

JUJUTSU'S SECRET WEAPONS: Hard Blocks and Precision Strikes

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Hall of Fame Winners

Instructor of the Year **george kirby**



PHOTO BY THOMAS SANDERS

For some, teaching is nothing more than a steady paycheck. For *jujutsu* master George Kirby, it's a calling that he's uniquely and undeniably suited for.

Long before the Brazilian-jujutsu revolution swept the United States, the amiable Kirby began studying the gentle art to help deal with the stress of grad school. Little did he know that his tutelage under *sensei* Jack "Sanzo" Seki was the beginning of a martial arts journey that would shape America's understanding of jujutsu for decades to come.

By 1968, Seki could sense Kirby's potential as an instructor and told him and fellow-student Bill Fromm about an opening at a local YMCA in Burbank, California. When Kirby pointed out that as brown belts they were too inexperienced to teach, Seki responded, "Now you're both black belts. Act like it."

And so began the teaching career of one of traditional jujutsu's most respected and beloved masters. A year later, Kirby followed another one of Seki's suggestions and collaborated with Fromm to form the American Ju-Jitsu Association. Under Kirby's stewardship, first as president and now as chairman, the AJA has grown into a governing body renowned for bringing together jujutsu practitioners from around the world. He's also the founder and chairman of the Budoshin Ju-Jitsu Dojo Inc., a nonprofit educational foundation, and the Budoshin Ju-Jitsu Yudanshakai, a research and educational foundation.

Kirby's collaborations are too numerous to list in their entirety, but a few of the groups he's donated his time to helping are the Budo Centre International, Nippon Seibukan, Shorinji Ryu JuJitsu Association and World Head of Family Sokeship Council.

Despite his busy schedule as an ambassador of the arts, teaching has always been Kirby's passion. Following his sensei's advice, Kirby taught jujutsu and self-defense at the Burbank YMCA until 1974, when he received an opportunity to expand his program with the Burbank Parks and Recreation Department. His partnership with the city lasted until 1996, when he decided to take on the challenge of launching a new jujutsu program for the city of Santa Clarita, California where he continues to share what he's learned. Along the way, he perfected his craft in the public-school system, where he taught jujutsu and social studies for nearly four decades.

Following the Rodney King controversy, Kirby worked with a handful of other nationally known martial artists to develop for the Los Angeles Police Department what would become one of the nation's best arrest-and-control training programs. In 1998 the city of Los Angeles awarded him a Certificate of Appreciation for his role as a defensive-tactics consultant on the Civilian Martial Arts Advisory Panel.

The LAPD isn't the only organization to recognize Kirby's outstanding work. The California Branch Jujitsu Federation twice awarded him the title of Outstanding Instructor, and he's earned the Amateur Athletic Union Jujitsu National Sports Award and a certificate of honor from the Federation of Practicing Jujutsuans.

His dedication to teaching extends well beyond the classroom and the *dojo*. A prolific writer, Kirby has penned a half-dozen books on jujutsu, and his essays have appeared in numerous publications, including *Black Belt*. He's also preserved his teachings digitally with an eight-part DVD study course.

In 2000 Kirby reached the pinnacle of his profession when he was promoted to *judan* or 10-degree black belt. In recognition of his 40 years of teaching, *Black Belt* is proud to induct him into its Hall of Fame as 2007 Instructor of the Year. ✖

About the author:
Jon Sattler is the assistant editor at *Black Belt Communications*.