

KIDDING AROUND WITH KARATE

By Michael P Kliment

It is thought that children release their emotional tension through playing games. There is no doubt that playing games is a very useful activity for children, no matter the theoretical opinion of its purpose. Playing games has a rather important part in connection with child's physical growth, developing his/her intelligence and acquiring experiences and skills.

It influences child's emotional life in his/her development into a socially accepted human being. I am a coach with many years experience acquired by training karate from the year 1978 and being coach from the year 1992 on.

I give great importance to playing games when working with children. I carefully choose exercises for emphasizing children's coordination, skillfulness and strengthening of muscular power. The children do not perceive that consciously, but through games they practise all of the above. Through these they are improving their skills which are going to be used later on in their private life and in the field of competitive sports. When a child is playing, he is strengthening his/her muscles and his/her nervous system, acquiring skills and realizing his/her abilities. Games are also useful for the children to get to know their physical environment and the rules which are

applied there. On the basis of already acquired experiences, the child forms his/her own ideas, learns how to think and tries to solve the problems which he/she comes across. Games enable children to meet their coevals, learn how to confront other people, learn how to be patient and to develop a sense of comradeship, toleration and cooperation. Selected exercise teaches the child to learn the meaning of fairness, courage and truth among people. The Child has an opportunity to play different roles through various games and can express positive or negative feelings. The Child's growth influences the change of the games content which is carefully chosen by the coach. When the child grows older, he/she is capable of performing more difficult tasks which result in further development.

Young people undoubtedly join karate clubs with a wish to learn self-defense and how to protect themselves if needed. Younger children express a wish to become like their heroes from movies or cartoons that always beat evil. They are not capable of connecting the karate virtuosity with demanding training or understanding the consequences of dangerous actions connected with the well needed self-control. My goal is to assure that everyone can find something useful for him or herself. The training for our youngest are always focused on certain techniques which come to life through interlaced games. Motivation always presents a key factor which must not be forgotten when thinking about further development of young athletes.

Before parents enroll their children into karate clubs, they have to make sure that their child comprehends what that means, otherwise his/her enthusiasm will die away. Training Karate demands great bodily precision, reliability and flexibility. The Child must be able to comprehend changing fighting situations and must show emotional stability, steadiness, aggressiveness, persistence and goal orientation. All of the above must be taken into consideration to assure the child's gradual growth through properly chosen exercises.

The already mentioned qualities demand a much disciplined and long lasting cycle which can be carried out by young people who are already enrolled in high school. Younger children can join such trainings, but their persistence is linked together with many other factors like coach's popularity, location, parents' authority...etc. Planned and accumulative introduction of primary school pupils into karate training presents a unique process which is adjusted to the children of certain age. The main goal is that children like going to trainings which is possible if trainings:

- are not a burden (training should not take place more than twice a week),
- are appropriate for children's age,
- are interesting and diverting (should be carried out in forms of various games and new challenges...),
- give children a feeling of progress...

But there is a preliminary condition that

always insist on which is learning karate and being safe at the same time. There should be minimum risks of injuries present at trainings and competitions. This especially applies to young children. It is known that not all karate skills include risks of injuries and children should always be given an opportunity to choose between kumite (fighting) and kata (floor routine). But it is important to parents as well as coaches that the children are not only having fun,

but are also showing progress in their motor nerve and personal development.

If you have any news, events or stories on your martial art please feel free to either drop me a line on 0828883100 or send me a email to michael@jska.co.za We are here to inform all about our martial arts, no matter what style or kind."

In this pic: Michael P Kliment, 5th Dan Black Belt, Chief Instructor of JSKA South Africa, Chief Referee Karate Eastern Cape and Assistant Coach to the National Protea Team

