

The Benefits of Kirikaeshi

Jason Leigh
Choyokan Kendo Dojo
Midwest Kendo Federation
Wednesday, October 18, 2006

Below I have deconstructed the movements of Kirikaeshi in terms of action and benefit.

Motodachi's Actions & Benefits	Shidachi's (Attacker's) Actions & Benefits
<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motodachi and shidachi stand at toma. 	<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motodachi and shidachi stand at toma. (Some sensei/sempai will ask students to take 1 okuri-ashi step forward to issoku-itto-no-maai before following the next step.) <p>Benefit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shidachi learns difference between toma & issoku-itto-no-maai by properly adjusting distance before the initial shomen strike.
<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motodachi kiais to encourage shidachi to begin strike. - Motodachi receives shomen strike from shidachi. - Motodachi meets shidachi in taiatari before backing off to proper maai to enable shidachi to begin sequence of strikes to left and right men. <p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allows beginners to get used to getting hit on the head. Provides practice at taiatari with correct posture and positioning of the hands during collision. 	<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shidachi kiais loudly and boldly, and executes big shomen strike and engages motodachi in taiatari. <p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students learn to take a big swing as with all strikes in Kirikaeshi. - Shidachi practices ki-ken-tai-ichi where strike to men is synchronized with one's kiai and fumikomi. - Shidachi practices taiatari by colliding into motodachi. - A proper strike also requires good posture (with back straight, arms straight forward and parallel to the floor, shoulders relaxed).
<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motodachi leads the movements of the shidachi by taking appropriate ayumi-ashi steps (4 steps backwards, 5 steps forward) and blocking the shidachi's men strike to the left followed by the right and so on. - Motodachi may choose to not block the strikes to give the shidachi more practice at striking the men, rather than striking the shinai. <p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leading the shidachi teaches motodachi to be assertive in controlling shidachi's movements. Repeated side-to-side blocking provides tenouchi practice. The transition from backward ayumi-ashi to forward ayumi-ashi provides further practice of ashi-sabaki (footwork). 	<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shidachi strikes Motodachi 4 times to yokomen (sides of men) while advancing forward. Each strike is synchronized with okuri-ashi footwork and continuous (1-breath) kiai of "Men!" - Shidachi then continues in reverse with 5 yokomen strikes, taking okuri-ashi steps backwards, and synchronizing all this movement with loud continuous kiai. - In all cases it is the Shidachi's responsibility to establish the correct maai in response to the motodachi's steps. <p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loosens shoulder joints and muscles. - Striking to the side of the Motodachi's men provides practice in ensuring that the "blade" edge of the shinai strikes the target rather than the merely the side of the shinai. Furthermore this

	<p>provides practice striking with the mono-uchi of the shinai.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It also gives the shidachi practice at striking at the right maai each time as well as providing okuri-ashi footwork practice. - Conducting the strikes with a single kiai builds lung capacity and stamina, and encourages breathing from the stomach as well as reminding the shidachi that each strike should be conducted with strong kiai.
<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Above is repeated for second round of kirikaeshi. <p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - same as above. 	<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On the last yokomen strike, shidachi steps back to toma while still kiaiing. Without stopping kiai, shidachi then takes one okuri-ashi step forward to issoku-itto-no-maai followed by shomen strike while still kiaiing. - After shomen strike, shidachi can take a breath. - Then the sequence 4-forward and 5-backward yokomen strikes are repeated. <p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Builds stamina as the second round is often harder than the first. Teaches shidachi to relax his arms and shoulders to minimize fatigue. Also provides all of the same benefits as above.
<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motodachi opens to allow shidachi to make a men strike and follow through. - Motodachi turns around in preparation to reverse roles. <p>Benefit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ashi-sabaki practice of avoiding oncoming Shidachi. - Both kendoka get to practice kirikaeshi consecutively, saving time. 	<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After second round, shidachi again steps back to toma while kiaiing, takes one step forward to execute the last shomen strike and following all the way through and past the motodachi and then finally turning around to face motodachi. During this entire sequence the kiai remains loud and constant. <p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Same as above. But also provides practice striking through the opponent, maintaining zanshin, turning around with sufficient distance past the motodachi and returning to readiness position in chudan-no-kamae. This puts both motodachi and shidachi in proper positions to change roles in kirikaeshi. - When roles are reversed, so that shidachi is now motodachi. The new motodachi can use this as an opportunity to engage in deep breathing from the stomach to recoup (at least that's what I do).