



Soon
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Let's talk compression versus expansion

Energy is created by releasing a compressed substance to its expanded variation. In the vast world of physical science, one can identify a large number of unrelated movements under these conditions. An example related to our rugby-fanatical nation is a scrum between opposing sides. The most powerful individuals usually play as forwards in a team and always those with a body mass that one would hate to find in an opposing team. But these enormous blocks of power and energy still find it necessary to compress their legs when setting in a scrum with the sole objective of executing maximum power and strength to overpower the opposing side.

In the competitive game of squash, players are taught to “bend their knees” to create maximum projection in distance and speed. A former world champion stated that the player who bends his knees will win the game. Athletic codes like sprinting, shotput and javelin require a mastery of compression before the final actions are executed. In the ancient art of unarmed combat, compression or contraction is essential in nearly every move in Kata and Kumite.

The very first move in Heian Shodan stipulates compression in the preparation phase of the defence only then followed by the expansion of the technique. The most obvious compression is seen in those jumping movements like in Heian Godan and more advanced Kata like Empi. I personally enjoy Kankuku Sho which includes two very different variations of jumps.

Kamae or the ready position in a fighting stance will be in a natural position with relaxed bend legs and compressed arms. A fighter will, like the forward player in rugby, compress his or her legs and upper body to gain maximum distance in the shortest time possible. Projection as a result of compression will firstly gain the necessary distance from the attacker to the defender but through projection also enhance the attacking hand or leg attack. It is thereby impossible to execute an effective technique without the support of the projection of the compressed body. In Shotokan style of karate, power is mostly created in a linear fashion opposing to the circular movements found in the Nahate styles of karate.

This will be my last column at the end of an exciting year filled with great challenges and opportunities. Enjoy the festive season and we look forward to seeing you on the tatami next year.