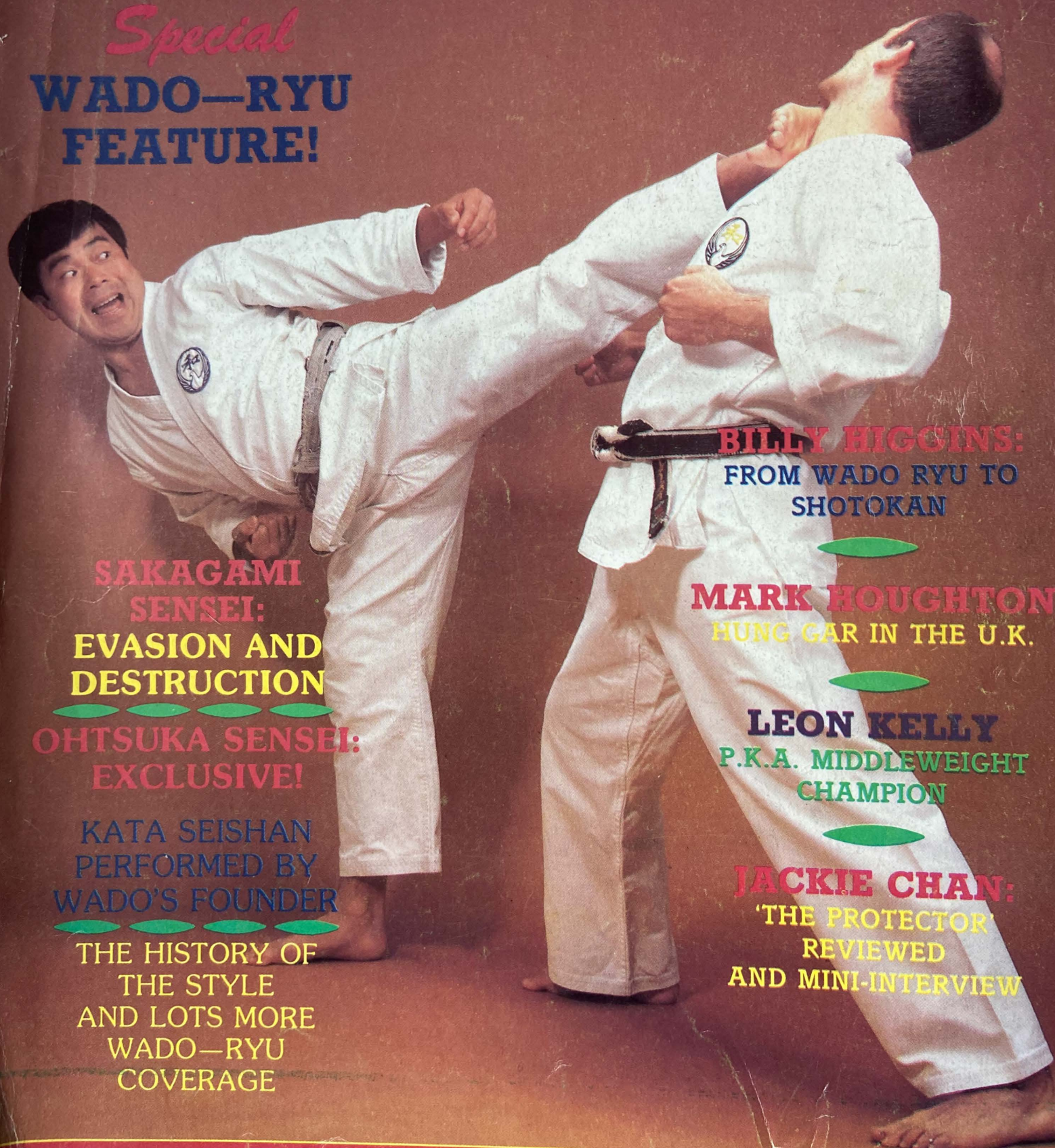


# COMBAT

THE WORLDS LARGEST MARTIAL ARTS MAGAZINE

*Special*

**WADO-RYU  
FEATURE!**



**BILLY HIGGINS:**  
FROM WADO RYU TO  
SHOTOKAN

**MARK HOUGHTON**  
HUNG GAR IN THE U.K.

**LEON KELLY**  
P.K.A. MIDDLEWEIGHT  
CHAMPION

**JACKIE CHAN:**  
'THE PROTECTOR'  
REVIEWED  
AND MINI-INTERVIEW

**SAKAGAMI  
SENSEI:**  
EVASION AND  
DESTRUCTION

**OHTSUKA SENSEI:**  
EXCLUSIVE!

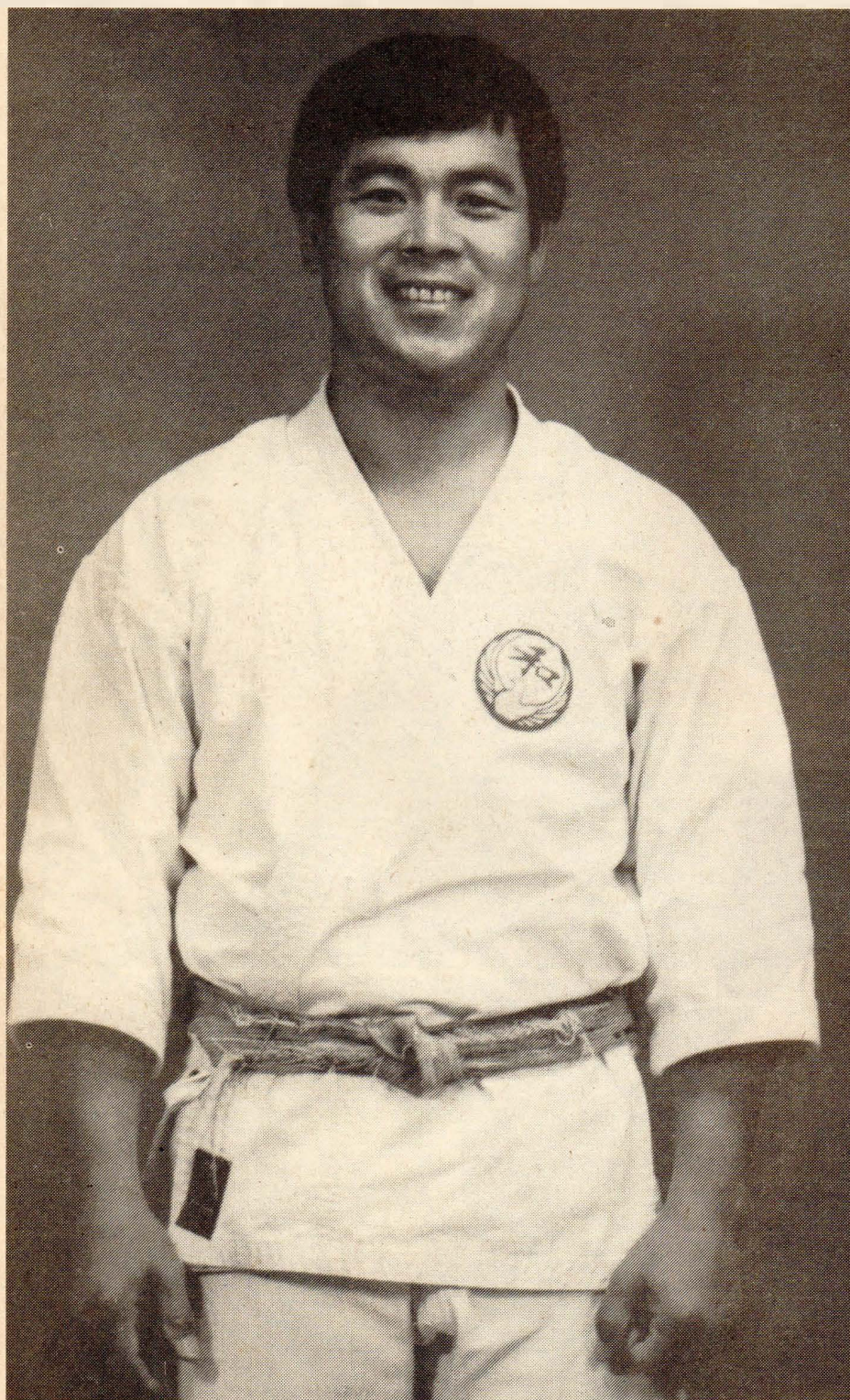
KATA SEISHAN  
PERFORMED BY  
WADO'S FOUNDER

THE HISTORY OF  
THE STYLE  
AND LOTS MORE  
WADO-RYU  
COVERAGE

**A COLLECTORS ITEM!**



# SAKAGAMI SENSEI AND THE ELUSIVE FIST OF WADO-RYU.



Though cheerful of disposition, Sakagami is still a fierce karate fighter.

In the late sixties and early seventies, when Britain was first held in the grip of martial arts fever, the Temple karate club was a national centre for superior Wado Ryu. Of the instructors who made a name for themselves then, only a few still hit the headlines. Of the others, several are still very active in karate, with strong clubs and good students, but they have adopted a lower profile in recent years. One such person is Sakagami, currently a 6th Dan with the United Kingdom Karate Wado-Kai, who is now based in Wolverhampton, though he also runs a club in Stockport near Manchester.

Looking much younger than he really is, Sakagami exudes a real enthusiasm for karate, though those that know him will soon comment on his almost encyclopaedic knowledge of Western boxing. He has followed the sport avidly for years and, in the following interview, makes some telling comparisons between that art and his own. We also discussed the technical side of Wado Ryu, and in particular it's effective simultaneous evasion and counter-attack techniques.

**COMBAT:** *We know that the Wado Ryu that you teach is the same style that was founded by Master Ohtsuka, and passed down to Tatsuo Suzuki, who is the head of Wado in the U.K., so can you tell us what makes Wado Ryu different from some of the other karate styles in this country?*

**S.S:** We employ a lot of counter-techniques. By this I mean that, when your opponent attacks, you, you block and counter-attack at the same time. They aren't two different movements. To give us time in which to avoid a blow and to strike back, we use the foot-work of the style. This is probably the strongest point in Wado Ryu technique.

**COMBAT:** *Wado can boast of some very fine kicking technicians. Is there a special Wado Ryu kicking method?*

**S.S:** We don't have any special method, unique to Wado Ryu, to develop kicking technique. It's basically down to the individual to work on his kicks and find out what works for him. For example, my senior, Mr. Shiomitsu, has a



marvellous kick, especially his mawashi-geri, but he developed it in his own individual way, I think, rather than in any special 'Wado' way.

**COMBAT:** *You're very modest to mention only Mr. Shiomitsu, because it's well known as being a good kicker yourself. What's your special training method? Were you fairly flexible when you started in karate?*

**S.S:** I wasn't too stiff, but I wasn't extraordinarily flexible either. I developed my suppleness with a lot of running and stretching exercises, and kicking the bags. You need to do both static stretching and kicking the bag to improve your kicking.

**COMBAT:** *Looking at Wado Ryu technically, does it adapt easily from kata to kumite to street defense? Is it easy to apply Wado technique realistically?*

**S.S:** Wado Ryu does have very practical kata, but, of course, you can't use a kata movement in fighting exactly as you do it in kata. You have to have the knowledge and intelligence to apply a kata movement as a fighting technique. I would hope that I am equal in both kata and kumite, but today the emphasis seems to be mainly on competition, so, naturally, students will practice more for fighting. I don't object to this. While you are young, it is a good thing to practice lots of fighting. I did the same! When I was in my late teens and early twenties, ninety percent of my practice was devoted to fighting.

**COMBAT:** *One of the reasons that Mr. Otsuka split away from Funakoshi was that he found that the students were getting bored with studying kata all the time.*

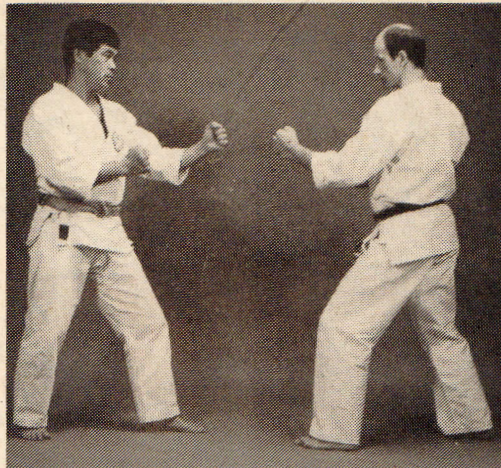
**S.S:** That's right. Another thing he did was bring in a lot of techniques from jujitsu, which he had already been a master in before he took up karate.

**COMBAT:** *We understand that your other main interest in life is boxing.*

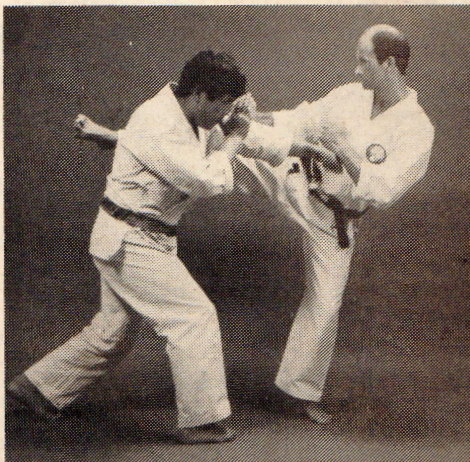
**S.S:** Yes. I have followed the boxing for many years. Even though I'm a karate man, I would say that I love to watch boxing more than I like to watch karate!

**COMBAT:** *What are your views on the age-old debate on who should win between a boxer and a karate fighter?*

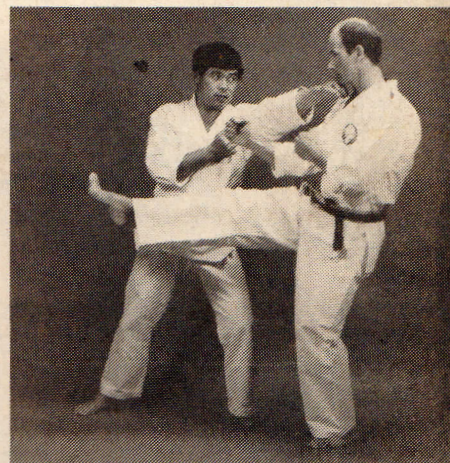
**S.S:** Well, to begin with, the style is less important than WHO you are fighting and how good they are at what they do. Also, it would depend on the circumstances. Do they have to wear boxing gloves? Technically, I think that traditional karate men are vulnerable



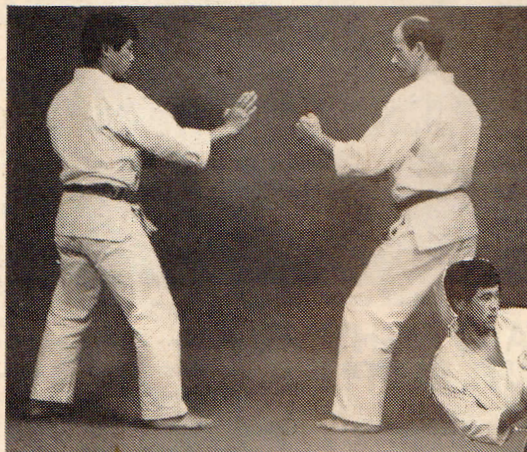
Sakagami and opponent face each other.



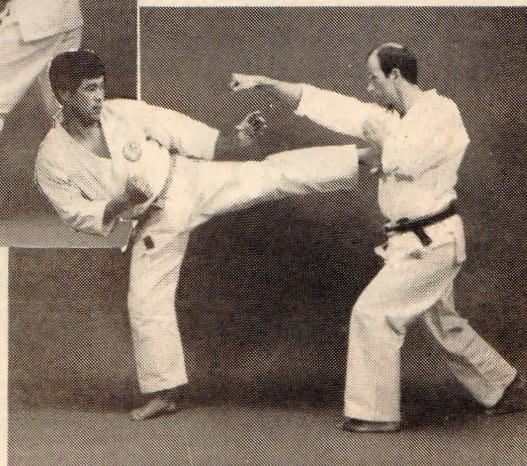
Should the opponent kick Mawashi Geri, Or Sakagami moves in the opposite direction to evade and retaliate.



As the opponent kicks, Sakagami moves to the side and punches simultaneously.



Sakagami and opponent square off.



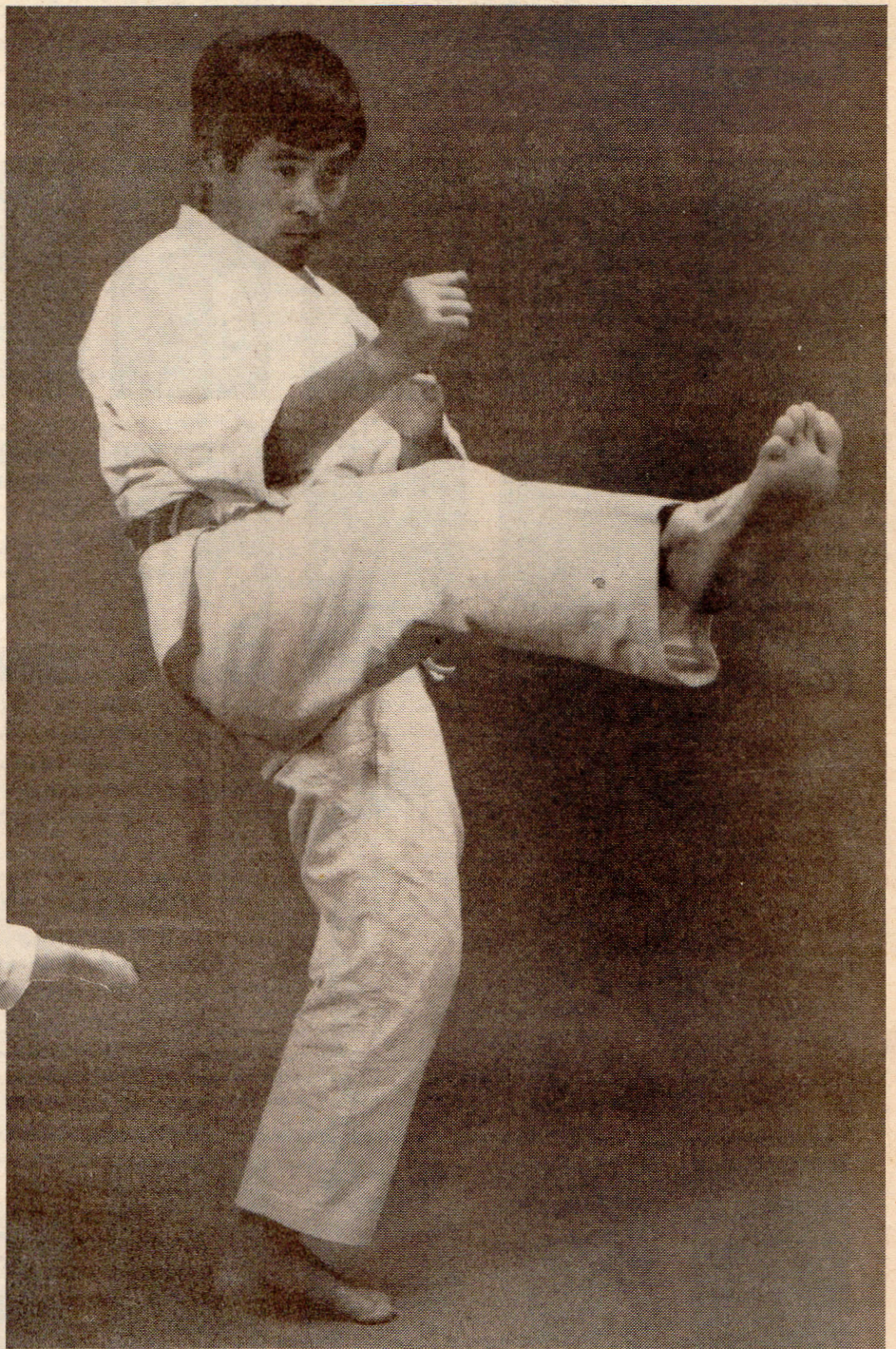
As opponent punches, Sakagami kicks.



against swinging punches, hooks and uppercuts, while boxers seem to be a bit vulnerable against straight punches. If I had to fight against a boxer, then I would have to adapt what I know to suit the situation. I certainly wouldn't fight in the normal karate way! Back when I was just a second dan, yes, I would probably try to fight him in the karate way, but now that I've got so much more knowledge, I can adapt Wado Ryu to suit the opponent. For one thing, a boxer's stance is usually wide open, which would leave him very vulnerable to mae geri, whereas jodan mawashigeri would probably not be a very good technique to use against a boxer.

**COMBAT:** *Within your organisation, are instructors given a certain amount of leeway when it comes to adapting Wado techniques?*

**S.S:** We are not all built the same way. Some of us are big, some small, some flexible, some not so flexible. All



Mr. Sakagami is well known for his kicking ability.

instructors must bear this in mind. Of course, in basic things, we follow the traditional way, but, when it comes to fighting, you have to find your own individual way. Like boxers might have the same coach or trainers, but still have their own style.

**COMBAT:** *When your students start to spar, what techniques do you stress from the start?*

**S.S:** I like to see students using a counter punch or kick with a little side-step, at

the same time as an attack comes towards them. I also like to see good combination techniques.

**COMBAT:** *Do you feel that the Wado Ryu being taught today is as strong as it was ten years ago?*

**S.S:** Yes. I think it is in fact stronger. The modern training aids, especially in regard to stretching, have helped us a lot.

**COMBAT:** *Mr. Sakagami, thank you.*

**S.S:** Thank you.