

The Shinai Express

Issue 1 - October 2024

Editorial by Chair of the NZKF Board of Directors, Sue Lytollis

The Board of the New Zealand Kendo Federation is keen to keep members of all Budo within our Federation updated as much as possible via this little missive. The Shinai Express follows past publications such as the Ganbaru Gazette (90s) strangely also written by myself.

I hope to send The Shinai Express to you three times a year, via Hello Club and posted on our website. If you have something you'd like to submit from your club, please send it to our secretary Tasha Derrett secretary@kendo.org.nz.

Coaching and Shiaisha Development for Kenshi

Creating a sustainable pathway to develop competitive *shiaisha* in New Zealand is a top priority for Blake Bennett Sensei, the NZKF's National Coach Director. Recently, Blake called for those interested in joining the Wolves and Wolf Pack—a squad designed not only for the 2027 World Kendo Championships (WKC) in Japan but as part of a 20-year vision to build depth and disrupt the international kendo scene.

The response has been overwhelmingly positive, with over 70 kenshi expressing interest, including 34 men, 14 women, and 22 others keen to learn more or offer support. This strong turnout reflects growing enthusiasm for sustained development beyond any single WKC campaign, ensuring future success across international competitions.

Developing elite athletes requires skilled coaches, and the Coach and Talent Development (CTD) group will align efforts across the national team and regional clubs. Led by Blake, the CTD group will work with national and regional coaches to ensure consistent development.

Recently, the NZKF issued a call for Head Coach (Sou-Kantoku), Men's Coach, and Women's Coach to lead the squad through to the 2027 WKC. Additionally, a call for Team Manager(s) is currently underway. Coaches and Managers will be named by the end of November. These appointments mark the beginning of a 20-year journey to strengthen New Zealand kendo, ensuring a lasting foundation for future generations of athletes and coaches.

Further information about the future of competitive Kendo is available from <https://kendo.org.nz/>

19th World Kendo Championships in Milano, Italy

A group of 14 New Zealand kendo-ka went to take on the world in Europe this July. Overall we did well, but were up against countries that have many more opportunities to shiai across their borders than we do. That said, all players fought admirably and we took on Australia (lost 1-3), Bulgaria (won 2-1) and Austria (won 4-1) in the Men's Team event. Sadly, Australia was the country to win the pool. In the women's individuals, Rina Kobayashi won her pool to enter the knock out stage of the Women's Individuals but was defeated by her two opponents. A huge thank you to all those behind and in front of the scenes who put their all into this competition. To top it off, Martin Lee Sensei passed 7th Dan in the grading held after the Championships. Congratulations Martin.

Success at Iaido and Kaneda Sensei visits in 2025

New Zealand sent a raft of Iaido people to Melbourne in mid-September and were thrilled when six of them passed senior grades. From nidan to yondan, five people passed. Our newest 5th Dan is Ronald Llew. Great things are happening for Iaido, and in April 2025 the Auckland Kendo Club is holding an Iaido Seminar which Kaneda Sensei is leading. Look for information on Hello Club and NZKF website about this event.

NZ's newest JODO club in Whangaparoa

Lionel and Mayumi Hutton are two Jodo Sensei (5th dan) who have come to New Zealand having trained in Japan. They have started a small Jodo Dojo in Whangaparoa. They are keen to demonstrate their art at events, so if you know somewhere that might be a good show piece, or you want to pop into their club, please email them at lionelhutton@gmail.com

Naginata in Denver

A delegation of Kiwis took themselves off to the USA for the 8th Naginata World Championships in July. It was a great experience especially for the those team members attending the WNC for the first time. Unfortunately none of the Engi teams advanced beyond their first matches. The women's team was up against Japan in their first match. All team members did their best, but the outcome was somewhat inevitable and the team failed to advance. The men's team was up against Belgium in their first match. The fighting was spirited but the team failed to advance. Both Saori Shio, and Alex Bennett advanced to the top eight in their respective Individual competitions. In the Friendship tournament, Alastair Holloway placed third in the men's competition and Tiffany Tsang was awarded the Female Fighting Spirit award for Court B. Tiffany Tsang graded to ikkyu. Elaine Tsang and Simon Bauke both passed their shodan gradings. Alastair Holloway passed the shinpan exam. This is great news for Naginata in New Zealand because neither dan or shinpan exams in Naginata are available domestically.

New Zealand Kendo Nationals

For the first time in six years, the New Zealand Kendo Nationals were hosted by Christchurch clubs on 25th/26th of May this year. Big thanks particularly to Maru Kenshikai who were key hosts for this event. We had 45 people compete, and it was remarkable in that Rembuden Kendo Club took the trophies in all official events. The Board of NZKF is also reviewing the timing of key national events and hope to report on this in the next newsletter.

Rembuden Taikai

Approximately 70 shiaisha came to Wellington for the 24th annual Taikai event held by Rembuden in September. This is one of the longest lasting annual shiai in New Zealand and this year it was hotly contested. Winning the Open Dan Individual Women was Shiho Kamata who defeated her opponent Rina Kobayashi. This was followed by an all Rembuden Senior Men's Dan Individual final between Rob Challies and Max Lee. Max was the winner on the day. 'North Shore Kendo A' won the Team event with 'Auckland Kendo Club A' taking second place in this three-person team event. Veterans was won by Akira Nakamura.

Other upcoming Events

Special AGM of the NZKF. The law changes in the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 mean that all incorporated societies like the NZKF need to re-register with an updated constitution (the document that sets the rules about how we operate). All of our members need to be informed of what the new constitution contains and we as a Federation need to approve it. For this reason, we require a **Special General Meeting at 5.30 pm on Friday 8th November 2024.** The new constitution and a Zoom link has been sent to all current members of the NZKF. While we will try to keep things as much the same as possible, the law requires that some things may need to change. We will tell you more about this when we send you the constitution. Each club needs to provide a representative to this meeting, please.

We will still have our scheduled Annual General Meeting in December.

A **P23** (pathway to sandan) training session will take place in Christchurch on 15th November followed by the **South Island Championships** on 16th/17th November.

Auckland Kendo Club are hosting their annual fixture on 28th February – 2nd March 2025. The 2025 International Summer Kendo Seminar led by Alex Bennett Sensei, accompanied by two Kyoshi 8th Dan, and a raft of Kiwi and Japanese 7th dans, will provide exciting learnings for all who attend. The seminar theme is Connection. Visit the AKC website to express your interest and look for flights now.

Call Out for Kenshi 3rd dan and above to apply for the **49th International Kendo Leaders Seminar**, to be held in Chiba, Japan from 17 – 24 March 2025. Patrick Sharp (Yoshinkan) was the last person to attend in 2023 and it made an enormous impression on him and bolstered his skills in teaching and coaching at club level. If you are interested in attending, check in with your dojo leader, and then send an email/letter with your reasons for wanting to represent New Zealand at this event by 15th November to secretary@kendo.org.nz

