

Dino Kardas interview questions

1. You recently experienced a severe ACL injury, followed by several operations that resulted in dire health issues. Can you tell us how it happened and about the events that followed?

In mid April 2009, during a fighter's class that I hold at my Dojo every Thursday night I was engaging in fairly hard sparring with my brother Sensei Lucas Kardas. Generally on a Thursday night class my students and I will spar anywhere from 10 to 15 rounds of solid but controller Sabaki Practice (sparring). During one of the later rounds, I think it was round 11 or 12, I was attempting a Tai otishi we heard a loud cracking sound and I fell to the Matts. The pain I felt at this point was like an intense heat in the core of my knee.

I applied ice straight away, the strange thing was at after around 10 minutes the pain had subsided so I got back to my feet and started walking around, my knee felt ok, I faced one of the heavy bags and tested my leg with low round house kicks and it felt good. I remember thinking that I had gotten away with it and I was so lucky.

At the end of the training session my students and I were practicing one of the Enshin Kata together, when I threw a left upper roundhouse kick my supporting leg collapsed and again I found myself on the Matts. I guess I wasn't so lucky after all. The following day I visited my GP, he referred me to an orthopaedic specialist, I was advised to have an MRI where a ruptured ACL in my Right Knee (Anterior Cruciate Ligament) was confirmed.

In early June 2009 I went in for surgery to have my knee reconstructed, the surgery went as planned and my orthopaedic surgeon was very happy with the way the surgery went. The following day I was discharged from the hospital.

That evening I was sitting at the dinner table with my leg elevated and icing my knee to reduce swelling, which is very important in managing recovery in the days post opp. As I stood up to move to more comfortable seating I felt this indescribable pressure as though someone was inflating my knee with an air compressor, I remember thinking that my knee was going to burst. Not having gone through surgery of this nature before I thought this was a normal thing to experience as I was advised to expect pain, swelling and some bruising. I was unaware that this was the first sign of an aggressive Staph infection that I contracted while in surgery.

Two days after surgery I visited my physio to start my 12 month rehab. I told him of my experience from the previous nights and although he seemed concerned he told me that he had seen this before in other patients and to continue with my physio while we monitored the situation.

Two weeks after the surgery is when I really felt the effects of the infection, it all came on suddenly. I was experiencing extreme pain in my leg and very high fevers.

I was admitted back into hospital where the surgeon inserted a large needle into the side of my knee to extract fluid that was sent off for testing. The following days were quite challenging on my body. I experienced huge fluctuations in my body temps, shaking uncontrollably for hours and so hot that the bed was saturated with perspiration.

After a week of being in hospital and trying different antibiotics to try and combat the infection unsuccessfully the doctors decided to insert a pick line (this is a tube that is inserted into your heart thorough a vain in your arm) to administer a very strong course of antibiotics.

I also underwent two more unscheduled surgeries to try and flush out my knee with antibiotics and to clean any signs of infection from the bones in my knee this is done by basically filing away signs of infection just like you would file rust of metal, very painful.

After some weeks in hospital I was allowed to return home, although I was still very ill. My surgeon advised me that if my temps continue to skyrocket then I would have to return to hospital and have the reconstruction reversed. This is done so all the foreign material (screws and ligament graft) can be removed from my body which would give me the best chance to beat the infection.

I remember my surgeon explaining to my wife and me what I could face given the Staph infection I had and the possibility of amputation but he would not let it come to that. I remember saying that from an injury sustained while training to the possibility of amputation how could this happen.

In the weeks following I seemed to be making progress I was starting to feel better and I was progressing with my physio, but unfortunately on the weekend of the AFL grand final, within the space of 30mins I went from being fine to extreme pain again. It was so sudden I found myself in hospital once again and my surgeon advising me that he will be reversing the reconstruction. I remember saying to my wife that "that's it; I will never be able to train again, what I am going to do with the dojo".

I would spend another two weeks in hospital recovering from my 4th surgery and being administered intravenous antibiotics, over this period I had a lot of time to reflect. I could not give up something that was apart of me for most of my life, it was apart of my personality, how can you just stop being who you are. I made a decision to challenge myself and do what I needed to do to get back to full training again.

Upon release from hospital I was put on a very strict medication regime and if I did not follow it to the letter I could run the risk that the bacteria would become resistant and then I would be in real trouble. I was on 13 tablets day for three months, I also had to be monitored for the next year having weekly

blood tests to make sure the medication was not damaging my kidney's or liver.

The day after I was released from hospital I returned to my Dojo, still on crutches and with stitches in my leg and began training again. Over the next year I made steady progress training with a hinged brace and going through a complete rehab with my physio as though I had a reconstruction, I focused on upper body strength as well as strengthening my legs to compensate for not having an ACL in my Right leg. I was conducting classes as normal every day with the help of my brother Sensei Lucas Kardas and my senior students, Scott Thompson, Omar Videl-Moscoso and Pat Le Gall.

I conducted myself with the mindset of training for a world tournament the only difference was I was training to defeat an opponent that was fighting me from the inside. I also needed to strengthen my body as much as I can so I could undergo another knee reconstruction once I had the all clear from the doc's that were monitoring the infection.

In March 2011 I returned to hospital and underwent my 6th surgery, my right knee reconstruction. I am happy to say this time everything is going well considering the complications and I am now nearing the end of my rehab. I am training at pretty much full pace again although still being cautious when sparring with firm contact. I am looking forward to returning to Japan next year fully fit and healthy.

2. In what ways had your Enshin training prepared you to deal with the experience of the operation and protracted illness, and the associated pain?

Through the discipline of dally practice training in the Martial Arts strengthens your mind and body. The experience of pushing your body to exceed itself gives the Martial artist strength of character and determination to overcome any obstacle.

A person that has trained many years in the Martial Arts learns how to better deal with setbacks whether they are physical or emotional. It is through these challenges that we face on life that our sprit is strengthened.

3. How did the pain suffered post-op and during your illness compare to the pain experienced in an Enshin dojo through conditioning the body against impact, etc?

I don't believe that I can compare muscular soreness that is a result of physical conditioning/Impact training associated with daily practice in a Dojo to the physical and emotional pain that is associated with illness.

In the two months following my 1st knee reconstruction I experienced 3 other surgeries and a huge amount of muscle degradation and strength loss. My

Right leg looked like I had no Quadriceps; I did not even have the strength to perform a single hamstring curl only lifting the weight of my foot.

I am sure other Martial Artists would agree that when training in any contact activity/sport physical soreness is a part of daily training so I think your body becomes accustomed to pain. I feel in my situation this is true so dealing with the pain was not such a shock to the system. My training helped me to accept the situation and pain I was experiencing and just deal with it.

4. You said you returned to training against doctor's orders during your infection recovery period. Where is the line between pushing yourself through pain to achieve gains in spirit, mental toughness, etc., and 'undoing' much of that hard training, and the reason for it in the first place — that being, to make oneself stronger, healthier and more able to physically defend oneself — by keeping on going and exacerbating an injury?

Any surgeon/Doctor would advise a person that has gone through the amount of surgeries that I have to think about slowing down or completely stopping such a physically demanding discipline such as Karate. My surgeon didn't order me to stop but he did say to me that he would prefer if I retired from my karate training, he thought my body had gone through enough and was it worth the risk of sustaining another injury in the future.

During this period while I was recovering from the infection the training I was engaging in was defiantly modified, I was very cautious as my knee was not stable. My progression was one of small steps, as I felt improvement in strength and stability I would push a little more, if I was not confident or sore on any particular day I would back off. I listened to my body. My objective was not to have "gains in spirit and mental toughness", I just wanted to get back to full training again, and I think it gets back to the core of why we train — to challenge ourselves, to overcome adversity, to prevail when the odds are stacked against you.

5. Did you feel you approached or crossed that line at all in dealing with this injury? If not, how did you work around it and keep training without making your situation worse?

I don't think I crossed any lines, my training approach was structured and sensible I think if it was anything else I wouldn't be where I am today

I followed a standard rehab and was monitored by my physiotherapist every week. There are so many elements that make up Martial Arts therefore there is always something you can train. If you have a sore leg you can work on punches, If you have an injury to your hand then you can concentrate on Kicks or Kata. There is always something to be done to improve strength or technique. There is no excuse to completely stop training.

In my case I train with a hinged Knee brace that gives me more stability, during my worst period I focused on developing strength in my leg I spent

many hours on a spin cycle pedalling only with the injured leg and approached this similar to sparring rounds. I would time myself for two minutes on a general tension and 2 minutes with as much resistance that I could handle, I would do this every day in 20min blocks.

I would train alot on the heavy bag, again structured rounds (min 10x 2min rounds) only working my hands and elbows, initially with limited footwork around the bag but as my leg got stronger I was able to move more freely, eventually some month later was able incorporate kicking techniques.

I practiced alot of basic technique and would simulate kicking technique, I would perform all the hip rotation while imagining I was completing the full extension of the kick in my mind. I practiced alot of stance work and found it greatly benefitted my stability and strength in my legs.

Some unconventional training I did on a regular basis was hoping on my injured leg while throwing a tennis ball against a wall and catching it, this is designed to develop stability in the joint, resistant band training was also a big part of my rehab and eventually running. I approached all this training with caution in mind just as when you are first getting into a hot bath, little by little.

6. What types of conditioning for body and mind is generally undertaken in Enshin training?

An Enshin Dojo is no different to any other martial art discipline, Everything a Martial Artist does, from the moment they walk in the Dojo and bow on the mats, all the minuscule details that are trained over and over again, the physical conditioning, the sweat that is left on the dojo floor after a training session, getting back up when you think you can't, the years and years of repetition, this is what builds and strengthens one's mind and body.

It doesn't matter what Martial Art you dedicate yourself to this is one thing that we all have in common and I am sure every serious martial artist can relate to what I am saying.

7. For those not familiar with the Enshin way, how does the average Enshin class break down, in terms of warm-up, solo basics, partner drills and pad-work, sparring, conditioning, kata, etc?

In my Dojo an average 1.30 hour class is conducted in the following format:

Warm-up exercises (10min)

Basics (30 mins)

Punches
Blocks
Kicks

Technique and Positioning (15mins) Footwork Drills

Combination's without Partners

Sabaki with Partner (20 mins) – Bag Training
Arm Guard Training
Sparring

Kata (10mins)

Physical Conditioning (5mins)

I also conduct separate fighters class every week that cater for the student that wants to push harder, the techniques that I teach are no different from those trained in a normal training session in the Dojo, but these sessions are more intensive.

8. What has been the role of your own teacher, Kancho Joko Ninomiya, in getting you through this difficult period, and in your development of 'karate spirit' thus far?

Kancho Ninomiya and Sensei Masuda (All-Japan Chief Instructor) offered words of support and encouragement which I appreciated. Kancho has been a huge influence in my journey so far, his technique and skill as a Martial Artist is second to none. I feel extremely lucky to have Kancho as a teacher and mentor.

Kancho's teaching methods are both innovative and progressive; he is always developing new Sabaki technique. Kancho always offers his students words of advice and correction of technique, He defiantly leads by example. Kancho trains every day, his personal training consists of early morning runs, intense pad work and heavy bag training, weight training Makiwara training and Sabaki as I witnessed and participated in when I was receiving my training at Honbu.

9. Can you recall any specific experiences or lessons from him that, looking back, that became turning points in your journey? Are there any particular training sessions, incidents or words from your sensei that stand out?

The that really stands out in my mind was the absolute courage of one on Kancho's long time student the late Mr Michael Miles and his story is truly inspirational and made me recognize how lucky I was. Michael Miles was in a serious car accident that left him paralysed from the waist down and with limited use of his arms and hands. In 1989 Michael started training Enshin Karate.

During my stay at Honbu I had the privilege of meeting him and witness his training with Kancho. Mr Michael Miles would train with Kancho numerous times a week, before his arrival we would lay ply wood on the Matts so he could manoeuvre his motorised wheel chair and practice his Sabaki technique with Kancho.

This is a quote from Kancho's book "My Journey in Karate – A Sabaki Way" and best sums up what I am trying to express.

"I became more and more aware of the extraordinary courage and spirit Michael brought to everything he did. In 1995, after earning his black belt, Michael was featured in an inspiring demonstration At the Sabaki Challenge. It was a high point for Michael in his training, but a short time later he received devastating news, his doctors told him that he had developed bone cancer and they would have to amputate his Right leg from the knee down. Three weeks later Michael called to say that he was ready to come back to training. Most people would have given up after a setback like this, but not Michael. He has been through numerous infections and illnesses, but each time he comes back to continue his training. We think of Karate as a struggle against an opponent, but in life very often the greatest opponent is within. Michael has faced these inner challenges many times and has always returned with a positive spirit and strong will."

10. As a teacher these days, how do you push your students to get the best out of them and make them tougher, without compromising your duty-of-care obligations or winding up with a bunch of injured karateka on the benches?

In my Dojo I always encourage my students to train with safety in mind. Reckless training practices fuelled by ego only lead to injury and does not promote progression.

Students train for different reasons some students want to fight in tournaments, other students that want self defence, lose weight, or build Self-confidence

As instructors we need to recognise these differences, we can't just structure training sessions for the people that want to go hard all the time, training must be a balance of technical elements, physical conditioning. I'm of the belief that the Dojo is for everyone irrespective of age, gender, or physical makeup.

** Basic details:

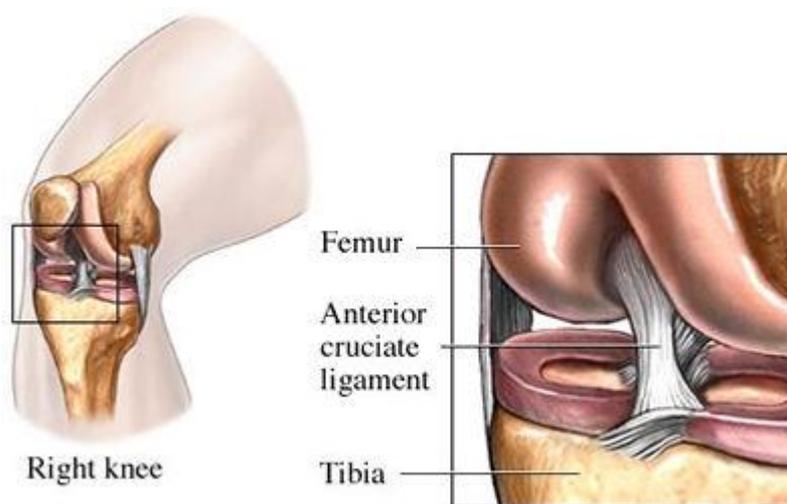
- What's your current rank? 3rd Dan
 - How many years have you been training now? 30 years
 - Career highlights?
 - Honbu trained (Denver USA).
 - Japan Trained.
 - Graded by Kancho in Ehime and Chiba Japan
 - Australian Head Instructor and First Branch Chief
-

Sub Headinings

What Is The Anterior Cruciate Ligament?

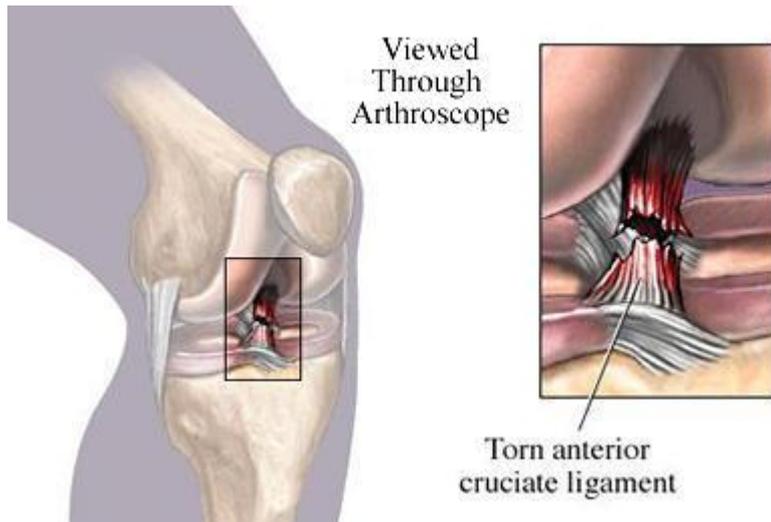
The anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) is one of the most important of four strong ligaments connecting the bones of the **knee joint**. It is often injured.

Ligaments are strong, dense structures made of connective tissue that stabilize a joint. They connect bone to bone across the joint.



The function of the ACL is to provide stability to the knee and minimize stress across the knee joint:

- It restrains excessive forward movement of the lower leg bone (the tibia) in relation to the thigh bone (the femur).
- It limits rotational movements of the knee.



A tear to the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) results from overstretching of this ligament within the knee.

- It's usually due to a sudden stop and twisting motion of the knee, or a force or "blow" to the front of the knee.
- The extent of the tear can be a partial or a complete tear.
- Individuals experiencing a tear to the ACL may or may not feel a pop at the time of the injury.
- It is often injured together with other structures inside the knee joint.
- After the initial injury, the knee may swell and become painful.
- Instability or a sensation the knee is "giving out" may be a major complaint following this injury.

Goldern Staph

Staphylococcus aureus bacteria--more commonly known as "staph," can cause a variety of symptoms. These range from minor discomfort to life-threatening infections. There are several types of staph bacteria, including MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) and golden staph, the most common cause of staph infections. While each infection differs slightly due to the mutation of the bacteria, the symptoms and causes of staph are universal.

If staph enters the bloodstream or attacks any major organs, a life-threatening situation can develop. Staph can affect the heart valves, lungs, blood, brain, skin, joints or open and/or healing wounds. In any of these cases, a fever is

usually present, along with irritated skin near the staph bacteria entrance. Immediate medical attention is required in this case.