

Exceptional Trio

from Guy Sahri ©

The guarantors and heirs of several generations of Karate practice gathered in the City of Light, Paris. The choice could not be better for this exceptional trio. The Budo spirit was indeed at the Stage Pierre de Coubertin, on Friday 4th April 2008, for a training course provided by Experts. This judicious choice with Olympic connotation would have blown the founder of this Art, Gichin Funakoshi. Dominique Valera, recently promoted 9th Dan, and his two fellow colleagues, eloquent Bernard Bilicki 8th Dan and elegant Serge Chouraqui 8th Dan, have presented several decades of digested practices. Such level is pure treat! However Karate remains a fantastic human adventure. Those three accomplices, passionate, invested with a mission who generally exceeds the framework of the Karate mat, proved to be impressive of smoothness and control. With them, exists a peculiar relationship, a magic event where sometimes it would be wise to stop, to look at or simply listen. Art remains a gift, which would not exist without them, and would not exist anymore without us.

It is with passion, a great sense of reality and an unquestionable humility, that these three legends did not hesitate to confide in all simplicity, their feelings over current Karate, its evolution and its future...

Guy Sahri: Could you tell us what is this Training course for and what is its priority?

Serge Chouraqui:

First of all, the priority was to demonstrate and show during this training course that French Karate has several facets: in particular, Contact Karate that everyone knows, with Dominique Valéra, Jutsu Karate with Bernard Bilicki who is one of its precursors within the French Federation of Karate and Associated Disciplines and myself for Karate in general called Traditional Karate...

Bernard Bilicki:

First it is a meeting with three Experts, with different identities on the level of presence and notoriety of each one but in a common spirit. Since last season we had already jointly decided to implement a training course where all 3 disciplines would be present, i.e., Traditional Karate with Serge, Karate Contact with Dominique and Jutsu Karate with me. It was especially to answer rightly to the Karate spirit of modernity. Traditional Karate is still present, obviously, however Karate Contact is more an opening towards a society of consumption, needs and, I would say, of more contacts, therefore, in my opinion, in the direction the world tends today. People want to try something else and the interesting thing is to be able, with only one federal license, to practice all the disciplines offered by the French Federation of Karate and Associated Disciplines. Lastly, Jutsu Karate is important for me. Prior the classification of the Japanese Martial arts in 3 disciplines, the Judo, Karate and the Aikido, there was the Jutsu. In fact the word Jutsu comes from the Chinese and it means the capacity and the skill to move, in other words to answer most effectively and quickly to an attack. Jutsu Karate is a discipline which depending on the types of confrontation allows variation, either in distances such as Karate in its traditional aspect, or in an appropriate body to body contact as per in Contact Karate allowing to respond to the attack by locks, atemis or projections according to the situation. We re-created the origin of the Martial art as in those years pre classification.

Dominique Valera:

As Serge and Bernard said ... I think this training course was organized on the basis to create in Paris, something which had not taken place for a long time, a training course with 3 experts, with three different disciplines: the Traditional with Serge, Jutsu with Bernard and me the Contact. If I may say, a beautiful skewer of experts to show our techniques...

« We are closely linked... »

Guy Sahri: Is the practice between the 3 of you a force or a shared pleasure?

Bernard Bilicki :

As I said it previously, it is a very good thing. The pupils who come to our training course find an interest as they can deal with three Experts, with different gestural codes but with a common philosophy that is commitments through practice.

Dominique Valera:

They are both. On one hand, it allows us to show that we, the experts, are very closed and on the other hand it is possible to take pleasure in practicing 3 different disciplines which makes people happy. Indeed, we often encounter during in training courses, people who are out of their depth and lost motivation, whereas by making training courses short and varied, like with Jutsu, the Traditional and Contact Karate, we realizes that people are more motivated.

Serge Chouraqui:

Completely both. Absolutely both!

Because it is a force to meet three people, with a certain experience, who have in the more or less 40 years of practice both in competitive events and teaching. It is also an excellent experience shared with the training course participants. It is a pleasure too because the three of us have been in the circuit for many years. We know each other well, having the same opinions and the three of us are former competitors of the French squad. We have only one objective that is to make Karate known under all its facets with pleasure of course.

« It is a question of becoming Olympic... »

Guy Sahri: Which are for you the current stakes of Karate?

Dominique Valera:

(Smile) I think it is the question of becoming Olympic, which has a poorly start, in my opinion, but well... We try to do the most! I think the upstream work, these last 10 or even 20 years was not accomplished properly. There were especially work meetings, important meetings that were a flop because Taekwondo passed and that we did not pass. Therefore I deduce from this that there was a void somewhere.

« We, the elders, ensure the sustainability of our Martial Art... »

Guy Sahri: Do you think that the rise to power of an Olympique expiry the tradition still allures ?

Dominique Valera :

There are two things that must be clearly distinguished in our Karate: Karate practiced by everybody, which is interesting because there is no limit, no boundary, and the Karate competition which is simply a Fencing fist-foot that develops Karate our sport. Karate sport is a small part of Karate. Karate is much richer than that. There are many techniques in all these sports competitions which are very effective. When I see people talking about the K1, with shots elbow, knee blows on scrambles powerful cards; it was the same as calling Katas here! That is why I always say to people that took only a few competing technologies and is known as the Karate here, but it's not the Karate is the « Karate of competition ». It has reduced what it's really all!

Serge Chouraqui:

As recalled Dominique sports practice and the practice of the martial arts by him. Being in the Olympics, must naturally be separate. On the contrary to be within the Olympic Games, I think it is already a performance and more importantly for our discipline, that already allows to make know it. This is an important place for our athletes. We know that Olympism is the purpose for a practitioner, a high-level sportsman. Now that it might deteriorate the image of traditional Karate, absolutely not! You can always practice in club the martial art with its purpose, and everything that emanates from, especially his philosophy and at the same time practicing sports later. I think it is an integral part of the teacher and course of education that we can provide practitioners.

Bernard Bilicki:

To be a little more publicized compared to what Serge, returning to Olympia, I think actually important. Especially at the Ministry of Health, Youth and Sports so that we have finally a recognition World Karate who would better understand, I mean especially in a positive way. I believe that a strong media is indeed important, and we are many people that even if the Olympic Karate becomes, what I hope, we must, we elders, ensure the sustainability of our Martial Art and the tradition We will be the guarantors. I think it is necessary for other values that the sporting side.

« It is the reference. »

Guy Sahri: To have trained and have the best athletes and world practice does not lead well it not certain pupils to have requirements beyond their capacities?

Serge Chouraqui:

I think on this point Bernard and Dominica will agree. We were competitors students, teachers, coaches and now... experts. These are requirements quite normal for a high-level athlete to want to absolutely reach the top of the summit, ie the first places in all the competitions. The athlete should be demanding relative to its potential and stay in a room for improvement to enable it not only to achieve this objective, but also to continue and keep it. Despite having heard alongside the best athletes and practitioners worldwide, it is the reference. But it is also a reaction quite normal for a high-level athlete...

« It is the mind that makes the difference... »

Guy Sahri: Karate is an art that control, but also a sport; do you attach more importance to the sporting spirit of the fighters to their physical and technical prowess?

Dominique Valera :

I attach especially importance to the individual. But good... it is true that at a certain time I was not style to make winks. Bernard and Serge knew well that when I arrived at a competition I was not there to tighten the hands and to say hello. People took to me for a proud, inaccessible guy. In fact, I remained in a bubble not to be intimidates. In the cloakrooms, I burst internally; I did not look at anybody. Sometimes, I heard guys kidding me themselves of my mouth because, at the time, my mother gave me slippers ones so that I do not have cold. In my head, I said myself: « You will see, the slippers one, when you will take what it y inside in the mouth, you less will laugh ». I conditioned myself. I had a reputation of guy not easy of the kind to be said: « What has there, you? ». Right before the combat, I fixed the right guy in the eyes. It was to see two machine-guns or a bludgeon which was going to fall to him above. After in the combat, there were two different possibilities. Either you asserted yourself of entry and you showed yourself that you were strongest, or you used the tactics of the breach of trust. In fact you let come the guy, so that it takes confidence then you returned like a screwdriver and, there you dried it. An example if I remember it well, on August 10, 1969, finale of the cut of World of the black belts in New York. Right before the combat, an American comes to see me saying to me: « You saw against who you fall... Hawks Frazier! It makes 1,92m and 107 kg ». I answered him: « It must make noise when it falls ». The guy me a look at right in the eyes and said to me: « You are crazy! ». I answered him: « Yes! Me, completely crazy! » Thereafter it had to go to see my adversary for him to say. And it is true; it made noise when it is tomb! I still hear the echo. (Laughter)... One should not be let intimidate. It is a state of mind! It is necessary to announce the color of entry!! One makes sports of combat all the same not game of bowls... There is the purely sporting aspect (technique, tactic, and physics) but this side should not be forgotten fights. It is always necessary to be in a warlike spirit. You know I will say you to a certain level; it is the mental one which makes the difference. The human being interests me through its practice, where as it practices basket, Karate, tennis or golf, I don't care, which I want it is that it opens out through what it chose. It is that most important for me. If it chose Karate, so much better for us, if it chose the Golf, so much better for him.

« It spits on the system... »

Guy Sahri: In recent years much to be blamed on the competition completely obscure tradition. It also saw the emergence of several international federations or confederations and the world who say they are different, what do you think?

Dominique Valera :

I think that happened at that level, it is a pity to become janitors. There are many people who engage in a « trick » and who, when they are transferred or relegated to third place, say anything to go back to the first. It's easy to act like that but I do not think that this attitude is very martial. Leaving something after then spit in the soup, it's really too easy! For 20 years it was in a system and then, at once, because it is transferred, not party, but turned it spits on the system, I think that this point we must still put things in their place.

« Another contact ... »

Guy Sahri: What represents for you the fact of being a Federal Expert within one of the most important Federations on a world level?

Bernard Bilicki:

The Federal Expert is someone who has a mastery of his technique through which he will convey messages and pedagogical techniques, nothing to do with the next « Master » It is a great word, but the word Expert will instead go to a multitude of people, without really go into details. Initially they called « Soto Deshi » and « Uchi Deshi ». It is called « Soto Deshi » the professor who gave a technical and educational courses to all its students. However if there was a person who wanted to make a contract award, ie a « Uchi Deshi », Disciple of the Interior, he had an idea of the Master, another contact. On approaching the more spiritual side. So, the word Expert, without being popularized, addressed to a person who will communicate his knowledge and pedagogical technique, but not know the level of the soul.

Dominique Valera:

This makes me the effect of being in a really strong and I think that the companions Experts who are with me are also very powerful people. They each have a quite eloquent individual pathway. To me that is happiness. I come from the 9th Dan be appointed by the Commission of Specialized and Dan Grades Equivalents, it is 4 or 5 days, and as I told them, it's my pleasure. It is all at the same level but, well, to be living 9th Dan, I like better than being 10th Dan death!

Serge Chouraqui:

Dominique is right perfectly! I remember that at the time receiving a graduation was an immense pride and to have managed to be initiate in the effectiveness, one had the impression to have become supermen. To have the black belt, it is as the sky which opens. The more one ages, the more one must be this responsible as an expert or not, to put the question to know if it is deserved. Do we give the good example? Do we convey the values essential of Karate and life? On the other hand the level of the belt and its graduations must be accessible to all, without being sold off for as much. But I do not believe that it is damage one's reputation today. One could it think because the number increased, but it is not because it ya more Generals in the army today than this rank is damage one's reputation.

« The belt it is good to attach the trousers... »

Guy Sahri: Finally Mr. Valera 9th Dan? A result?

Dominique Valera :

No, it's a continuation of what I did up to now. Because if tomorrow i put a white belt, for me, this does not prevent me for working , it does irritate me since I have always said that the belt is good for attaching pants , from there, I have black, blue or red, I do not care, what counts is the guy, the rest ... It is only happiness!