

The meaning of Osu

In (shin)kyokushin, a question is answered with 'Osu'. A greeting is also Osu. Every instruction or question in class, is answered by 'Osu' instead of 'yes' or 'I understand'. When performing kihon waza (basic techniques) in class, each technique is often accompanied with a loud "Osu". When practicing jiyu kumite (free fighting) in class and your opponent lands a good, hard technique, you say "Osu" to acknowledge your opponent's skill. As a measure of respect, knockdown fighters at a tournament bow and say "Osu" to the front, to the referee and to each other, before and after the fight.

Osu is a combination of the words: Oshi which means "Push", and Shinobu which means "to Endure". It means patience, determination, appreciation, respect and perseverance.

In order to develop a strong body and strong spirit it is necessary to undergo rigorous training.

(Shin)kyokushin training is very demanding. You push yourself until you think you've reached your limit. First your body wants to stop, to give up, but your mind keeps pushing you. Then your mind wants to stop, but your spirit keeps you going. When you reach this point you must fight yourself and your weakness and you must win. To do this you must endure the pain, you must learn to persevere, but above all you must learn to be patient. That is Osu!

As we all know, (shin)kyokushin karate is not learned overnight. It takes years to properly learn the fundamentals. The basic techniques are performed thousands of times (ren ma – "always polishing") until they are done by reflex or instinct, without conscious thought (mu shin – "no mind"). It's easy to get frustrated by doing the same thing over and over again, especially when progress seems to be slow. To overcome that frustration and continue training takes patience and determination. That is Osu.

The reason you subject yourself to hard training is because you care about yourself, and to care about yourself is to respect yourself. This self respect evolves and expands to become respect for your instructor and fellow students. When you enter the dojo you bow and say "Osu" . This means you respect your dojo and the time you spend training there. This feeling of respect is OSU!

During training you push yourself as hard as possible because you respect yourself. When you finish you bow to your instructor and fellow students and say "Osu" once more. You do this out of appreciation. This feeling of appreciation is OSU.

Thus OSU is a very important word in (shin)kyokushin karate because it signifies patience, respect and appreciation. That is why we always use the word OSU; to remind ourselves of these indispensable qualities.

The ultimate devotion needed to live Kyokushin's way is Osu.

The spirit of Osu is described accurately by Shihan Cameron Quinn of Australia, a wellknown karateka who trained long time in Japan and thoroughly understands the Japanese spirit. In his book The Budo Karate of Mas Oyama he writes:

"There is a saying in Japan, "Ishi no ue ni sannen." Translated, it means "Three years on a rock." This saying symbolizes the need to persevere at all times. It is one of the most important philosophies in Kyokushin karate.

Kyokushin is an art offering many things according to the immediate and long term aims of the trainee. Ultimately, one realizes that transcending the kicks, the punches, and the kata, there is a special spirit in the heart of the participants. It teaches them to face the demands of daily life with a mature and enduring attitude. A budo-ka is not easily shaken by the blows of adversity, realizing that for a person to draw near to their true potential, a never-say-die spirit of perseverance is required.



This strength of character develops in hard training and is known as osu no seishin (the spirit of Osu). The word Osu comes from oshi shinobu, which means "to persevere whilst being pushed". It implies a willingness to push oneself to the limits of endurance, to persevere under any kind of pressure.

The single word Osu captures most accurately the ultimate in what the art of karate, particularly Kyokushin, has to offer. One who is truly able to manifest the spirit of Osu in every word, thought, and action may be regarded as wise and brave. Training should first and foremost be approached in the spirit of Osu. One's daily life, and the responsibilities it holds, would be more completely lived if addressed in the spirit of Osu.

Even for the beginner, who is conscious of his lack of training and does not necessarily want to face the demand of training, it is enough merely being aware that through perseverance and the will to continue, there comes great physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional gains. All that is needed is that special determination."

OSU!!!