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- Know how to HEAL and protect yourself and help others in times of need
- The Hidden 8 Steps to Light-Switch Success
- Mind-Warrior Secrets of the JEDI (Yes for real, it existed thousands of years ago, and still does today)

... and so much more, it would take 20 pages to outline it all here.

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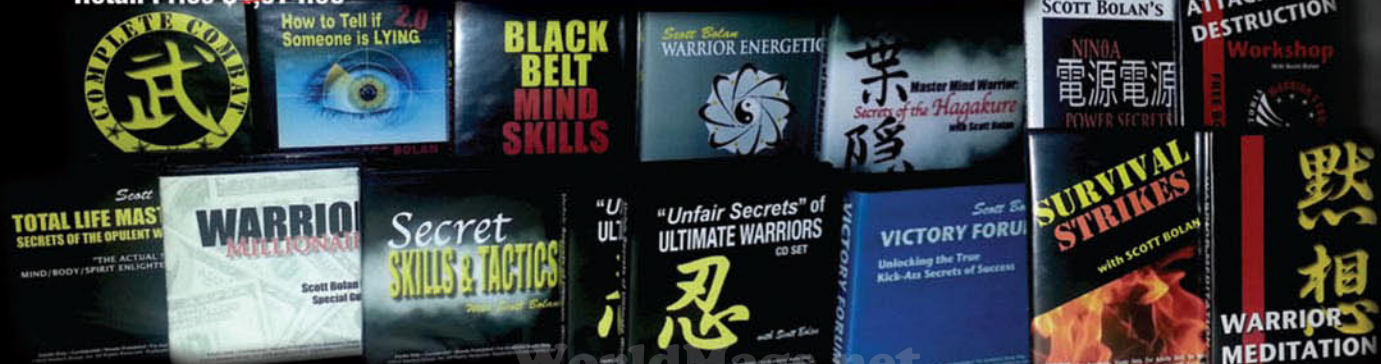
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WORDS OF WISDOM

by Robert W. Young

One of my favorite quotes about fighting comes not from a self-defense instructor, a former military man or even a long-dead samurai. It comes from the pen of a novelist named John Steinbeck:

The purpose of fighting is to win.

There is no possible victory in defense.

The sword is more important than the shield, and skill is more important than either.

The final weapon is the brain.

All else is supplemental.

The wisdom of that passage, which comes from *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights*, prompted me to search for other gems that have emerged from the minds of people who live or lived primarily outside the martial arts community. If you find any of the following particularly inspirational, you might want to buy a book or do some online searching to see if the source has produced anything else that pertains to your practice.

"Danger, if met head on, can be nearly halved."

—Sir Winston Churchill, former prime minister of the United Kingdom

"If someone has a gun and is trying to kill you, it would be reasonable to shoot back with your own gun."

—The Dali Lama, Tibetan spiritual leader

"The right to defend one's home and one's person when attacked has been guaranteed through the ages by common law."

—Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights leader

"An armed society is a polite society. Manners are good when one may have to back up his acts with his life."

—Robert A. Heinlein, science-fiction author

"The best defense is a good offense."

—unknown

"If anyone hits me, they can expect to be hit back, and harder. I never turn the other cheek because in my experience that doesn't work."

—Alice Bag, writer and musician

"In self-defense and in defense of the innocent, cowardice is the only sin."

—Dean Koontz, novelist

"I don't even call it violence when it's in self-defense; I call it intelligence."

—Malcolm X, civil rights leader

"Self-defense is nature's eldest law."

—John Dryden, 17th-century English poet

"Childbirth is more admirable than conquest, more amazing than self-defense, and as courageous as either one."

—Gloria Steinem, women's rights activist



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GROUP PUBLISHER Cheryl Angelheart

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Robert W. Young

GROUP CREATIVE DIRECTOR Alexander Norouzi

GROUP ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Donna Diamond

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL MEDIA Raymond Horwitz

SPECIAL PROJECTS ART DIRECTOR John Bodine

SPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR Vicki Baker

WEB EDITOR Jon Sattler

COPY CHIEF Jeannine Santiago

A/R MANAGER Alice Negrete

RESEARCH DIRECTOR Kristy Kaus

ADVERTISING ACCT MGR Laura (Flores) Thorne

PRODUCTION MANAGER Patrick Sternkopf

ART DIRECTOR Dana Collins

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Floyd Burk, Jason Brick, Mark Cheng, Antonio Graceffo, Mark Hatmaker, Mark Jacobs, Dasha Libin Anderson, Dave Lowry, Kelly McCann, Keith Vargo, Dr. Robert Wang

CONTRIBUTORS

Tony Blauer, Brad Efting, Kelly Muir, Dr. Craig D. Reid, David Sims, J. Torres

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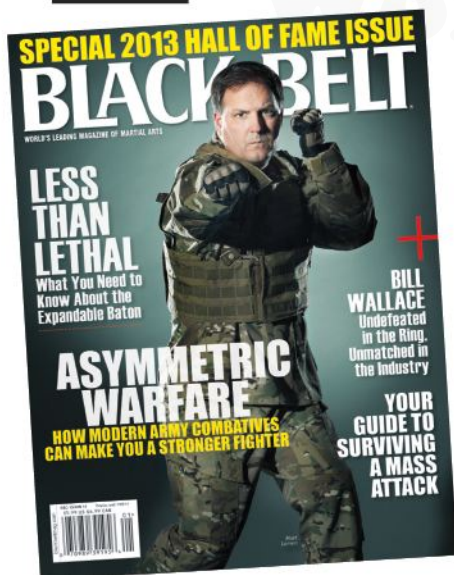
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Future of Military Martial Arts

I'm pleased that *Black Belt* has recognized Matt Larsen as its 2013 Self-Defense Instructor of the Year. He's done more than anyone I can think of to revolutionize the way our men and women in uniform fight, and I have no doubt his material has saved countless lives and will continue to do so. I only wish the Modern Army Combatives Program had been around when I served.

Ted Moro - via the Internet

Bill Wallace Deserves the Attention

My thanks go out to Floyd Burk for penning the two-part story on Bill Wallace in the October/November 2013 and December 2013/January 2014 issues. Although most mature martial artists know the "Superfoot" story well, Burk provided plenty of details I never knew—such as the Elvis interactions. I've never attended a Wallace seminar, but now I feel compelled to just so I can be part of the history of the American martial arts.

Myra Allen - via the Internet

Real Father of MMA

I'm replying to a letter Jamez Shoiry wrote in response to a letter I'd written. Shoiry stated, "[Bruce] Lee was the first one to bring to the table a vast array of techniques that all came from different arts, then mold them together with open-mindedness and flexibility. ... When it comes to MMA as an art as opposed to a form of competition, Bruce Lee deserves the title 'father of MMA.'"

Well, in 1898, Englishman Edward William Barton-Wright (1860-1951) returned to England from Japan, where he studied *jujitsu* and judo. Combining elements of *savate*, boxing, wrestling and stick fighting, he developed a form of self-defense—"as opposed to a form of competition"—that he named *bartitsu*. Barton-Wright claimed that his system could enable practitioners to defend against attacks of every kind. So

this was indeed a "vast array of techniques that came from different arts and were molded together with open-mindedness and flexibility." The Bartitsu Club opened on Shaftesbury Avenue in London in 1900.

Then there were the members of the Black Belt Society—Adriano Emperado, Peter Young Yil Choo, Joe Holck, Frank Ordonez and George Chang—who in 1947 in Oahu, Hawaii, founded *kajukenbo*, a combination of karate, judo, *kenpo* and boxing. They wanted to develop an art that would "make them invincible on the most difficult streets of Hawaii."

There's no doubt Lee was the real deal, a true master, a legend who will continue to guide and inspire people for many years to come. He dared to question principles and foundations and prompted his fellow martial artists to seek the truth in combat rather than "blindly follow" tradition. However, as great as he was, he should not be called the father of MMA.

Interestingly, in 1972, when he was inducted into the *Black Belt* Hall of Fame, Lee expressed in a letter to the magazine's editor that he did not place any importance on such titles anyway.

Peter Jagger - Birmingham, England

Editor's Note: The October/November 2013 issue of *Black Belt* included an article about *bartitsu*. ✕

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Tom Laughlin and George Lee

The last month of 2013 brought a double dose of sad news to the martial arts community. On December 12, Tom Laughlin, the actor who portrayed Billy Jack in four feature films, died from pneumonia at age 82. Laughlin was a longtime practitioner of *hapkido*, no doubt inspired by Bong Soo Han, the hapkido master who performed the fights in *Billy Jack* (1971) and *The Trial of Billy Jack* (1974).

Laughlin is survived by Delores Taylor, his wife since 1954. Earlier in 2013, when he received the Silver Spur Award from Reel Cowboys, a group of actors and stuntmen who celebrate Western films, Laughlin professed his enduring love for Taylor: "Without her, I am nothing. She has been my partner every step of the way, through the good times and the bad, and I accept this award on her behalf."

The man who helped popularize the Korean kicking art is better-known, of course, for this immortal line from the second installment in the series: "I'm gonna take this right foot, and I'm gonna whop you on that side of your face. And do you want to know something? There's not a damned thing you're gonna be able to do about it."

Just four days later, on December 16, George Lee, a *jeet kune do* practitioner from the Oakland period, died at age 97. In addition to training under Bruce Lee, George became close friends with the JKD founder. A skilled machinist, George built much of the training gear Bruce was photographed using.

Born in Monterey, California, George Lee was a senior member of the Bruce Lee Foundation's Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do Advisory Committee. "Rest in peace, George," Shannon Lee tweeted after his passing. "You have been a great friend to my father and my family. Your kind heart will be missed."



Photo Courtesy of Billy Jack Enterprises

Tom Laughlin as Billy Jack



JCVD Returns

JEAN-CLAUDE VAN DAMME TACKLES COMEDY

▲ On February 7, 2014, Jean-Claude Van Damme will return to theaters when *Welcome to the Jungle*, an action comedy, debuts in theaters. In addition to the martial arts star, the movie features Adam Brody, Megan Boone, Kristen Schaal, Rob Huebel and Dennis Haysbert, who portray a cadre of office workers who become stranded on a desert island when a corporate retreat goes wrong. The retreat is led by an over-the-top ex-military man named Storm Rothchild, played by Van Damme.

Directed by Rob Meltzer and written by Jeff Kauffmann, *Welcome to the Jungle* won the award for Outstanding Achievement in Filmmaking—Ensemble Cast at the 2013 Newport Beach Film Festival.

► Dr. Alex Sternberg, **shotokan karate** practitioner and associate professor in the Division of Athletic Training, Health and Exercise Science at Long Island University, has begun **surveying martial arts instructors**.

► “As I am unaware of any extensive **scientific investigation** of non-tournament **martial arts injuries** associated with training, I strongly feel it’s time we did. This survey is completely **anonymous**, and the privacy of all respondents is strictly protected. This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the **SUNY College of Medicine School of Public Health** toward my research and dissertation for a Doctor of Public Health degree.” surveymonkey.com/s/KarateInjurySurvey

► Even before it was released, **The Complete Ninja Collection**, a 900-page tome by *Black Belt* Hall of Famer **Stephen K. Hayes**, became a **best-seller**. How’s that even possible? Through the magic of online pre-orders, of course. store.blackbeltmag.com

► **Kickstarter** recently hosted a campaign to raise funds for *The Professor: Tai Chi’s Journey West*, a **documentary** about **tai chi legend Cheng Man-Ching**. The effort gathered pledges for almost 70 percent more than the goal—which means the film likely will be made. kickstarter.com/projects/taichifilm/the-professor-tai-chis-journey-west

► **Man of Tai Chi**, a film starring and directed by **Keanu Reeves**, was recently released on Blu-ray and DVD. It features fight choreography by **Yuen Woo-ping** (*The Matrix*) and co-stars Tiger Chen.

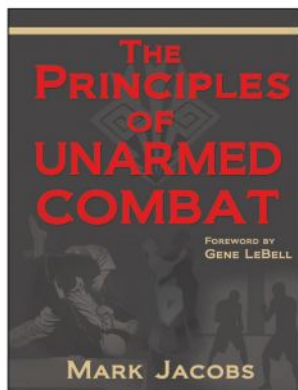
► The plot of *Man of Tai Chi*: Reeves plays the wealthy owner of a **Beijing underground fight club** who recruits a humble *tai chi* student (Tiger Chen) for his closed-circuit battles. When the young man is seduced by money and power, it triggers a war between the Hong Kong police and the **world’s deadliest combatants**.

► *Black Belt’s Facebook* page has experienced an unprecedented spike that brought **20,000 new “likes”** in a two-week period in December. If you’re not already a member of this vibrant community of nearly 80,000 martial artists, you’re missing out. facebook.com/BlackBeltMagazine

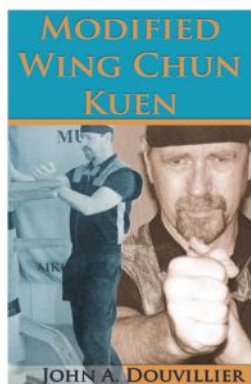
► *Black Belt* has received word that *The Real Miyagi*, the **documentary** about the life of karate pioneer **Fumio Demura**, has been put on **temporary hold**.

► Back in August 2010, the magazine featured Iraq War veteran and HBO’s *Generation Kill* co-star **Rudy Reyes** on the cover. In December 2013 the **martial artist/Recon Marine** resurfaced in National Geographic TV’s **Ultimate Survival Alaska**. Reyes and two teammates pitted their survival skills against three other teams in an extreme adventure race.

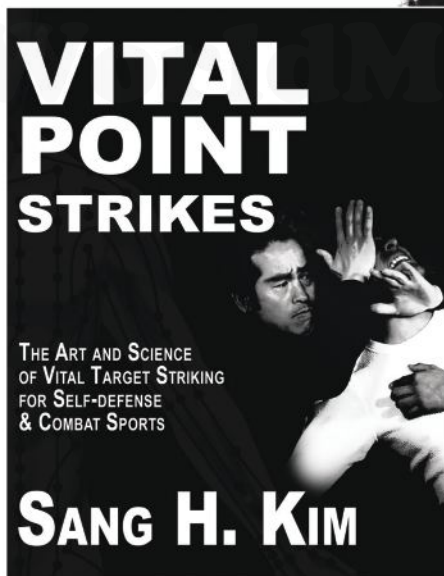
► **Fast & Furious 7**, the film that was in production when Paul Walker died in an automobile accident on November 30—only a mile from the *Black Belt* office—has been indefinitely postponed. Martial artists were anticipating its release in part because it was supposed to co-star **Jason Statham, Michael Jai White, Ronda Rousey** and **Tony Jaa**.



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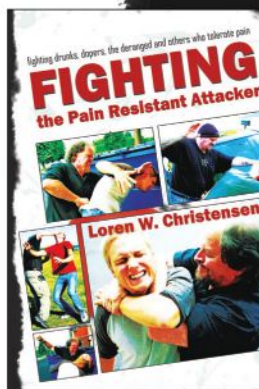


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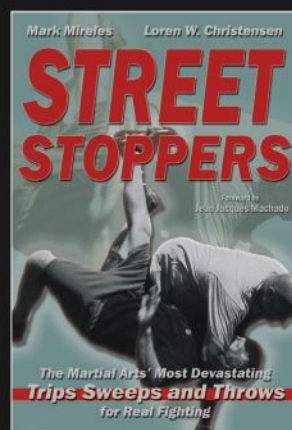
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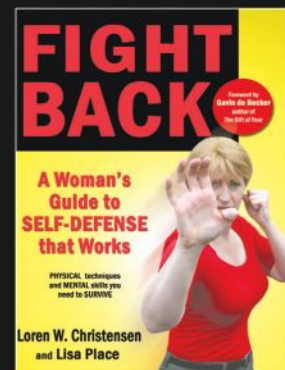
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For a Better Community

NONPROFIT USES BJJ TO TRANSFORM BOSTON

▲ In Roxbury, the neighborhood with the highest poverty and unemployment rates in Boston, Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* is thriving—and changing lives—thanks to Alexandra Fuller and Hudson Henriques. In July 2013 the BJJ purple belts launched Level Ground Mixed Martial Arts with a stated mission to unleash the strength, power and ingenuity of youth through MMA and BJJ. The organization concentrates on young people who are exposed to disproportionate levels of poverty and violence and who lack access to education.

The organization has seen rapid growth in the past four months—from three students to more than 30.

“Level Ground gave me consistency in an inconsistent life,” said Fredy, 20. “People here are tight-knit, and there are no filters. It is the one place that I know [that] no matter what happens, I will feel better leaving there.”

Fuller said the program is popular because the martial art espouses five key values: respect, discipline, humility, self-control and tenacity. After each class, she and Henriques make it a point to get students to reflect on how they can put these principles into practice off the mat as well as on it.

Felix, 21, agrees that the lessons can be life changing. “It keeps me off the streets,” he said. “I get mentally stronger—it taught me how to control my strength.”

For maximum benefit, Level Ground couples martial arts training with academic and life-skills support. Staff and volunteers assist students with college applications and provide a weekly curriculum with topics ranging from nutrition to self-control.

The program currently operates in a YMCA, but Fuller has a grander vision. In the next eight months, she aims to open a facility in the heart of Roxbury. “The Level Ground studio will serve as a hub for MMA and BJJ training, [as well as] academic and life-skills support for urban youth in Boston,” she said. “Our goal is to empower youth to see themselves as strong, confident leaders and then apply this identity to accomplish dreams they did not believe were possible.”

To fund the expansion plan, Level Ground is appealing to MMA and BJJ associations, apparel and equipment companies, practitioners and the martial arts community as a whole for support. “Hudson and I cannot do this alone,” Fuller said. “What if we collectively come together to use MMA and BJJ to transform a community? Roxbury will be no longer associated with poverty and violence, but opportunity and peace. It is possible, and I invite everyone in the MMA and BJJ community to be a part of it.”

For more information, send email to ali.levelgroundmma@gmail.com.

Karate on Campus

MARTIAL ARTS AT RADFORD UNIVERSITY STILL GOING STRONG

The Radford University Karate Club in Virginia recently celebrated its 40th anniversary. Founded in 1973 by *Black Belt* Hall of Famer Dr. Jerry Beasley, now a professor of Health and Human Performance at Radford, the club has attracted international attention and graduated hundreds of martial arts practitioners.

In 1982 the club became the national headquarters at which Joe Lewis’ American Karate Systems was launched.

In 1988 it sponsored the Karate College, a martial arts event that would win the *Black Belt* Industry Award for Best Seminar/Training Camp in 2008. It was among the first mixed-style martial arts camps in the United States. Renowned instructors who’ve taught there include Lewis, Bill Wallace, Jeff Smith, Renzo Gracie, Jhoon Rhee, Ji Han Jae, George Dillman, Wally Jay, Remy Presas, Willie Johnson, Kathy Long, Benny Urquidez, Gokor Chivichyan, Ted Wong and Fumio Demura.

In 1993 the RU Karate Club helped launch the Original Jeet Kune Do Camps with first-generation Bruce Lee students Lewis and Wong. Former Karate Club members from that era include Robert W. Young, editor-in-chief of *Black Belt*; and Jason William McNeil and Rich Manley, who work as martial arts actors in Hollywood.

For more information, send email to jlbeasle@radford.edu.

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New Sport

OBSTACLE COURSE WITH NINJA WARRIORS!

► On April 26-27, 2014, the Bushido Challenge will be unleashed on the world. First battlefield: Virginia, where at least 17 obstacles will populate a 6-mile course. What makes the Bushido Challenge different from other obstacle races? The theme will be *bushido*, Japanese for "way of the warrior."

"At the beginning of the event, each participant will be given three flags," the event website says. "Ninja will be hidden throughout the course looking for moments of weakness to sneak in and steal your flags or 'life force.'"

Phase One: Overcome obstacles based on the five elements of Asian philosophy—which are earth, wind and fire ... plus water and the void. Phase Two: Defeat those pesky ninja. Phase Three: Survive a surprise event that "will raise the expectations of obstacle racing ... forever," the website states.

The organizers are promising \$3,500 in prizes—and a chance to win a samurai sword. bushidochallenge.com 🗡️



Photo By Peter Lueders

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Reach vs. Range

Reach is a ubiquitous part of the information provided in pre-fight tales of the tape, whether it's boxing, kickboxing or MMA. An impressive number can lead you to conclude that the fighter in possession of superior reach will have the advantage when trying to land long-range probing shots

by Mark Hatmaker

This is an easy conclusion to, well, reach. After all, if Fighter A has a reach of 78 inches and Fighter B has only 71 inches, Fighter A has a 7-inch reach advantage, right?

Not necessarily. First, as you no doubt noticed, the math is a little off. You can't simply subtract the lesser measurement from the greater and arrive at the reach advantage. Reach measures wingspan—that is, from fingertip to fingertip—so you'll need to add one more calculation to get the actual "advantage."

Here's what I mean: If the overall reach difference is 7 inches, you must halve that number to 3.5 inches of reach advantage for the obvious reason that both arms are included in the tale of the tape. This halving of the total reach disparity does come a bit closer than the skewed number we get from stopping the calculation at the first function, but the problem doesn't end here.

THE PROBLEM ACTUALLY BEGINS with how you measure reach in the first place. The standard method is from fingertip to fingertip across the back of the athlete. It's this number that some mistake as information of value.

Finger jabs and spearing strikes are illegal in most fights, so having the fighter extend his fingers as opposed to going from fist to fist adds extraneous inches to the total. An especially long-fingered athlete can skew this number, making it even less valuable in reach comparisons.

When you learn how reach is measured, you begin to see another problem with wingspan reach: The breadth of the athlete's back is included. With this number added in, you actually know next to nothing about a fighter's reach.

Consider this: Two athletes have a wingspan reach of 70 inches. They're evenly matched—at least, in classical terms. Assume they have fingers of the same length. Now, let's take the first

70-inch athlete and give him the torso of British mixed-martial artist Terry Etim, a long, lean fighter. Let's give the other 70-incher the thickly muscled torso of UFC welterweight Thiago Alves. Do you think they have the same reach in regard to arm length? Not even close.

FOR REACH TO HAVE a more practical value, you'd need to alter how it's measured to arrive at a useful number in the first place—a number that might be called "range" rather than reach. A chest-to-fist measurement would yield fairly accurate range results with one measurement. It would let you know upfront the practical value of a fighter's potential punching range in a static scenario.

In the realm of MMA and kickboxing, you might wonder why reach or range stops with arm-length values. Why aren't leg-range measurements considered significant? A long-legged fighter with good kicks can render an arm-reach disadvantage meaningless. It follows that fight fans might benefit from knowing an athlete's cup-to-heel measurement, but that's outside today's discussion.

Don't get me wrong—reach as the term is used now is not without value. I'm simply making a case for it being a flawed method. As such, it's easy to make too much of it in discussions of strategy or tactics.

Reach and range can be, and often are, advantages in a fight, and of course, all disadvantages in reach/range can be compensated for. Perhaps another day, I'll discuss some of the strategies and tactics that can be used to make up for areas where you might come up short. In the meantime, let's close with how that legendary race of warriors, the ancient Spartans, viewed the topic of reach/range. The following comes from Plutarch's account of the reign of Lyscurgus:

"King Agis, when an Athenian laughed at the Spartan short swords and said they could easily be swallowed by jugglers on the stage, retorted, 'And yet with these little daggers, we can generally reach our enemies.'" ✕

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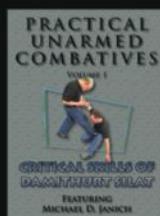


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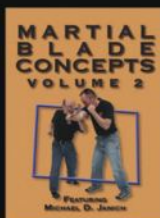


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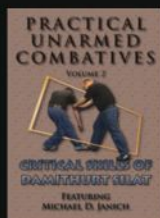
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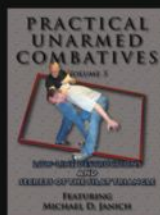


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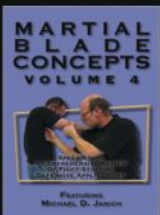


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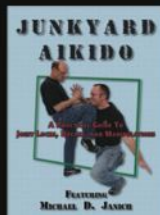


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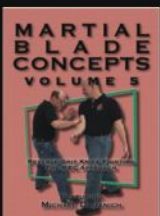


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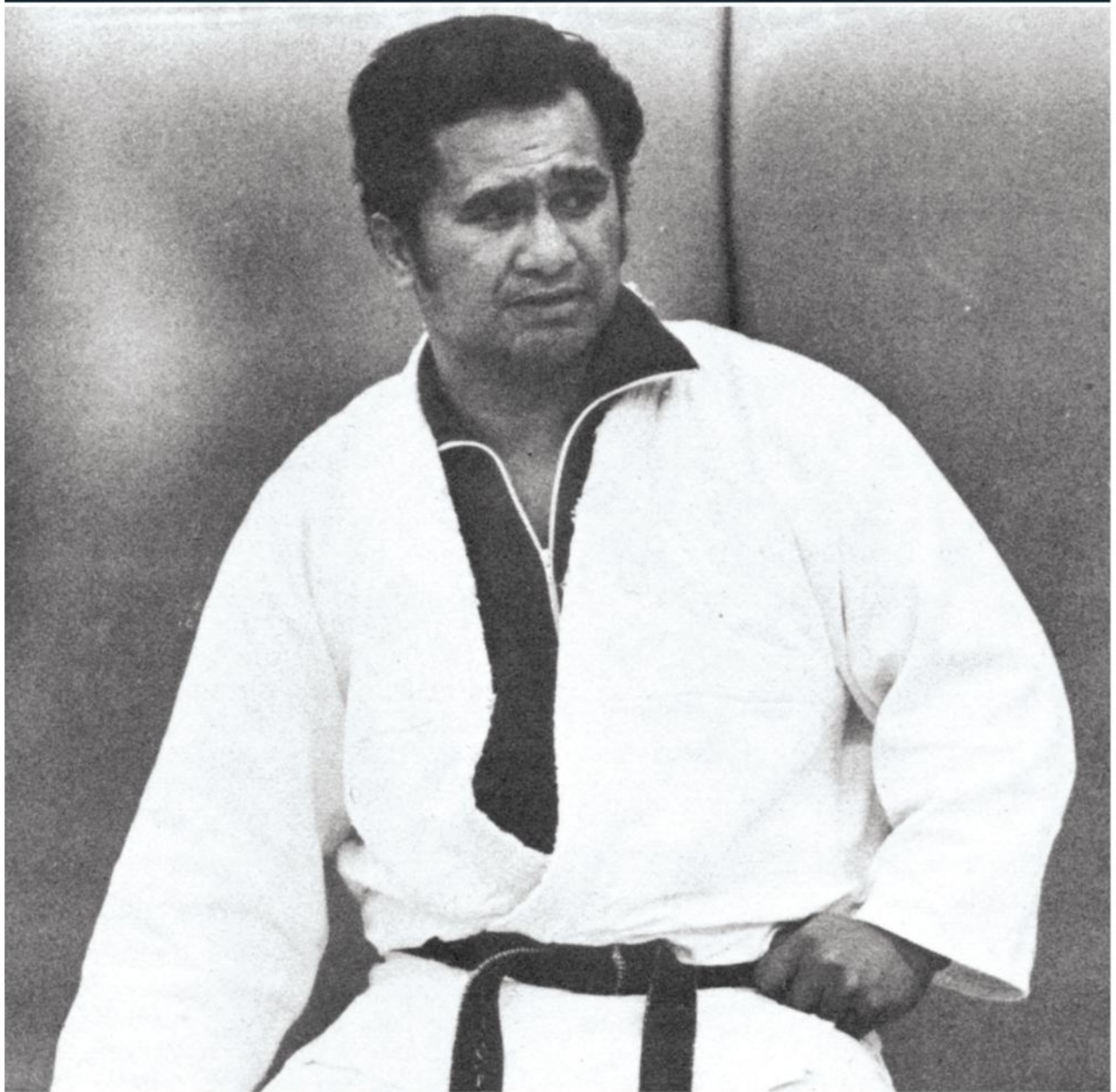
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Art of Healing

In the early 20th century, few things terrified parents more than the thought of their children contracting polio. John K. Cahill Sr. and Abigail Cahill came to know that fear firsthand when their son Willy was diagnosed with the disease at age 7. They immediately had the boy admitted to a hospital in Honolulu, where doctors prescribed a long, arduous treatment yet still gave a negative prognosis. The Cahills knew their son's illness had no cure, but they refused to give up hope.

by Ron C. Peck

Young Willy Cahill was fortunate that his father, who started training in *jujitsu* in 1937, chose to do so under the tutelage of an immigrant named Henry S. Okazaki. Yes, Okazaki was an accomplished martial artist—in Japan he trained in judo and several styles of jujitsu, and he would later found *dan-zan-ryu*—but he was also a healer who

knew firsthand from his own bout with tuberculosis how martial arts training could help the body fight disease.

When Okazaki, who in 1929 had established the Seifukujitsu Institute of Restorative Massage, learned about Willy's plight, he initiated a regimen that included the daily application of a special ointment and a daily leg massage. The boy's doctor at the hospital

wasn't pleased when he learned of the unconventional treatment, but because he didn't think Willy would ever walk again, he said the sessions with Okazaki likely would do no harm.

Months later, Willy walked out of the hospital, fully recovered.

AFTER HE REGAINED his strength, Willy started training with his father,

“Cahill eventually attained the rank of eighth-degree black belt in judo and 10th degree in jujitsu.”

who taught at Okazaki's Hui Miki Miki Judo Club. In 1947 the Cahill family relocated to California, and John started teaching near San Francisco. In 1954 he began using the name Cahill Judo Academy even though he lacked a permanent facility.

John Cahill died in 1962, but the martial arts spark had long since taken hold in Willy. For a time, the young man flirted with the notion of becoming a football coach, but his mother asked him to take over his father's business. “When a Hawaiian mother asks for something to be done, you don't ask questions,” Willy said.

Together, they opened the John Cahill Sr. Memorial Judo Academy in San Bruno, California, in 1963.

WILLY CAHILL WOULD see decades of success as a local martial arts teacher and an international coach. In 1975 he was inducted into the *Black Belt* Hall of Fame as Instructor of the Year. In 1978 he co-founded Jujitsu America. Cahill eventually attained the rank of eighth-degree black belt in judo and 10th degree in jujitsu.

Never forgetting his childhood bout with bad health and how he was saved by the martial arts, Cahill has always believed in paying it forward. In 1999 he accepted an offer to coach the U.S. Paralympic Judo Team in preparation for the 2000 Games in Sydney. His athletes claimed two gold medals, as well as a silver and a bronze.

In 2003 Cahill joined forces with me to

create the Blind Judo Foundation. “Training blind and visually impaired athletes is one of my greatest challenges,” Cahill said. “It's not about personal recognition; [it's] a matter of giving back.”

It isn't hard to imagine that both John Cahill and Henry Okazaki would be proud of this and all the other lessons Willy Cahill learned in the *dojo*—and with the way he's chosen to spread the benefits of the martial arts to the next generation. ✕

For more information about the *Blind Judo Foundation*, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower the blind and visually impaired using the tools and tenets of judo, visit blindjudofoundation.org.



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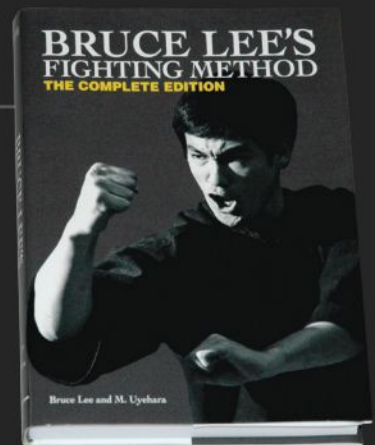
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The Knockout Game: Last-Resort Defense

The news has focused tremendous attention on the “knockout game.” It’s not actually a game; it’s a nasty criminal assault conducted by punks who think it’s funny as hell to KO unsuspecting victims with ambush-style assaults. The game isn’t new. As a youngster growing up in the Boston area in the 1970s, I remember the same headlines, the same outrage, the same senseless injuries to innocent people who were attacked for no reason.

by Kelly McCann

If you’ve watched the videos on the news, you’ve seen how these attacks typically occur: An unsuspecting and (usually) preoccupied pedestrian is approached from ahead or behind by one or more innocent-looking people. When the attacker gets in striking range, you usually see a looping punch get launched at the victim’s head and BANG! The victim is left unconscious on his or her back.

Most of the damage from these attacks results from the secondary impact. If a 6-foot-tall person is knocked unconscious while standing, his head travels 6 feet to the ground without the benefit of any tucking, rolling or resistance. There’s also the damage incurred by the initial impact: broken jaws, arterial tears, ocular-cavity fractures, broken noses, dislodged teeth and so on.

IT’S IMPORTANT TO understand that any of us could be victimized this way. If you don’t believe it could happen to you, you’re already behind the power curve. That would be tantamount to a boxer climbing into the ring and believing he can’t be hit. Of course it can happen to you.

Once you accept this, you need to know that the most effective tool you can use to combat these attacks is situational awareness. You can’t maintain situational awareness if you’re texting, if you have earbuds in, or if you’re talking on your cell-phone or checking your email. So don’t do those things while you’re on the street. Each is a visible invitation to predators that tells them you’re not paying attention to your surroundings.

Specifically, what are you being alert for? People who are walking directly at you without regard for your personal space. People who are trying hard to appear like they’re not looking at you—to hit you, an attacker has to “range” you—when they

really are. Sudden or furtive movement within accessible range of you. The sound of running or quickening footsteps.

To better understand this, imagine you’re an attacker. What you would have to do to get close enough to punch someone in the head before he or she can react? Look for that kind of motion. How would you have to approach someone to put him at ease while you’re getting ready to hit him? Watch for that kind of behavior.

IF YOU SEE A STRIKE coming early enough and have time to get your hands and arms up, you can effectively block a sloppy, looping punch. It’s the more efficient straight punches that are harder to defend against. Reaction is always slower than action; if you see a punch at the last minute and your hands are down, it’s doubtful you’ll be able to block anything.

Protecting yourself against a strike when you see it a little too late isn’t easy. A level change is likely the easiest thing to do—sit down, like you’re lowering yourself into a chair. Bending your knees quickly drops your head out of the path of the punch and makes it harder to hit. Boxers use this technique effectively and repeatedly throughout 12-round fights against skilled punchers to marginalize strikes and protect themselves.

As you drop, bring your hands up. That makes the “block” happen twice as fast because your head is moving down and your hands are moving up simultaneously.

I haven’t seen any videos of knockout-game assaults that include repeated punching. Usually, they’re rolling ambushes in which one punch is thrown and the attacker runs after he swings. That’s not to say it couldn’t turn into a scrap, so always be prepared to fight back if you’re not knocked down or out.

Bottom line: These attacks are cowardly, dangerous and just plain cheap shots. You don’t have to like that they occur, but you also don’t have to think the odds are stacked against you. Situational awareness, physical preparedness and last-resort tactics like sitting down if you fail to detect the attack as early as you’d like will do a lot to keep you safe. ✖

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Return to Shaolin, Part 2

Times had changed at Shaolin Temple. When I trained there 10 years ago, no one had heard of mixed martial arts. This time, when they handed me my full issue of gear, it included MMA gloves.

by Antonio Graceffo

On my first evening, I was invited to tea with the Du sifu. Although not a monk, he was called “sifu” because he was the head trainer for the house. He asked what I wanted to learn, and I explained that I compete in MMA events. He knew exactly what MMA was—and even mentioned the UFC. I confessed that I’d had a one-year layoff and needed to get back in shape. I also said I wanted to learn the basics of Chinese *san da*. He agreed to my request. To my surprise, he assigned me a local training partner, a man named Yi Long, and designed a *san da* strength-and-conditioning program just for us.

All that would have been unthinkable 10 years ago. Back then, my sifu, a real monk, tried to force me to do forms—which I have no interest in—and leaps—which I have no aptitude for.

It turned out that Yi, the largest of the Chinese students, was 140 pounds of solid muscle. He also happened to be the worst at *taolu* forms. But that was OK because his dream revolved around becoming a pro *san da* fighter like his namesake, a famous Chinese martial artist. About 70 percent of our daily six hours of training was spent on conditioning and strength, while the remaining 30 percent was spent on *san da*. It was the perfect mix for me.

All the students at our facility wore traditional kung fu uniforms, but the sifu had me wear a *san da* uniform because that was the only art I was learning. Once again, it made me feel like he was going out of his way to accommodate my needs.

FOLLOWING DU SIFU’S schedule, we began training at 6 a.m. with a focus on strength and conditioning. We’d run, then do “man carries” up and down a nearby hill. Another favorite was to have us walking a half-mile course while toting heavy objects.

Du sifu loved that kind of old-school training—at times he’d send us to the river with instructions to bring back the biggest rocks we could carry. Or he’d command us to retrieve two medium-size rocks each and then outline a strength routine that used them. We hefted large, smooth rocks like they were weights, then tossed them back and forth like they were medicine balls.

Afterward, Du sifu would start us on our leg lifts and other ab exercises, which we did while sitting on stone pedestals in the garden. That would conclude our morning workout, usually around 7 o’clock.

NEXT CAME BREAKFAST, usually shredded potatoes and *mantou* (steamed bread), after which we’d resume training at 8:30. This session consisted of forms for the other students, but because Yi and I were there for different reasons, we did stone carries, along with stone lifting, bag work, pad work and *san da* takedowns. We’d finish by 10:30 and take a much-needed rest until 4:30. That downtime included lunch and a nap. For me, it also brought two hours of Chinese classes, which I’d need to enter the Ph.D. program at Shanghai University of Sport. The bonus was those language lessons helped me function better in my martial arts workouts.

At 4:30, Yi and I would join another 90-minute class: kung fu for the other students but strength training and *san da* for me and my partner. That lasted until dinner, which was served from 6 to 7 p.m. This was the hardest meal for me—noodles, every single night. Training resumed immediately afterward and ran until 8:30. It was almost all strength oriented and followed by a short performance in front of the sifu to show what we’d learned that day.

All that training brought one observation to the forefront: As hungry as I was, I thought the food was less than stellar. Once, I remarked to another foreign student that a particular lunch had tasted good. “Yeah, because of all the MSG,” he replied. “Last week, I went into a noodle shop and there was so much MSG in the food that about halfway through, I felt like there was a carnival going on in my mouth with all these pointless tastes.”

A big issue—for me, anyway—was the lack of protein, which hit hard because of all the strength training I was doing. My solution was to travel into town twice a week to buy meat, coffee, chocolate, fruit and other provisions. That solved my protein problem and added some much-needed variety to the menu. Case in point: I fell into the habit of preparing coffee in my room after the 6 a.m. workout. Then I’d bust out some jam to spread on the otherwise plain *mantou*. I recommend such dietary supplementation to any Westerner who’s staying in China for an extended time and needs to have his or her spirits lifted via familiar foods. ✕

(To be continued.)

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Polishing With Pain

In Japanese, *tachikiri* means “standing cutting.” In *kendo* parlance, it refers to special training that’s conducted in some *dojo*, where a better way to translate it would be “trying to stay on your feet and not collapse while having the tar beaten out of you.” It’s a test of one’s spirit as much, if not more, than one’s physical skill.

by Dave Lowry

The concept of *tachikiri* is simple. One person faces a continuing series of opponents in freestyle practice. The opponents rotate in and out, resting between bouts, while the main participant remains to face them. The bouts usually last five minutes each. The typical number of these contests is 24. If you do the math, that’s two hours. Actually, it’s more than that because no matter how carefully one has put on kendo armor, after a while, knots slip and loosen, and gear gets jostled out of place. You may get a rest to retie the cords of your helmet, but you’ll have to endure the extra time in the fighting that follows.

AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, no matter how aerobically fit you are, your physical endurance will give out sooner or later. You’ll be aching, heaving for breath, soaked in your own perspiration. The bamboo *shinai*, effortlessly light in normal practice, seems to be turning to lead in your fists. The strong, bold attacks that characterized your early bouts become fewer and fewer, replaced with defensive

moves—and those becoming increasingly feeble.

What you’ll also notice is that *tachikiri* includes a certain amount of what looks like abuse. The opponents, who are freshly rotating in, don’t ease off as the central participant begins to tire—just the opposite. They increase the intensity of their attacks. They press. They drive attacks home. Then it becomes even worse: The opponents begin *tai-atari*, or smashing in with their bodies. They knock the participant back, staggering him. As he weakens, they’re able to hit him hard enough with their shoulders to knock him down. Exhausted, he’s unable to summon the strength even to stand up. *Kendoka* can end up sprawled out on the floor—over and over. When they’re able to crawl, get to their knees and finally stagger to their feet, it all begins again. They can expect to be tripped and shoved while their opponents batter them without any reservations.

A *tachikiri* is not, technically speaking, a contest. Points are not recognized by the referee. His only job is to halt the action when a pause is needed to readjust equipment or when one of the participants is driven out of bounds.

THERE’S A LINE between hard training and brutality. I’ve seen *tachikiri* in kendo *dojo*. There have been moments when it got quite close to that line and one could make an argument as to exactly which side of the line it was on. I know, too, that there are karate *dojo* where similar sorts of special training—one person facing multiple opponents, for example—occur. Some are full-contact matches, during which one is either knocked out or rendered incapable of continuing. It’s none of my business, but there are some relevant notes about *tachikiri* that should be taken into consideration when contemplating the whole matter of brutality—and the advisability of engaging in this kind of training.

First, participants in *tachikiri* are, in most cases, advanced *kendoka*. Beginners are not even considered. Most participants are sixth or seventh *dan*, often in their 50s—which means they’ve had more than 20 years of training. Further, their opponents are usually selected because they’ve done *tachikiri* themselves. When one volunteers for *tachikiri*, a team of senior instructors reviews the application, taking into consideration the physical and emotional state of the *kendoka*. A physician is on hand for the event. In other words, this isn’t something dreamed up by some young guys who want to see how tough they are.

Another factor to consider is that *tachikiri* training is not a goal, not something to be conquered. It’s part of a wider approach to *budo* in which such activity is a step to be taken and passed, after which one is expected to move on.

It’s often said that *tachikiri* is not about winning but about surviving. Think about what that means. Prevailing physically is only a small part of this kind of training. The real goal lies in survival and the polishing of the spirit. ㊦

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Left: Andie Ristie and Giorgio Petrosyan.
Above: Ristie with the belt.

Glory Be

One reason we watch fights is no matter how certain we are of the outcome, there's always that faint glimmer of hope for a memorable upset. Case in point: Giorgio Petrosyan came into the Glory 12 New York lightweight kickboxing championship tournament as an odds-on favorite. Unbeaten for nearly seven years and widely regarded as pound for pound the best kickboxer in the world, he was bound, many believed, to walk away with another title.

by Mark Jacobs

Except that someone forgot to tell Andy Ristie. Ristie left Petrosyan splattered on the canvas like roadkill courtesy of a pair of hooks delivered in the third round of the four-man tournament's opening bout. The crowd of 5,000 at The Theater at Madison Square Garden was in stunned disbelief.

THE SHOW was the fourth major event that Glory, the world's biggest kickboxing promotion, held in the United States in 2013, and it was to be Petrosyan's formal introduction to the American public. For years, the Armenian-born Italian 154-pounder has been almost a mythological figure. With a record of 78-1-1—his lone loss came early in his career courtesy of a *muay Thai* bout in Thailand—Petrosyan had a reputation as a defensive wizard who could make even the toughest opponent look aver-

age. But he'd also been criticized for an overly cautious style and a lack of knockout power. That, combined with the fact that kickboxing isn't exactly in the limelight in the States, has rendered him a well-kept secret to most American fight fans. Then along came Ristie to spoil the coming-out party.

Originally from Suriname but now fighting out of Holland, Ristie was vocal in his criticism of Petrosyan's fighting style, saying he didn't respect Petrosyan because he runs away. But where Petrosyan's movement and safety-first style had caused most of his previous foes to chase after him—ultimately leading to their own doom—Ristie had different ideas.

A NORMALLY AGGRESSIVE FIGHTER known for his powerful knee strikes, Ristie began the match by cautiously forcing Petrosyan to bring the fight to

him. He then tagged Petrosyan more than he's accustomed to. Petrosyan rallied a bit in the second round, but the third saw Ristie turn up the pressure, suddenly catching his foe along the ropes and staggering him with a left hook. A second hook seemed to graze Petrosyan's chin, but it was enough to send him to the canvas for good.

Not content with one upset, Ristie followed up with another surprise victory against fellow Dutchman Robin van Roosmalen in the finals. Although both train in Holland, they're a contrast in styles. Van Roosmalen is viewed as a prototypical Dutch kickboxer with aggressive boxing and powerful low kicks, while Ristie seems to have a more *muay Thai*-oriented approach that makes use of knees and lead-leg front kicks to keep his foe off-balance.

Although van Roosmalen was widely regarded as the best 154-pounder

“With some homegrown talent and a TV deal in place with Spike, Glory is now looking to pull off the biggest upset of all by making Americans finally take notice of kickboxing.”

in the world after Petrosyan, Ristie chopped him down with even greater ease. He dropped the Dutchman at the end of the first round, then swarmed him in the second round, finishing van Roosmalen with a crushing hook that sent blood spraying from his mouth and left him crumpled on the mat. Ristie went to a neutral corner and jumped up on the ropes in celebration before the referee even finished counting.

“I knew it was a hard shot,” Ristie later said with some understatement.

RISTIE'S TOURNAMENT VICTORY was not the only major upset of the evening. Case in point No. 2: Glory 10 middle-weight tournament winner Joe Schilling stepped into the ring for the superfight against Wayne Barrett as a prohibitive favorite. Schilling was rated by some

as the best 185-pound kickboxer in the world, while this was only the fourth pro fight of Barrett's career. But Barrett, a local favorite who trains in New York, didn't seem intimidated.

“No one believed in me, but it felt like my destiny,” he said.

Barrett was unfazed by Schilling's taunting tactics in the first round, out-boxing the Los Angeles resident. He then stepped up his attack in round two, dropping the muay Thai specialist twice with big punches. Schilling showed phenomenal toughness and recuperative powers, not only surviving the round but also coming back to drop Barrett with a huge knee to the head in the third round. Barrett displayed his own grit, though, and got back to his feet before somehow lasting out the round to win the upset decision.

“I was really dizzy from the knee,” Barrett said. “The only thing that made me get up was I said to myself, ‘It's my night!’”

Along with American Ky Hollenbeck, who impressed in a lightweight victory earlier in the evening, Barrett and Schilling proved the United States can still produce world-class kickboxers. And while the previous Glory show held in New York in June 2013 suffered from questionable officiating, this one went off smoothly and provided all the thrills a fight fan could want. So with some homegrown talent and a TV deal in place with Spike, Glory is now looking to pull off the biggest upset of all by making Americans finally take notice of kickboxing. ✕

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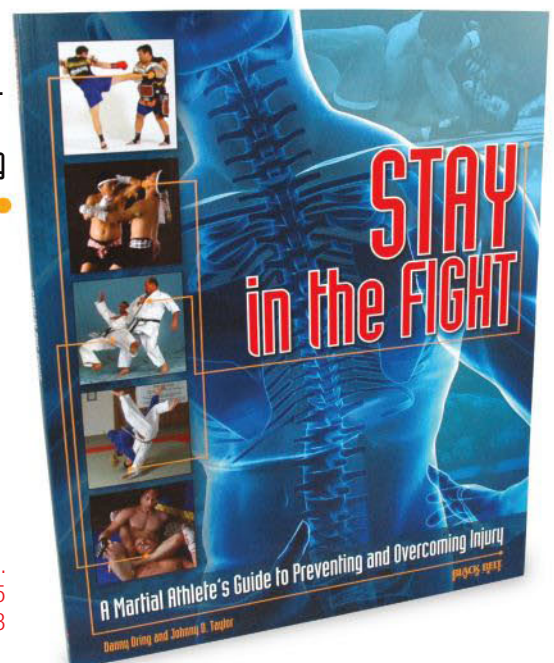
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—Danny Dring

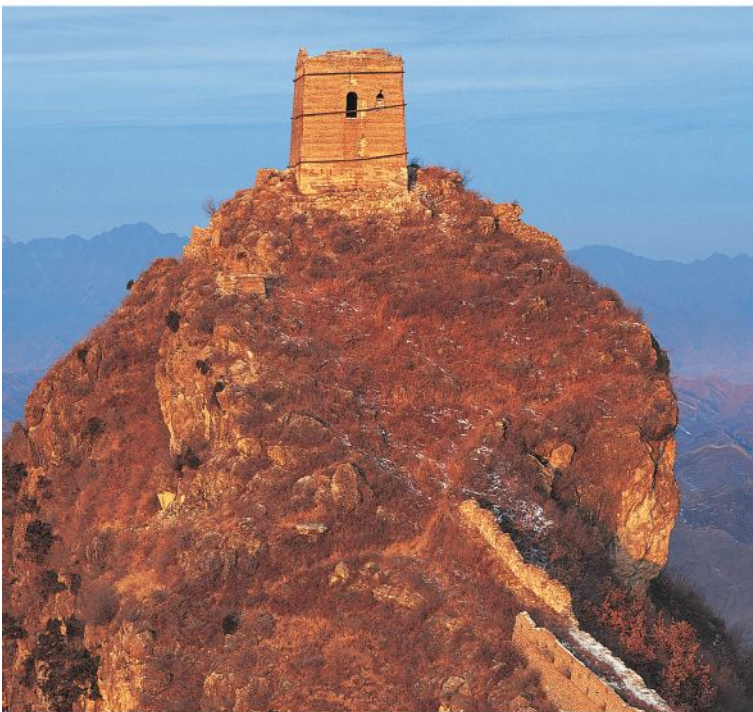
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From the Ends of the Earth

I've had a website for a year now. It's nothing special, just a one-page affair to promote my writing and provide a contact point for readers. But the little attention the site gets continues to amaze me. Mostly, it's the emails from far-flung destinations that are the biggest surprise. I never thought that people living on small islands in the Pacific Ocean or in tiny towns in former Soviet bloc countries cared much about the martial arts. But in those and many other out-of-the-way places, there's a persistent desire for martial arts knowledge.

by Keith Vargo

It shouldn't have come as too much of a surprise. Hailing from a small town, I spent my youth reading everything I could get my hands on that pertained to the exotic world of the martial arts. The smallness of my hometown was what made me look for more knowledge and a larger purpose in the fighting arts. It's natural that people all over the world would do the same, especially if they live far away from hotbeds of fight training.

THE BIGGER SURPRISE is that those of us from small towns usually don't see them as the gift they are. When you live in such a place, it can seem like a tidal pool of humanity. You feel stifled or isolated, far away from the action. But distance and isolation can give martial artists a lot. They can make practice more meaningful than it is to people who've always had easy access to high-level instruction. They also can foster independent and creative activity, especially in the young. What's more, distance and isolation might even put you on the path

to being an elite martial artist. Here's how.

Scarcity of anything makes it more valuable. The more valuable something is, the more meaningful it is. If all there is is one small martial arts school in a town, everything students learn there will likely mean a lot. It may be their sole connection to outside martial ideas and cultures. So they take the time to really study, to understand all facets of their art. By contrast, people living in a metropolis with dozens of training options have the luxury of adopting a take-it-or-leave-it attitude. They may not see everything a fighting art has to offer because they don't have to.

SECOND, LIMITED MARTIAL arts instruction combined with a nonurban setting can actually lead to better general physical skills. This is especially true for kids. The findings of coaches and researchers indicate that specializing in one sport and its narrow set of skills should happen only after age 12. Before that, the kind of deliberate, self-organized and directed play that kids naturally do is best for developing general physical skills and body awareness. It's exactly the kind of thing that small towns and rural places foster and that can be stifled in bigger cities. In fact, research tells us that martial artists raised in small places can and often do surpass their big-city peers.

In a study done by Dr. Jean Côté and his colleagues at Queens University in Canada, researchers looked at the birthplace of 2,000 pro athletes. They found "a birthplace bias toward smaller cities: Professional athletes were over-represented in cities of fewer than 500,000 and under-represented in cities of more than 500,000."

They wrote that athletes of all kinds benefit from opportunities for "deliberate play" in their formative years. What's more, the researchers concluded that the joy in playing sports that was experienced during their primary school years gave the pro athletes from small towns the motivation to become elite players.

AFTER AGE 12, small-town athletes can channel their excellent general physical skills into whichever martial art is available, turning their narrow martial arts training options into a narrowing of focus. Because they can't bounce from one art or school to another, they can concentrate their efforts on the limited set of skills their art is built on and truly excel at it.

For some, that's enough; they'll master the art they have. For others, bumping against the limits of the only art they've ever known is like bumping against the limits of small-town life. So they look for something more.

Those who wind up looking for something more are the ones who reach out from towns and villages all over the Earth. They're the ones you see fighting in big MMA shows after they found their way to elite gyms in distant locales. They're the expatriates I meet here in Japan who have uprooted their lives so they can train at the oldest martial arts schools in existence. All of us have one thing in common: It was those small places that made us the martial artists we are. ✨

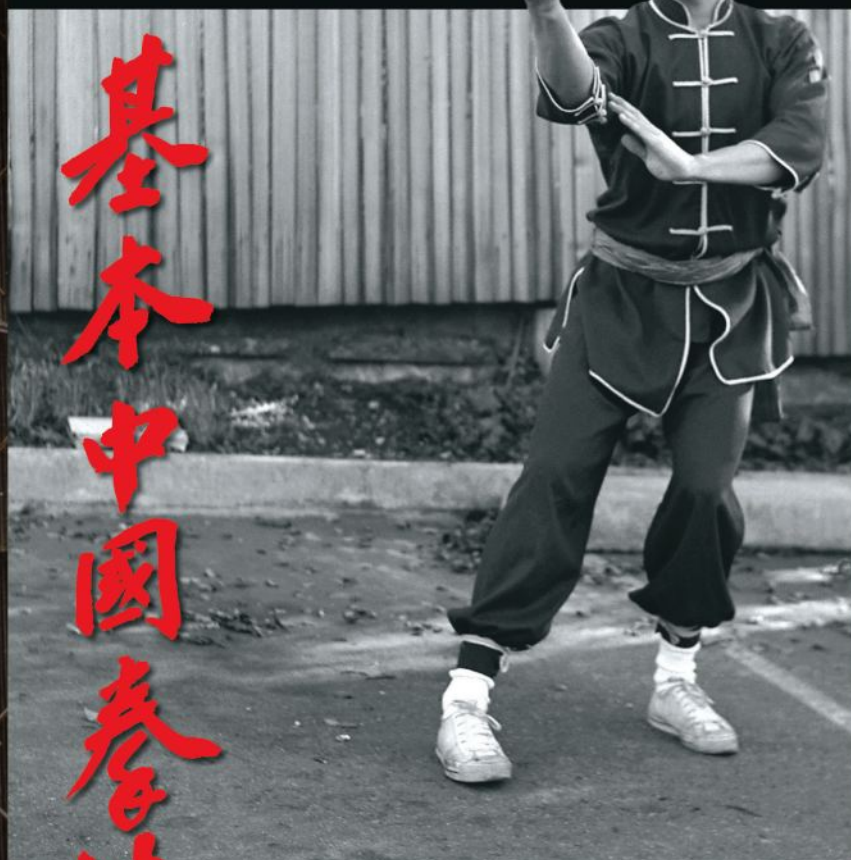


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The Art and Science of Meditation

Meditation is an integral part of many Asian systems of self-defense. As martial artists, we understand that it can bring a sense of calm and centeredness that's especially crucial in chaotic situations. Whether we're talking about training, real-life combat or just everyday life, having the right state of mind in the face of adversity is something we all desire.

by Robert Wang, M.D.

Like with any other skill, our ability to meditate improves with practice. Those who do it regularly say they feel calmer, more resourceful and more prepared to handle whatever challenges they encounter. For centuries, martial arts masters have taught their students that meditation fosters an optimal state of mind and helps increase martial power. They've also preached that meditation has a beneficial effect on overall health by bolstering stress man-

agement and even combating disease. What the masters have always known, science is now getting closer to proving.

A TEAM OF PSYCHIATRISTS from Harvard Medical School is researching how meditation can affect the genes and the brain activity of people who suffer from chronic stress. Through a rigorous five-year study using the latest neuro-imaging and genomic technology, scientists are investigating how mind-body harmony can turn on and off genes that have been linked to stress and immune function. This research is exciting because it takes us deeper into the relationship between meditation and human physiology.

Other studies have reported the discovery of the beneficial effects of meditation, but those findings were based on variables such as participant-reported feelings, heart rate and blood pressure. The Harvard study is enabling us to examine on a deeper level the effects of meditation on the human body. The evidence indicates that the reason we feel less stressed and healthier when we meditate is the genes that control stress and the immune system are being manipulated.

INFLAMMATION AND STRESS are generally bad for the body—particularly if they're present for sustained periods. We know that stress is a natural part of life, however. As martial artists, we face it constantly in the *dojo*. What enables us to cope and even thrive is the subsequent recovery period during which the stress is removed. We desperately need time to recuperate so we can be ready and refreshed when we have to tackle another stressor. Meditation seems to control our genes in a way that helps shut down stress, thus allowing us to consciously bring about that recuperation period.

Need more evidence? You've probably wondered why masters who meditate appear healthier, more vibrant and younger than others their age. Well, scientists at UCLA found that engaging in 12 minutes of yoga meditation daily for eight weeks increased the body's supply of telomerase, which they've dubbed the "immortality enzyme." Telomerase actually slows the cellular aging process.

As we live our lives, we should remember that although pharmaceuticals are necessary for the treatment of many illnesses and conditions, meditation is a tried-and-true way to help us reduce stress and—when combined with proper nutrition, rest and exercise—avoid those illnesses in the first place. ✕

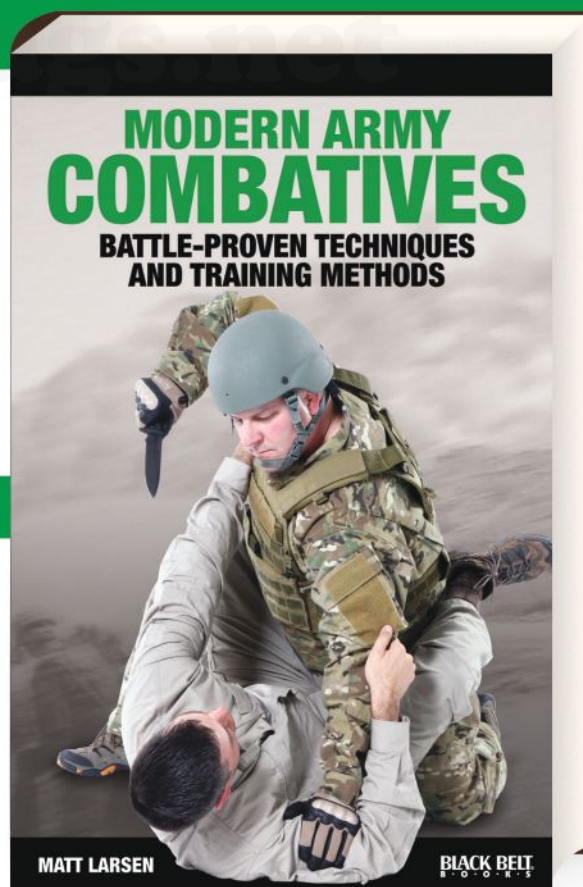
● ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Robert Wang, M.D., is a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. He's an orthopedic surgeon specializing in sports medicine.

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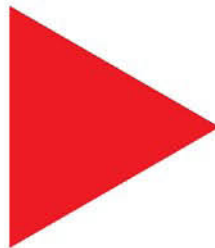
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Larsen started training in the martial arts as a young Marine infantryman and later joined the Army. Holding black belts in several martial arts, Larsen eventually trained the 75th Ranger Regiment in combatives, as well as close-quarters battle and marksmanship. His field manual on hand-to-hand combat led to a training program for the entire Army. Larsen's methods have revolutionized combatives training and the culture of the U.S. military. *Modern Army Combatives* is a must-have for students of self-defense and martial artists everywhere.

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POWER PLAY

KARATE MASTER
KENJI YAMAKI
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STORY BY ROBERT W. YOUNG
PHOTOS BY ROBERT REIFF

When you've been schooled in hard-core *kyokushin* karate in the land of its birth, it's a given that you know how to generate maximum power with your kicks and punches—and you know how to deliver it on target at just the right moment in a physical encounter. That's certainly the case with Kenji Yamaki, an eighth-degree black belt who hails from Japan but now calls Torrance, California, home. In part through his experiences in the infamous 100-man *kumite* in 1995, Yamaki has built a reputation as a powerful, no-nonsense fighter who gives new meaning to the phrase "knockdown karate."

Yamaki first came to our attention back in 2009, when contributing editor Mark Cheng wrote a story about the *karateka* titled "Back to Basics:

3 Karate Kicks and How to Fine-Tune Them." We featured Yamaki on the cover of our May 2011 issue, and in 2012 our DVD-publishing division put out a two-disc set called *Full-Contact Karate: Advanced Sparring Techniques and Hard-Core Physical Conditioning*.

Since then, we editors have followed his career closely.

When we learned that the *karateka*, who in recent years has invested much of his mental and physical energy in developing his own system, dubbed Yamaki karate, has modified his fighting style to focus more on one-hit resolutions—which obviously require plenty of power in addition to precision timing—we decided to bring him in for another story. Presented here are five of his favorite counters to common attacks. The nucleus of each one packs enough power to end a fight—whether it's a bout in a full-contact karate tournament or an assault in a back alley.

1



2



3



**COUNTER I:****LEAD-HAND STRIKE TO THE CHEST**

Initiation: "Your opponent can use practically any punch or kick—it doesn't matter because your defense is the same," Yamaki says. Obviously, versatility is prized in his system.

Reaction: Step forward as you extend your lead arm and execute the power punch. You don't need to chamber your counter, so there's no chance you'll telegraph your intent, Yamaki says. "That means you're more likely to catch him by surprise."

Target Selection: "You can hit any target on the opponent's centerline—his face, his solar plexus or even his throat if it's a self-defense situation," Yamaki says.

Power Generation: It's essential to start with good posture, he says. That entails standing upright in a position that facilitates rapid advancement—which is precisely what this counter calls for. "Much of the power for the punch comes from stepping forward," he says. "You put your bodyweight into the strike, focusing it in your first two knuckles. If you depend on only muscle, it will make you weaker and slower."

Resolution: Being a straight punch, the technique drives the opponent backward, knocking him off-balance, Yamaki says. That's assuming it's aimed at his chest. You can imagine what happens if it's aimed at his face.

COUNTER 2: ROUNDHOUSE TO THE THIGH

Initiation: The opponent goes on the offensive with a low roundhouse kick aimed at your lead leg.

Reaction: Move your leg backward to evade the attack, then plant it back on the ground before unleashing an immediate right-leg roundhouse. Make contact with your instep or lower shin, depending on the distance to the target.

Target Selection: In a tournament or a less-than-lethal fight, the optimal area to attack is often the thigh. When such a kick is thrown with sufficient force, it can be crippling. In a more serious situation, target the jaw or temple, Yamaki says.

Power Generation: This low kick is so strong because you're moving forward and pivoting counterclockwise

at the time of impact. When you kick, drop your bodyweight into the blow for even more power, Yamaki says. "That way, you're using gravity for energy."

Resolution: When slammed into a thigh, kicks like this are debilitating—after all, for years they've been used to break baseball bats. "It's a very powerful technique that can drop your opponent," Yamaki says. "If you want the fastest counterattack, however, you should use a front kick to the body instead of a roundhouse to the leg. If you want a knockout, use a roundhouse to the head."



COUNTER 3: REVERSE PUNCH TO THE CHIN

Initiation: The opponent attacks with a punch aimed at your face.

Reaction: Step toward him as you swat down his attacking arm with your lead hand—once again, using gravity to amplify your power. From that lowered hand position, execute a quick backfist to the face. Rotate your body counterclockwise as you fire off a reverse punch.

Target Selection: The backfist should be aimed at the eyes or nose. Either way, it will probably have an adverse effect on his vision—which will give you the opening you need to drive home the power punch, Yamaki says. “Your reverse punch should target his chin or philtrum.”

Power Generation: The reverse punch is one of the first techniques any martial artist learns—and for good reason: It’s easy to execute a powerful blow by turning your torso, pushing with your legs and dropping your bodyweight, Yamaki says.

Resolution: Make contact as planned with both shots, and your foe’s likely to sustain a broken nose—right before his lights go out.



5





COUNTER 4: ELBOW TO THE HEAD

Initiation: The opponent opens with a roundhouse. As soon as you detect it, the counter begins.

Reaction: Dart forward to position your body inside the radius of the kick. Then, even if it makes contact, it won't have much power. "At the same time, extend your lead arm to strike him in the throat with the web of your hand," Yamaki says. Leaving that hand on his neck, take another step forward and twist as you execute a horizontal elbow strike with your right arm.

Target Selection: "The best target is the jaw," he says.

Power Generation: The forward motion of the second step combines with the torso twist and arm swing to create a devastating elbow strike.

Resolution: The term "tactile reference point" refers to using one hand to keep track of your target while you attack it with your other hand. That's precisely what you're doing when you keep your left hand on your opponent's neck as you advance and execute the elbow strike. It helps with accuracy. Whenever you add accuracy to a powerful strike that's augmented by forward movement, you up the potential for a knockout.



COUNTER 5: KNEE TO THE SOLAR PLEXUS

Initiation: The opponent uncorks a left jab aimed at your head.

Reaction: Deflect the limb downward using your right arm. Your opponent follows up with a right punch, which you deflect down and then to your left using your left arm. Immediately step in and execute a right knee thrust. Keep your foot flat on the ground when you make contact.

Target Selection: "Go for the solar plexus," Yamaki says.

Power Generation: The force that makes the knee thrust work so well comes from moving forward with your full bodyweight, Yamaki says. "Drive the energy through your knee into your opponent."

Resolution: The knee thrust, especially when it's aimed at the solar plexus and bolstered by the weight of an advancing body, is among the most powerful techniques in the martial arts. If it hits the intended target, the fight will be over. Like the other techniques shown in this article, this one is very fast—especially the defensive portion of it. That's possible in part because the lower position in which you keep your hands—in front of your chest, as opposed to in front of your face—enables a quicker reaction. That's just one of the modifications Yamaki has made to his personal fighting method. He says it makes the techniques work better for him. If it makes the techniques work better for you, too, feel free to adopt it—no doubt he'd be honored to have you follow in his footsteps. 🐯



6



Watch this karate powerhouse in action in his two-DVD set, *Full-Contact Karate!*

blackbeltmag.com/kenji-yamaki



8

ENALINE

RSE FROM BLACK
KIPP IS DESIGNED
—KEEP YOU ALIVE!
BY BRAD EFTING



48

HOURS OF ADRENALINE

THIS REALITY-TRAINING COURSE FROM BLACK
BELT HALL OF FAMER BILL KIPP IS DESIGNED
TO DO ONE THING—KEEP YOU ALIVE!
BY BRAD EFTING





Bill Kipp demonstrates how an attacker who's decked out in a specially made "predator suit" can absorb a full-force kick to the groin. Such training is essential for teaching the mind and body to execute effective techniques under stress.

We've all read stories about ordinary people performing extraordinary feats to save loved ones—lifting a car, wrestling a bear, fending off multiple attackers and so on. Human beings, no matter how big or small, get an adrenaline rush when they face a life-threatening situation. Conditions that create the rush are different for everyone, and the effects aren't always good. How you deal with the rush can determine whether you prevail in—or even survive—a physical altercation.

The best way to increase your chance of prevailing is to learn how to channel the rush in a positive direction so you can make quick, conscious decisions when you need to. This is precisely what Bill Kipp has taught for the past 25 years. To facilitate the learning process, Kipp, who was *Black Belt's* 2012 Self-Defense Instructor of the Year, created FAST Defense. Standing for Fear Adrenaline Stress Training, it works with any martial art or combatives program, and it doesn't involve complicated techniques.

Every year, Kipp hosts a weekend course called 48 Hours of Adrenaline Self-Defense to spread his message to the public. This is a brief look at the material he covers.

FIRST EVENING

Arriving at Kipp's ranch, I saw an old barn sporting a banner that read "The Gauntlet." The term brought to mind the 1980s arcade game in which you had to fight off an assortment of monsters using your unique strengths and weaknesses. The goal at each level was to find your way through the maze and reach the exit. Success wasn't based on how good your techniques looked; it was based on whether you survived. I was curious whether Kipp's Gauntlet would be as challenging as the video game.

Kipp told us what to expect during the next 48 hours. Before we'd be allowed to enter the Gauntlet for hands-on training, we needed to learn how and why his program works.

To mimic a street attack, Kipp creates "duress scenarios" to teach students to control their adrenaline. To elicit that adrenalized response, he has attackers hurl four-letter words while swinging undisclosed weapons in unplanned scenarios. That causes some people to fight and some to flee, but it also induces a third reaction: to freeze. The absence of a reaction can be more dangerous than fight or flight, and Kipp takes great pains to condition students so that doesn't happen.

He explained that the duress scenarios have other benefits: They accustom you to the reality that you'll lose your fine-motor skills, suffer from tunnel vision and auditory exclusion, and experience a time slowdown. Ordinarily, these factors would hinder your response, but that can change with proper training, he said.

Lesson No. 1 in FAST Defense is awareness and avoidance. It's something we've all heard before: Don't be in a situation in which you have to use physical force. If avoidance isn't possible, you must be prepared for a physical response. Not every defense warrants an all-out adrenalized attack, Kipp said. For example, someone at an office party is clowning around, trying to show off a new hold he learned while watching an MMA fight. In this case, a redirection of the person would be more appropriate than a full-blown fight.

Lesson No. 2: The distance between you and the attacker will determine your adrenaline level—and the best response to defuse the situation. Kipp uses the color codes devised by Col. Jeff Cooper. When the distance is great, it's considered the yellow stage. You move your hands from your sides to an overlapping position in front of you and place your feet in a slightly staggered stance. There's no fighting stance because at this distance, it's better to de-escalate and redirect rather than get physical. Maintaining your distance, you ask the person what he wants in a nonaggressive but forceful manner.

If he continues to approach, you go to orange. Kipp showed us how to move our hands, palms forward, in front of our bodies and issue commands such as "Back away—I don't want any trouble."

If the aggressor gets uncomfortably close, you're at the red stage, at which point you should shout, "Back off, stay away, back off!" If he ignores your warning and you can't escape, it's time to defend yourself using your surging adrenaline.

Kipp ingrained the three color codes by having instructors create scenarios at different ranges. They'd yell and use aggressive body language to make the "attacks" as realistic as possible. Sometimes I was able to halt the aggressors at the yellow stage, while other times we reached red before they retreated. Although I knew they weren't going to attack me physically, I could still feel the adrenaline.

What do you do if you're at red and the aggressor is still approaching? Kipp demonstrated some simple but effective strikes that we'd be practicing in the Gauntlet. The first two targeted the eyes and knees. As we executed them in the air, several heavily padded people approached—the intensity was about to be cranked up. They were wearing "predator suits" designed and built by one of Kipp's training buddies. The groin padding meant we could land full-force knee thrusts, and the supersized helmet meant we could execute eye strikes with the same zeal.

For the next phase, a predator approached each defender from different directions. Our task was to halt the aggressor, to redirect him or to fight him if need be. My attacker approached me and asked for spare change; as I tried to redirect him, he charged. In an instant, my vision narrowed, and I started unloading eye strikes and knees thrusts. To keep us breathing regularly despite the adrenaline, we were told to yell "eyes, eyes" and "knees, knees" during the encounter. I fought off my attacker and was telling myself, "Hands up, look around, go get help"—just like Kipp had taught us—when another opponent appeared. My attention shifted to him, and I succeeded in stopping his approach.



Author Brad Efting uses a slap to the groin (top) and a knee thrust to the face (bottom) to neutralize his attacker. Because precision strikes can be difficult to effect when the defender is in an adrenalized state, FAST Defense focuses on gross-motor movements such as these.

SECOND DAY

After critiquing videos from the night before, we started the first physical exercise of the day: learning the palm strike, the elbow smash, and combinations of the palm strike, elbow smash, slap and knee thrust. We exaggerated everything to get full power because, Kipp said, when the adrenaline drops, strikes become shortened.

Once we felt comfortable hitting the pads, it was time for more realistic scenarios designed to incorporate everything we'd learned so far. The instructors weren't concerned about the order of the strikes we threw; they just wanted us to fight back. I preferred a palm strike to a knee combination, but I knew it wouldn't work every time. A knee is great if you're close to the attacker, whereas the palm is effective only when you have enough distance to generate full power.

On Friday night, Kipp had explained that street attacks normally happen in an asymmetric manner—that is, the attack gives the attacker an unfair advantage over his victim. The unfair advantage could result from surprise, the introduction of a weapon or the presence of multiple attackers. From now on, our training would involve multiple

Bill Kipp shows a self-defense sequence that's typical of the interactions that take place at his training events. The assailant grabs Kipp from behind (1). Kipp moves forward to create space to maneuver (2), then executes a groin slap (3-4). Next, he chambers his right arm for an elbow smash (5), which he slams into the attacker's face (6). After creating more space, Kipp readies himself for a palm strike (7), which he drives into the man's face (8). The defender finishes with a rear-leg knee thrust to the groin (9-10).





opponents and weapons. Kipp demonstrated his method for fending off multiple attackers: stacking, or keeping the primary attacker between yourself and the other opponents.

We walked through the stacking drill while throwing slow strikes, which enabled us to think about the scenario. I found it challenging to keep the secondary attacker in a straight line while focusing on the primary, but it did reduce a multiple-opponent attack to a series of one-on-one fights.

Now, the time for slow motion was over. We were about to enter the Gauntlet, where we'd test ourselves at full speed against multiple assailants. One by one, we were led inside. Afterward—and we all survived—we celebrated with a barbeque and a screening of our Gauntlet videos.

THIRD DAY

The fun started with techniques to counter an armed opponent. Whether you're facing a stick, a knife or a gun, your defense hinges on being within striking distance. Whenever you shrink that distance, you can expect your adrenaline to spike. Your natural reaction is to move away, but you actually need to move in to control the weapon and create enough pain to make the attacker unable to continue.

Most of the techniques Kipp taught were the same for sticks, knives and guns, but the point of impact for each was different, so we had to focus on different things. He said the goal for each weapon, however, is always to control and strike, then warned us that we might confront these weapons in the Gauntlet, which is where we were headed.

We were told very little about what was inside the Gauntlet so it would mimic the way real attacks unfold. Deception, weapons, multiple attackers—it was all fair game. As Kipp walked us through individually, he verbally coached us because he thinks that if we're ever in a life-threatening situation, our minds will flash back to this training and allow us to hear what he said—which might give us an advantage.

By the time I was called to enter, the adrenaline was already flowing. Kipp told me to close my eyes as he guided me into the first chamber. The music prevented me from hearing my attacker approach, and before I could open my eyes, I felt a knife at my throat and a hand restricting the movement of my strong-side arm. The attacker pushed me backward while ordering me to the ground. I raised my left hand as if to submit, and in an instant, I snaked my arm around his right limb and trapped it against my torso while driving my knee into his groin. I kept striking until he was on the ground and no longer moving. Kipp instructed me to take his knife, then blew his whistle to signal that chamber No. 1 was complete.

I handed the knife to Kipp, and he told me to close my eyes as he guided me into chamber two. My heart was racing, time had slowed and the only sounds I could hear were Kipp's words of confidence. He told me to stand still. I stopped, and an arm was wrapped around my neck and a

knife held to my throat. This time, the assailant was behind me. I raised my hands close to the attacker's elbow while asking what he wanted. Promising to give him whatever he asked for, I grabbed the elbow of his knife arm. With his limb secured, I dropped my weight and spun around to strike. I fought him to the ground and took control of the weapon, but then another foe appeared out of nowhere. My tunnel vision had prevented me from seeing him until he was already on me.

"Drop the knife!" he yelled. Trying to back him off verbally, I assured him I didn't want any trouble. His hand whipped from behind his back, and he pointed a gun at me. Immediately, he

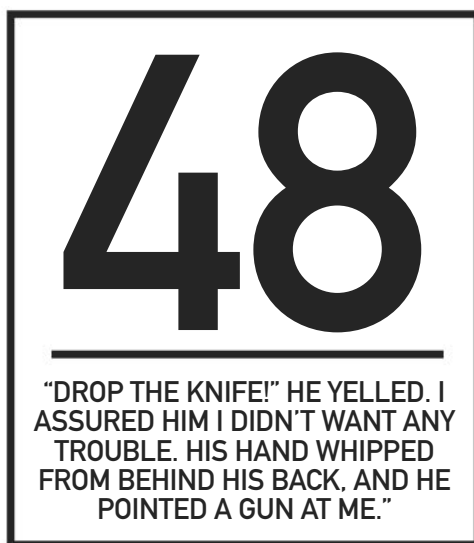
was in control of my fate. The predator repeated his demand for me to drop the knife and ordered me to get down on my knees. Knowing this wasn't going to end well if I submitted, I decided to fight. I could hear Kipp telling me to let him get closer so I could defend myself and obtain control of the firearm. As I handed over my belongings, he came within reach. I hooked my left arm over the arm holding the firearm, trapping it. Simultaneously, my right arm landed palm strikes to his head. This laid him out—but then another attacker materialized. I tapped and racked the firearm while instructing him to back off. Seeing the gun, he turned, raised his arms and walked away. Chamber two was complete.

Before stepping into the third chamber, Kipp said there might be a weapon I could use inside. As he opened the curtain, an attacker jumped me. I locked an arm and started throwing knees to the groin. As soon as I finished him with a palm strike to the head, a guy with a baseball bat pounced. An overhooking left allowed me to control-trap his weapon hand, after which I unleashed a series of strikes. He slumped to the ground, and I yelled, "Hands up, look around, go get help!" Kipp blew the whistle and announced that chamber three was complete.

REFLECTION

Kipp's course taught me how adrenaline affects my body and how I can train to control it. The adrenaline dumps didn't allow me to perform superhuman feats, but I was able to execute strong strikes to fend off multiple armed attackers. Not bad. As Kipp predicted, the adrenaline did alter my senses, most notably my vision and hearing. With his instruction, I was able to train my body to quickly counter the effects. Reciting his "hands up, look around, go get help" mantra after each exercise got me in the habit of looking around to scan for additional attackers—in essence, overcoming tunnel vision.

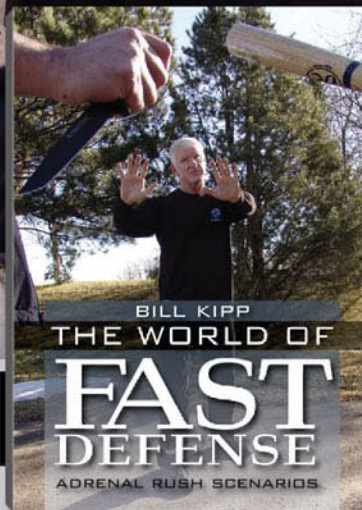
Because of the training, I know my mind will react more quickly if I'm attacked—instead of wasting valuable time thinking about whether to fight (and then deciding which techniques to use) or to flee. I highly recommend Kipp's 48 Hours of Adrenaline Self-Defense. You'll walk away with a lot of useful knowledge and the confidence you need to use it. ✖



TRAIN FAST COMBATIVES WITH BILL KIPP

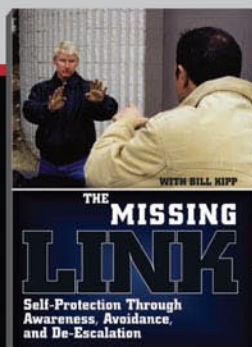
THE WORLD OF FAST DEFENSE

Black-Belt magazine's 2012 Self-Defense Instructor of the Year, **Bill Kipp** is well known for his adrenal-based, asymmetric scenario training. With this video, **The World of FAST Defense: Adrenal Rush Scenarios**, Kipp elevates his system to a new level, explaining why and how students trained in this approach are set for success: they have learned to avoid the common mistakes made when the human brain gets adrenalized. Also available for download. 70 minutes.



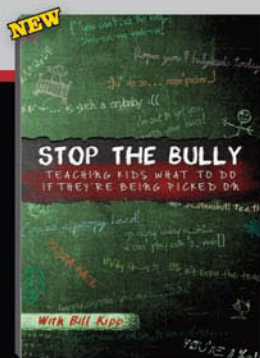
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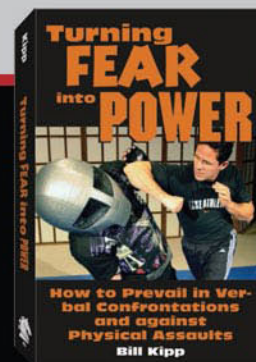
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TONY JAA

THE MAN WHO
POPULARIZED MUAY THAI
ON THE SILVER SCREEN
IS A SKILLED MARTIAL
ARTIST—AND A COMPLICATED
INDIVIDUAL!

BY DR. CRAIG D. REID



When you watch a Tony Jaa film, you can't help but be blown away by his high-power death blows—you know, the ones he unleashes while swooping down as if he's been shot out of a howitzer. Armed with precision knees and elbows, he crushes craniums, ravages ribs and chops chests. Then he might helicopter toward the next threat, his legs mowing down anyone who dares to oppose his *muay Thai* skills.

On screen and off, Jaa has a reputation for living life on his own terms. Need proof of his success? He's achieved fame in the action-film world without resorting to the copycat mentality that's rampant among martial arts moviemakers around the world.

THE RISING STAR

When I first spoke with Jaa back in 2005, he was a no-name actor with

only a kick-ass movie called *Ong-Bak* under his belt. He came from an industry that 98 percent of Americans didn't know existed and hoped to join the slim ranks of Asian kung fu stars who were making their mark on Hollywood. His first film break had come eight years earlier when he was selected to be Robin Shou's stunt double in *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*, but eight years is a long time to wait for success to come knocking.

Jaa, however, was far from idle. In my conversation with him, he revealed that he and his master Panna Rittikrai had come up with the idea for *Ong-Bak* while on the set of *Annihilation* and that he'd fine-tuned the concept over the ensuing years—after a lifetime of being a fan of the genre.

"Back in my village, I recall watching Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan films on outdoors screens—a large white sheet—when traveling projectionists

came to town," Jaa said. "I fell in love with those movies and wanted to get into film because of them.

"When you watch Lee and his emotion and intensity, how can that not move you? And Chan is amazing with his gymnastic abilities and the guts it takes to do those stunts. This is what I wanted to do, as well—bring back that feeling of the old Hong Kong action films from Jackie's time, to show those kinds of stunts again to the public.

"I'm sure many out there have seen a lot of the action fighting films that Jackie obviously inspired, and they show a lot of martial arts. But even then, except for a few, they all use wires [and] stunt doubles. I'd wonder, Why don't they just always show the real abilities? And since I could, I wanted to do it this way."

Despite influences from the movers and shakers—including Lee, Chan and Jet Li—Jaa managed to find his

ONG-BAK IN A NUTSHELL

In case you're one of the 10 people in the martial arts community who haven't seen it, *Ong-Bak* tells the tale of a tiny jungle village, whose people awaken to find that the head of their Buddha statue has been stolen and shipped off to Bangkok. A young warrior named Ting (Tony Jaa), the winner of a tree-climbing contest, volunteers to negotiate the dangerous streets and back alleys of the city to recover it.

Besides rescuing the head and saving the village, Ting has a stint as a bare-knuckle fighter who takes on towering Caucasian combatants, engages in a spectacular steeplechase amid crowds of shoppers and finds himself facing the most feared fighter in Thailand.

If you haven't seen it, it's definitely worth watching.

own martial arts niche that revolved around a highly stylized version of muay Thai. With *Ong-Bak*, his use of vicious and violent *muay boran* elbow and knee strikes as part of his film-fighting art, not to mention stunts performed without wires, reminded us why we loved Hong Kong action films from the 1980s and '90s and just how talented Jaa was when it came to recreating that excitement.

THE ELEPHANT WHISPERER

That talent grew out of Jaa's unique childhood. He was born on February 5, 1976, and raised in Surin, a jungle village near the Thai-Cambodian border. Almost daily, he'd hear bombers dropping their payloads on people down below—which served as motivation to develop his speed and maneuverability so he could run for cover when necessary.

At 15, Jaa began training in muay Thai. That entailed daily treks through the jungle to another border village, where he'd practice martial arts and weapon skills eight hours a day under Rittkrai, who at the time was a Thai action hero.

When I asked Jaa how he was able to develop his amazing vaulting abili-

ties, he said, "Flower and Leaf." When pressed for details, he revealed that the only thing that made life in the war-torn region bearable was the time he spent with his two pet elephants, named Flower and Leaf. Every day, he said, he'd lead them to the river, then jump onto the back of one of them and dive into the water. As the elephants grew, so did Jaa's physical strength. Interestingly, this human-pachyderm relationship became the impetus for the movie *Tom Yum Goong* (*The Protector*).

"As a kid playing with elephants, I learned to find harmony with them—they're not just pets but part of the family," Jaa said. "It takes great skill to ride them. When you watch them pick up water and throw it over their backs, you just can't help but feel one with them. *Tom Yum Goong* gave me the chance to share my passion for elephants with film audiences. One of my goals is to open a sanctuary for abandoned elephants."

THE GROWING (MARTIAL) ARTIST

Tom Yum Goong synopsis: A man named Kham (Jaa) loses two important elephants at a crowded festival, and the behemoths get shipped to Australia, where they're slipped through customs and sent to a Sydney restaurant. Armed with courage and rockem-sockem fight skills, Kham makes his way to Australia to rescue the beleaguered beasts.

As the film was about to begin production, Jaa knew it would be filled with marvelous action and death-defying stunts, but that was no different from *Ong-Bak* in his mind. Always the innovator, Jaa vowed to come up with something new for *Tom Yum Goong*. He drew inspiration from *Timecode*, a 2000 film crafted from four continuous 90-minute takes, and *Russian Ark*, a 2002 movie constructed from footage sourced from a Steadicam that followed the main character around a museum for 96 minutes.

With those flicks in the back of his mind, Jaa envisioned fight scenes that

were more challenging and ambitious than *Ong-Bak*'s. He and his crew wound up doing a four-minute sequence in one take, without cuts or edits. Jaa said the main inspiration for the action was Bruce Lee's *Game of Death*—specifically, the part in which Lee ascends the stairs, battling a fresh opponent on each floor.

Before *Tom Yum Goong*'s American release, Jaa was excited about its potential—especially because of that aforementioned fight. With a boyish grin, he explained: "We did eight takes of this scene and could only do two per day due to the preparations. We had to change one of the Steadicam operators because he couldn't keep up with me running up the stairs. In one take, everything was perfect until the third level, and just as I was going to throw out one of the stunt guys, the second team didn't come out in time, so we had to cut.

"In another take, everything was going fine until the final team of attackers—then we ran out of film. It was frustrating; everything had to be done in four minutes. But in the end, it was worth it, and it worked well."

THE NEXT PROJECT

Soon after he completed work on *Tom Yum Goong*, Jaa insisted on directing *Ong Bak 2* (2008) himself—which strained his relationship with Prachya Pinkaew. Jaa wound up biting off more than he could chew. The movie was over budget and he was under pressure, and it must have been too much for him to handle. Unannounced, he walked off

the set and disappeared for two months. Ousted director Pinkaew finished the film. *Ong Bak 2*, a loose prequel to *Ong-Bak*, was originally conceived as one movie but was later split into two, which were dubbed *Ong Bak 2* and *Ong Bak 3*.

Ong Bak 2 synopsis: In Thailand in 1431, the origin of the sacred relic of *Ong-Bak* is revealed. Tien (Jaa) is a nobleman's orphaned son who, upon witnessing the murder of his parents, is stripped of his dignity and position. After he learns various martial

"JAA WOUND
UP BITING OFF
MORE THAN
HE COULD
CHEW. THE
MOVIE WAS
OVER BUDGET."

Photo Courtesy of Magnet Releasing



TONY JAA FILMOGRAPHY

Fast & Furious 7—2014*

Tom Yum Goong 2
(The Protector 2)—2013

Ong Bak 3—2010

Ong Bak 2
(Ong Bak 2: The Beginning)—2008

The Bodyguard 2—2007

Tom Yum Goong (The Protector)—2005

The Bodyguard—2004

Ong-Bak
(Ong-Bak: The Thai Warrior)—2003

Nuk Leng Klong Yao
(Muay Thai Assassin)—2001

Mortal Kombat: Annihilation—1997

Mission Hunter 2
(Battle Warrior)—1996

Puen Hode (Hard Gun)—1996

Plook Mun Kuen Ma Kah 4
(Spirited Killer)—1994

arts from his surrogate father, the table for revenge is set and he must face the wild and cackling Crow assassin.

Wanting to outdo *Ong-Bak*'s fight scenes, Jaa and Rittikrai went back to a previous short film they wanted to make, titled *Venomous Man*. The intention of that movie was to show a plethora of martial arts without favoritism with respect to country of origin. Director Jaa borrowed that idea and began training in *chaiya* Thai boxing, *korat* Thai boxing and *lopburi* Thai boxing, as well as kung fu, *ninjutsu* and *taifudo* (a combination of *aikido*, kung fu, judo and muay Thai).

Meanwhile, actor Jaa honed his skills, claiming he'd learned how to control his mind and unlock the power of his body. Although his acting improved, it was apparent from some fight scenes that he was out of his element. His renditions of drunken

boxing, tiger-claw kung fu, samurai swordplay and Chinese weaponry fell short, the dull and awkward technique delivery overshadowing his true abilities. Only when Jaa finally shed his look-which-other-martial-arts-I'm-good-at dream and used his trademark elbow and knee strikes did the fights rock and once again remind us why we love his work.

THE EVOLVING FIGHTER

A crucial component of Jaa's preparation for *Ong Bak 2* involved the development of a "new" martial art. He spent weeks observing carvings of monkeys, garudas, serpents and deities at ancient archaeological sites. He combined those images with his pre-existing martial arts skills and *khon* (traditional Thai dancing), giving birth to a fighting style he labeled *natayuth*. The name is composed of *nata*, which means "danc-

ing," and *yuth*, which means "fighting."

Jaa associated himself with the *garuda*, a large mythical bird-like creature that symbolizes martial power, bravery and speed. These were the virtues he wanted to showcase, both in *Ong Bak 2* and in real life. They ended up becoming a focal point of *Ong Bak 3*, in which they serve as the centerpiece of Tien's training.

To make *Ong Bak 3*, the studio assembled scenes that didn't make it into *Ong Bak 2*, added some re-shoots and molded it around an esoterically balmy, off-the-cuff storyline. The third movie begins where the second ends: Tien learns the truth about the evil king who's behind the death of his parents. While seeking revenge, Tien is captured, imprisoned and tortured, leaving him crippled. During his long and painful road to recovery—which is when he creates the art of *nata-*

“IF I HAD TO SUM-
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yuth—the Crow assassin from the second movie returns and kills the king. Loaded with black magic, the Crow sets about taking over the kingdom.

Although the pachyderm pugilism in *Ong Bak 2* and *Ong Bak 3* was marvelously outrageous, the third movie's rematch between the dancing Tien and the ghostly Crow made the heavens squirm—and apparently did the same to audiences.

THE EMOTIONAL MAN

Which brings us back to Jaa's two-month disappearance. After he resurfaced on Thai television, asking for forgiveness for having left the set of *Ong Bak 2*, the film did well in Thailand. However, after the third film suffered a poor opening in Thailand, Jaa tossed in the towel a second time. He quit acting, shaved his head and joined a Buddhist monastery to become a monk.

Where did that leave the man who once seemed destined to become an action hero? He signed a 10-year contract with Sahamongkol Film International, the company behind *Ong-Bak*. However, in part because of his inability to speak English well, Hollywood execs have kept their distance. Perhaps the eventual U.S. release of *Tom Yum Goong 2 (The Protector 2)* will herald his comeback. The movie, which recently played in Asia, is generating buzz because it reunites the martial artist with Pinkaew and his production company. Or maybe Jaa's supporting role in *Fast & Furious 7*, which is certain to attract attention in the States because of the death of Paul Walker on November 30, 2013, will allow the Thai star to shine in the West.

The sage side of Jaa once told me, “The aim of my movies is to always show the world about Thai people,

culture and symbols, and to prove we can make good films. Martial arts has given me peace, and I have learned from the meditation that it gives me calm. And if I had to summarize my philosophy, I'd simply say live your life with happiness and be happy with what you're doing.”

At the end of the day, only Tony Jaa knows whether he's abiding by his own words. ✕

About the author: Dr. Craig D. Reid is the author of *The Ultimate Guide to Martial Arts Movies of the 1970s*, which covers more than 500 fight films in its 300 pages. It's available in bookstores and at blackbeltmag.com.

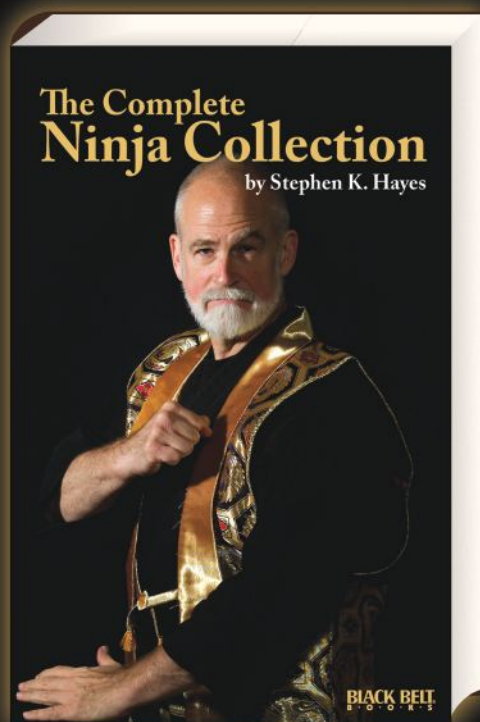
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by Stephen K. Hayes

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UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU

For most martial artists, Paul Vunak needs no introduction. In case some of our younger readers haven't heard of him, here's the short version of his bio: Vunak has trained under Dan Inosanto for decades. He rose to fame after landing a gig teaching the U.S. Navy SEALs in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although he also teaches civilians via his Progressive Fighting Systems organization, Vunak says he still spends half his time training the military.

—Editor

What does the military want from martial artists?

The military wants to have a fighting system that doesn't take a super long time for its people to learn. They need that knowledge so they can complete their mission, which often means neutralizing the enemy as quickly as possible. It's not about sparring; it's about fighting.

Is the military primarily interested in weapon-based skills, or is it also in need of empty-hand training?

There is an empty-hand component, but most of what I teach the military involves edged weapons.

How did the military make first contact with you back in the '80s when they found themselves in need of a better way of fighting?

I was watching television one night, and they came to my house unannounced. There were a couple of guys in suits and

ties; they said they were from SEAL Team 6. I had no idea what SEAL Team 6 even was. We did a full hour interview. Afterward, they said they wanted me to move to Virginia. I said I wasn't moving to Virginia because I loved California and hated cold weather. They wrote a figure on a piece of paper, and I said, "I'll pogo-stick to Virginia if you want."

I stayed from 1988 to 1991. During the time I trained the SEALs there, I developed different programs for various situations that could occur in the field. It gave others a chance to know me, and there was a flood of work from about 16 government agencies over the next 20 years.

Is what you taught military groups back then much different from what you teach them now?

In the '80s, I was teaching basically Thai boxing with eye jabs and groin shots, along with Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* mixed with *kino mutai*—and it's identical to what I



**MORE PRECISELY,
HE WANTS TO LEARN
YOUR TECHNIQUES
TO KEEP OUR
FIGHTING MEN AND
WOMEN SAFE!
IN THIS EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW, PAUL
VUNAK TALKS
ABOUT WHAT HE
GIVES THE MILITARY**



BY ROBERT W. YOUNG



teach now. We were fortunate enough to be ahead of our time back then.

Many martial artists dream about landing a gig teaching the military or police, but some of the people who've done it say that because budgets are so tight, it's not as lucrative as one would think. They say you're often expected to teach for free—in exchange for the prestige that comes from being able to tell others, "I teach XYZ agency or department." Are you saying that some government agencies are willing to pay well for top-notch instruction? What you just said is 100-percent true. If you want to make money, you won't do it through teaching law enforcement or the military. The only military group you'll ever make money teaching is SEAL Team 6 because they have an almost unlimited budget. When I went from teaching them to teaching other groups in the military, my cut in pay was ridiculous. That said, my company Progressive Fighting Systems is a club of about 50 people, and I'm intensively training each one to be able to break into military and law enforcement. As I've told them, it isn't for money; it's for credibility. It's a steppingstone. And edged-weapons training is the best way to get in.

Where do the knife skills that you like come from, and are they the same as the skills the military wants? A lot of people talk about training with a knife, and they do karate techniques and knife disarms—often things that are silly. The stuff I do and teach comes



straight from the Filipino martial arts. Everything I have except my Brazilian jiu-jitsu comes from Dan Inosanto.

With regard to knife skills, is the military interested in defense as well as offense?

I've seen thousands of knife articles, knife videos and knife seminars, and it's truly the one element of the martial arts that's years behind all the other elements. The techniques some people do with knives are akin to trying to catch bullets in your teeth. When you witness the Filipino style of knife fighting, which involves defanging the snake and quick kills, as well as a litany of drills that teach you how to develop those skills, you see how complete a package it is—and how difficult it would be to disarm a skilled martial artist with a knife.

The SEALs asked me to teach knife disarms once, but within the first hour, I convinced them it wasn't a good idea, and they've never asked again in 20 years. We didn't have No Lie Blades back then; we had Magic Markers. I showed a few moves to a smaller guy and invited volunteers to disarm him using any technique they wanted. At the end of the session, the volunteers had marks across their eyelids, over their groins, down their throats—none of the techniques worked. Most disarm techniques don't.

The biggest problem when learning edged-weapon disarms is the attacker uses a locked-out blow. In reality, the only way to deal with how people really attack with a knife is by using footwork, distancing and defanging. That's the military's bread and butter.

Why do instructors teach defenses against those locked-out attacks if they're unrealistic?

Because in other martial systems, there are actual contests of skill. If you say you're a great grappler or a great kick-boxer, sooner or later you'll have to prove it in a match. But if someone says he's a great knife fighter, he'll never have to prove it. When was the last live-blade knife fight these people got in?

What kind of edged-weapon training is the military interested in—folding knives, fixed blades, a little bit of everything?

Most of what I teach about edged weapons involves the machete. When you're in the field, you're not going to come across a \$400 folding knife. You're going to get a \$1.89 machete used against you. It's the most used weapon on earth with the exception of the AK-47.

Is a machete easier to defend against, or is it more intimidating because of its size?

If you know how to use a machete—it's nothing but an open folder that's about five times longer—you can be formidable. If you know how to use it, you can take out many guys who have machetes but don't know how. To stop a machete attack, you need footwork, timing, emotional control and the ability to defang the snake.

What empty-hand skills do you teach the men and women of our military?

They want the ability to neutralize somebody as quickly as possible. That is and always will be the ability to take out the eyes and the groin, to straight-blast the opponent, to get into clinch range where elbows, knees, head butts and eye gouges are possible.

Apart from knees executed from the clinch, it doesn't sound like you teach a whole lot of leg techniques.

I teach kicking the groin. It's a little flick kick to the groin that any 70-year-old man can do, which means it's easy for soldiers to do when they're wearing a rucksack and carrying gear.

These days, if you're meeting with a military unit, it's probably easy to convince them of the usefulness of grappling because of the ubiquity of the UFC and Brazilian jiu-jitsu. Back

in the '80s, were things the same?

I started flying around America and Europe teaching Brazilian jiu-jitsu in the early '80s, and nobody knew what it was. Then I would show them the guard and they would say, "What's he doing now?" The only way you can sell something like that is to actually do it on the people you're trying to convince. So I locked them up, choked them out and said, "This is what I'm doing—try it."

It was a tough sell, but nowadays jiu-jitsu is everywhere. Now, my sell is to teach people that you cannot go to the ground first. Ground skills are a back-up—in case you end up there. If you're in the military and you end up on the ground, you have to protect your weapon. If both your hands are holding your gun, you can't do jiu-jitsu. The last thing you want is to get into a protracted ground fight on the street. That's why we teach jiu-jitsu augmented with kino mutai—but just enough to get you off the ground. You can't counter jiu-jitsu without knowing jiu-jitsu.

Is the kino mutai biting you teach for use during grappling intended to mentally and physically distract the

other person so the soldier can get to his feet?

There are about 14 fundamental jiu-jitsu positions. In each one, there are probably 50 ways you can remove an eye or [bite]. You have to be able to get into those jiu-jitsu positions without getting the snot beat out of you—if he's putting a triangle on you, you have to know how to defend against it—long enough to implement your bite, eye gouge or groin strike. Likewise, all those bites, eye gouges and groin strikes and 50 cents will get you a cup of coffee if you don't know enough kickboxing to stop the kicks and punches your opponent might use to keep you away.

For stand-up, is defense a big part of what you teach servicemen, or are they primarily interested in offense—attack, attack, attack?

Even for the military, if someone attacks you with blows, you have to be able to stop them. Let's say you're a SEAL who's about to enter a building and a 6-foot-5 guard attacks you with punches. Before you counterattack, you have to defend against what's coming at you. For us, defense means destructions. We put our

elbows out so the opponent breaks his fists when he hits them.

How do you teach all these components to a military unit in a short time?

When I say I teach Thai boxing, I'm not teaching them the whole art. They're not hitting Thai pads. They're learning a kick to the groin and the jab, cross, hook and uppercut, as well as the overhand, the thigh kick and the clinch. Then I teach them to implement that with the *wing chun* straight blast. When things are done that way, I can get the stand-up game across to people in one day.

Then I show them the fundamental jiu-jitsu ground positions and so on and cover that in a day. I teach everything under conditions I call "stress inoculation." If you have martial arts techniques but not the proper stress inoculation—what if you take a punch to the face or some other injury?—you can become distraught and unable to do your technique.

After two days of this, it doesn't mean they'll be experts; it means they'll be ready to continue training after I leave. ✖

For more information about Paul Vunak, visit fighting.net.

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Win the Knockout Game

Surviving an Ambush
Requires More Than
Learning a New Kick
or Punch!

BY TONY BLAUER

To say I'm disgusted by the "knockout game"—the recent spate of crimes in which young thugs sneak up behind unsuspecting people on the street and try to knock them out with one punch—would be an understatement.

As I address what you can do to defend yourself against this outrage, I'll keep it simple and strategic. I'm not going to discuss race, parenting, the decaying moral fiber of society, the way our politically correct world has contributed to these brazen acts of violence or secret martial arts techniques.

My self-defense system is based on behavior. Therefore, my observations and recommendations will be about behavior. That means you can change your ways and be safer on the streets the minute you finish reading this—there's no need to learn any new kicks or punches.

THE AMBUSH

The first question people usually ask is, How do you defend against an ambush like the knockout game? My answer is, You can't. That's why it's called an "ambush." Yes, you can train to anticipate, intercept and weather an attack, but there's no magic style or technique that will enable you to defend against a non-telegraphic ambush.

If you can't defend against it, what can you do? Get off the X and move to the left of the ambush.

This isn't *Star Trek*—people don't beam down into your personal space. In other words, there are always pre-contact cues. Getting off the X means using those cues to move out of the kill zone to a place where you're in less danger. It means using situational awareness. Put bluntly, get your head out of your ass. A huge part of that is staying off your cellphone when you're in public.

Having no awareness means you have no flinch response, which means you have no chance to do anything productive or protective. For those who are unfamiliar with the flinch response, it refers to your body's natural reaction to a threat. Once you're aware of the imminent attack, you can function in concert with it. This allows your body's survival system to work. Your flinch will always be your first response in a surprise attack—it will take place sooner than even your most-practiced defensive technique.

THE AWARENESS FACTOR

As I said, no one can counter a true ambush. When the intended victim intercepts the attack or disengages from the attacker, it becomes an "attempted ambush." This is important because it helps

you think about the bigger picture.

How would you attack you? This is a simple concept, but it helps you understand the ambush mentality. Would you attack you while you (the second you) were walking down an alley, daydreaming? While you were sitting in your car, checking emails next to an open window? While you're talking on your phone at a bus stop? Probably.

Mentally follow yourself for a week, making notes about when you could sucker-punch yourself, grab your purse, steal your car and so on. You'll be amazed at what you can learn about your situational awareness.

Now here's the cool, sciency part: Doing this will activate your reticular cortex. Whenever you send a message to your reticular cortex—such as "Stay alert!" or "Watch out for gangs!"—it makes a change in your brain that bolsters your awareness of your surroundings. In nerd-speak, the reticular activating system helps mediate transitions from relaxed wakefulness to periods of high attention.

THE THREE D'S

The three D's are *detect*, *defuse* and *defend*—in that order. If you're having discussions with fellow martial artists on the best moves to use if someone attempts to play the knockout game with



WHY SOME PEOPLE WON'T FOLLOW ANY OF THIS ADVICE

A large portion of the population—including some martial artists—still haven't learned that they're worth fighting for. In reality, how you feel about yourself can influence how you react to potential violence and what you will or won't do in response to an attack.

Cognitive dissonance, apathy, denial and other avoidance strategies have conspired to convince many people that self-defense training and awareness aren't important enough to invest time in because they think their lives aren't important enough to protect. That's a huge handicap to overcome in a fight.

Tapping into your indignation at being targeted is a primary way to fuel your fight. You need to know in advance that you'll do whatever it takes to protect yourself and your family. You don't necessarily need tactical training to do that. You just need to fight back. Give yourself permission to do that.

you or you're searching for "counters for a sucker punch" on YouTube, you're still standing on the X. You've missed the first two D's.

You're not alone; a lot of people get stuck in this trap. "What's the best counter to XYZ?" they ask. The problem with this way of thinking is that to practice the counter, you must practice the attack. Therefore, you always practice letting yourself get attacked in order to practice the counter. Interesting irony.

More important, however, is that the aforementioned trap causes people to not work on avoidance and de-escalation. Accessing the skills you've honed in the *dojo* gets even more unlikely when you consider that in a true ambush, there's no consent and no awareness of the attack. In the real world, the hand is quicker than the eye, and the hand is quicker than the brain. If you're trying to figure out which martial arts technique is best, you're ignoring math, physics and physiology.

What's required for a criminal to succeed at the knockout game is a complacent victim with minimal situational awareness. Up your awareness and you've already initiated your defense. If you're walking down the street alone and you spot a gang, move to the left of the ambush as soon as you can. Your

defense is more mental—and, therefore, preventative—than physical.

THE GAME PLAN

By now, you know the importance of situational awareness in nullifying the knockout game. I'll conclude with a list of specific actions you can take to further improve your defenses.

- ★ Examine your routine to find openings you may be giving opportunistic criminals. If you get rid of what they're looking for, you won't be "it" anymore.
- ★ Walk with your own "gang" when you know you're going through areas with a higher risk. For example, if you're alone and about to leave a restaurant or a store, ask the manager for an escort. Four eyes are better than two.
- ★ Keep your head up and your eyes open. Know what's happening around you at all times.
- ★ Keep your hands free. Yes, that means keeping your cellphone in your pocket or purse when you're on the street.
- ★ Trust your gut and err on the side of safety. If you think something is about to happen, immediately change your

direction and make noise to attract attention. If you're wrong about the pre-contact cue—if it's a false alarm—you might be embarrassed. So what? The alternative is to ignore the threat and potentially suffer the consequences.

- ★ Commit to the homework. That means regularly reviewing the material presented in this article and applying the suggestions. It also means mentally and physically practicing your defensive measures. Rehearsals are a great thing.
- ★ Remember that self-defense is not just a set of techniques you practice in the *dojo*; it's a behavior and a way of life. ✕

● ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Tony Blauer is the creator of the SPEAR System and High Gear, both of which have helped revolutionize training for the law-enforcement, military and self-defense communities. He currently focuses on researching personal defense and running train-the-trainer courses for his SPEAR, Personal Defense Readiness and CrossFit Defense programs. For more information, visit tonyblauer.com.

Get this FREE download detailing Tony Blauer's SPEAR System!
blackbeltmag.com/spear-guide

Beware the Martial Arts Cult!

How to Spot Them,
How to Avoid Them

BY DAVID SIMS

“Tigers,” the junior instructor said in the hushed voice of a man imparting a secret.

“Tigers?” I asked.

“In the old days, whenever someone entered a ninja monastery, they were given a tiger cub to raise. By caring for the tiger, the apprentice demonstrated his worth. When the tiger was full grown, the apprentice was ready to become a full ninja.”

“That’s ... interesting,” I said.

“Oh, it’s incredible,” he said. “The tiger was more than just a ninja’s pet; it was the ninja’s partner. The ninja could ride the tiger into battle, and the tiger could climb trees with the ninja on his back. That’s why superstitious samurai thought that ninja had magical powers.”

“Amazing,” I said. And it really was. This was a grown man in his 30s, spouting nonsense to a 17-year-old. And the tiger-riding ninja didn’t even make the top 10 list of implausible claims made by the instructors in this martial arts group. They also talked about freezing water and moving cups with mental energy and about seeing their master walk across snow without leaving footprints.

It was troubling to hear grown men and women talk like this, but it wasn’t quite enough to make me leave. The training was fun, I thought as I signed up for a five-day camp. Some of the teachers were a little odd, but as long as I kept my head on straight, it wouldn’t be a problem for me. That attitude

changed as soon as I got to the camp.

It wasn’t just the authoritarian control the master exercised. It wasn’t the creepy way he showered attention on a girl who was in her teens. It wasn’t the slavish way everyone responded to him or the pseudo-religious awe in which they held him. What finally tipped the scales was when I heard the master talking about the “ninja monastery” he was planning to build. He explained that it could be our refuge during the “coming troubles,” after which we would emerge and help restore order to the world. I got out of there fast enough to leave a trail of smoking footprints.

DARK SIDE

Although I left, others did not. Many of the recruits were teenagers. The master told them that they were important, that they were elite, that they were part of the family. He told them that he was grooming them to be leaders, teachers, masters of an ancient tradition that few in the world knew. And they stayed by him, some for almost a decade. A few remained loyal even after others had publicly exposed the master’s lies about his training and after a researcher posted old newspaper stories covering the master’s felony convictions.

It was an ugly introduction to the martial arts and could well have marked the end of my training. I wound up being incredibly lucky—only a few weeks after quitting, I began college. One of my professors was also an *aiki-*

do instructor who exemplified the best traits of a martial artist. While I moved forward, others remained under the master’s thumb. Once, when a few left the group, a psychologist who was experienced at helping former cult members said he thought this was as much a cult as the Branch Davidians.

VICTIM SELECTION

I wish I could say that this story is unique. Unfortunately, it’s not. Back in 1989 a CBS affiliate in Chicago aired a story called “The Cult and the Con.” It described the founder of a martial arts group who, along with several members, ended up serving prison time on federal tax charges. A few years back, *60 Minutes* ran a story that examined possible cult activity in a California-based martial arts group. The reporter mentioned that students of the group were discouraged from having any contact with their families and pressured to give their property to the *dojo*.

I could list dozens of other examples. For many of them, we have only the word of former members, and the current members will often refute their claims. There’s not enough proof for a court of law, perhaps, but this much thick, billowing smoke usually has a fire somewhere underneath it. Martial arts cults are a real problem.

What types of people might gravitate to the martial arts? Well, all kinds, of course. One group that comes to mind is young people. They’re trying to find



their place in life, looking for an art that can provide them with discipline and guidance and for mentors who can help them find their path. Such people can learn a great deal from a martial art and an honest instructor; they're also potential victims for a cult.

What about people who've suffered from abuse and domestic violence? Many turn to the martial arts to find the mental and physical strength to protect themselves. A good martial arts instructor will support and encourage them. A cult leader will view them as prey.

What do beginners expect to see in a martial art? Often, the expectation comes from Hollywood: a wise teacher with hidden knowledge, students who must loyally complete tasks they don't understand and undergo rigorous training to prove themselves, the need to completely trust their master, lots of reverent bows. It can be a recipe for the creation of a cult.

CRUCIAL QUESTIONS

So how are you supposed to distinguish a normal, healthy martial arts group from a cult? Here are a few signs to look for:

- **How much authority does the leader exercise over his or her dojo?** It's normal for an instructor to be in charge, but a good martial arts teacher won't resemble a Third World dictator. My current teacher is absolutely in charge when we're on the mat, but he has no control over my personal life. He'd never dream of ordering me to date or not to date a certain person, for example. In contrast, members of the martial arts cult I belonged to said the master had ordered them into or out of relationships. Some said they were required to take vows of chastity.
- **Does the teacher claim to be infallible?** Cult leaders are always right because they're prophets, because they're the only ones who understand *chi* or because they're the ones in contact with the aliens. This means the cult members must always believe what the leader says. In an email exchange with a woman who belonged to what I suspected was a martial arts cult, I asked how she knew her master was a ninth-degree black belt and the top champion in Asia. "She told me so," the student replied. "If she says it, I know it's true. I don't need other evidence."
- **How does the teacher respond if his authority is questioned?** Will he throw a temper tantrum and threaten to kick the person out? You probably don't want to be in a long-term relationship with someone who rants and raves when people realize he's wrong.
- **Does the group seem focused on obtaining property and wealth from its members?** I know a young man who left the tiger-riding ninja after the master explained that before receiving his black belt, the student would need to demonstrate that he was committed to the group by handing over his bank account number.
- **How does the group talk about people who aren't members?** Cults generally like to make their members think all nonmembers should be treated with suspicion. Outsiders, even family members, cannot be trusted. They're often portrayed as evil or at least misguided agents of the world who are scheming to interfere with the cult's noble purpose.

CAUTION ADVISED

If you come across a group that exhibits any of these characteristics, you may want to steer clear. If your dojo fits the description, you might want to do some homework. Talk to former members to find out why they left. Do some online research on cults in general and martial arts cults in particular. Compare your school to others in the area and ask yourself if the other dojo seem to have a healthier atmosphere.

The martial arts community has an obligation to keep its eyes open for cults. There may not be any direct actions we can take if one sets up shop in our town, but by fostering awareness and, if necessary, alerting the authorities, we can help protect those who might fall victim to them. ✕

When Worlds

How a Muay Thai Legend Teaches the Fine Art of Kickboxing to Westerners

BY MARK JACOBS

Collide



The good-natured and heavily accented voice reaches across the gym: "You take a month off and no good. I tell you no beer. You don't listen!" Then the source demands more work.

On and on, Kaensak Sor Ploenjit drives a student in a private lesson at New Jersey's AMA Fight Club. While never brutal, he's merciless in what he asks for, making the gasping martial artist go round after round on the pads, do calisthenics and spar.

This kind of unrelenting work, more than anything else, is the key to success in *muay Thai*.

A WORLD AWAY

"Here, it's tough to make fighters strong," says the man known throughout Thai boxing by his ring name Kaensak. "People have jobs and can only train in the evening. In Thailand, fighters do nothing but eat, sleep and train all day."

Few people in America understand that as well as Kaensak, probably the most highly regarded Thai boxer in the States. He was the first man in history to win the Fighter of the Year Award from the Thai Sports Writers Association two years in a row. With nearly 300 professional bouts to his credit, he knows what it takes to be successful in the ring.

The son of a former muay Thai competitor who turned all five of his children into fighters, Kaensak began training at age 9 and moved into a notoriously tough kickboxing camp when he was 13. There, he practiced up to six hours a day.

In Thailand, a typical day starts at 5:30 a.m. with a 3-mile run followed by a couple of hours on the pads. He says this type of work is the most important part of training because it develops the endurance needed for a fight. Executing several hundred roundhouse kicks against the pads in each workout—not to mention punches, elbows and knees—isn't unusual. While the normal Thai pads found in the United States are by no means soft, the ones used in Thailand, Kaensak says, are much harder. And unlike classes here, almost all training, including sparring, is done with no protective padding except boxing gloves.

It's during those morning sessions that most of the instruction gets done—although it's more in the form of a trainer giving the occasional pointer or suggesting tactics to a fighter. And often it's only the most promising fighters who get this kind of one-on-one attention—the trainers are in business to develop a few top professionals, not impart instruction to the masses like in most Western facilities.

Evenings consist of three to four

hours of additional training. This includes running several more miles, doing extra rounds on the pads and then enduring a few rounds on the heavy bag. Perhaps the most essential, and grueling, portion of these evening workouts is clinch work. Fighters spend up to an hour doing nonstop sparring from the clinch, attempting to toss each other and hit with their knees.

The sessions usually culminate with five rounds of live sparring and calisthenics—often, two sets of 50 push-ups, two sets of 50 chin-ups and 500 sit-ups. While sit-ups are considered crucial to condition the body for punishment, chin-ups are deemed vital to build the arms for clinch fighting. Such rigorous training regimens quickly separate the good fighters from the great fighters.

EFFICIENCY IN TRAINING

For those with such a background, doing muay Thai is second nature. For the rest of us, nothing will change the fact that we weren't raised in a kickboxing camp. That makes the art's techniques more challenging to master. Learning the nuances from a teacher who's familiar with both Eastern ways of training and Western ways of living is the best alternative. That's why I spoke with Kaensak—so he could elaborate on a



few of his observations for the benefit of the martial arts-practicing public.

If you're coming into muay Thai from another art, Kaensak says, you'll need to pay attention to some important technical differences. If you've done Western boxing, for example, you probably fight in a more compact stance so you're ready to slip and duck punches. In muay Thai, such evasive action isn't always practical because you could end up catching a knee to the face when you're down.

With respect to kicking, Kaensak acknowledges muay Thai's interpretation of the roundhouse is different from karate and *taekwondo's* interpretation. Because they focus on power, Thai boxers often step into the technique and make contact with an almost straight leg. Meanwhile, practitioners of other arts usually pivot and effect a snapping motion that comes from extending their lower leg.

Kaensak says that although this is accurate, it isn't the only way Thais do their roundhouse. Sure, you can step into the kick, but if you need to stay put or even retreat, you can pivot on your lead foot the same way students of other arts do. Additionally, although the Thai roundhouse is usually thrown with less knee snap than in other styles, it does contain a bit of snap. Kicking with full follow-through using a nearly straight leg—the

logic holds that if you miss, your body will spin around from the force of the kick—isn't for every scenario, Kaensak says.

JUST FOR KICKS

Even though the Thai roundhouse may not be totally different from the roundhouse that's taught in other arts, the way Thai fighters use their arms is very different, Kaensak notes. To ensure they remain balanced, Thai boxers typically throw the arm on the same side as the kicking leg down and back. In other words, when executing a rear-leg roundhouse with your right leg, as your leg lashes out, your right arm is thrown back and to the right as a counterbalance. That gives you the option of smoothly retracting your leg if the kick misses.

Interestingly, when you throw a right-leg roundhouse, Kaensak recommends you pull your left hand back toward your left ear rather than leave it in front of your face to block punches. He says this will protect against a counter aimed at the left side of your head. A straight punch to the face is less of a threat, he says, because that would require your opponent to leave himself open and counterpunch while your roundhouse kick is coming at him.

Contrary to logic, your defense against a high kick should entail leaning back-

ward and dropping your lead hand, Kaensak says. This prevents your opponent from knocking your lead hand out of position with his kick. His kick will likely miss because of your lean, and afterward, you can raise your lead hand to guard your face against a follow-up.

TIME TO SWEAT

Although there are obviously nuances that get overlooked when Westerners practice this Eastern art, perhaps the most important difference is that elite Thai athletes simply train more than anyone else. Because of the grueling nature of the sport, they've found that the best way to develop skill is through hard work. This is a message Kaensak always tries to impart to Americans—including the MMA fighters who come to him to bolster their stand-up game.

"It's difficult because they train good, but the techniques don't always come out in the fights," Kaensak says. "They need more muay Thai sparring. I tell them they have to train it every day, not once a week."

As with most martial arts, more truly is better in muay Thai. ✕

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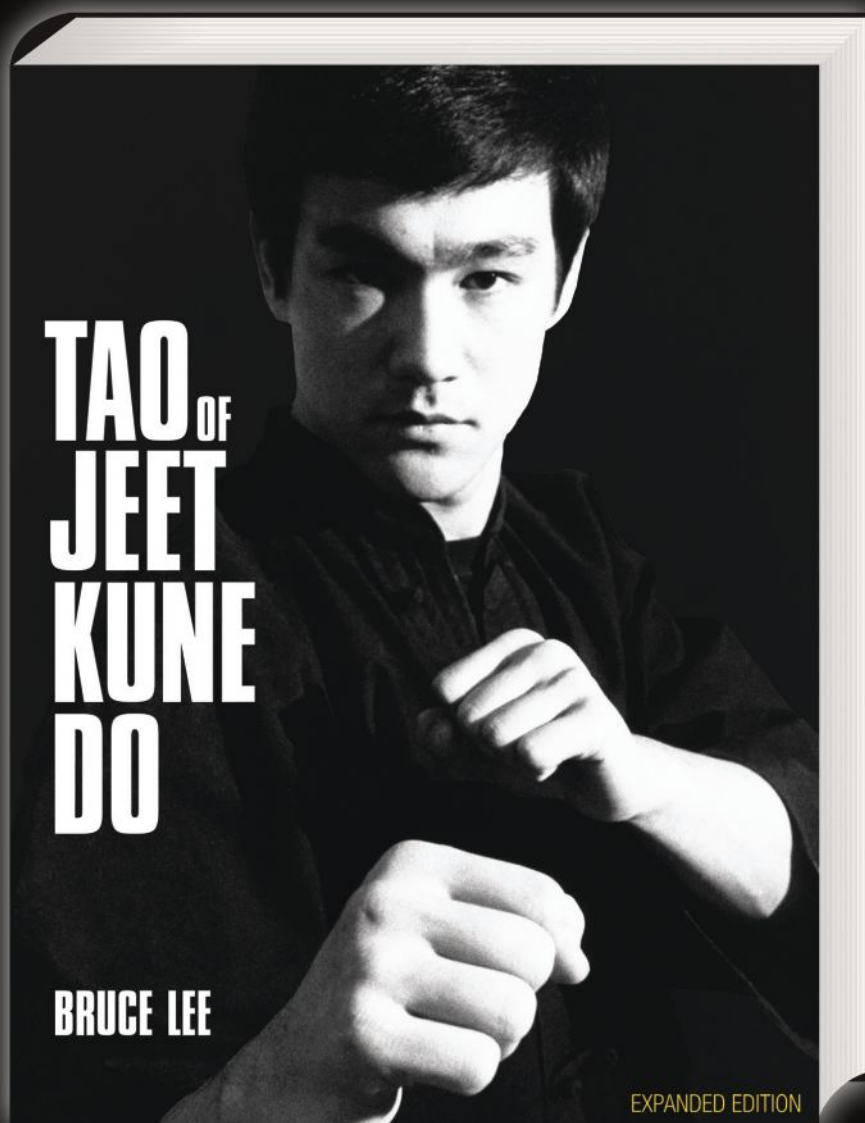
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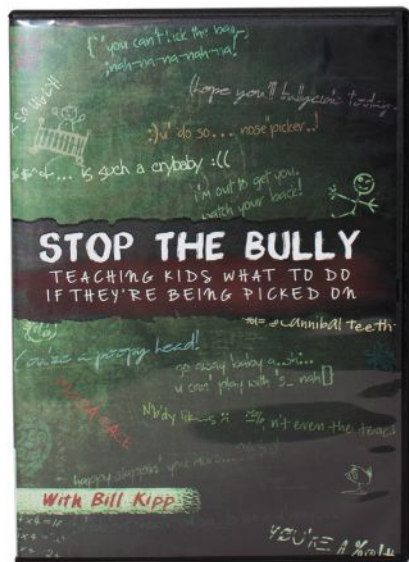
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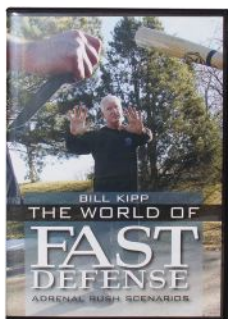
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If you're hungry for more from the man who's featured in "48 Hours of Adrenaline" in this issue, check out *The World of FAST Defense: Adrenal Rush Scenarios* and *Stop the Bully: Teaching Kids What to Do If They're Being Picked On*. On the first DVD (70 minutes), *Black Belt*'s 2012 Self-Defense Instructor of the Year delves into some of the material his course covers. On the second DVD (75 minutes), he addresses everything kids need to know to stay safe.

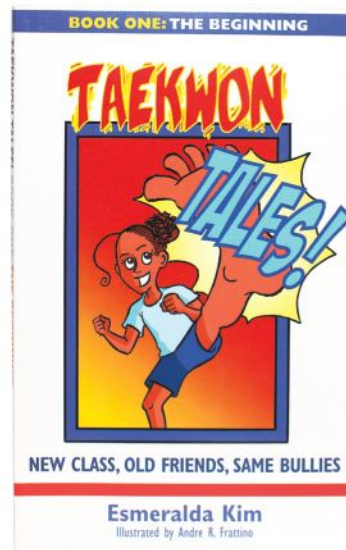
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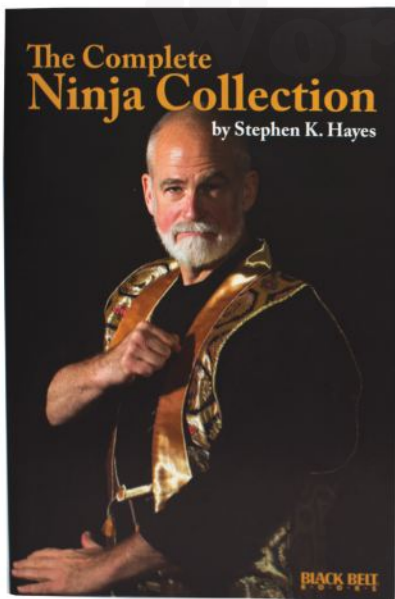


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This children's book, titled *Taekwon Tales*, tells the story of Maddie Espinoza, a fifth-grader who's bullied until she meets Master Im and starts learning *taekwondo*. Written by Esmeralda Kim, this illustrated volume, the first in a series, is 115 pages long.

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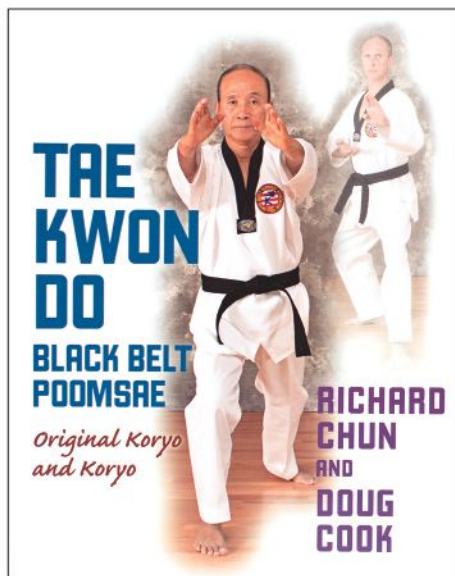
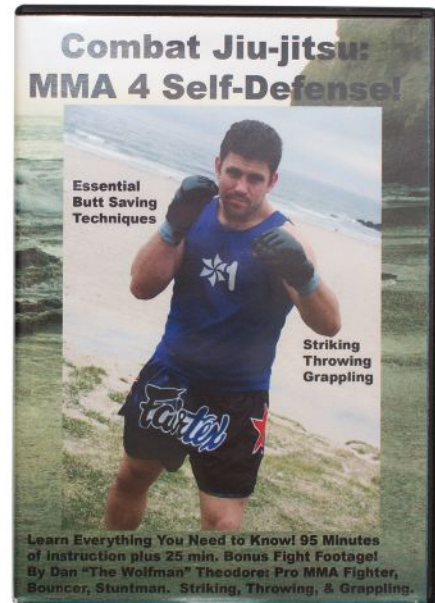
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ANALYSIS OF A KOREAN FORM

Ninth-degree black-belt Richard Chun and sixth-degree Doug Cook teamed up to create an 87-minute DVD titled *Tae Kwon Do Black Belt: Original Koryo and Koryo* and a 192-page book titled *Tae Kwon Do Black Belt Poomsae: Original Koryo and Koryo*. They were designed to further your understanding of the popular Korean fighting form.

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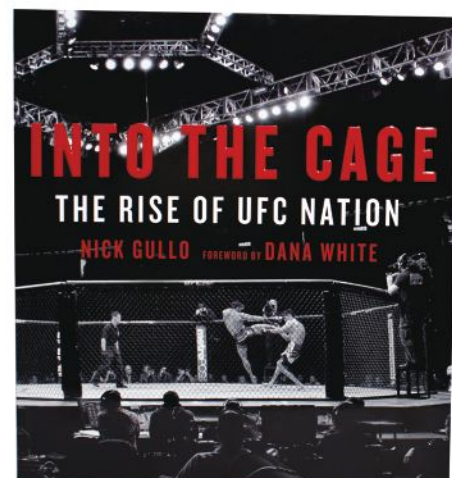
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HISTORY OF THE UFC

Dana White wrote the foreword for *Into the Cage: The Rise of UFC Nation*, by Nick Gullo. The photo-heavy, full-color book spans 230 pages and documents the fight sport's history, champions, styles and women, as well as its reality-TV show.

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Whistlekick recently launched a line of sparring gear that promises to improve on what you're used to using in the *dojo*. It's lightweight and breathable yet more comfortable and durable than the competitors' offerings, they say. Shown here: The Whistlekick Original Sparring Boot, which noticeably does *not* use a vinyl underfoot retention strap.

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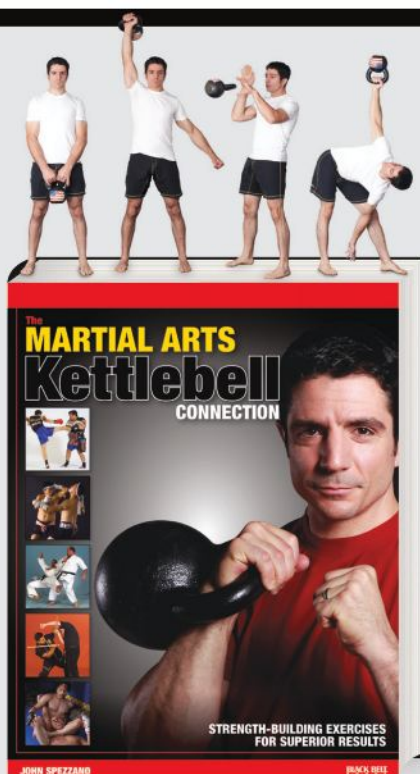
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Kenneth Jay, Z-Health Movement Coach, author of *Viking Warrior Conditioning* and *Perfecting the Press*, says, "*The Martial Arts/Kettlebell Connection* is an excellent introduction to hard-style kettlebell lifting and has clear and concise explanations and illustrations. I predict this book will be a hit with the martial arts community as well as a great addition to any kettlebeller's library."



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The Great Disappearing Act

by Kelly Muir

Although it used to be common in the *dojo*, sparring is disappearing at an alarming rate. The fear of students quitting, combined with liability concerns, has forced many instructors to look at other options. What a shame! Martial arts training is a physical activity—no amount of curriculum manipulation can eliminate that. For students to achieve success, it's imperative for them to become proficient at the "martial" component of the arts.

Beyond the obvious technical benefits of sparring, there are non-physical attributes that make it essential. While nearly every instructor claims that training can help students learn the tenets of the arts—perseverance, courage, etc.—if they aren't sparring, students can't learn them. Some teachers try to circumvent this by offering "mat chats" about the tenets. Others have students display stripes or badges on their uniforms to show that they've completed relevant tasks. While I understand the concept behind those actions, if the instructors aren't also requiring their students to engage in competitive contact, those badges and stripes mean nothing.

An understanding of tenets is earned, pure and simple. It's earned through dedication to training, time on the mat and, at the highest level, physical contact. If we don't allow our students to spar, to risk contact, they'll miss out on some of the greatest lessons the arts have to offer. Let's take a look at a few things students can learn from supervised sparring.

IF YOU GET HIT, IT'S YOUR FAULT. One of the most impactful moments of my life happened in my teens. After getting kicked during sparring, I fell. Lying there, embarrassed and confused, I waited for someone to

help me. Nobody did. When I finally opened my eyes, my instructor was looking down at me. Calmly, he said, "Next time, keep your hands up."

I never forgot that advice. Of course I used it in the ring, but I also discovered that those words of wisdom transcended the mat. As I grew older, I faced many tough times when I felt overwhelmed with work, family or life. To survive those ordeals, I reminded myself that if I kept my hands up—even in a figurative sense—I could make it through. And I did.

As instructors, we must allow our students to have that experience. While we shouldn't encourage students to knock down other students, when it does happen, we can turn it into a life lesson.

YOU CAN'T ALWAYS WIN. People win and people lose—that's part of life. We must teach our students that they won't always be comfortable and they won't always be the best. Furthermore, when we allow our students to test their skills against one another and determine who's victorious, it provides an opportunity for the winner to be gracious and the loser to learn from the experience.

YOU HAVE TO ANALYZE YOURSELF. After a sparring match, it's good to have students evaluate their performance. If they won, why? If they lost, why? What have they improved on? What do they still need to work on? Learning to ask the right questions is something that will follow them through every exam, every assignment, every life challenge. Self-evaluation will empower them to assess their own situation and enact changes that are necessary for progress.

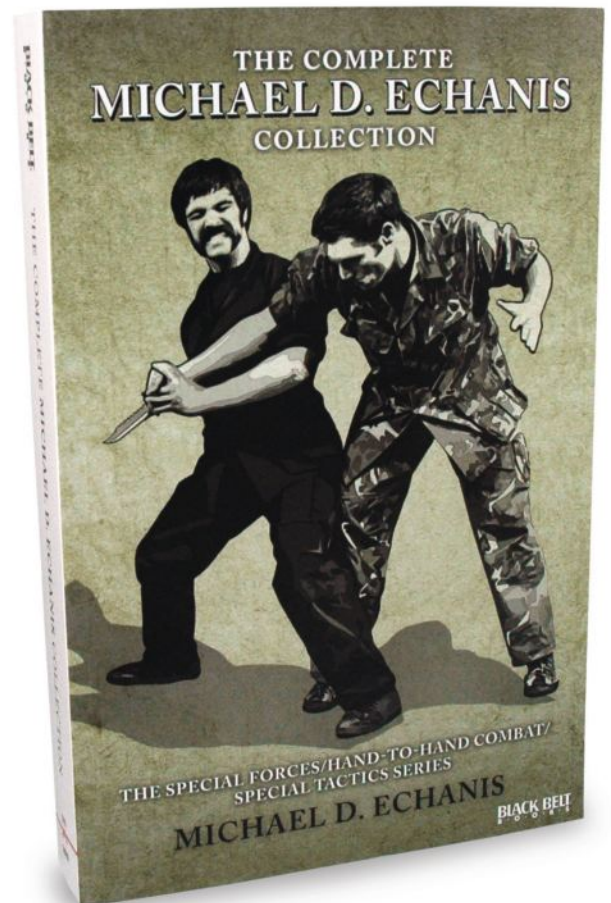
FASTER IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER. It seems that everything is fast now—fast food, instant communication and, unfortunately, rapid rank advancement. How can our students learn patience if we don't make them slow down and process the lessons? Sparring is the perfect place to do this. When they run drills, tell them to slow down. When they spar, have them do it at quarter or half speed. When we force them to go slow, it permits them to assimilate the movements of offense and defense. Allowing them to speed up before they're ready can reinforce the notion of instant gratification and contribute to the development of bad habits.

IF STUDENTS WANT a high-school diploma, they must pass all the required courses whether they like them or not. The same should apply in the dojo. If people want a black belt, they must become proficient at the required courses. Sparring may not be everyone's favorite, but allowing students to skip it ultimately will make them weaker and the rank less meaningful. ✂



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Mitchell Bobrow (right)

The Rise of Otomix

by J. Torres

In the martial arts, it isn't easy to translate a passion into a business, to build that business into a recognized brand and to ensure both business and brand survive as the arts evolve. It isn't easy, but it is possible. Witness Otomix, the martial arts and fitness clothing and gear company founded by former tournament standout Mitchell Bobrow.

At age 12, long before he dreamed of starting a business, Bobrow received his first exposure to the arts. A stream of *kihap* shouts drew him into Kim Studio Korean Karate, a school run by *Black Belt* Hall of Famer Ki Whang Kim. Even before he finished watching the class, Bobrow was hooked.

In high school, his association with the martial arts continued. Kim allowed him to compete as a brown belt, and Bobrow placed second in sparring—in the adult division. Afterward, Kim said he wanted Bobrow to refrain from entering any more tournaments until he was a black belt.

Bobrow's interest in the arts didn't suffer, however. On campus, he founded the

first chartered karate club in America. His martial obsession accompanied him to George Washington University, where he majored in business and minored in psych. When Bobrow resumed fighting as a black belt, he did it with a vengeance. *Black Belt* named him the No. 4 fighter in the America in 1968 and No. 7 in 1969, and sister pub *Karate Illustrated* put him in the No. 1 spot for the decade.

The creation of Otomix (otomix.com) in 1988 followed an odd series of events in Bobrow's meandering martial arts career. After reading a newspaper ad for an actor to play a Chuck Norris-like part in a TV version of *Delta Force*, Bobrow moved to Los Angeles. "Within days of my arrival, I was in acting classes, had a manager and an agent, all with hope that I was the next martial arts star," he said. "Then I was told *Delta Force* was on hold but *American Ninja* could be a possibility. I was bounced around Hollywood, where I did roles in *Days of our Lives*, *Coneheads* and *Black Belt* with Don 'The Dragon' Wilson."

On the set and off, Bobrow wore his martial arts shoes, and everybody loved

them. With advice from then-girlfriend Nancy Barrett, he elected to enter the import-export biz. "We decided on the shoes we were going to order, and during that period Nike and Reebok were booming, so we ordered 20,000 pairs," he said.

After two years of turmoil, Bobrow settled on a factory that could give him what he wanted, and the result was the Otomix Original Martial Arts Shoe. "We started going to karate and taekwondo events and would sell \$500 worth of shoes at each one," he said.

The business sustained itself for a while, but by 1990, orders were starting to dwindle. "So Nancy and I sent out 8,000 fliers to martial arts schools," Bobrow said. "The orders immediately started coming in."

Because Otomix was located in Santa Monica, California, its shoes quickly attracted attention from the fitness crowd. "They got popular with the bodybuilders at Gold's Gym," Bobrow said. "We decided to make another shoe for bodybuilders, and it was also a big hit. Now we were in two niche markets, advertising our shoes in *Black Belt* and *Muscle & Fitness*. We rapidly expanded into work-out wear and martial arts gear."

Bobrow and Barrett attended as many events as humanly possible to brand the company name, and it worked. "Over the years, we've been in Nordstrom, Macy's, Harrods and Sports Authority, to name a few," Bobrow said. "We currently sell our yoga line for women in Costco. Otomix has catered to every fitness craze for 20 years: Tae Bo, cardio kickboxing, Pilates—you name it."

The company proudly manufactures 80 percent of its clothing in the United States, he said. "Designs, patterns, cutting and sewing are all done in Los Angeles."

In 2013 Otomix's management decided to spearhead a push into martial arts studios. "We felt there was a need for a full-line supplier for school owners," Bobrow said. "We have plans to open a warehouse in Maryland to service the East Coast by the end of 2014, as well as one in Europe. Currently, about 25 percent of our business is outside the USA, making us a global brand."

If Bobrow's plans reach fruition, a whole lot more people around the world are about to learn about the Otomix brand. ✕

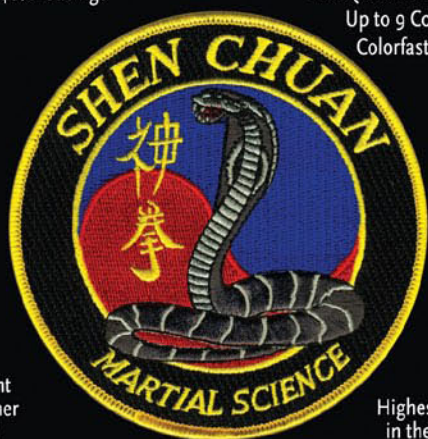
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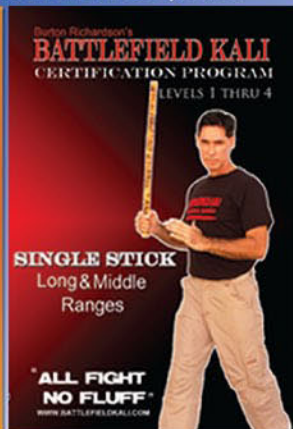
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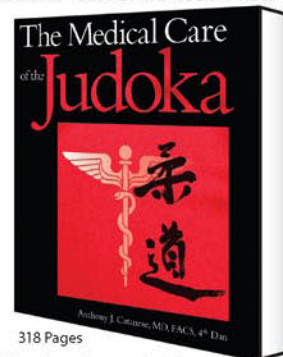
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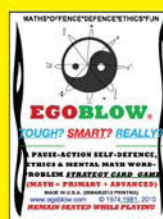
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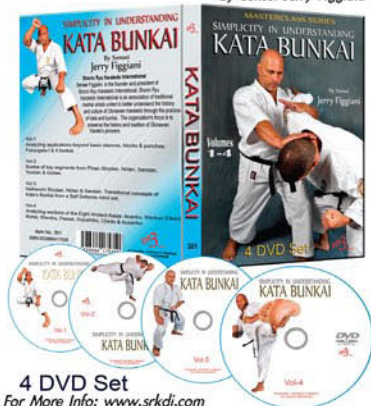
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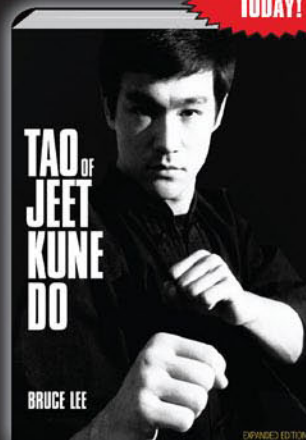
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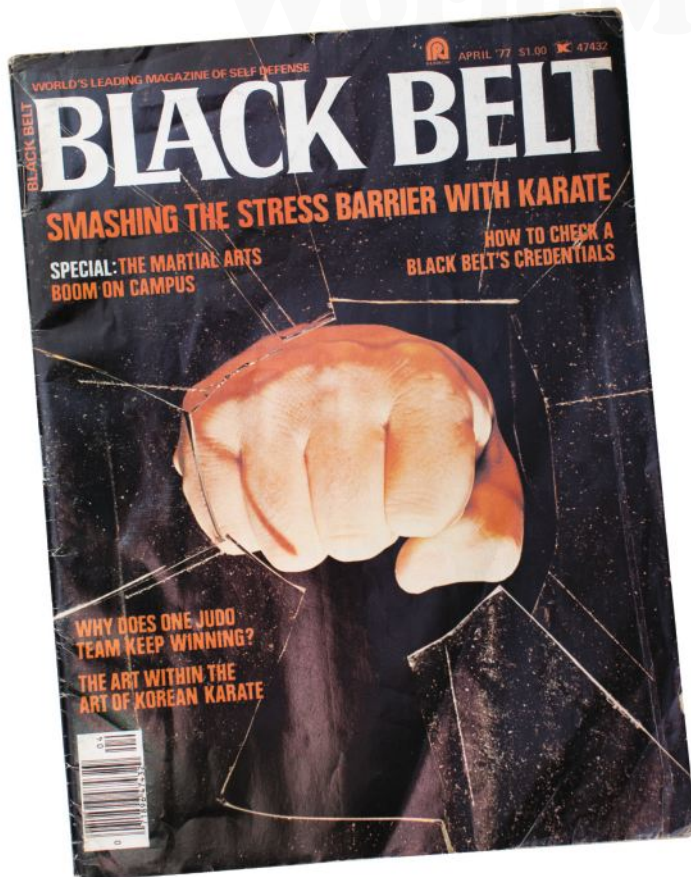
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From the Archives

Vol. 15, No. 4, \$1

The 160th issue of *Black Belt* was dated April 1977. It was 84 pages long and featured nothing but a fist and some broken glass on the cover.

- The *Black Belt* College Martial Arts Survey shines a light on the state of the arts in America's institutions of higher learning. At 23.3 percent, judo is the most popular style on campus. It's followed by karate (20.5 percent), self-defense (19.8 percent), *taekwondo* (19.1 percent), kung fu (7.6 percent), *tai chi* (4.2 percent), *jujitsu* (3.1 percent) and *aikido* (2.4 percent).
- When asked why their college doesn't have a martial arts program, 32 percent of administrators said it's because they lack qualified instructors.
- In a letter to the editor, future *Black Belt* Hall of Famer Jerry Beasley weighs in on the trend that has the martial arts moving toward full-contact sports: "The emergence of the change in the *dojo* was facilitated by, and perhaps a direct result of, technological advances, e.g., safe-T equipment."
- Taekwondo is approved for inclusion in the first World Games, an international sporting event slated for Houston.
- The American Federation of Independent Shotokan Karate conducts a survey of dojo in Los Angeles to determine the average cost of lessons: \$30 per month.
- When a reader complains that there's too much advertising in *Black Belt*, the editor writes a lengthy response in which he explains how the ads make low prices possible. Without advertising, he says, the price of the magazine would double or triple.

- "Smashing a piece of wood and calling yourself a karate expert is like putting an apple on somebody's head and calling yourself an archer," says W. Scott Russell, president of the Society of Black Belts International.
- "Rapidly exhaling at the moment of impact and holding the breath during execution of a movement can help concentrate strength and promote speed." So says taekwondo authority Sang Kyu Shim.
- An excerpt from Bruce Lee's *Tao of Jeet Kune Do* contains numerous gems of fighting strategy, including this one: "Many fighters commit the error of leaning back on their rear leg when defending themselves instead of taking a short step back. In such cases, attack the rear weight-bearing foot."
- Taekwondo is poised to spread throughout Africa. Under the leadership of the World Taekwondo Federation, the expansion plan already boasts success in 13 countries.
- "Being an artist, I appreciate karate as a beautiful art form," says a woman who took up the style after she was attacked in a garage.
- These days, when it seems like only the newest MMA moves or the deadliest self-defense sequences are of interest, it's good to remember those words. ✖

(Note: Back issues are not for sale. To purchase a hard copy of the cover of this issue or any other, visit facebook.com/BlackBeltMagazine and click "Cover Reprints" at the top of the page.)

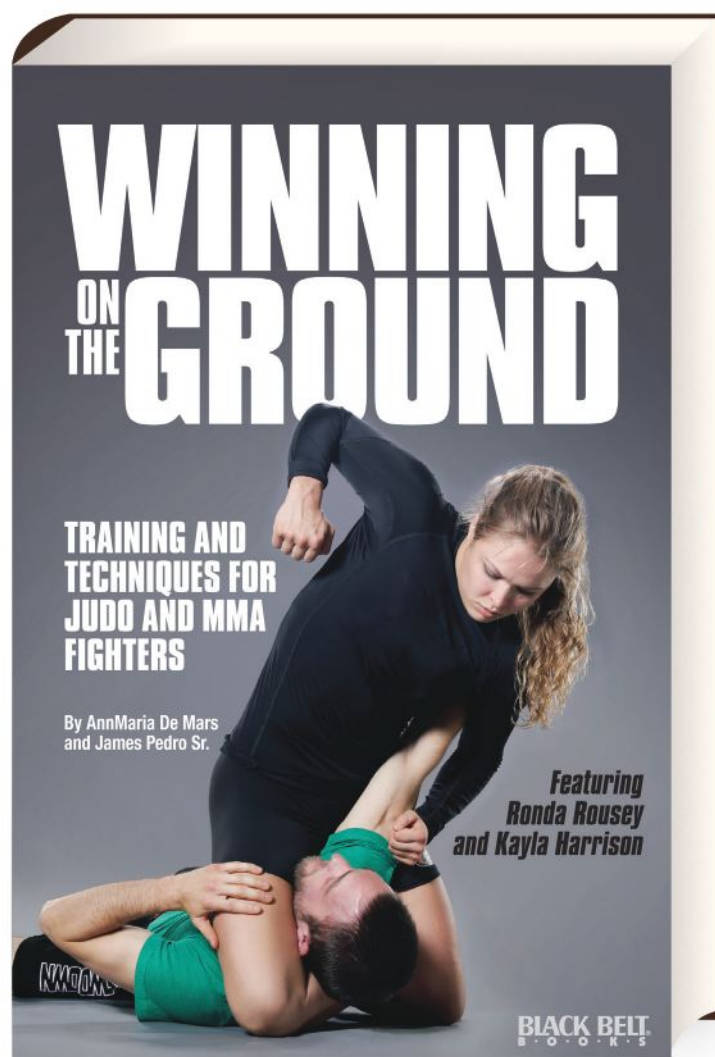
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