

Koshiki Fighting

If you are craving some really special excitement in tournament competition, you might want to check out the Koshiki divisions if they are offered. This is a category of competition that Robert Trias used to sponsor at the old U.S. Karate Association Nationals and World Championships, for people who missed the realism of old-fashioned bare-knuckle full-contact fighting but had no wish to get hurt.

In Koshiki you wear body armor and a clear plastic full-face shield for protection, so that competitors can blast away in relative safety! It's great training for street fighting because it forces you to get your distance and body mechanics in perfect form, in order to really impact the target area. Some people say that the usual light-contact point fighting is *bad* training for a real fight, and Koshiki remedies that problem.

Opponents fight for a fixed period of time, usually two minutes, with no point limit, and the fighter who is ahead at the end of that time wins. A point total of 15 to 18 for one match is not unusual. The referee will allow a full exchange to take place before stopping the action momentarily to award points, and may give *several* points to *each* competitor. So it is not only the first point that scores (as in regular point fighting), but also all of the counterpunches and follow-up techniques as well.

For safety purposes, penalties are strictly enforced, and the second one (other than out of bounds) brings instant disqualification. Every step out of bounds is a one-point penalty. Turning your back to your opponent in an undefended way is a one-point penalty even if you are not hit. Techniques delivered to the throat, the sides of the head, or in an upward direction to the face (which could strike under the face shield) are also forbidden. And the groin is not a target.

Injuries, when they do occur, are often finger and wrist sprains suffered by the attacker because karate people (unlike boxers, for example) are not accustomed, at first, to hitting with full power. All you are allowed to wear on the hands is some tape over the knuckles or a pair of leather gardening gloves (to protect against skinning your knuckles on the face shield), with the fingers of the gloves cut off to facilitate grabbing.

Our own federation, the USAKF, no longer offers Koshiki divisions at local tournaments, but the USKA still does, and even some local ASKA tournaments do. KoSho has the necessary gear, and Sensei would be happy to teach Koshiki fighting to anyone who is interested. Just let him know.

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