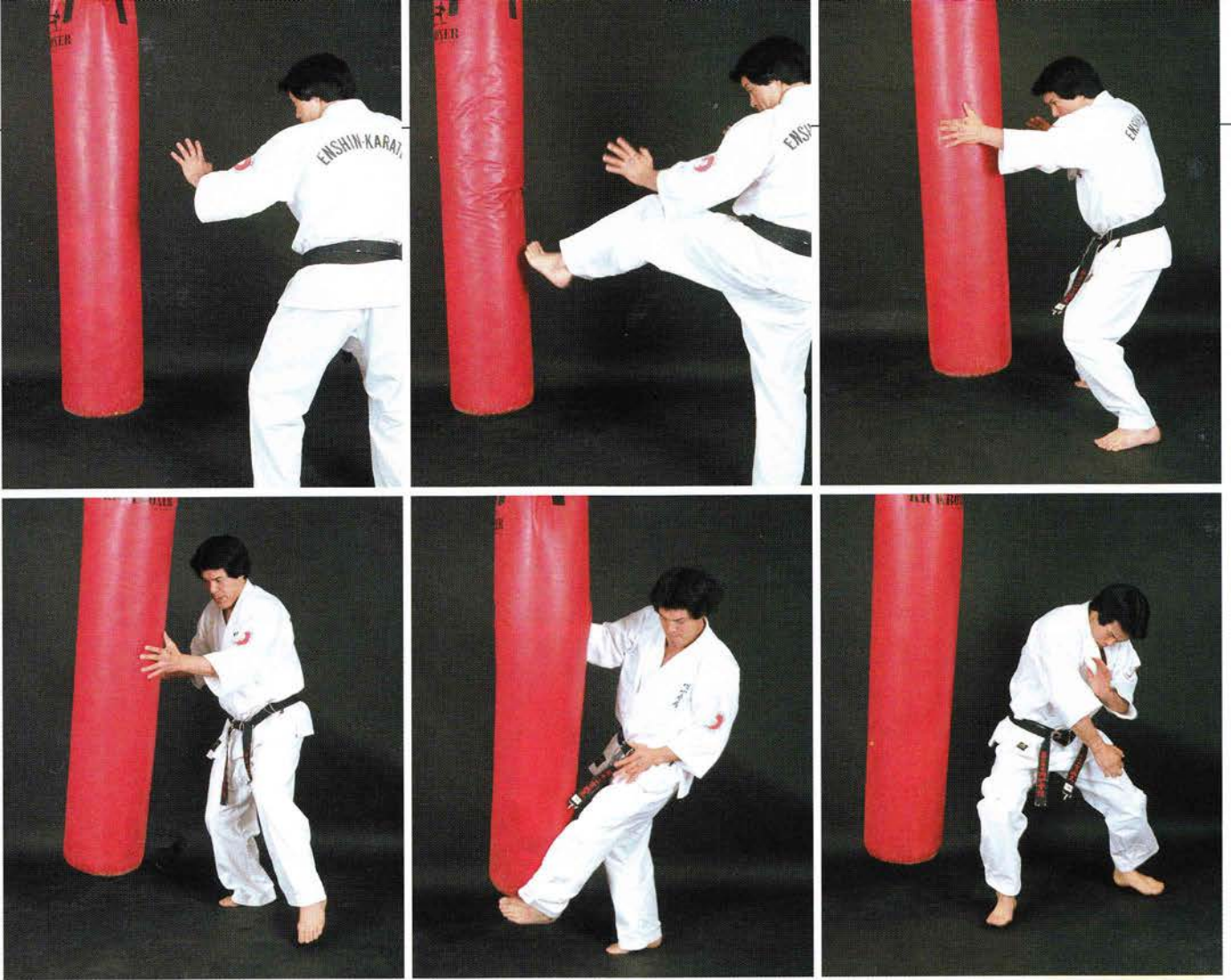
3 TACTICS AGAINST A ROUNDHOUSE KICK TO THE LEGS

a) Before – foot stop: This is the earliest point in the kicking stroke: just as your attacker begins his low kick. Use a foot stop – ashidome – to the top of his kicking leg before he gains momentum.

b) During – shin block: The attacker's low kick is in the impact zone, the heart of his kicking stroke. Instead of taking the kick's full impact on the thigh, deflect it downward with a shin block – sune uke. Try to block above the knee of the attacker's kicking leg.

c) After – front leg retract and low kick: Retract your front leg out of range of the low kick. Simultaneously turn and follow up by using your front leg to kick the back of the attacker's kicking leg. Contact his leg just at the end of his kicking stroke, before it either touches down or retracts. Your impact, even if it is slight, can take him off balance.





THE SABAKI CHALLENGE.

When Kancho Joko Ninomiya was a teenager training in Japan, he would look forward to competing each November in Mas Oyama's all-Japan tournament. Kancho Joko Ninomiya used this tournament as a tool to measure his progress, skills, and spirit against the best karate fighters in the world. Each tournament taught him where he needed to improve. When Kancho Ninomiya won the All-Japan tournament and returned to his adopted home of Denver, he wanted to start a tournament that would provide the toughest test of karate spirit and technique: No pads, no

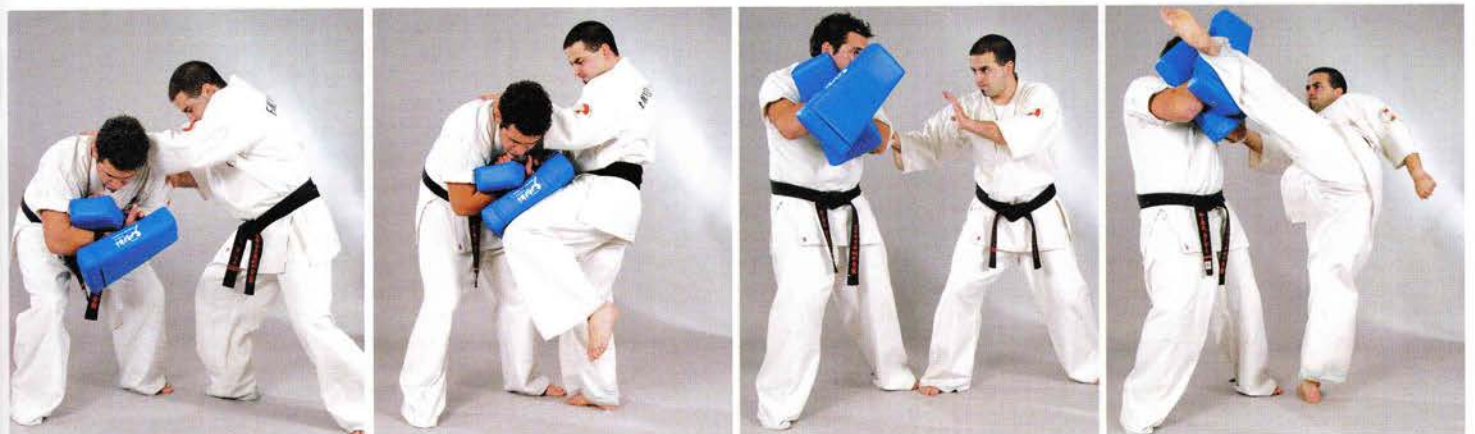
gloves, full-contact. The first year the tournament was held in front of a few hundred spectators at a local high school. Today, the Sabaki Challenge is attended by thousands and televised across the world.

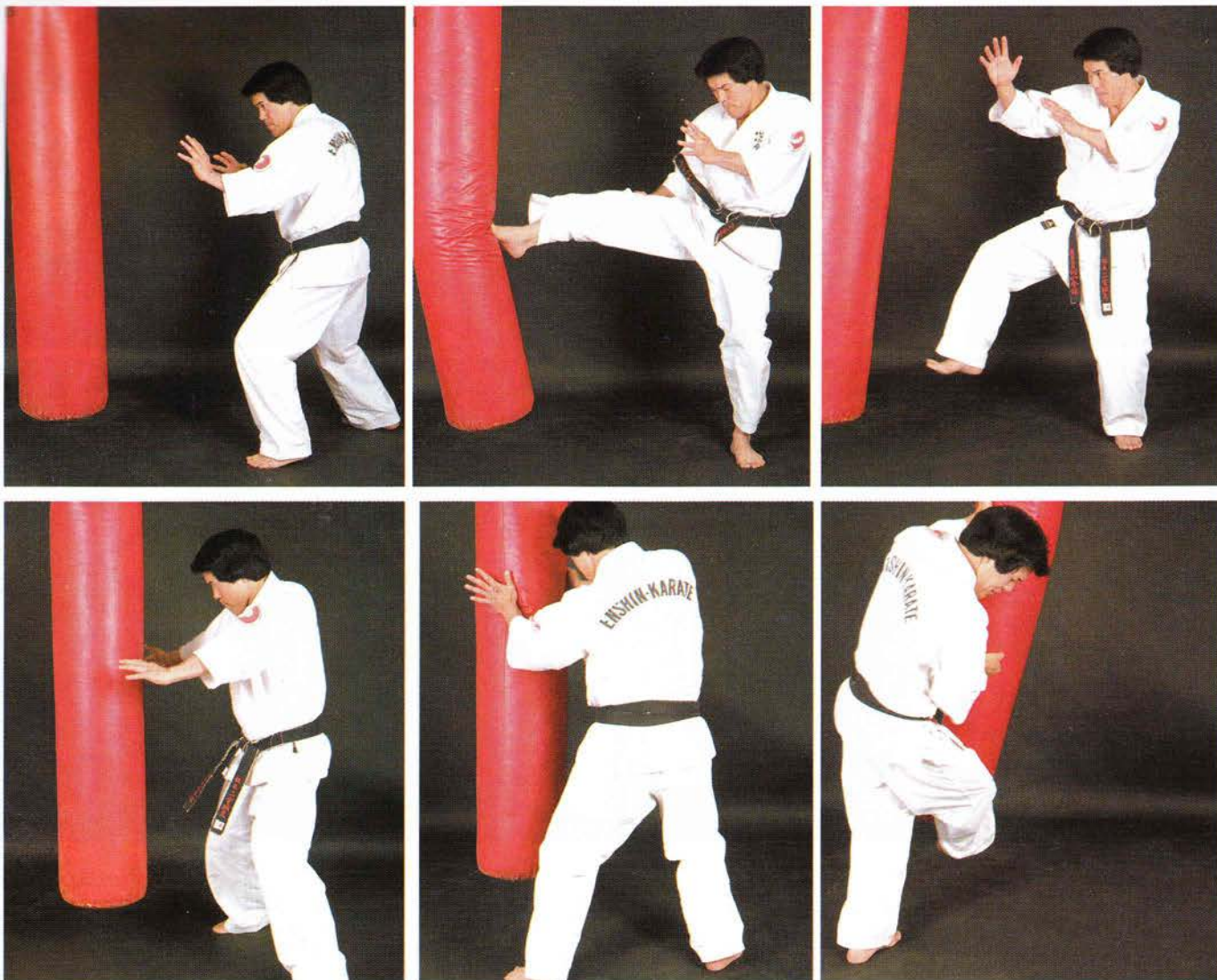
Between 1979 and 1987, the fighting consisted of a series of matches. The first single-elimination tournament format was used in 1988, when Kancho Ninomiya began calling the event by its current name – The Sabaki Challenge. Later, Kancho Ninomiya began using a circular fighting area instead of a square. This encouraged a circular movement and technique instead of straight-in power.

In order to encourage more technique and

add more dimensions to the fighting, Kancho Ninomiya decided to allow grabbing techniques to allow fighters to pull their opponents off balance, take an outside position and expose a weakness.

The Sabaki Challenge has a unique character that captures the true budo spirit. It is for any serious karate fighter from any style or school who truly wants to develop his or her skills and test their fighting spirit. The Sabaki Challenge is a fighters' tournament, in that it embodies the underlying purpose of karate training: The repetition, refinement and constant effort that culminate in inspired performance.





TOURNAMENT STRUCTURE

The quarter-final, semi-final and final matches consist of two two-minute rounds. If the score at the end of the match is tied, the fighter with fewer penalties is declared the winner. If both fighters have the same number of points and penalties, the match goes to a judges' decision. In the event that the judges' decision is tied and the referee calls a draw, an additional one-minute round is fought to decide the match.

KUMITE (FIGHTING) RULES

1. Hand or elbow strikes or head-butts to the neck and face are not permitted. Kicks and strikes to the groin are not permitted. All kicks to the legs and sweeps to the legs are allowed, with the exception of a direct blow to the front of the knee.

2. A fighter may grab his opponent's shoulder or gi (of arm or leg) for only three seconds while executing a technique. A fighter may not encircle the opponent's leg with one arm or hold the leg up with two hands. When grabbing from the front with

two hands, both hands must reach from the same side of the opponent's body. Encircling the opponent's neck or torso from the front with two hands to pull him into a technique is not permitted. If both fighters are grabbing each other, creating a stalemate, the referee will break them apart immediately.

SCORING

1. One point will be awarded to a fighter who causes his opponent to turn away after a stunning kick to the head. One point will be scored for a fighter who executes a successful sweep or throwing technique, remains on his feet, but does not follow immediately with a controlled punch or kick. The sweep must be a clean technique. In the event that a fighter executes a successful sweep or throwing technique and follows with an uncontrolled punch or kick after his opponent is down, the sweep is negated and he neither scores nor receives a penalty. It is the referee's and/or judges' decision whether or not the follow-up technique is controlled.

2. Three points will be awarded to a fighter

who executes a sweep or throwing technique, only if he remains on his feet and follows with a controlled punch or kick. Any legal technique that doubles over the opponent will be scored three points. Any thrust, kick, strike or other legal technique that connects and instantly downs the opponent so that his hands and knees or hands and hip touch the mat will be scored as three points.

3. Six points will be awarded to a fighter who legally downs an opponent who then cannot rise and continue after five seconds. The decision is declared a knockout and the fighter will be declared the winner.

4. A fighter can win his match by knockout, points or decision. **BLITZ**

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