

## Some Thoughts on Homogenized\* Karate

There was a time long ago and far away when we believed that there were major differences among the few styles of karate, kung fu and tae kwon do. A fan in the stands at the First World Karate tournament held in Chicago in 1963 could notice vast differences among the kumite exhibited by several styles competing there. Granted the uniforms were quite distinctive, still matters of stance height, kamae, kicks, breath, animal forms, takedowns facings and such did separate the groups.

Now if that same person were to view a modern karate tournament, the task of identifying different fighting styles would almost be insurmountable. This adaptation is not necessarily a bad thing-look at how the shape of automobiles and airplanes has changed as they have gotten faster and more fuel efficient. But, to take the comparison a bit farther- let us match a Formula One race car against a Ford Model A\*\* and take bets on the winner... in a race across the New Mexico desert. Tournament kumite and tournament kata are as specialized as that Formula One race car and just about as useless on the street. Much as the height of the basketball rim determines the size of successful basketball players, so too do the rules of karate competition determine the techniques used.

This article is not designed to polarize modernists and traditionalists: rather, it is to encourage acceptance of both world views.

Whether we address modern crowd pleasing tournament karate or older versions of dojo karate, certain fundamentals remain, for example, fighting distance, timing, balance, focus, and the need for physical conditioning. There is much ground upon which traditionalists and sport karateka may meet.

- Homogenized – to prevent separation
- Ford Model A- a 1903 automobile produced by the Ford Motor Company

*Taken from Kondo No Shokai newsletter Spring 2003 edition*

*Written by Terry Sanders 10th dan style head of Shorei-ryu- Kaicho, Kondo No Shokai*

*You can get more information on the Kondo No Shokai Association by visiting the website:*

[www.geocities.com/kondonoshokai/](http://www.geocities.com/kondonoshokai/)