

## Return to the Roots of Karate

Karate Master Vince Morris offers two-day course at the 'Tengu Dojo' Aufenau

Wächtersbach. Karate as self-defence, as martial art instead of martial sport, that was the topic of a two-day course by English speaking karate master Vince Morris, which took place last weekend in the hall of the Genth School in Wächtersbach. For this the hall was transformed already on Friday into a "Dojo", a 'Place for the Way', the training facility for various Japanese martial arts.

Morris already visits the Tengu Dojo Aufenau for the 4<sup>th</sup> time and his aim is to teach the traditional karate to his students. In order to do this, he and his wife Eva delved into the history of karate. Morris explains that this martial art comes from the island of Okinawa and is related to the Chinese Kung-Fu. Japan had occupied the islands in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the inhabitants were forbidden to carry weapons. In order to still be able to defend themselves, traditional karate emerged. Masters would have taught small groups of students how to defend themselves. Especially the individuality of the training is important. A 1.50m tall woman weighing 50kg has to use different techniques from a 1.90m tall man weighing 100kg.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century karate came to Japan. There the art met with a society that underwent a great transformation. An isolated Asiatic country turned within a short time into a modern, expansive, western-orientated society, that began to militarise. Here martial arts also played a great role, but not anymore in small groups, but it was taught the young men in the army in large groups. At that point karate lost its self-defence style and became a competition sport. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> WW this type of karate came to the US and Europe and so received its modern-day orientation. Techniques that were taught in the original karate like throws, attacks to eyes and sensitive spots, so Morris continues to explain, became forbidden and referees made sure the rules were strictly followed.

Vince Morris now wants to give karate-ka the opportunity to get to know both forms. Around 50 participants came, even from the Netherlands and Belgium to listen to Morris' instruction and to practice these. Many of the participants have already been to several courses of the 73 year old master. Amongst many international competitions he has already given self-defence courses for policemen, bodyguards and soldiers and published numerous books. In his youth he had been interested in the origins of karate, he tells me, and he started his research. His master in England, a native Japanese, had after a certain rank not been able to explain him anything more so that Morris began to discover the origins through his own research. He now teaches his findings in courses throughout Europe and hopes thus to interest other karate-ka in these origins.

Before the training started he set down three rules: If someone has an injury to please signal that and to avoid making it worse. The second point was respect and responsible training with the partner since there was no referee present to intervene and potentially painful techniques were being taught. And as a third point, questions could of course be asked. Here Morris proved his sense of humour, that for example the question of how one could keep one's good looks at old age, could be posed. In the 'Rules of Combat' Vince Morris has written down his experience: Here it is written for example that 'it's only over when it's over'. The opponent would have to be finished so he could not re-attack. It also says to use the opponent's force against them and to specifically prepare for very close-up combat. In spite of these partially brutal techniques like strangling or throwing, like in competition, the aim should never be to inflict violence for its own sake. It should always be seen as a last resort, to be avoided by karate-ka.