



laido-bu Squad Training Sessions 2017: Questions & Answers

As laido Squad Manager (SM) I have over the past couple of weeks received a few private messages asking about the laido-bu's Squad Policy changes for 2017 and how these changes affect any person interested in attending laido Squad Training Sessions (STS) for practice or for challenging for squad places. Last week, the Jodo-bu also posted some of their own information about their own IT policy changes for 2017. Because of that post and the questions it has spawned about how the laido policy changes affect what was the previous the lai/Jo Joint-IT Sessions, the laido Bucho and I have discussed it and think that this has presented us with a great opportunity to answer some of those questions openly, and to shed light on our vision, ideas and reasons for change.

1. Why has the name changed to Squad Training Sessions (STS)?

The original name given to the sessions in the BKA constitution is 'squad training' so we have simply returned to the name assigned to these sessions through that document. It is purely a matter of preference to adherence to the prescribed name, incidentally, this is also what the Kendo-bu call their sessions

2. Can any laido member attend?

Yes. All BKA laido-bu member are allowed and encouraged to attend these sessions. These are the cheapest one-day events on the BKA calendar, and although their final aim is to identify and create a final team that will represent the BKA and United Kingdom at the European laido Championships (EIC), the sessions allow any member the chance for a slightly different and a more personalised style of input from that of a usual seminar. So, whether you just want more practice, to get ready for a grading, or have squad aspirations, as a member of the Bu, regardless of your grade or level, you are entitled and encouraged to attend laido STS.

3. If I am not interested in making the squad, can I still attend STS?

Absolutely yes. As stated above, the final aim is for the STS to help the Squad Management identify a team to represent the BKA/UK at the EIC; however, the sessions are an excellent opportunity for any member to get extra practice and input. So, in-fact it essential that non-squad people also attend as this can help push up the standard and energy of the STS.

4. How do I become a new member of the laido squad?

There are a few simple things you must do. First read the 2017 policy document making sure you understand what squad is about and what is expected of you in return (if squad is new to you). Then notify me, the SM, of your intent/interest (ideally before 31/01/17), because then you will then be added to a database and be watched closely at STS and advised on how to improve your performance. I have asked for early notification to make administration more convenient, however you can do it later as well of course, but may end up missing point allocation as none will be given retrospectively. You can also mention your interest face to face at a STS, but I would still require written confirmation of you having read and agreed to the Code of Conduct, hence the email requirement.

<http://www.britishkendoassociation.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/BKA-2017-laido-Squad-General-Info-Policy.pdf>



You will also need to attend as many of the squad point scoring events as possible because selection will be based on several criteria and your tally of points, which will give the selection officers an idea of your level of commitment and success amongst other things. Your points will be based on attendance and commitment and your success in the high-point scoring events, and this with written observation notes about your attitude and team spirit and potential will all be considered by the three voting officers who select the final team.

5. If I was a member of the 2016 squad, am I still considered a squad member?

Yes. The 2016 Squad will hopefully make up the backbone of the squad until the new 2017 team is selected. As SM, I am aware that people's lives change, and therefore you have been requested to contact me and confirm your intention to keep your place in the squad. This will also bring your contact details up to date and will be written confirm that you have read and agreed to the Code of Conduct, which is required. This should ideally be done before 31/01/17 for easier administrative purposes. If I do not receive an email from you I will assume you are not available and will look to reallocate your squad place. However, also be prepared to fight for your place on the 2017 Squad as we are hopeful that many new faces and old faces from the past will turn up to challenge for squad places.

6. Do non-BKA Events contribute to Squad Selection points?

No. Non-BKA events will not be taken into consideration. Not everyone has equal access to the information about other events and non-UK events, meaning they can go by unnoticed. Also, some people may have limited ability to get to them, especially if they are non-UK events, and this we feel creates inequality. Therefore, the best thing we think we can do to keep things on as level a playing field by having our point scoring events as accessible as possible to all.

7. What is the difference between the squad and team? Aren't they the same?

The team are those who will step out onto the shiai-jo on the day of the taikai and compete, the squad is the reservoir from which the 'best candidates' are chosen.

The plan will be to identify 3-6 people at each of the seven grade levels (Mudan to Rokudan) who will be drafted into the Iaido squad. These individuals will receive more focused input and feedback at times. However, be prepared to keep or even raise your level as squad positions can be challenged for and can therefore change. From the squad a final team will be selected for more intensive closed sessions as the European Iaido Championship date gets closer. Thus, not everyone on squad will make the team, but we are confident the training will help develop your Iaido and it is up to you to fight for the opportunity to represent your country at the EIC.

8. Why are the Iaido STS now separate sessions from the Jodo Intensive Training?

This is something all the Iaido Elected Officers and Squad Management debated for some time. We are hoping to advertise the Iaido STS session in more effective ways to make them as inclusive as possible and encourage many more of our Iaido-bu members to come along and support. This means that if this works then there may simply not be enough room in the same hall for two arts. There are health and safety issues to consider and we also don't want to have people standing around at the side of a hall because of a lack of space. We also wanted to address some of the concerns raised about the noise that Jodo-ka often make. Some have



commented that the noise is very distracting. So, although we didn't mind sharing some joint dates and venues, we were asking for separate halls and autonomy.

The planning, venue bookings and accounting situation proves to be more convenient for the laido Bu's 2017 plans if we operate separately. Finding suitable dates and locations where all faculty from both Bu were available was becoming problematic. For example, there were early plans of sharing some sessions, however some months became too full with laido events and a balance was needed to respect both the Squad officers and members' schedules, resources and other private commitments. In some cases, officers from the two Bu were not available on the same weekends.

9. Why are no points awarded for half day attendance at STS?

Our expectations for our squad members is high. We wish to coach and monitor improvement on an individual basis, and we are prepared to commit 100% to you and we expect 100% from you. Coming for half a day is disruptive to the teaching and monitoring system, and to be awarded points is not fair on the other squad members who have put in a full day.

If the laido Squad Coach, Assistant Coach, Manager, Bucho and other invited sensei are willing to give up their days for STS and squad support, and the BKA through Bucho allocates the use considerable sums of members' money to fund STS and trips to the EIC, then we feel that it isn't that unreasonable to expect the same level of commitment from any person wanting to be considered for the final team. Thus, we want to make sure we have the right committed people for the team. If you want us to commit to you, then please also commit to us.

10. So, how do we fund the actual STS?

The fee for a STS is £15 (£8 concession), which is paid on the door (SO PLEASE have the correct change). We hope to encourage as many people to attend, not only to maximise the number of people we can assess for final team selection, but to also allow people without any squad aspiration to just enjoy and develop their own laido. These fees will be used to cover the hall costs, travel expenses of faculty and any surplus will be used to pay for 'intensive team only' sessions closer to the EIC date, and to fund the final team's costs of going to the EIC. Therefore, the more support we get from the members at events, the more the individual member's technique improves, the squad-aims win and the BKA coffers which sends the team to the EIC wins.

11. How is the final Squad funded?

The reality is that for the laido-bu to run the four smaller 2016 regional seminars (Spring, Scottish, West Midlands and Northern Seminars), it cost the Bu between £9,000-£10,000 in total. Whereas, in 2016 the laido-bu spent around £11,000 to send the laido Team to the EIC. We think this is a huge investment to make, especially since it uses the membership's funds. It is for this reason we have decided on some of our new policies: to try make the STS more inclusive to all, to offer the best possible training opportunities, to be sure that the people being considered for the final team are committed, diverse and a good investment.



We feel this is very important as the BKA is one of the very few associations at the EIC which has opted to pay for 100% of the squad costs (as passed at the 2015 laido AGM). This is not the case for many other teams, some of who get very little financial support.

12. Isn't it counter-productive to separate the laido and Jodo STS?

No. We think the opposite is true, and that the separation is good for both Bu, it stops us both compromising on what we do, where we do it, when we do it and how we do it. This has now become what we consider to be best for laido if we want to push our laido STS and Team to build on their two individual and one team Bronze medal success from 2016. We need to do something different and innovative because we are sure the other country's teams will be training hard or harder than ever, as the EIC is obviously a very competitive event but a superb experience worth the hard work. So, to respect the time, energy and huge financial investment the faculty and members make to the STS, the Squad, and the final Team, we feel the time is ripe for more inclusive and committed change.

So, the proverbial ball is on your court and we hope these comments help you understand better our intentions and that you will come and join us at the laido STS.

STS information can be found on the BKA webpage under the laido tab, the calendar and with regular updates on Facebook.

Best wishes

Karl Gibbons – Squad Manager

And the Elected laido Bu Officers