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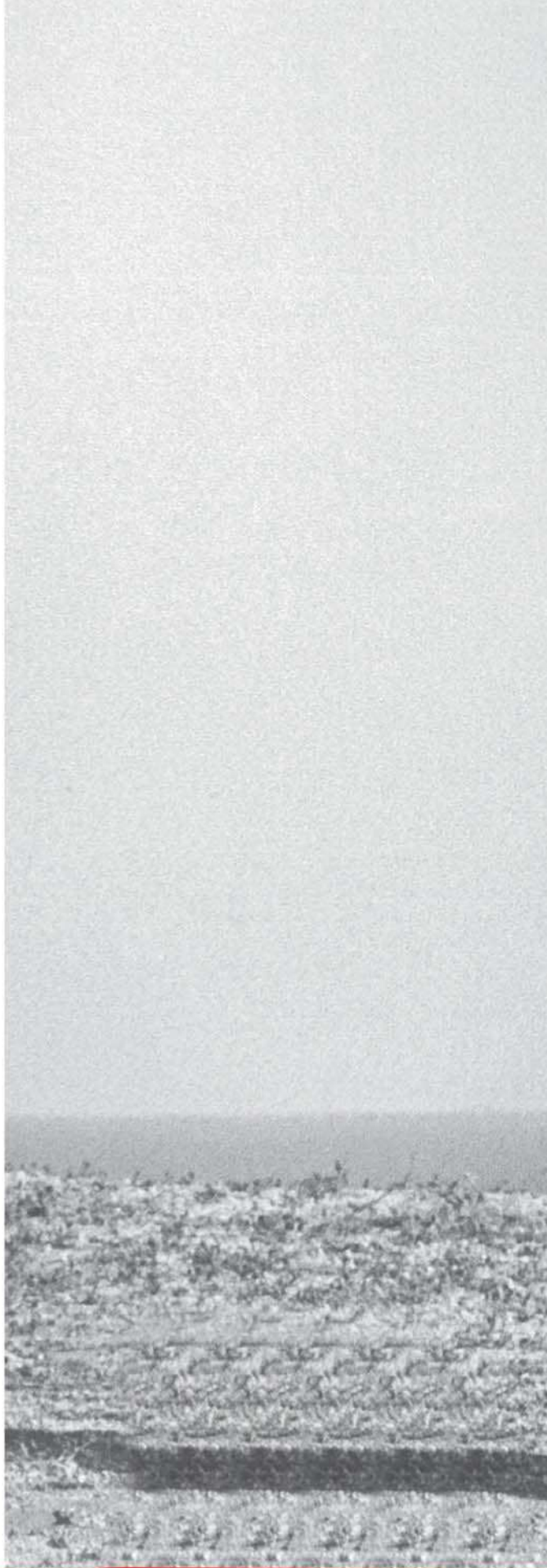
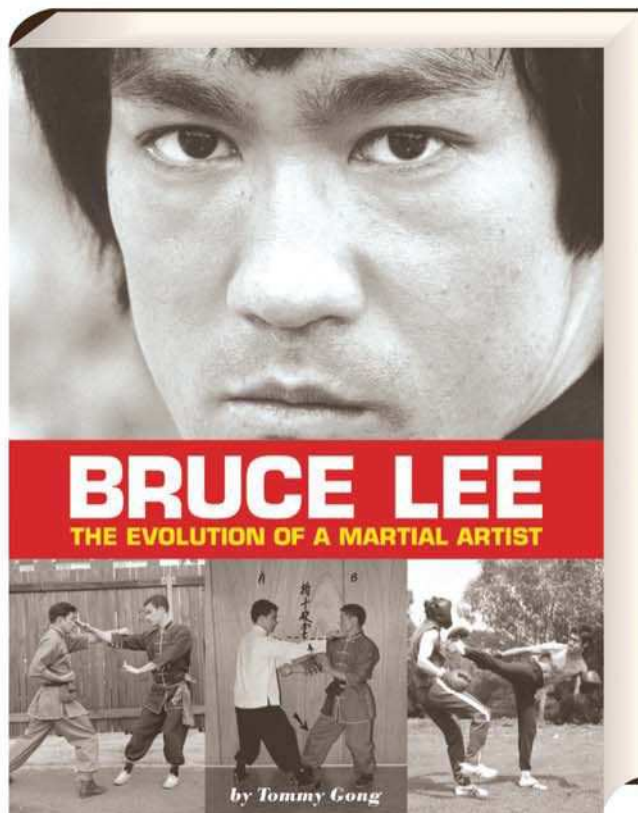


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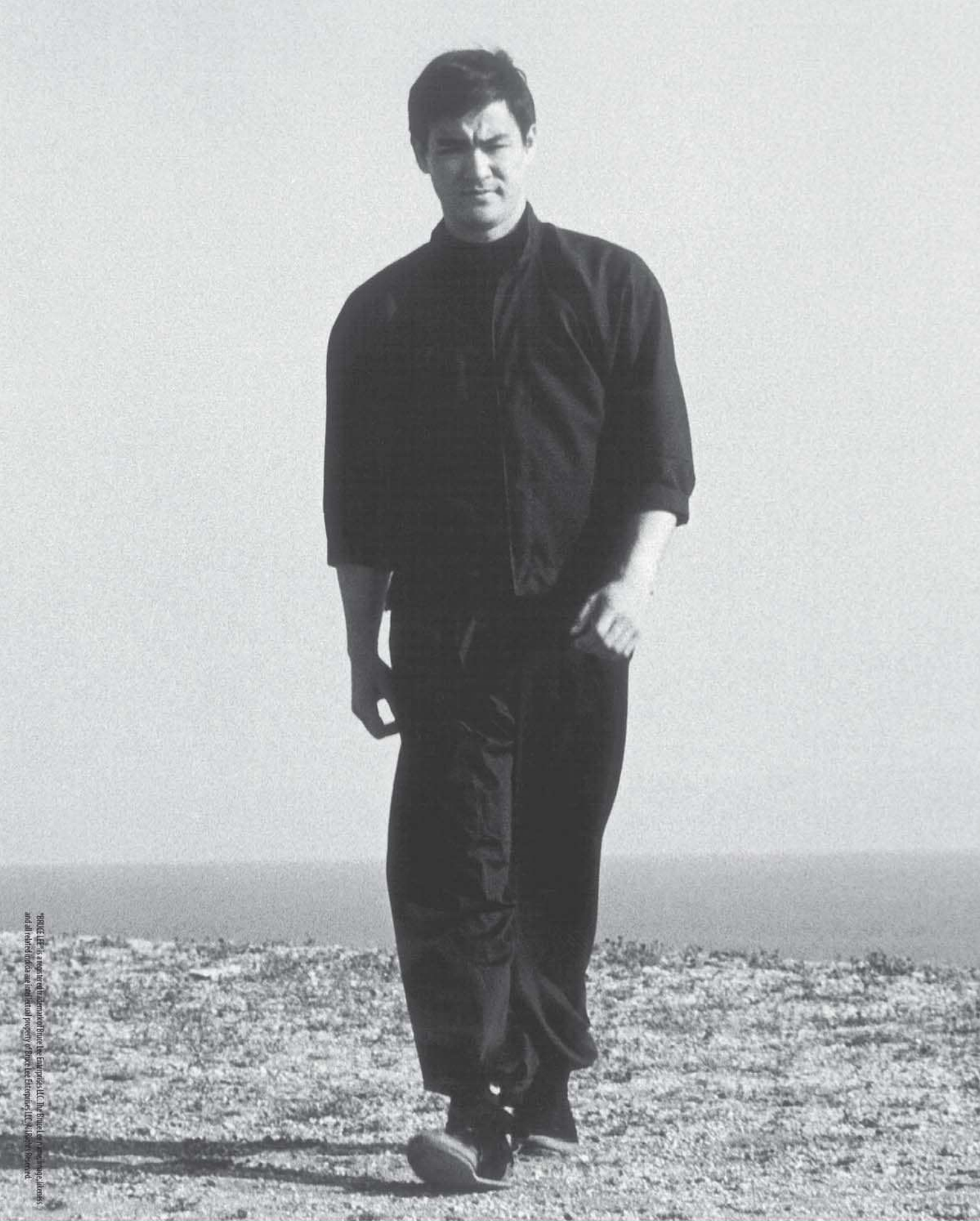
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# THE NEW BOOK DOCUMENTING AN ICON'S JOURNEY

In *Bruce Lee: The Evolution of a Martial Artist*, author Tommy Gong traces Bruce Lee's path as he evolved from *wing chun* student to founder of *jeet kune do* and developed his philosophy of self-actualization. The story of Lee's quest for the ultimate martial art is all here. This is a must-have book for fans of the iconic legend as well as for students of the martial arts.







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**LIVE CLEAN, TRAIN HARD, FIGHT DIRTY AND DON'T LET ANYONE TAKE YOUR LUNCH MONEY!**

How did the man who coached Chuck Liddell to the top of MMA get so good with his hands? What experiences in his youth put him on the path to martial mastery? Why does he paint his toenails? Here's everything you ever wanted to know about John Hackleman, founder of Hawaiian *kempo*, plus five sweet self-defense techniques!

Photo by Cory Sorensen

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# TOP 10 LESSONS I LEARNED FROM MARTIAL ARTS

After devoting the three and a half decades to the arts, to say I learned a lot would be the ultimate understatement. Of course I'm referring to the myriad fighting techniques and strategies I fine-tuned over the years, but every bit as important are the life lessons that have seeped into my psyche. Presented below are the top 10 lessons on my list, along with how they translate to life on the outside.

**No. 10:** You get out of your art exactly what you put into it. It's like many things in life, including school. You (or your kids) can go to the best high school and not learn anything. Or you (or they) can go to a mediocre school and learn tons. The difference is the effort that's invested. As they say, the martial art doesn't make the man; the man makes the martial art.

**No. 9:** Falling is not the end of the world. In most martial arts classes, it happens all the time courtesy of breakfall practice. Before long, you learn it doesn't always hurt, and if it does hurt, it's usually not for long. Seldom does anything get broken or bruised. The correct response to falling, of course, is to get up and continue. The take-away? If it was your fault you fell, don't make the same mistake again.

**No. 8:** Interception is preferable to blocking. Bruce Lee would agree — just look at the name of his art. In life, being proactive is almost always better, whether it pertains to your job, your health or your relationships. Remember the old saying, "A stitch in time saves nine."

**No. 7:** Linear is usually better than circular. A front kick normally gets the job done more efficiently than a hook kick. It's all about the path that's followed. Longer requires more energy and more time. In life, it's often best to set a goal and go for it directly. That will reduce the likelihood of getting lost along the way. Or intercepted.

**No. 6:** No matter how good you think you are, there's always someone better. In the *dojo*, you discover this the hard way in sparring. Outside the *dojo*, well, applying the lesson you learned when that reverse punch beat your best block and caught you on the chin might help you avoid finding out the hard way.

**No. 5:** When you know how to fight, you don't feel compelled to prove it, especially in front of others. In fact, you go out of your way to avoid it because you know the potential consequences. Decades ago, a great science-fiction novelist named Robert Heinlein put it this way: "An armed society is a polite society."

**No. 4:** Knowledge is power. In the *dojo*, you learn there's a counter to every attack you could ever face. In life, you learn there's a solution to every problem. Often, that solution is prevention, in life and in the martial arts.

**No. 3:** It pays to be flexible. Do you need to be flexible to enjoy success in your particular art? Maybe not. But flexibility sure makes things a lot easier. On and off the mat. Physically and mentally. At work and at home.

**No. 2:** Most of the time, avoidance is better than conflict. Plenty of martial artists hear the term "street fight" and quip, "Who gets in street fights — I don't go anyplace where street fights are likely to happen." This lesson on conflict avoidance as it applies to life was succinctly stated by Bill Wallace: "If you don't like what I do, well, I'm sorry. I'll be the first to apologize. I'll do it even if I'm right. If it makes you feel good, then it makes me feel good."

**No. 1:** For those few times in life when lesson No. 2 just doesn't cut it, you have no alternative but to stand and fight. Luckily, you know how thanks to all those days in the *dojo*. ✕

— Robert W. Young,  
Editor-in-Chief

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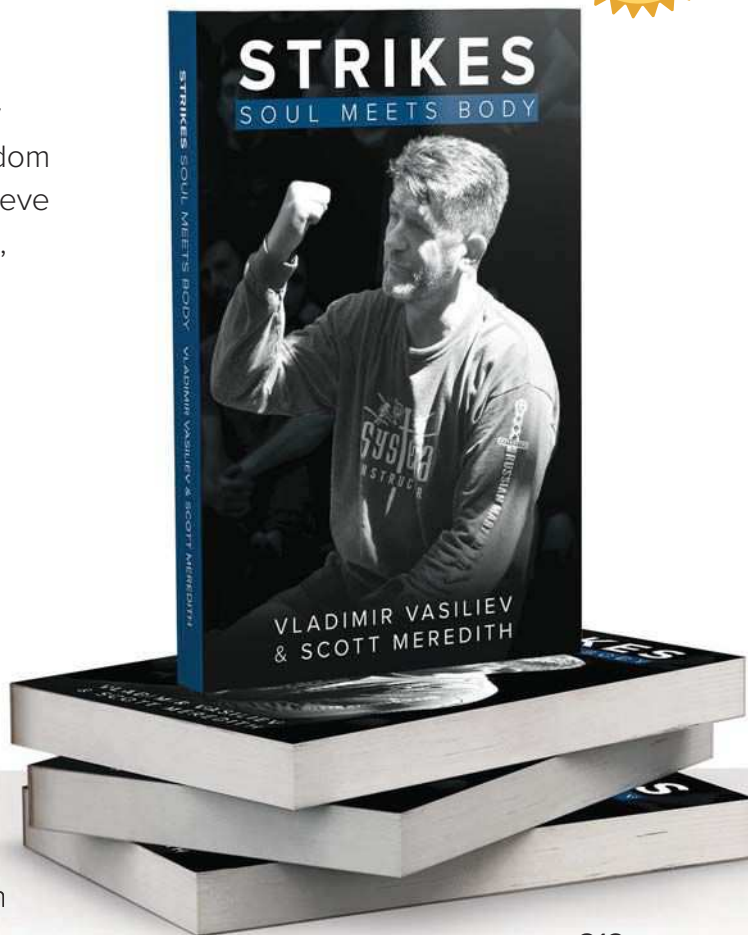


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MARTIAL ARTS NEWS YOU CAN USE. READ IT - KNOW IT - LIVE IT

# GRANDMASTERS AND GRIDIRONS: THE DAN INOSANTO BIOPIC

► Forty years ago, in a now largely forgotten piece of sports history, the Dallas Cowboys began one of the more unusual experiments seen in professional football up to that time. The team decided to bring in a small Asian-American gentleman who happened to be the leading protégé of Bruce Lee and the world's foremost expert in *jeet kune do* with the hope that martial arts training might improve their game. The man was, of course, Dan Inosanto, and the tale of his time with the Cowboys is so unusual that some people think it needs to be told as a movie.

"It's a classic story of East meets West," said Dan Inosanto's daughter Diana Lee Inosanto, who has been working on the project for years and finally has it in development with the Mark Gordon Co., whose production credits include *Saving Private Ryan*. "I always said I wanted to tell this story because it's such a weird tie-in between martial arts and pro football. The Cowboys were an aging team back then, and they realized martial arts training could be the answer in helping them preserve their players' energy on the field."

Inosanto was originally approached by Bob Ward, an old college friend who in 1976 became probably the first person hired by an NFL team to work exclusively as a full-time strength-and-conditioning coach when he joined the Cowboys' staff. Ward had already trained for several years with Inosanto and recognized the potential usefulness of adding some martial arts to the Cowboys' practice regimen.

"Sports performance is the language of human movement," Ward said. "And when you see you can move more effectively if you train in martial arts, you'd have to be crazy not to use it. I was teaching some of this myself, but I figured, why not bring the experts in? I brought a number of people in, but Dan was the main one. He was the one that taught me to absorb what's useful from every source."

Ward took his idea to the Cowboys brass, including legendary head coach Tom Landry. They were enthusiastic about trying anything that might give them an edge on the field.

Ironically enough, it was the martial arts expert who needed the most convincing that teaching martial arts to football players was a good idea.

"I played football in high school and college, and it taught me a lot of things that helped me in martial arts," Dan Ino-

santo said. "I wasn't sharp enough to see the value of cross-training in martial arts for a football player, though. But Bob saw the value and made me realize, for example, that anything which enhanced hand speed would be a tremendous plus, particularly for defensive linemen who had to hand-fight on the line of scrimmage."

The program came along at just the right time because the rules in football were undergoing changes that favored the offense. Previously, offensive linemen could not extend their hands to ward off defenders, but defensive linemen were allowed to use a "head slap" to the offensive lineman's helmet to gain an advantage. But both those rules changed, forcing defensive players to look for new ways to use their hands to fight off blockers.

Enter Inosanto. Initially, he tried to teach the players a number of *wing chun* movements emphasizing the *chi sao*, or "sticky hands," exercise. But this proved too cumbersome for most of them to master, so Inosanto switched to using more Filipino-style martial arts techniques such as the *hubud* drill, which he said helped "turbocharge" their hands. Ward said he believes this, along with various blocking and movement drills, gave the Cowboys a better ability to cope with the variety of situations they faced on the football field and may have been a minor contributing factor to their winning Super Bowl XII.

"It didn't contribute everything to winning, but I think it did help make good players better," Ward said.

Inosanto is modest about any contribution he might have made to the Cowboys' success. "Well, they had a pretty good offense, too," he said, jokingly. "I think it was just one of the links in the chain. If one link is weak, then the chain is weak."

Ward believes martial arts have even more to offer football players today, especially when there's growing concern about concussions. Diana Lee Inosanto agrees. "I'm hoping, after all the controversy over concussions in football, that with this movie there will be a possibility for the martial arts world to reach out to the football community and say, 'We can offer you a way to help prevent concussions,'" she said. "By learning martial arts techniques, football players can learn how to deflect an opponent's energy and spare themselves injury."

— Mark Jacobs



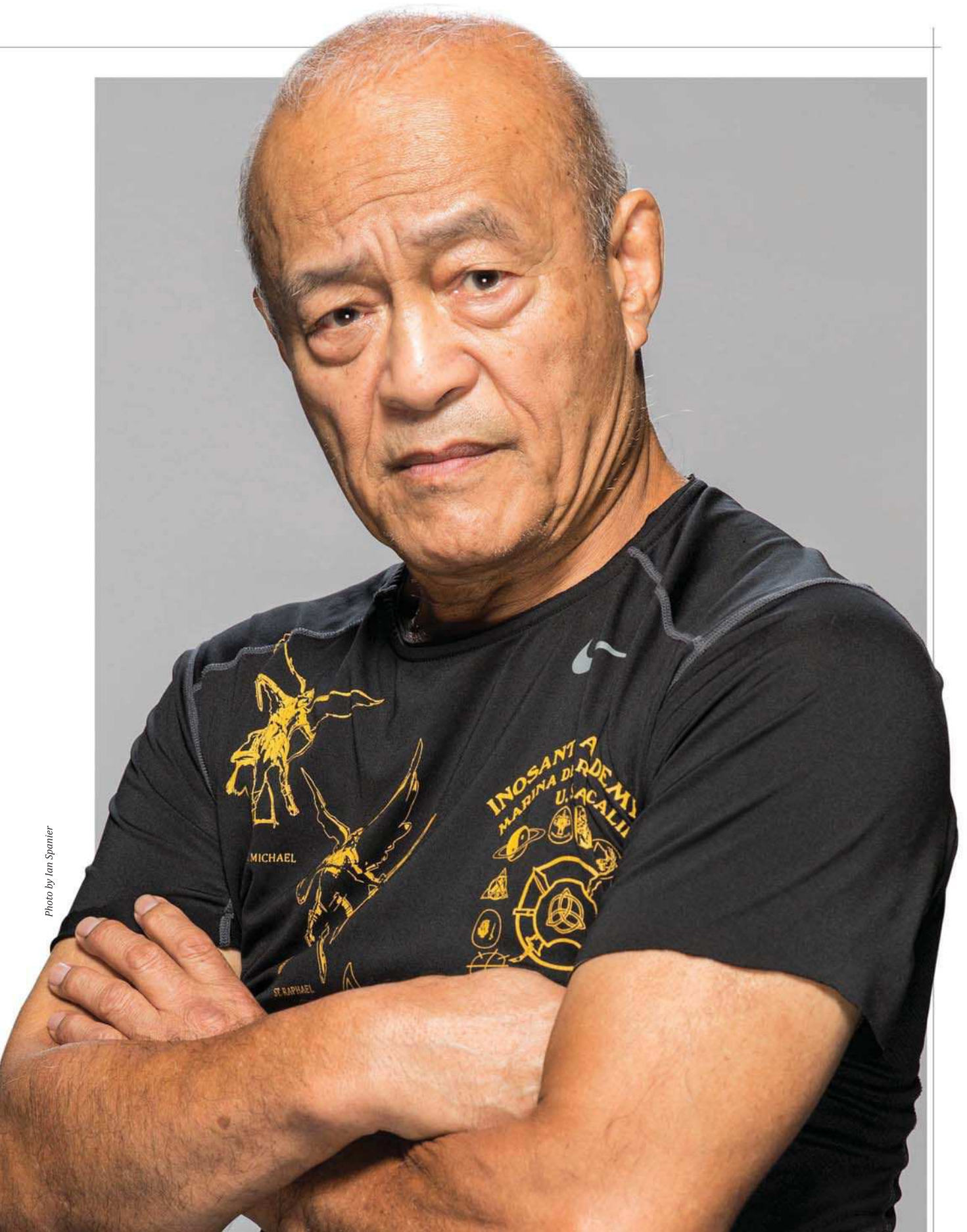
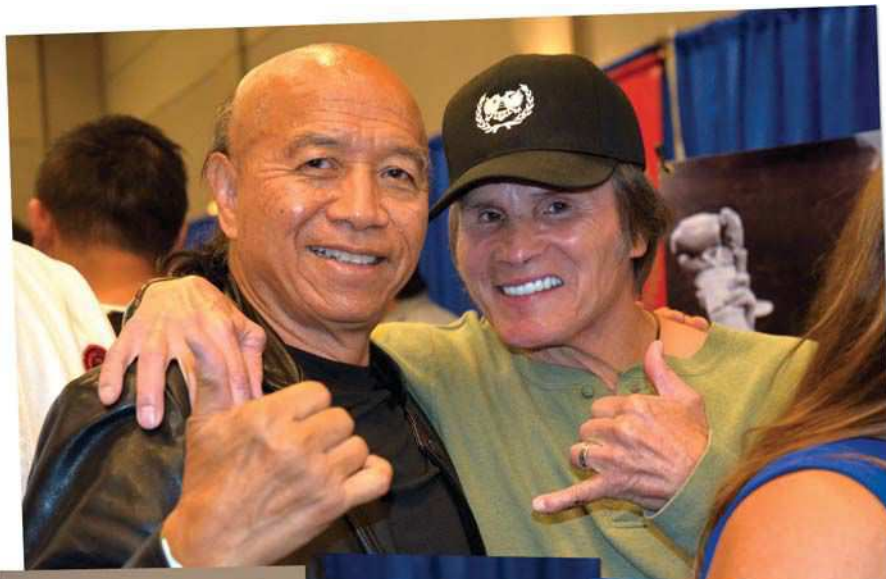


Photo by Ian Spanier



# CELEBS GALORE AT DRAGONFEST!



♦ I had a hunch that Dragonfest 2017 was going to be a must-see con the minute organizer Michael Matsuda handed me a flyer at the Martial Arts SuperShow. The roster of celebrities from fight flicks and cult classics seemed almost too good to be true. I had no choice but to tell Matsuda I would attend. Besides, since the venue in Burbank was a scant 25 miles from *Black Belt* HQ, I had little to lose.

As soon as I arrived on August 5, I hunted for a parking spot, which was surprisingly hard to find. "How could this local fan expo draw such a crowd?" I wondered. The first hint of the answer came when I took my place in line to get into the Burbank Marriott Convention Center: Right in front of me were film star Michael Jai White and his wife Gillian Waters. It was a good sign of things to come.

Inside the hall, I spotted stars like an astronomer on a mountaintop at midnight. Don Wilson, Cynthia Rothrock, Benny Urquidez, Gerald Okamura, Eric Lee, T.J. Storm, Anthony De Longis, Peter Kwong, Cheryl Wheeler Sanders, James Lew, Art Camacho, Herbert Jefferson Jr., Al Leong, Cecil Peoples — the list could go on.

All of them were attracting crowds of autograph seekers and selfie snappers. As one would expect of martial artists — which most of these actors and actresses are — they accommodated as many requests as their schedules permitted. Their fans were like kids in a candy store, stoked to get a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet an idol or three.

I'm not sure how Matsuda manages to corral so many showbiz types for his event, but his formula appears to be working. This marked the first year he had to hold Dragonfest at the Marriott, a venue that's noticeably larger than the space that was available at the nearby Martial Arts History Museum, which he also helms.

Matsuda is already laying the foundation for next year's Dragonfest. If his track record is any indication, the 14<sup>th</sup> incarnation of the event will be bigger and better than ever. There is one thing, however, that's a given: *Black Belt* will be there.

— Robert W. Young



# SPEAKING OF THE MARTIAL ARTS HISTORY MUSEUM ...

► Michael Matsuda, founder of the Martial Arts History Museum, never seems to run out of new — and clever — angles to promote his unique institution. He's engineered movie nights, book signings by authors and honor days celebrating the careers of prominent black belts, as well as many other events. While juggling those promotions, he even created a museum tour on DVD and a talk show.

Understanding that traveling long distances to visit the museum in person may be too expensive for many martial artists, Matsuda did the next best thing and brought it to them. He created a 60-minute DVD offering a virtual tour that explores nearly every facet of the museum's fascinating exhibits and artifacts, which cover an array of martial arts from around the world. Matsuda is the DVD's tour guide.

"Now, every martial artist can visit the museum virtually," Matsuda said. "You'll get a close look at the history of our arts and at the Asian cultures where they originated. You'll see how those Asian-based arts spread to America and the milestones that led to [their] explosive growth and popularity. This DVD will play a huge role in spreading the word about the museum. But more importantly, it will help keep our martial arts history alive."

The DVD is available from Amazon.com.

*Coffee at the Museum* is Matsuda's other new project, which he hosts along with former *Black Belt* cover photographer Mario Prado. The weekly 15-minute show deals with martial arts history, Asian culture and tradition, and health and fitness.

Matsuda's goal with the show is to provide a perspective on the martial arts as seen through the eyes of the museum. Topics have included a historical look at martial arts magazines and a three-part series on the impact of Bruce Lee. Upcoming episodes will feature the history of martial arts in films and an in-depth look at historical figures such as American-*kenpo* founder Ed Parker Sr. and Elvis Presley.

*Coffee at the Museum* can be found at [mamuseum.com](http://mamuseum.com) and on the museum's YouTube channel.

— John Corcoran



## FILIPINO MARTIAL ARTS EXPERT DESIGNS NEW KNIFE



◄ DoubleStar Corp., manufacturers of American-made firearms and components, announced a collaboration with Filipino martial arts instructor Ray Dionaldo. Dionaldo will render his designs into affordable production knives for DoubleStar's new Edged Weapons Division. Dionaldo is the founder of Filipino Combat Systems.

"I've always been passionate about knives and the Filipino martial arts," Dionaldo said. "Working with DoubleStar and being able to share this passion with others through my knife designs is an amazing opportunity."

Dionaldo started making Filipino-style training blades as a hobby in high school. While in college, he made bolo knives and training weap-

ons to help cover his tuition. Altogether, he has more than 40 years of experience in the blade arts. In addition to teaching FMA seminars, he works as an international blade dealer, designer and edged-weapon instructor. He was endorsed by Remy Presas before the master passed away.

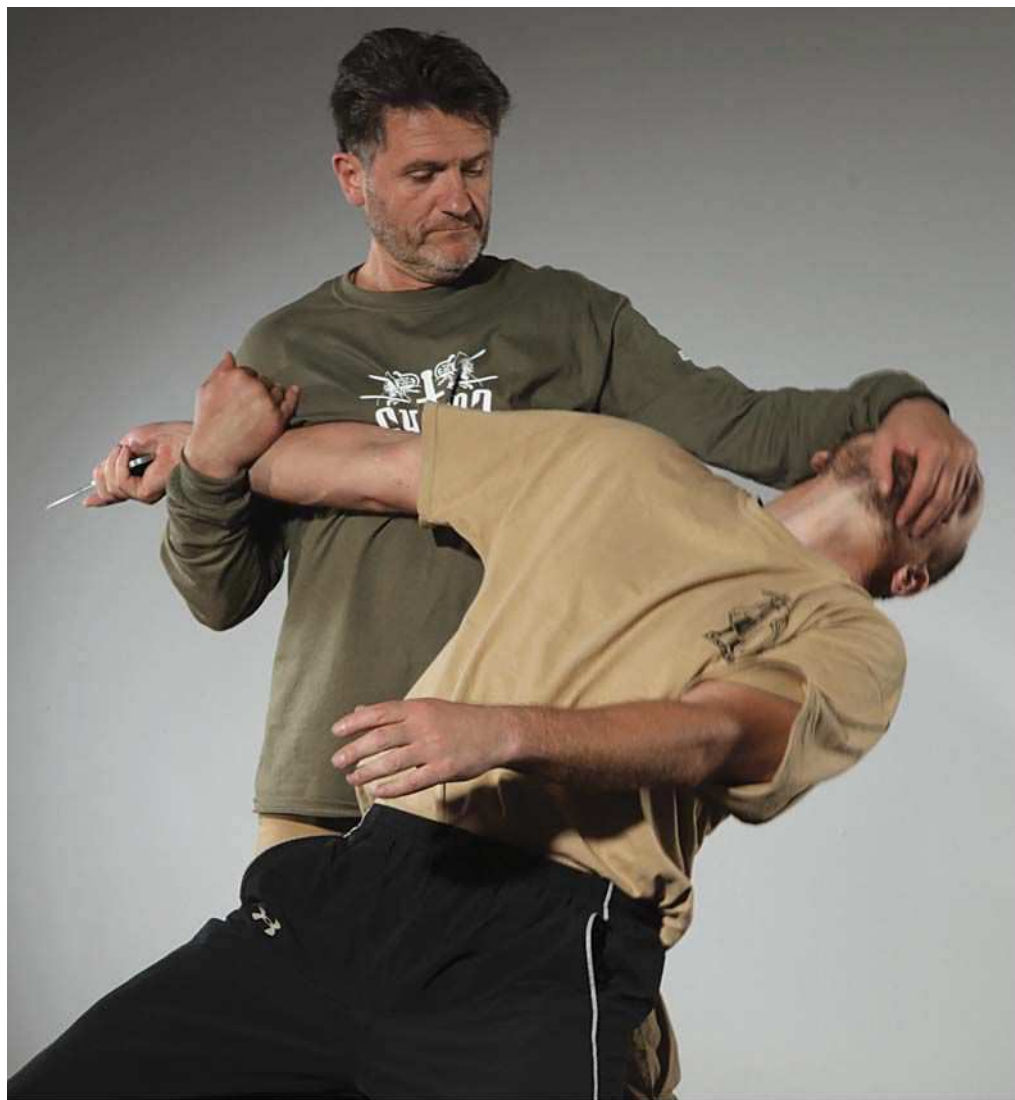
The first knife designed by Dionaldo is called the MOTAC. Intended to facilitate speed and penetration, the blade features a straight clip point and shallow belly. It benefits from DoubleStar's Dragon Hyde DLC coating and textured G-10 scales. The suggested retail price for the made-in-the-USA knife and its Kydex sheath is \$210. For more information, visit [star15.com](http://star15.com).

# VLADIMIR VASILIEV TO TEACH PERSONAL-PROTECTION SEMINAR IN JANUARY

◀ *Systema* authority and *Black Belt* Hall of Famer Vladimir Vasiliev has responded to the demands of an increasingly threatened population by scheduling a personal-protection training event on January 20-21, 2018. It's open to beginners as well as advanced martial artists.

The first day will be devoted to protecting yourself, while the second day will cover protecting others. Together, they will address awareness, pre-emption, the stages of escalation, weapons disarms, controlling distance, escape and evasion, lines of attack, stealth strikes, psychology and the role of emotions.

The training event will take place at *Systema* Headquarters Toronto School in Thornhill, Ontario, Canada. Instructor evaluations, renewals and upgrades also will be available. For more information, visit [russianmartialart.com](http://russianmartialart.com).



## NEWS BITES

- *Black Belt* Hall of Famer **Kelly McCann**, who writes the *Combatives* column, was interviewed on **Tucker Carlson Tonight** on Fox News. McCann gave safety tips after the Las Vegas massacre.
- In the aftermath of the shootings, the **UFC's Dana White** announced that the organization would donate \$1 million to a fund established to aid the victims and their families.
- **Reuters** reported that a historical martial art known as *tahteeb* is undergoing a revival in Egypt.
- *Black Belt's* most popular **Question of the Day** on Facebook was, "Is it the responsibility of your martial arts instructor to get you into shape?" More than 200 people commented.
- Our most popular social shares were a video clip posted by Channel Fight that showed a **Bruce Lee** movie battle, which scored more than 2,600 likes. Second was a post showing a *Falcon Rising* clip from **The Real Michael Jai White**. It garnered more than 1,800 likes.
- The 5<sup>th</sup> **World MMA Championships** took place on October 6-7 in **Kazakhstan**.
- Book and DVD publisher **Paladin Press** announced online that the company is going out of business. November 29 will be the last day its products are available for purchase. ✂



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## On a Link to an Article on Our Website

**BLACK BELT:** Go here to read "Tai Chi Training for Middle-Aged Martial Artists Who Refuse to Quit."

**Jeff Crook:** You don't have to change martial arts. Just change your way of thinking. Look at clips of Choshin Chibana as an old man. Still doing karate.



## On a Question of the Day

**BLACK BELT:** Why are martial arts movies so often about you-killed-my-brother-now-I'm-going-to-kill-you or you-must-fight-in-an-underground-death-match?

**D-Rome:** Family is the tie that binds! Fighting over a girl does not have the same emotional feeling on-screen as fighting for family.

**Anthony Thomas:** Because they consistently sell. No need for great writers, just competent martial artists and choreographers.

## On a Photo of John Hackleman We Posted From The Pit

**Deverand Palmer:** Sorry, but why are his toenails painted?

**D-Jay Baker:** You get that after 5<sup>th</sup> degree.



## On a Link to a Third-Party Story

**BLACK BELT:** Go here to read "Steven Seagal: I became friends with Putin over martial arts."

**Kenneth Baillie:** I don't waste my time talking politics with a martial artist and, from the quotes, neither does he. Seagal has been ridiculed and hounded over his personal choices, but it's his business. As are the friends he chooses to make. Haters will hate, but I believe it's simple jealousy of his wealth and successes with aikido, Buddhism and his earlier movies. Love him or hate him, he's a martial artist and a damn good one at that. No, I'm not talking about his movies. Watch his seminars and the classes he conducted all over the world.



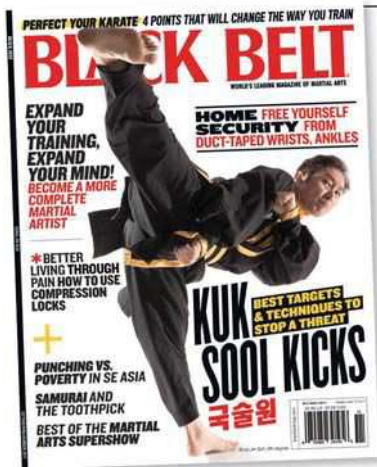
## On an Essay in Our Recent Issue

**Phil Humphries:** What a fine article in the Editor's Note section of the Octo-

ber/November 2017 issue by Robert W. Young, titled "Remember Our Roots." An excellent piece — hope everyone reads it.



## On the Wisdom of a Kuk Sool Master



October-November issue: “As martial artists, we’re interested in self-defense, doing just enough damage to stop the attacker. Most of the time, we don’t need or want to kill the person. ... You don’t want to send the person to the hospital; you want to take him out of the fight so you can escape. ... Hitting anybody with more force than necessary is abusing the martial arts.” Bravo!

**Michelle D Long:** In this day and age, it’s easy to drink the Kool-Aid and believe that every self-defense situation the average person is involved in will be either a life-or-death battle with a terrorist or a full-contact MMA bout. Yes, those do take place, but most of us are unlikely to ever experience them.

Which is why it was so refreshing to read the comments from *kuk sool won* master Sung Jin Suh in your

## On a New Twitter Record

BLACK BELT tweeted a link to a trailer for *American Assassin*, a new *John Wick*-esque action flick that features plenty of armed and unarmed martial arts. The tweet set a record for us with 117 likes and 34 retweets.



## On Our Ability to Read Minds

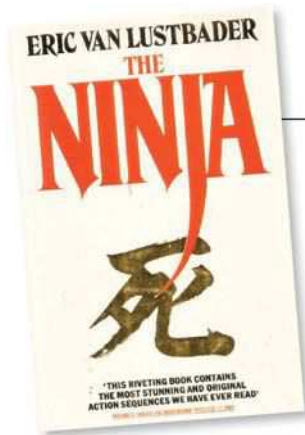
BLACK BELT: Who remembers all those ninja novels written by Eric Van Lustbader in the 1980s and '90s?"

**Steve Torres:** I was just thinking about them this morning!

**Chad Laibly:** Remembers? They are all on my bookshelf right now. *The Ninja*, *The Miko*, *White Ninja*, *Jian*, etc.

**Ken Morrow:** The first two Nicholas Linneer novels [by Lustbader] were great. Then he went all “mystical” into esoteric Buddhism and REALLY hyper-exaggerated tantric “magic.” But, yes, I read them all.

**Chris Willis:** Yes, the first two were excellent! Had a hard time getting through the others. Was hoping a really well-done film treatment or miniseries would be made of them. Linneer is a great character.



## On a Question of the Day

BLACK BELT: The first time your martial arts instructor had you break a board, what technique did you use?

**David Nelson Anderson:** I see many comments that boards don’t hit back ... the reason board breaking is used in martial arts is to train the mind to overcome the limits the mind sets for the body. The body is capable of more than the mind tells you it is.

**Melissa Folkerts:** I’ve never broken boards, but I accidentally cracked an elbow once with an Americana. I’m guessing that doesn’t count.

**Jason Thalken:** I used a secret pressure-point technique carefully applied to one of the board’s outer meridians, draining it of its *chi*.



## Preparation vs. Prevention in the Battle Against Terrorism

Anyone who pays attention to the news knows that a seemingly endless succession of attacks — active shooter, edged-weapon, vehicular and so on — is occurring. It's emotionally and mentally fatiguing to watch from a distance, as well as both terrifying and enraging to experience in person. It's also important for everyone to recalibrate and think about the realities of these senseless acts of violence.

by Kelly McCann



Photo by Robert Reiff



**T**he first thing to remember is that our 24/7 endless news cycle makes these events appear much more prevalent than they are. There's a phenomenon created by cable news: The earth shrinks! Our earth is a total of 196.9 million square miles. That's huge, but cable news makes an immediate around-the-world impact, giving viewers the impression that all these occurrences are happening in an artificially close geography. They're not.

Next, we need to accept the fact — and it is a fact — that there's no way to prevent *all* these incidents from taking place. We are going to live with these situations. In many ways, September 11 opened a Pandora's box. It uncorked the evil genie, and there's no way to stuff his nasty ass back into the bottle. The most significant thing the world learned on that fateful day was that the United States and its citizens are not invincible. It encouraged and inspired (to use the name of an online *jihadi* magazine) acts of mass violence against us. *Inspire* magazine directly promulgates a violent ideology that's harmful to us all. Worse, it provides potential attackers with concepts and detailed information about how to proceed.

**ALTHOUGH THE U.S.** government has created helpful messaging and has dedicated outlets to the collection of suspicious or potentially dangerous information in an effort to prevent attacks, many people, despite their concerns about being targeted, are still reluctant to use them. Some have a vague feeling they'll be ridiculed for overreacting or be swept up into something they'd rather not be.

In still other instances, help desks, hotlines and call centers are overwhelmed by leads. Often, they can't handle the volume of information in a timely manner. That's a shame because there are usually actions or behaviors observed by average citizens that, properly articulated to the police, could be the indicator needed to compel official intervention *before* an attack fully manifests.

**WHAT THIS MEANS** to you should be obvious. *You are responsible for you.* Although you may not be able to help avert an attack, you certainly can pre-

pare yourself for being caught in one. That's actually your first critical preparatory step: accepting your potential presence in an attack. Visualize it as clearly as possible — how you would feel, the environmental conditions (panic, fear, irrationality, wounded people, screaming, frantic behavior, motion, etc.). Don't leave out anything.

Remember that regardless of your training, a byproduct of being suddenly confronted by a life-threatening situation can triple your heart rate. You will not be 100 percent. Imagine doing a high-intensity interval training session and what that makes you feel like. Now imagine the onset of that condition being immediate and still having to make rational decisions when the consequences are dire.

Understand the difference between concealment and cover. Concealment simply masks you from the attacker's line of sight. Cover, on the other hand, masks you from his line of sight in addition to providing impenetrable protection from bullets and shrapnel. Watch footage from active-shooter situations, and you'll see people choosing between the two, often poorly. Force yourself to breathe, use your powers of observation, select a position to move to and scat! Repeat this over and over, moving farther and farther away from the crisis point.

**CATHY LANIER**, the former D.C. police chief and current NFL director of security, stunned the nation when she said on *60 Minutes* that since most of the killing occurs within the first 10 minutes, people should be prepared to handle the situation themselves because it's unlikely police will arrive in time to prevent it. I'll go a step further and say that if you're fairly close to the attacker, you have no logical option other than to attack him.

When should you attack? The choice may not be yours to make if the

exigency of the situation warrants. Otherwise, attack when you're behind the attacker or to the back side of his strong arm — if a shooter is holding a weapon in his right hand, for example. This prevents him from articulating his elbow and orienting the muzzle or point of an edged weapon toward you. Attack when there's a lull in the shooting — if he experiences a malfunction or when he's reloading, for example. Colin Ferguson, the man who committed the attack on the Long Island Rail Road in 1993, was taken down by three passengers when he attempted to reload his handgun for the third time.

**HOW SHOULD YOU ATTACK?** The most important thing is to gain control over the muzzle of the gun and point it in a relatively safe direction. This is your opportunity to use all the things you've learned in the *dojo*. You have to stop the person, and that entails seriously injuring him or killing him. In other words, you need to make him unconscious or dead. Ineffectual striking, choking or any action that fails to make him stop likely will result in the death of others and possibly yourself. Remember that.

Finally, know how to take basic lifesaving steps: stopping bleeding (direct pressure, proper use of a tourniquet), clearing the airway, performing CPR, using an automated external defibrillator and so on. Sadly, we live in a time when any of us may be required to step up in an emergency. Ask yourself if you're prepared. Or do you still consider these emergencies the domain of the police and first responders? ❧

*For information about Kelly McCann's combatives courses, which can be streamed anytime, anywhere to your digital device, visit [aimfitnessnetwork.com/blackbelt](http://aimfitnessnetwork.com/blackbelt).*

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*There's no way to prevent all these incidents from taking place. We are going to live with these situations.*

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## Boxing Hits the Road With Freddie Welsh

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the year 1886 to be exact, a lad named Frederick Hall Thomas was born in Pontypridd, South Wales. He'd grow up to rename himself Freddie Welsh after his home country. As a matter of fact, during your next bar-trivia night, you can proudly exclaim that Freddie Welsh was the only boxing champion in history whose last name was also his nationality.

by Mark Hatmaker

**W**elsh did some fighting in his home country, then crossed the pond and landed in Philadelphia, where he competed for a while before returning to his homeland. He'd cross the Atlantic several times in his career, which saw him pick up the British lightweight championship belt and the world lightweight title.

**THOSE ZIGZAGS** over the ocean allowed this perceptive fighter to glean valuable tips and tactics from both the British and the American schools of boxing. He eventually forged his own style of pugilism. Here's one of his observations:

"The English boxer is too orthodox; he sticks to his style, despite all else. The American fighter conforms to the situation. If he misses a left hook, he swings right back with the right. The English boxer swings back to his position and starts again."

Welsh constructed a mongrel hybrid of English and American styles that worked wonders. When another champ, the formidable Abe Attell, was asked how a person might succeed against such a foe, he said:

"How do you beat Freddie Welsh? If you can lay a glove on that guy five times in 20 rounds, you'll get the verdict, sure! If you don't want to be made to look like a sucker, take my advice: Go away and train. Train good and hard. Then sprain your ankle the night before the fight."

Many things come to mind when examining the strong points of Freddie Welsh, including his unerring jab,

his constant and baffling movement, and his indefatigable stamina. For now, though, let's concentrate on how he built his endurance while skipping traditional roadwork.

**DID THAT GET** your attention? No roadwork. Well, almost none.

Welsh did not log mile after endless mile. Instead, he chose to use sprints to get the job done. He believed that a series of hard, fast sprints would be just as effective, if not more so. Furthermore, his training method would take less time and allow a boxer to put more hours into the matter at hand: boxing.

What Welsh stumbled onto at the beginning of the last century — that sprints can take the place of long, drawn-out endurance work — has been borne out by contemporary exercise science. High-intensity training (HIT) in many studies has performed just as well as or better than traditional long slow distance (LSD) training.

Welsh reasoned that boxers aren't long-distance runners but are athletes who must produce short bursts of maximum effort between brief lulls involving relatively less energy expenditure. Long-distance running, he believed, taught one to plod as opposed to explode.

**LEST YOU THINK THAT**, having failed to log long miles, Welsh would fade in the later rounds of his bouts ... nope. He fought in numerous 20-rounders — 82, as a matter of fact — and according to those in and out of the ring, he was just as fresh at the end of his fights as he was at the beginning.

It's useful to remember that Welsh did not need the one undisputed benefit of roadwork: the weight-cutting effect. As a lightweight with no tendency to balloon between matches, he found sprints the ideal way to go.

With all that in mind, if you're a disciplined fighter who stays close to his or her fight weight most of the time, you might be able to make use of the Freddie Welsh sprint-roadwork approach. If, however, one of the goals of your training is to lose weight, traditional methods might serve you better. ✂

● **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** For more information about Mark Hatmaker, visit [extremeselfprotection.com](http://extremeselfprotection.com).



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## Judo Randori in Five Countries, Part 1

*"Judo is the way to the most effective use of both physical and spiritual strength." — Jigoro Kano*

by Antonio Graceffo

**L**ike most MMA practitioners, I've had some exposure to Brazilian *jiu-jitsu*. Judo, however, remained a mystery to me — until I had the chance to practice the art in 2014 at Shanghai University of Sport in China. I very much enjoyed my study of the "gentle way," and more important, I added judo founder Jigoro Kano to my list of personal heroes.

Like many of the journeys people take through the martial arts, the path that led me to judo was indirect and unplanned. Eventually, however, it guided me to five countries, and along the way, I learned that judo is one of the best arts when it comes to inclusivity because it's suitable for practice by children and seniors, as well as men and women. Furthermore, because it's an international and Olympic sport, it can

be a vehicle to help a person travel the world. It's easy to find friendly *judoka* to train with in nearly every country.

The aspect of judo I found most appealing, however, was its place on a very short list of martial arts in which students actually "fight" in sparring and competition. In other words, practitioners not only learn the art and the techniques, but they also immediately test themselves against uncooperative opponents in *randori*.

Yet another appealing aspect of judo was that two people can fight full force without injuring each other. Unlike in the other arts I enjoy, such as boxing and *muay Thai*, in judo you can fight hard and still show up at work the next day.

Photos Courtesy of Antonio Graceffo



These are just a few of the reasons I've always appreciated judo as the embodiment of the true spirit of the martial arts, in which a smaller person can defeat a bigger person by redirecting his force — without doing him harm.

**MY FIRST EXPOSURE** to judo came in 2011 when I was in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It was in my second MMA fight, and I was submitted by a Malaysian judo instructor and former national champion named Abdul Hadi. At the time, I knew this was not a typical judo experience because we weren't wearing uniforms and, rather than using a judo throw to take me down, he'd kicked me in the head. After recovering from his armbar, I decided to find out what real judo was no matter how long it took.

In 2013 I began my Ph.D. studies at Shanghai University of Sport, where my doctoral dissertation was titled "A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Chinese and Western Wrestling." While judo was technically outside my research area, I discovered that an argument had been raging for decades, with pro-Chinese and pro-Japanese factions arguing whether Chinese *shuai chiao* was descended from judo or whether judo had been influenced by *shuai chiao*.

After some serious investigation, I concluded that wrestling was a nearly universal sport, practiced in some form in almost every culture on earth. When you study multiple styles — such as Greco-Roman, freestyle, Khmer and Mongolian wrestling, as well as *shuai chiao*, *ssirum* and *sambo* — you find that they often share common throwing techniques. This is most likely because, as Bruce Lee once said, there is only one type of human body with two arms and two legs, and for that reason, there is only one style of fighting.

Believing that the similarities in the various wrestling arts were the result of the human condition, I had no interest in trying to prove if judo and *shuai chiao* shared a common origin or if one influenced the other. Much more important to me was simply exploring judo and finding out exactly what it was. Then I would look at the similarities and differences between it and Chinese wrestling and MMA.

**IN MY SECOND** year of wrestling and research at SUS, I met Lukai, a former

national judo champ and current member of the university's professional judo team. The judo and wrestling teams trained in the same hall on campus, and each day in between wrestling drills, I'd watch the judoka. Some of their drills were similar to things we'd done when I lived in the MMA academy. Some looked like wrestling drills, while others were unique to judo.

One Friday evening, I was doing some informal wrestling with my teammates when Lukai walked in and began teaching a private judo lesson. I recognized him from morning practice, but we'd never spoken. When he finished, I found the courage to speak. Being the only foreigner in the wrestling program, I didn't really have to introduce myself, so after a few awkward moments of chitchat, we stepped onto the mat.

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*The first time he  
took me down,  
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foot sweep.  
Straight away I  
learned that the  
judo sweep can  
be extremely  
powerful against  
a wrestler.*

---

The first time he took me down, it was with a foot sweep. Straight away I learned that the judo sweep can be extremely powerful against a wrestler. It's particularly effective against an MMA fighter because the subtle movement can sneak in below the line of sight.

In the next round, I managed to grab one of Lukai's legs and go for a single-leg takedown. But after having trained in judo twice a day since he was 9, he possessed incredible balance and proved nearly impossible to take to the mat. I abandoned the leg and went for a body lock. I managed to lock my arms around his torso and started applying pressure to take him

down when he drove into me, hip-first, causing me to land on my back with him on top. It was a technique I'd never experienced. That's when I asked Lukai to teach me judo.

**OUR TRAINING SESSIONS** began with a series of basic exercises similar to the warm-ups you see in BJJ or MMA schools. They included rolling, break-falls and shrimping. One of the cruxes of judo is the over-the-shoulder throw known as *seoinage*, and a great deal of time is devoted to rehearsing the body positioning it requires.

On the judo side of the training hall, the team had attached to the wall industrial-size rubber bands and bungee cords that judoka used to practice grasping, turning and throwing movements. When the team members weren't training here, they were fine-tuning their grip. In Chinese wrestling, we had a drill called "gunfighter" in which the coach blows a whistle to signal the wrestlers to shoot their hands out and secure a dominant grip on their opponent's jacket. The judo practitioners performed similar drills, but of course they had been modified to account for the long sleeves of the judo *gi*. (The jackets used in Chinese wrestling are short-sleeved.) I found that I was constantly forgetting to protect my wrists, which enabled my opponent to easily secure a dominant grip.

Another difference I noted is that in Chinese wrestling, when gripping your opponent's short sleeves, it's legal to put your hand inside his uniform and grip it from the inside out. You're also permitted to grip the inside of the collar behind his head, as well as his belt in front and in back. In contrast, I learned, judo doesn't allow you to grip inside your opponent's uniform. But you can grasp his excess sleeve material for control.

Each of my initial judo sessions — with the constant gripping and pulling — left me in pain. My fingers literally ached, and my hands felt arthritic. Little did I know, it was just the beginning of the latest chapter in my martial arts education. ✕

*(To be continued.)*

Antonio Graceffo's book *Warrior Odyssey* is available on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).



## The Man Who Changed the World

In the martial arts, few individuals honestly can be said to have changed history. Among the handful who have, perhaps none generates a wider range of emotions than Rorion Gracie.

by Mark Jacobs

Opinions about him vary. Some admire him, while others view him as the type of evil mastermind one typically sees in a Bond film. But no one can deny that he's exerted as big an influence on the contemporary martial arts scene as anyone alive.

**RORION WAS THE MAN** who took a chance and came to America to spread the gospel of a then largely unknown fighting method called Gracie *jiu-jitsu*. Interestingly, some have claimed he came, in large part, just to escape the shadow of his older cousin Rolls Gracie. Considered the premier jiu-jitsu fighter of the 1970s, Rolls was raised in the same household as Rorion, training under Rorion's father Helio Gracie. While his critics imply this led to a sense of rivalry and even jealousy, Rorion insisted nothing could be further from the truth.

"Rolls was my idol," he said. "He was like my older brother. Sure, there was some competition there, but I always respected him."

Rorion said that rather than leaving Brazil to escape Rolls' shadow, it was Rolls who initially inspired him. "He came here to live with his mother in New York, and when he told me about it, when he described the sensation of taking off in an airplane, it was so exciting I said, 'I have to experience that.' Rolls encouraged me to come here."

**INITIALLY TRAVELING** to America in 1969, Rorion, then 17 years old, promptly lost all his money. What was supposed to be a brief vacation became a nearly yearlong adventure that found him flipping burgers at White Castle,

Photo by Rick Husted



attending Jimi Hendrix concerts and even living on the beach in Hawaii.

"I like the idea of unpredictability," Rorion said. "I feel comfortable with not knowing what will happen a half-hour from now. I think I learned that early on in my life."

For a man so comfortable with the unpredictable, though, Rorion Gracie always seemed to have a clear and calculated path he looked to follow. He attended law school, not with the intention of practicing law but with an eye on enhancing his professional image for his return to America, where he planned to firmly establish Gracie jiu-jitsu. In that, he succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams — except his own.

**RORION'S SON** Renner Gracie knows from personal experience the kind of pressure his father must have felt being raised in a family of eminent fighters.

"Growing up for him was probably similar to what I experienced," Renner said. "There's a lot of self-imposed pressure. He grew up in this ultra-disciplined family where jiu-jitsu was almost a religion. But he came here on his own where there was no pressure to maintain the family business. It was just his own sink-or-swim attitude of doing it every day, teaching jiu-jitsu one day at a time, that made it work."

Employed as a house cleaner before eventually getting some extra work in films, Rorion began teaching out of his garage, offering one free lesson to everyone he met. All that time, he never doubted it would lead to much bigger things.

"I told them all I was going to change the world," Rorion said. "Not for one day did I doubt that. That's because the system itself is so efficient. It's like a bubble — it's going to come up to the surface eventually."

Rorion caught a break when a friendly assistant director got him hired as a technical adviser for the fight scenes in *Lethal Weapon*, which culminated with star Mel Gibson engaging in a memorable ground fight against bad guy Gary Busey. It was unlike anything previously seen in movies and garnered Rorion some notoriety.

His idea to market *Gracie in Action* videos, in which he assembled footage of no-holds-barred challenge matches sent to him by friends and family,

was another brilliant stroke. In the martial arts landscape of the 1980s, where grappling typically took a back seat to striking and few ever thought about mixing the two, *Gracie in Action* seemed to strike a cord with younger martial artists looking for more realism in their training.

A hyperbolic article in *Playboy* proclaiming Rorion "the toughest man in the United States" generated additional buzz. Soon, more than 100 students were coming to his garage to train, with a waiting list of almost 100 desperate to join. After bringing his brothers over to help him teach, by 1990 he determined that the time had come to open his first academy in Torrance, California. It was also around this time when he began brainstorming with promoter Art Davie for an event designed to showcase jiu-jitsu to a TV audience. Thus was born the Ultimate Fighting Championship.

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*"You can't have jiu-jitsu that just relies on physical attributes. My kind of jiu-jitsu is the kind you can do for your whole life."*

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**WHEN YOUNGER BROTHER** Royce won the first UFC, the public profile of jiu-jitsu skyrocketed, setting off a chain reaction that led to the grappling boom and the rise of mixed martial arts as a major spectator sport. Not even someone as foresighted as Rorion Gracie could maintain control of things.

As UFC matches began running too long for broadcasts, necessitating the imposition of time limits, Rorion decided to sell his share of the business. With the sport already in distress because of public outcry, no one could envision it becoming the multibillion-dollar industry it is today.

But Rorion said he doesn't regret getting out when he did. He believed time limits and the use of judges to decide the outcome of fights detracted from his original intent.

"It was no longer a real fight," he said. "It was entertainment. I understand from a business point of view why they

have to do these things, but money was never the reason for my work."

Rorion said he no longer watches mixed martial arts, but he does note with a sense of satisfaction that almost all modern fighters employ jiu-jitsu as part of their arsenal. He said he also has little interest in what's happening across most of the contemporary jiu-jitsu scene. While many now view the style of jiu-jitsu taught at his Torrance academy as outdated, he sees the type frequently taught elsewhere as too competition oriented, geared more toward athletes rather than normal people interested in self-defense.

"You can't have jiu-jitsu that just relies on physical attributes," he said. "My kind of jiu-jitsu is the kind you can do for your whole life."

**PART OF** the negativity toward Rorion and his style of jiu-jitsu stems from his aggressive moves to control the Gracie brand. At one point, he trademarked the name, which alienated other family members. He also had a falling out with his own brothers, who eventually left his academy to start their own schools.

"Everyone points at the other person and says it's their fault," Renner said. "I used to believe the problems were always my uncles' fault, but as I get older, I see there are two sides to every story. Each one of them thinks they're right and they're the best. And they are. Rickson was the best fighter in the family, Royce is the best-known and my dad is the best entrepreneur. When you have a family of fighters and mix that with egos, it can be cause for a lot of disagreement. And growing up in that environment is tricky."

While Renner and his brothers now tend to most of the daily chores of running what's become a worldwide operation of affiliated jiu-jitsu academies, complete with an online-learning program that's generated controversy in its own right, Rorion in a sense has moved on to what he believes is even bigger. His new goal is to promote the Gracie Diet, which was developed by his uncle Carlos. Rorion said that although jiu-jitsu has touched millions of people around the world, he anticipates the Gracie Diet will eventually affect the whole planet.

While it's a rather grandiose plan, Rorion fully expects it to happen. "It's going to change the world," he said. "I've done it once. Why not twice?" ❧



## Do You Trust Your Sensei?

Here's one for you to kick around with your *dojo* mates the next time you're relaxing after training: It was back in the 1960s, a time when the Japanese dominated — almost laughably so — the international karate competition scene.

by Dave Lowry

**F**or years, they had toyed with Western competitors, scoring on them almost at will. Much of their dominance was of a psychological nature. Karate was, after all, “Japanese.” To face a Japanese opponent was intimidating for many *karateka* simply because of the other person’s nationality.

That dominance was not compromised in any dramatic, single moment, but as the decade progressed, a hand-

ful of Americans worked their way up on the circuit. It started in 1967, when a team of American *karateka* defeated a Japanese team in an international goodwill tournament. The event had enormous repercussions in Japanese karate circles. Americans began to develop more technical skills. They began to defeat Japanese competitors, and the whole mystique of the karate expert who is invincible merely because of his race started to erode fast.

**AT THIS TIME**, one of the most talented and formidable American *karateka* was making a name for himself. The name I’ll use for him is Bob. (He’s still alive, and I don’t wish him any attention he may not desire.) He trained under a Japanese *sensei*, and he trained hard. He was physically large and imposing and terrifically strong.

Still, it was Bob’s remarkable use of technique, applied with an amazing precision, that elevated him in karate





## *Was the sensei bowing to pressure from his Japanese counterparts to take Bob out because his appearance at the competition might threaten their dominance?*

winning often enough in national and international events that it looked as if he might be one of those karateka who would write a new chapter in the history of the art.

**A PARTICULAR** international championship was months away. Bob had trained steadily and was in peak condition. He would travel to Japan to compete against some of the most-senior karateka in the world. He was anticipating the event; it would offer a chance for him to prove himself and prove his art and his teacher in a dramatic, very public fashion.

Bob appeared at the dojo one evening for class and was summoned into the office of his teacher. His teacher, not incidentally, was among the most respected and senior karate sensei in the world. The teacher was, even though only in his early 40s, already a legend. He was Japanese. He was known for pushing his students to the point of exhaustion and beyond, refining their technique, honing their spirit. For his students — including Bob — he was less a teacher and more a reincarnation of a samurai, respected, even adored as a stern but caring father figure. For most of his students, he embodied the karate spirit.

“You are not going to participate in the international competition in Japan,” Bob’s teacher told him. “It is not good for your development in the art to put so much emphasis on tournaments. You need now to focus on karate as an art, not as a sport.”

And that was it. After years of sweat and sacrifice, Bob’s tournament career was over.

**I DON’T KNOW BOB.** I do suspect there must have been a lot of conflicting thoughts for him at that moment. Most crucially, I bet he was considering two perspectives. He was beginning to threaten the Japanese domination of international karate competition.

He had to wonder if this was really a matter of his sensei forbidding him to compete because the sensei wanted him to focus on facets of karate other than tournaments. Or was the sensei bowing to pressure from his Japanese counterparts to take Bob out because his appearance at the competition might threaten their dominance?

Was Bob’s sensei testing him? Did he want to see if Bob would trust him completely by accepting his order to stop doing what was so important to him? Was his sensei trying to teach him a lesson, to show him that he was too focused on competition? Was his sensei trying to actually acknowledge Bob’s maturation, telling him, in effect, “You’re good enough that you no longer have anything to prove in competition”?

Or, after all those years of submitting to his sensei and trusting him, was Bob finally having his eyes opened to the real character of a man he’d respected and who did not deserve that respect? Was Bob being told that, for all his teacher’s accomplishments, that teacher was in reality a petty little man whose warped and racist views outweighed his sense of obligation to his own student?

I don’t know. I don’t know how Bob weighed all those questions — or if he entertained them at all. Maybe he just blindly trusted his teacher and gave it no more thought. I do believe, though, that this is something every karateka should consider, particularly those who have a long and close relationship with their teacher. How much do you trust him? Enough to follow his dictates without hesitation? Maybe the real question is not how much you trust him but rather how much you *should* trust him. ✂

circles. He once scored using a knee strike. Think about how difficult that point must have been. Bob trained with near-obsessive intensity. Always first in the dojo, he often stayed long after others had left to engage in hours of free sparring with visiting Japanese practitioners. He devoted his life to karate.

Bob won national championships year after year. Further, in matches against Japanese karateka, he was winning, as well — not all the time, but more and more. And some of his wins were being scored against senior-level Japanese karateka. He was defeating men who were, in fact, professional karate teachers, who had been sent by their organizations to countries around the world to instruct. Bob was

● **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Dave Lowry has written *Karate Way* since 1986. For more information about his articles and books, visit [blackbeltmag.com](http://blackbeltmag.com) and type his name in the search box.



Atomic Blonde

## Assassins, Hit Men and Bodyguards

by Dr. Craig D. Reid

**A**TOMIC BLONDE When this film hit theaters, it was quickly touted as a female version of *John Wick*. “In what way?” I wondered. Was it premise, character, training or fights? Was it even a fair comparison? I had to find out.

Set on the eve of the fall of the Berlin Wall, *Atomic Blonde*, which is directed by David Leitch, tells the story of MI6’s most indomitable agent, a woman named Lorraine Broughton (Charlize Theron). She’s sent into East Berlin on a solo mission to retrieve valued assets that hold a key that could shorten or lengthen the Cold War.

Since *Kingsman*’s 2014 release — and star Colin Firth’s exhilarating three-minute, one-take pugilistic storm of spins, twists and ballistics against 100 attackers in a church — other action films have tried to create something similar and perhaps outdo Firth. Such is the case with *Atomic Blonde*.

Theron began training shortly after appearing in *Mad Max: Fury Road*. She reportedly sparred with Keanu Reeves while he was preparing for *John Wick: Chapter 2*. Noticing Theron’s adeptness

and the fact that she could remember a string of 30 techniques, Leitch created a seven-minute, one-camera, single-edit battle in which she trounces the baddies and reportedly does all her own body-crunching stunts. It’s the crowning combative achievement of the film.

In reality, long fights are tiring, so it’s logical that when someone crashes into a wall or piece of furniture, he or she would need time to regroup. In movie shoots, this can give actors precious moments to think about their next move before they do it. In *Atomic Blonde*, when the camera follows the actors, some angles show Theron’s face while others hide it, and that’s OK. But there might be evidence of a Texas switch in which stunt people replace the actors in the same shot. When you watch it, pay attention to the scenes in which Theron’s coat wafts in front of the camera and the camera swoops around her and the goons for a split second. There’s no one in frame, but in the next frame, we see the action from a different angle. Possible editing point? You decide.

Nevertheless, I thought *Atomic Blonde* was a compelling action film, one that’s very much worth watching. In my opinion, Charlize Theron is not a female John Wick; she’s an evolving Jane Wick.

**THE HITMAN’S BODYGUARD** Directed by Patrick Hughes, this is a nostalgic buddy-comedy actioner about derelict bodyguard Bryce (Ryan Reynolds), who is browbeaten into protecting and transporting his mortal enemy, the demented assassin Kincaid (Samuel L. Jackson), to The Hague so he can testify against a psychotic war-criminal dictator.

In Hollywood, when actors throw punches or react to being hit, those are considered stunts. This is why actors often say, “I do my own stunts.” In *Hitman’s Bodyguard*, you can see that it’s Reynolds bashing away, but in interviews, he never boasted that he did all his own stunts. I respect him for that.

Back to the action: Bryce’s white-knuckle duels aren’t fancy. Most sequences are snap-edit combinations of the usual unarmed skills shot with shifting cameras and tight angles. This can make watching the fights frustrating because it hides the action, points out the actors’ shortcomings and tells us that the filmmakers took the easy way out. (Inserting footage





The Hitman's Bodyguard

of stunt doubles is much simpler to pull off.) For some reason, though, this MO works in *Hitman's Bodyguard*, perhaps because the fights are short and Bryce's facial reactions add to the comedic sparring.

During Bryce and Kincaid's gunfight, which seems to have been influenced by Christian Bale's final brawl in *Equilibrium* (2002), the way Bryce tries to keep the going-off guns from blasting his girlfriend makes the sequence ... comically cute. In another, Bryce swings an ax at the main villain and displays wide-eyed confusion. He's left holding a broken ax handle, and his foe fights back even harder, as if nothing happened. It's all done with minimal movement and a humorous payoff. Overall, it makes the film work.

**THE VILLAINESS** Here we go again! Directed by Jung Byung-gil, this is another movie that's been likened to a female John Wick flick. Sook-hee (Kim Ok-bin) is a twice-trained assassin recruited by a government assassination squad that wants to take out a cunning drug lord who has a two-faced history with Sook-hee.

Fortunately, the actress who plays Soo-hee has some real martial arts skills. The puppy-eyed, Twiggy-esque Kim, 30, began martial arts training

when she was a child. Over the ensuing years, she earned a second-degree black belt in *taekwondo* and a third degree in *hapkido*. That's impressive.

Influenced by *Hardcore Henry* (2015), *Villainess* opens with long, unedited first-person-perspective shots of Sook-hee, armed with guns and blades as she walks down a series of corridors and staircases. She kills 40 assailants.

The rest of the movie's fights reveal hyper-dynamic energy as things seemingly explode and implode in the same shot. The irony is that comparing this film to *John Wick* and *Atomic Blonde* doesn't do justice to it. The

fight scenes in *Villainess* are superior. That's not because of the physicality or the choreography; it's the result of Jung's camerawork.

I call Jung's innovative shooting approach "pingpong-ball choreography." Envision the shots you'd get if the camera were a pingpong ball rebounding between actors and bouncing off walls, the ground and the ceiling as it occasionally smashes through windows and doors or is thrown off a roof. At the same time, you also see each actor's physical and facial reactions to the ball as it speeds toward him or her, makes contact and rebounds away.



The Villainess



Kingsman:  
The  
Golden  
Circle

It works wonderfully. Interestingly, I believe that if *Villainess*' fights had been shot wide angle at 24 frames per second, the movie would languish in mediocrity.

#### KINGSMAN: THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

This Matthew Vaughn-directed movie is a fun romp-about with stylized action and fight sequences shot with OMG appeal and armed with subtle British humor. It even has Elton John doing kung fu while wearing his wild *Crocodile Rock* costume of old.

The movie resulted when Vaughn crossed James Bond with James T. West, giving birth to a hybrid named *Kingsman: The Golden Circle*. In it, Eggsy (Taron Egerton) and the Kingsmen unite with their cowboy-cultured American counterparts, aka the Statesmen, to take down a lunatic vamp who wants to get rich by legally controlling the world's illegal drug trade.

Of all the actors who performed most of their own fights in the outrageously smooth melees we see in *Golden Circle*, it's Colin Firth (playing Harry Hart) who has emerged as the next action hero. His suave manners-maketh-man brawl in a British pub and his [dynamic] church fight are dazzling. Amazingly, all this comes from an actor who knew nothing about action, fights or guns.

*Golden Circle* has launched another action star: Pedro Pascal, who portrays the Marlboro Man-looking Statesman agent named Whiskey. He handily sends thugs flying, cuts opponents down to size with his electric lasso and quick-draws with two twirling 12-shooters. The passing of the fighting torch is symbolically represented in the movie when Whiskey performs the manners-maketh-man fight in an American barroom brawl that Hart

began — and lost.

Vaughn apparently believes that film fights need to return to their roots, which means actors doing physical things and cameras actually shooting them. "Kids today see CGI and say, 'Whatever!'" Vaughn said in an interview. "It's not as impressive anymore. To me, if you can think it, you can do it — then do it by camera. Doing things by camera is the future."

**AMERICAN ASSASSIN** Directed by Michael Cuesta and based on Vince Flynn's book of the same name, this film stars Dylan O'Brien as Mitch Rapp, an assassin recruited by a CIA counterterrorism unit to hunt for a rogue agent bent on helping terrorists gain nuclear capabilities. Even more intriguing than that is what took place when O'Brien had to learn martial arts to prepare for his role.

In March 2016, the actor suffered a life-threatening injury while shooting a stunt that went awry on the set of *The Maze Runner: The Death Cure*. He withdrew from public life for six months

while depression, fear and PTSD put him in a dark place. The accident made him question everything, and he wound up doubting that he'd ever be the person he was.

Before *Death Cure*, O'Brien had committed to *American Assassin* and was to begin filming later in the year. Refusing to renege, he agreed to spend two months getting in physical shape, learning fight choreography and adding muscle to his deteriorated frame.

My friend Roger Yuan (*Shanghai Noon*) was asked to train O'Brien. "Dylan went through a horrific accident," Yuan said. "I trained him physically and guided him on the emotional and psychological aspects of what he experienced so he wouldn't be victimized by the accident and [so he could] use hard parts of life as tools to become stronger."

The more he practiced, the more O'Brien keyed in to the meditative, self-exploratory side of the martial arts, which proved transformational for him. The experience also added richness to his character's development.

The choreography for O'Brien's close-quarters fights is simple, with the star performing only a few techniques at a time. Most of it is shot with shaky tight angles. On the few occasions when the camerawork is done with wide angles, it's evident that the star is struggling with some of the movements. Nevertheless, Rapp's rapid bludgeoning and brutal killing skills are exactly what the film needs. ✂

● **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Dr. Craig D. Reid's book *The Ultimate Guide to Martial Arts Movies of the 1970s: 500+ Films Loaded With Action, Weapons and Warriors* is available from Amazon.com.



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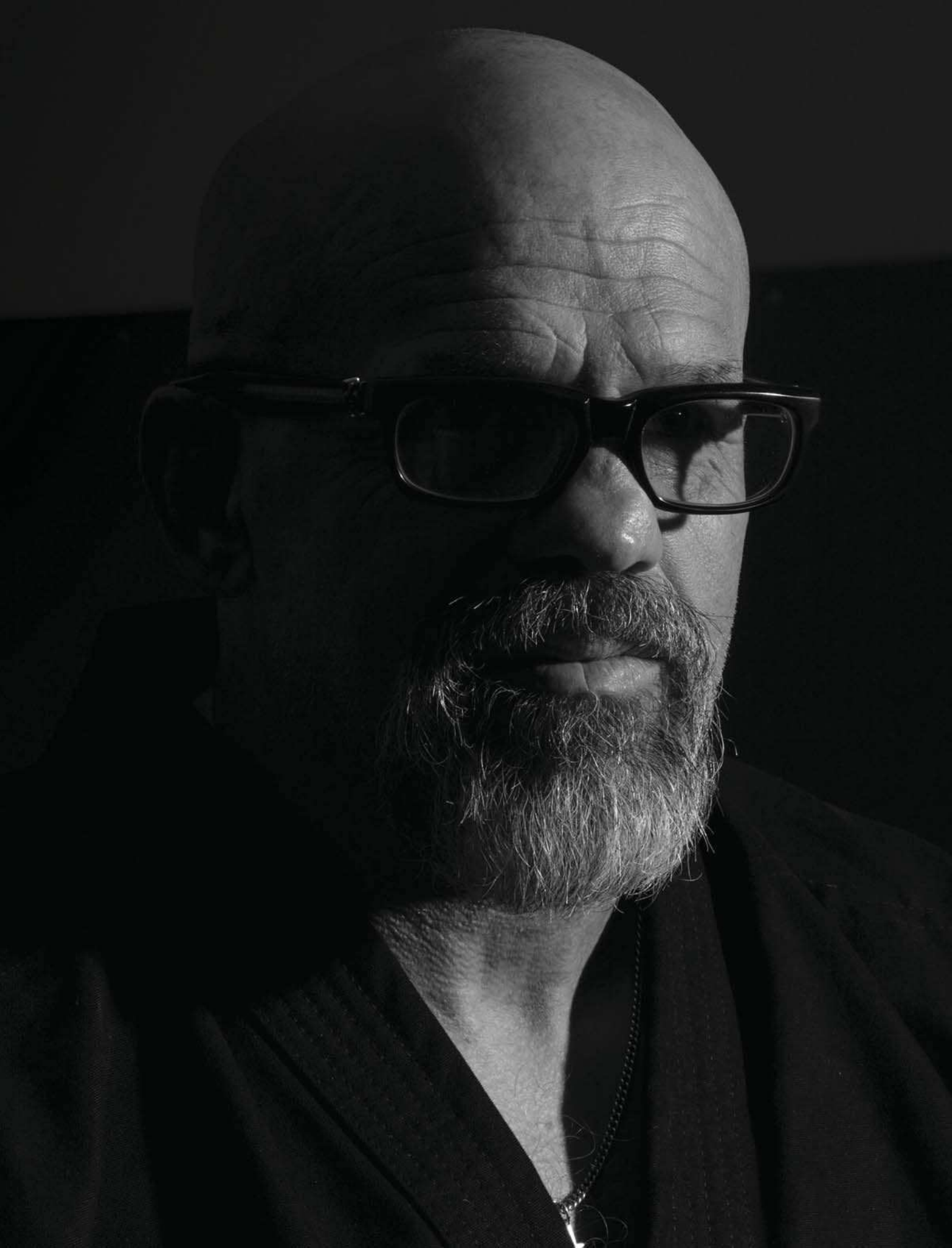
**LIVE CLEAN,  
TRAIN HARD,  
FIGHT DIRTY  
AND DON'T  
LET ANYONE  
TAKE YOUR  
LUNCH  
MONEY!**

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► **John Hackleman** on the  
Founding of Hawaiian Kempo

BY ROBERT W. YOUNG • PHOTOGRAPHY BY CORY SORENSEN





On my way to California's Central Coast to interview a 57-year-old male martial artist who paints his toenails, I got bogged down in construction traffic, which gave me no nutritional option but to eat the only thing I could scavenge from my glove box: an energy bar that boasted "protein from real crickets." That should have steeled me for anything that was about to come, but it didn't. Once I pulled into The Pit, John Hackleman's dojo in Arroyo Grande, and started chatting with the gruff martial artist — who happens to be a registered nurse — my incredulity grew so much that if my mind had a jaw, it would have been hanging like that of a kid watching his first Bruce Lee movie. Before I left, I'd reached what for me is a rare realization: If I lived closer to The Pit, I'd sign up for lessons.

## **"Bite him like a dog — a dog that wants to stay alive!"**

**T**hose simple words, spoken during the explanation of a self-defense technique, sum up the no-fangs-barred fighting philosophy of John Hackleman, former *kajukenbo* student and current master of Hawaiian *kempo*. The fight-dirty manifesto is unexpected coming from the mouth of the man who coached UFC standout Chuck Liddell to play fair in the cage.

In effect, the words illustrate the sport-vs.-street dichotomy that has been John Hackleman's life.

### **LIVE CLEAN** ▶ Hackleman was born in New York

but moved to Hawaii when he was 4. Within a few years, the storm clouds started gathering in paradise. "I knew there were a lot of fights going on, and I knew I'd be in a lot of them since I was white and had long blond hair," he said.

His pre-emptive action? Whip out the Yellow Pages and find a martial arts school.

The youth's attention gravitated to an intimidating photo of Walter Godin. "He was one of the toughest guys on the island, although I didn't know it at the time, and a master of *kajukenbo*, a street-fighting art from Hawaii," Hackleman explained. "I went down and talked to him. He said he'd been in and out of prison, but that didn't matter to me.

"He said it would cost \$20 a month to train with him, so I went home and told my mom I needed a check for \$20. That was the only check I ever gave him. I never paid again, and he was my *sensei* from 1970 until he died in 2001."

Godin conveyed to the youngster what would become the cornerstones of his fighting philosophy. "He taught me so much and shaped my personality," Hackleman said. "I wanted to be just like him — except for the bad stuff, of course, but I knew the difference because I had a pretty good moral compass from having been brought up right by my parents."

The boy desperately wanted to be respected like Godin was, and when it came to school bullies, he figured being feared a little would be nice, too. "So I started hanging out with Walter Godin," Hackleman said. "He didn't push me to

do any of the things that had gotten him in trouble. What he did do was teach me the art of *kajukenbo*."

### **TRAIN HARD** ▶

Soon after he had a grasp of the basics, Hackleman started fighting in local karate tournaments. "I liked competition, but I didn't like all the rules I had to follow," he said. "When I was a little older, I pulled my hamstring while training. I told Godin what had happened, and because he was very pragmatic and I was a kicker, he said, 'Go to a boxing gym and train until your hamstring is better.'"

The *sensei* set things up for his charge. "I went down to a ghetto boxing gym in the middle of a housing project," Hackleman recalled. "Before I knew it, I was scheduled to fight in the Police Athletic League. It was like the mini-Golden Gloves; they called it the Silver Gloves. And I discovered that I liked it."

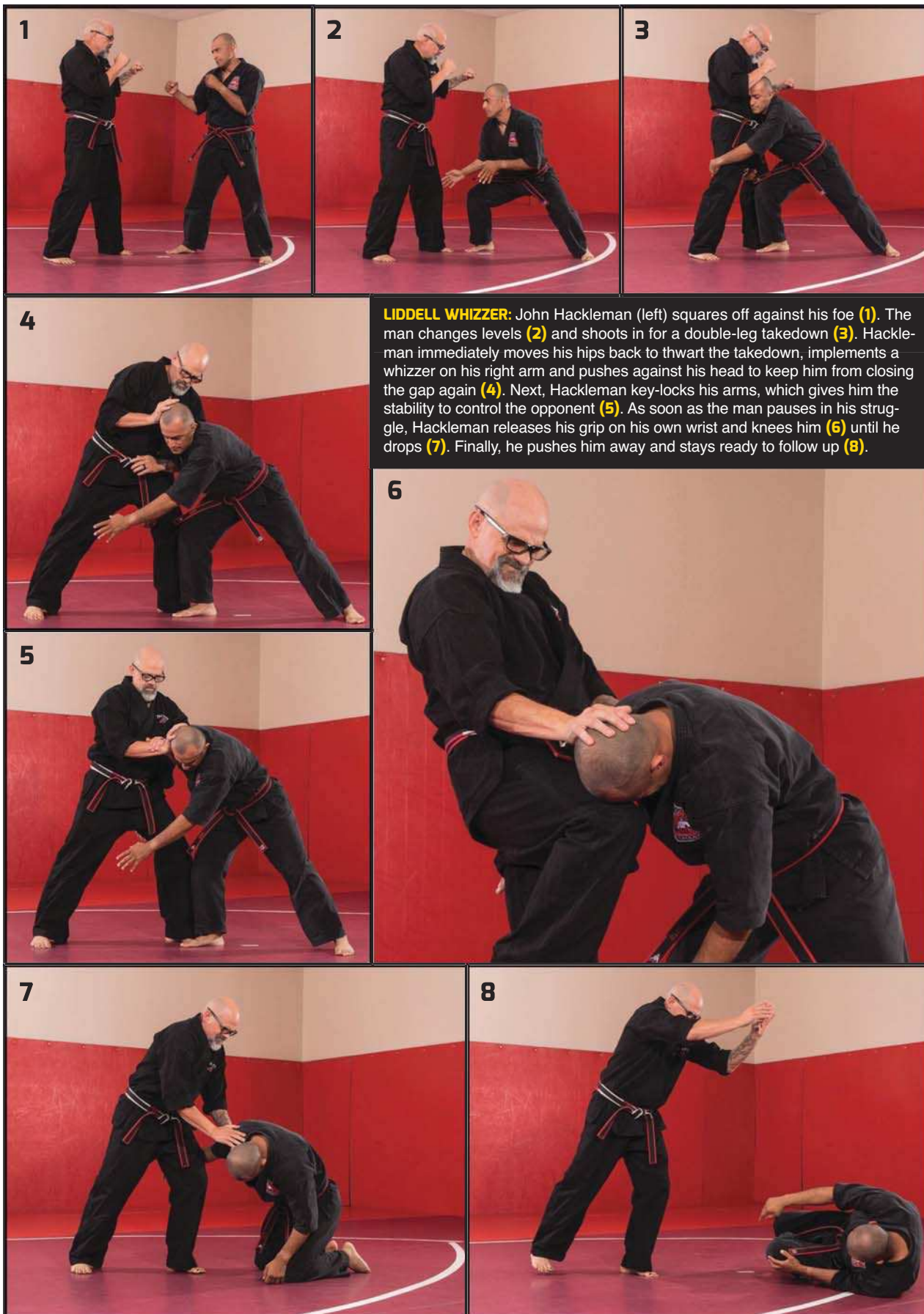
By the time his hamstring was healed, Hackleman had acquired an arsenal of hand skills from the pugilists. "When I went back to my *sensei*, I was a different guy," he said. "I wasn't just a kicker anymore. I wanted to punch and brawl in sparring matches. Godin loved it."

Even after his leg had returned to 100 percent, Hackleman stayed the course, eventually developing formidable hands. "I went all the way to Golden Gloves and won that in my state," he said. "When kickboxing came around, I fought in that, too. Then in 1975, they had the World Series of Martial Arts in Hawaii. It was anything goes. I was 16, but I lied about my age and entered — and wound up beating an adult with an elbow strike. Back then, I'd fight in any genre that came around. Mainly, though, it was boxing and kickboxing."

Hackleman never abandoned his *kajukenbo*, however. He put in a solid 10 years under Godin's wing until patriotism inspired him to change course. "The Iran hostage situation started in 1979," he said. "I thought we were going to war, so I enlisted in the infantry. That's where I needed to be because my dad was a West Point graduate, and he was infantry."

As luck would have it, Hackleman's first duty station was Honolulu's Schofield Barracks, practically in his own backyard. Then Ronald Reagan was sworn in, and Iran promptly released the hostages. In a way, Hackleman felt like the air had been let out of his balloon.





**LIDDELL WHIZZER:** John Hackleman (left) squares off against his foe (1). The man changes levels (2) and shoots in for a double-leg takedown (3). Hackleman immediately moves his hips back to thwart the takedown, implements a whizzer on his right arm and pushes against his head to keep him from closing the gap again (4). Next, Hackleman key-locks his arms, which gives him the stability to control the opponent (5). As soon as the man pauses in his struggle, Hackleman releases his grip on his own wrist and knees him (6) until he drops (7). Finally, he pushes him away and stays ready to follow up (8).

#### CAN OPENER:

The assailant grabs John Hackleman with a front body lock (1-2). Hackleman “drops and pops,” which entails separating his legs to make a wide base and getting his hips away from his opponent (3). The Hawaiian-kempo master then overhooks the man’s right arm and touches his ear with his four fingers to position his thumb for an eye gouge (4). Using a can-opener motion, he digs his digit into the eye socket, then turns and kicks out the man’s right leg (5). Continuing with the whizzer (overhook), Hackleman throws him to the ground (6) and stomps his head (7).



“I went to my first sergeant and said, ‘I joined because I thought there was going to be a war, but there’s not. I don’t want to hang out here for another three years,’” Hackleman recalled. “And he was like, ‘Well, you signed up for it ... but you’re John Hackleman, aren’t you?’ The first sergeant happened to be from Hawaii and knew I’d won the Golden Gloves. Then he said, ‘I’ve seen you fight — why don’t you join the Army Boxing Team?’”

Hackleman scored a tryout, courtesy of that first sergeant, and he won a spot on the team. For the remainder of his enlistment, all he did was box. “I can honestly say I fought for my country and bled for my country.” (laughs) On a more serious note, his military service no doubt helped him polish the hand skills that would take him to the top of the martial arts world. It also paved the way for a post-Army stint not only as a pro boxer but also as a kickboxer.

“I hit really hard and won a couple of titles, but I wasn’t at the top of boxing,” Hackleman said. “I did make it to the top of kickboxing and won world titles, but back then, you didn’t have to be that great [because it was such a young sport]. The competition just wasn’t there. I enjoyed competing, but martial arts was still my passion.”

**FIGHT DIRTY** ▶ When Hackleman’s enlistment ended, he yearned to return to his passion. “But I couldn’t teach martial arts and call it kajukenbo because I didn’t want to do the kajukenbo forms,” he said. “So I changed the name to Hawaiian kempo — with an ‘m.’ I was free to get rid of the *kata*. I took out other things I thought were ineffective and added things from my own experience as well as things I learned from other arts. Yes, I stole a lot of stuff. I’ve also had a lot of stuff stolen from me. It’s a common thing in martial arts.”

One of the first skill sets Hackleman grafted onto the Hawaiian-kempo curriculum was takedown defense. “I did that even though a lot of stand-up guys thought it was a waste of time,” he said. “‘Just punch him!’ they used to say, but I knew that wouldn’t work all the time. I disagreed with them because I’d fought with guys who just took me down like that!” (snaps fingers)

His takedown-defense methodology, now a hallmark of Hawaiian kempo, grew out of his experience on the street, as well as his interpretation of what other masters like Brazilian *jiu-jitsu*’s Ricardo Liborio and Mario Sperry had





### SCHOOLYARD HEAD-LOCK DEFENSE:

When the bully gets John Hackleman in a head lock, Hackleman immediately shrugs his shoulders to make his neck as short as possible and turns his chin toward the man's ribs to protect against a choke (1). (He notes that a head lock quickly can turn into a side choke, which is much more dangerous.) To guard against being thrown, Hackleman goes deeper behind the opponent and reaches up to dig a finger into his eye (2). When he lets go (3), Hackleman spins him (4) into a guillotine (5). His goal is not to make him tap but to tweak his neck (6), after which he shoves him away (7). Hackleman cautions readers never to maintain a guillotine for too long on the street because the assailant might have a knife.

shown him. "I really focused on the importance of the hips and lateral movement," Hackleman said. "The takedown defense I developed worked very well for me and my students." It still plays a vital role in his system because it's essential to surviving on the street, he added.

To take his ideas to the masses, Hackleman moved to Southern California in 1985 and began teaching the four pillars of Hawaiian kempo — striking, wrestling, jiu-jitsu and conditioning — in his backyard. A year later, he founded The Pit. In 1991 he relocated to Arroyo Grande and once again was forced to spread his fight gospel in his backyard. "And then came Chuck," he said.

Chuck Liddell was young and in the mood to throw down. Knowing a good thing when he saw it, he hooked up with Hackleman, and together they fine-tuned his game. Once Liddell was entrenched in The Pit, other fighters followed. Once Liddell began winning, the backyard *dojo* quickly reached capacity. "We became known as an MMA gym," Hackleman said, "but basically I just wanted to teach people martial arts."

That realization and his burgeoning success with the MMA crowd prompted Hackleman to abandon the backyard operation and open a real gym that was large enough to cater to

more than just fighters. "I wanted to make teaching martial arts my full-time job," he said. "It took off, and I didn't have to work as a nurse anymore. I'm not rich by any means, but I have a pretty good life and I'll have a pretty good retirement. Most important, I'm happy doing what I love."

One of the keys to Hackleman's success has been the message that dirty fighting reduces the need to learn a defense for every possible attack. "You don't have to become proficient at escaping from a lot of grappling holds because of biting and gouging," he explained. "Say someone clinches with you. You don't have to know a defense against that because you can just stick your finger in his eye. If he gets you in side control or the mount, all you have to do is break your posture and bite him anywhere. He'll let go."

### So What's With the Toe-nail Polish?

"A friend put it on years ago as a joke," John Hackleman said. "I was going to take it right off as soon as it dried, but I realized it was a big pain in the ass to take off, so I just left it on. Since I always wear thongs, never shoes, they got a lot of attention. There are now people in the UFC painting their toenails."

The big exception to that rule is the rear-naked choke, he added. "You can't bite your way out of this one. Once he gets it on, you're done. So we do learn a few specific escapes. Similarly, if someone comes at you with a running double and manages to slam your head into the ground, you're not getting out of it. Which is why you have to be able to defend against a takedown."

## DON'T LET ANYONE TAKE YOUR LUNCH MONEY ▶

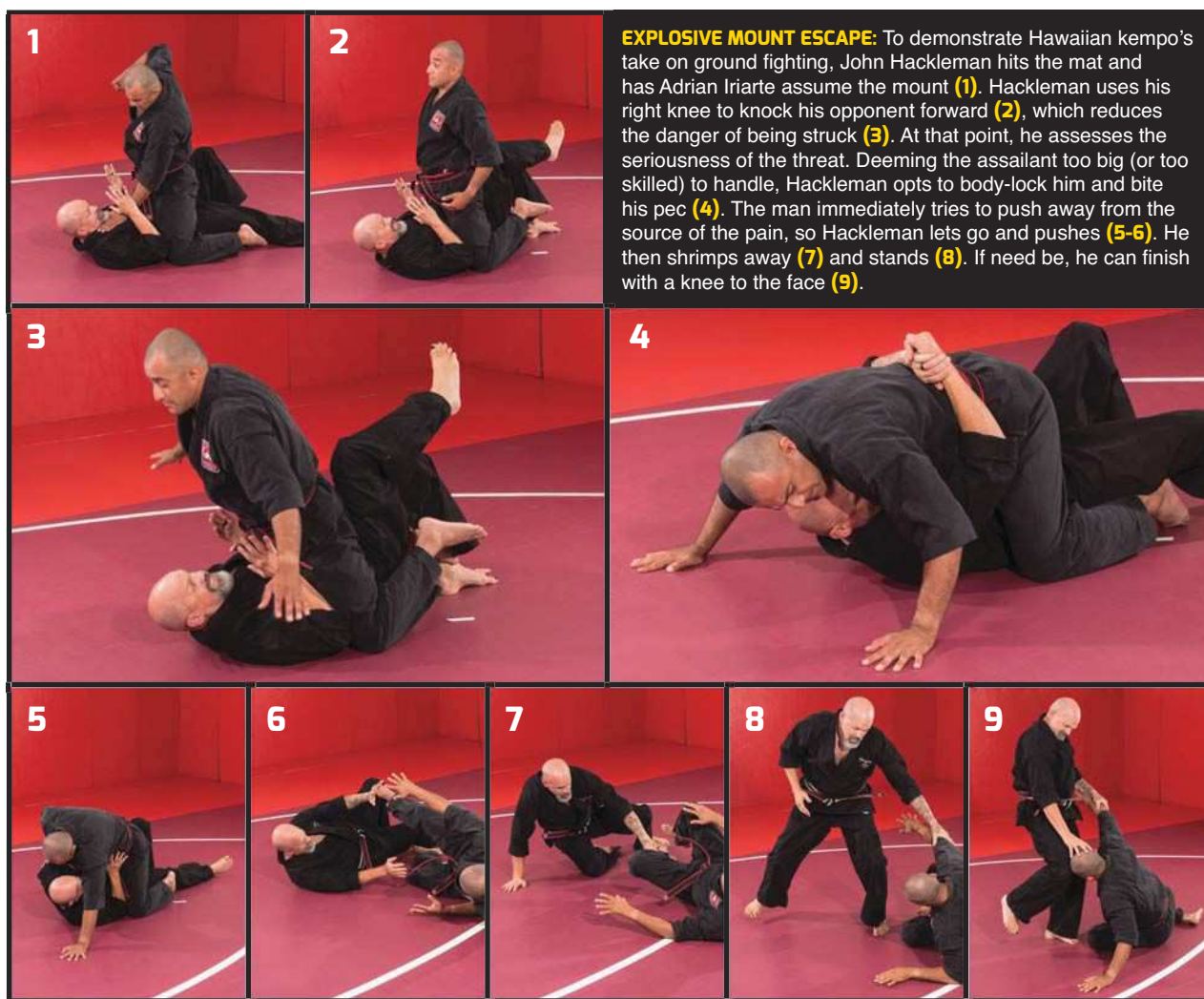
The modern Pit curriculum, as John Hackleman envisions it, has two parts: the kids' component and the adults' component. "For kids, the No. 1 thing is confidence," he said.

"That's developed through physically training in martial arts, not through talking about confidence. Part of it is knowing they can get a bully off them if they wind up on the bottom in a fight at school. We teach them never to bully, of course, but also never to be bullied."

It's essential for those who teach youngsters to remember that if a bully jumps a kid at school, you don't want that kid gouging out the bully's eyes, he said. "You also don't want him pounding the bully's head on the concrete. In the schoolyard, fights are usually over once the bully gets hit or taken down."

"It's all about dominance. If kids are more dominant on the playground, they don't get picked on. They don't have to strut around, but they do have to be dominant enough to keep bullies away."

Adults need no-holds-barred physical skills in addition to the ability to exhibit confidence. "There's no dominance



**EXPLOSIVE MOUNT ESCAPE:** To demonstrate Hawaiian kempo's take on ground fighting, John Hackleman hits the mat and has Adrian Iriarte assume the mount (1). Hackleman uses his right knee to knock his opponent forward (2), which reduces the danger of being struck (3). At that point, he assesses the seriousness of the threat. Deeming the assailant too big (or too skilled) to handle, Hackleman opts to body-lock him and bite his pec (4). The man immediately tries to push away from the source of the pain, so Hackleman lets go and pushes (5-6). He then shrimps away (7) and stands (8). If need be, he can finish with a knee to the face (9).

## One Q, One A

**We asked:** In this country, which are you more likely to encounter on the street: a guy who knows how to wrestle or a guy who knows how to punch?

**John Hackleman answered:** "Everyone knows how to punch, and everyone knows how to tackle, which means your chances of facing an OK striker or an OK grappler are about even. Just remember that most people will try to swing with you until they taste your first punch, after which they'll come in for a tackle."



on the street; there's life or death," he said. "When someone jumps you, it's not because they're bullying you and trying to take your lunch money. It's because they're trying to kill you."

That harsh reality necessitates a harsh response, Hackleman said. "You need to separate them from their consciousness. If that means knocking them unconscious so you can get away, fine. If it means killing them, so be it. If you think they're not trying to kill you so you don't really have to fight back, your adrenaline will never respond the way it has to. Then they might get in that one punch, and you might fall and have your head bounce off the concrete. There's no referee — so they soccer-kick you until you're brain-damaged or dead."

Despite the different teaching modalities, he repeats the same catchphrase with his kids, his adult students and his fighters: "I tell them, 'Don't let anyone take your lunch money.' It goes back to my roots growing up in Hawaii. We

used to get a quarter for lunch, and there were kids who would come up to us and say, 'Hey, *haole*, give me your lunch money!' One of the reasons I started martial arts training was I didn't want anybody to take my lunch money.

"Now it's a metaphor for kids not letting anyone bully them. It's also for adults to remind them to not let anyone hurt them. In a relationship, it means don't let the other person take advantage of you. In the cage, it means don't let your opponent take your title or ranking."

Living clean, training hard, fighting dirty and not letting anyone take your lunch money is the theme that permeates all the training that takes place at The Pit. It's also the philosophy that guides John Hackleman and his students in life. ✂

● **ABOUT THE EXPERT:** For more information about John Hackleman, visit [thepitmma.com](http://thepitmma.com).

## What He Does Best

When asked what he does best in the martial arts, John Hackleman answers quickly: "Punching." Considering the extent of his boxing career, it's not surprising. It's also not surprising that he's still pursuing punching perfection.

"Even though I'm confident in my skill set if I ever have to use it, I want to keep advancing my knowledge so I can be the best instructor possible," he said. "In my mind, there's no one who can teach better hand skills than me. That doesn't mean there isn't more to learn.

"I'm also really good with knives, but I want to learn more. Actually, I'm a big proponent of knowing how to use all kinds of weapons, including guns. I'm getting together soon with Tim Kennedy — he's another one of my students — to train with firearms. Tim takes that to a higher level than anyone."

**BIG BROTHER:** From his I-don't-want-to-fight stance, John Hackleman tries to de-escalate (1). Once he realizes it's failing, he opts for a pre-emptive shot, which begins with a left hook to the jaw (2). His right hand is ready to follow up, but he has to wait for his opponent to come into range. When he does, Hackleman uncorks a right uppercut to the chin (3). Then he unleashes another hook in case the man was able to avoid the uppercut (4). Hackleman is ready to strike again should it be required (5).



# **3 Front Kicks of** **KRAV** **MAGA**



**JUST WHAT YOU NEED  
TO HANDLE ALMOST  
ANY SELF-DEFENSE  
SITUATION!**

**BY JAMES HIROMASA**





So

o this guy is standing 6 feet in front of me. He's got his right hand behind his back, and he's saying he wants to f@%\* me up. It's midnight

on a sidewalk in Hawaii with no one around except my buddy, who's occupied with the two other people in the pickup truck the man was in. In the dim street light, I can barely make out the handle of a kitchen knife protruding from the right side of the man who's confronting me.

It seemed like the perfect time to let loose a front kick — but I couldn't do anything at that moment. I was a fairly accomplished martial artist, so what was my problem? Too many options were running through my head, and it locked me up. I couldn't decide what would work best, when to do it and what to follow up with if it didn't get immediate results. That's when I realized I was the kind of guy who needs simplicity. That led me to *krav maga*.

### **SIMPLICITY, IN MOTION**

In krav maga, instructors try to keep things simple because they assume their students have limited training time. So they pare down the defenses to the lowest number of techniques that will enable a person to solve the widest range of problems. Krav's kicks are no exception. Because kicks by themselves take away our ability to move in the moment and inherently compromise balance, our goal is to reduce the time we spend on one leg while delivering maximum damage or stopping power — and doing this in a manner that enables the average person with limited training time to learn quickly and execute easily.

In krav, we categorize kicks into two groups: defensive and offensive. Defensive kicks are those that put our full leg between us and the attacker on impact. They're designed to maintain or create distance between the two parties. An offensive kick is any kick that doesn't do that.

The krav front kick is broken down according to three goals: damaging a horizontal target, damaging a vertical target, and creating or maintaining space between defender and attacker. The resulting three moves are called different things by different people, but in general they're known by descriptive names: the regular front kick, the ball-of-the-foot front kick and the defensive front kick.





1



2

**REGULAR FRONT KICK:** The krav maga practitioner (right) is threatened by an assailant (1). The defender initiates the kick by lifting his knee and thrusting it forward while driving his hips forward, as well (2). The moment his knee reaches groin level, the krav maga stylist extends his leg, making contact with his upward-moving shinbone (3). For maximum energy transfer, he continues to move his knee upward until it's past the target height.



3

## REGULAR FRONT KICK

This technique is sometimes mistakenly called a groin kick. It's the kick a lot of people think of when you mention krav maga because the system is billed as no-rules self-defense. So that image of someone being kicked in the groin may drive home the point, but the move is far more than a groin kick.

The kick uses the shinbone — generally, between just above the ankle and halfway to the knee. Go any higher, and you'll turn it into a knee strike. The groin is a great target for the regular front kick but not the only target. In fact, it's good for any horizontal body part. Imagine that your attacker is bent over in front of you in a perpendicular orientation. This

is the perfect technique to slam into his face.

**ACTION:** To deliver this front kick, start by moving your knee upward and forward. To get your knee moving forward, you'll have to drive your hips (note the plural) forward, and that's exactly what you want. Just make sure your hips don't initiate the movement, which will telegraph the technique. As you do this, your knee should bend to approximately 90 degrees. Take care that your foot doesn't travel backward, away from the target. (Envision the foot trailing the knee slightly in the initial movement.)

As your knee approaches the target's height, explosively extend your leg.

Note that the knee never holds that 90-degree bend. Rather, it hits that angle and begins its unbending immediately.

Point your foot forward while extending your leg to expose your shinbone better and to emphasize your hip driving forward. Continue to drive your knee so it *passes* the target height, which ensures that your bodyweight goes through the target. Think of your knee as the last hinge in the weapon system: If the hinge stops opening before the target is reached, or even at the same height, the mass on the back side of the hinge stops there, too. For that reason, it won't transfer all its energy into the target.

Because your hips are driving forward, it might appear like you're lean-



## BALL-OF-THE-FOOT FRONT KICK:

Author James Hiromasa (right) assumes a defensive stance in response to the threat (1). When the assailant begins to close the gap, Hiromasa raises his knee while moving it toward the man, which entails thrusting his hips forward for more reach and more power (2). For maximum penetration, he makes contact with the ball of his foot, which requires him to point his foot forward and pull his toes backward (3).



ing backward, but you shouldn't lean away. The fact that both your hips are extended forward just gives the illusion of bending backward. Your upper body should stay very much over your base leg.

The final step, as in all krav kicks, is to recover your stance. The most common practice is to simply put your foot down where the fight dictates it should be. That's logical because what you do next is mostly determined by the attacker's reaction to your kick. Putting down your foot in front effectively advances you into the fight, while placing it back where it started puts you at long range, which offers different options. In most cases, you'll put it down somewhere in between

with a small adjustment step that gets you into a good stance, which will allow an immediate follow-up strike or set you up for a fast escape.

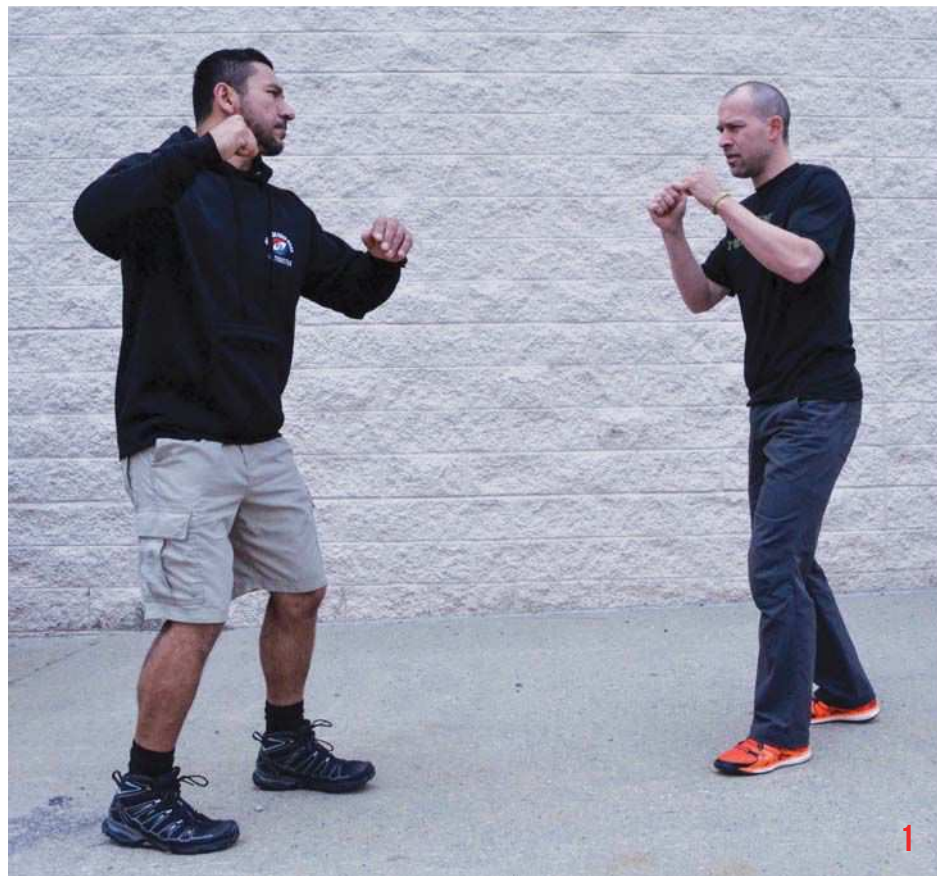
## BALL-OF-THE-FOOT FRONT KICK

Also known as the vertical-target kick, this technique is similar to a *muay Thai* kick known as the *teep*. It's designed to penetrate rather than stop an opponent's forward movement. (Although, a well-executed kick can indeed accomplish that.) Just as the name states, its aim is to make contact using the ball of the foot. When landing it, you'll want to point your foot forward and pull your toes backward.

The targets for this front kick are the vertical surfaces of your opponent's body. When you're face to face, prime examples include the front of the groin and the abdomen. It's easy to make the liver a target, or the kidneys, if your attacker isn't facing you. As always, the head can be a target, assuming it's been lowered to a reasonable height so kicking it doesn't compromise your balance or cross the threshold of where a hand technique would be preferred.

This front kick develops almost exactly as the regular front kick does. It's intentional. Krav maga practitioners appreciate the freedom to start a regular front kick and quickly morph it into a ball-of-the-foot front kick if the target changes middelivery.

**DEFENSIVE FRONT KICK:** The krav maga practitioner (right) prepares to use a front kick to maintain space when the aggressor decides to close the distance (1). He starts by raising his flexed leg with his foot angled back, which will enable him to make contact with the entire sole of his shoe (2). Note that he must hold this chambered position a little longer to ensure a higher knee lift. Next, the defender extends his leg while thrusting his hips forward until the bottom of his foot slams into the opponent's torso (3).



**ACTION:** As in the previous kick, start by raising your knee and moving it forward — make sure you're using your hips for power. This time, however, create a slightly greater knee-bend angle and hold it a little longer because your goal is to effect a more linear, horizontal projection. As your knee reaches target height, drive your foot forward. Your knee will get a little higher than the target, but it will come back down to line up between your hip and the target on impact.

Just before that impact, “punch” both hips forward, driving your body-weight into the kick. In this move, real power depends on timing more than anything else. To visualize the trajectory and angles involved, think about how you'd shut a car door with your foot. The foot comes up, but ultimately the trajectory flattens on contact. You want all the energy and mass thrusting forward at the moment of impact, as opposed to still moving upward.

Recovery is the same as with the regular front kick, but it's more likely there will be a slight advance, and because much of your energy is moving forward, you may have to advance after the kick to follow up anyway. A well-placed ball-of-the-foot kick can bend an attacker in half at the waist, often causing him to stop moving forward with his lower body. Just be aware that his upper body might still be moving forward. This can have serious consequences, especially if he has a knife. In any case, you should plan for anything and be able to adjust quickly to deliver a follow-up or make an exit.

### DEFENSIVE FRONT KICK

This kick is primarily designed to create space — or maintain space if the target is moving forward. To see a great example of the technique, search online for “this is Sparta kick” from the movie *300*. The clip shows a very

strong kick with lots of mass behind it, but because it's a higher kick, it takes longer to develop, which increases the chance your foe will defend against it or move. Of course, the higher the kick, the more your balance is compromised, as well.

Because this is primarily a “stopping” defensive kick, you want as much surface area as possible making contact. That means you need to angle your foot back in an attempt to land the entire sole on target. If you hit with the ball of your foot, you might lose some energy when your ankle acts as a shock absorber. Although technically you'd be fine just making contact with your heel, more is better. Think of trying to move a balloon with a pin versus with your hand. The pin will penetrate the balloon, while your hand will move it.

For maximum effect, this kick should make contact between the base of





the ribs and the suprasternal notch. Remember that you're trying to move someone backward or at least stop his forward momentum. Landing this kick at hip height may stop his legs from moving forward, but his upper body will still be in motion. Kicking above his midpoint hinge will have a better and more immediate result. If you can get his upper body to suddenly move behind his heels, you'll create even more space and time, especially if he stumbles backward or falls.

**ACTION:** Raise your flexed knee — the higher the knee, the higher the kick. Unlike in the previous two kicks, hold this bent, or chambered, position longer to allow for the higher lift. Start unbending your leg and pulling back your foot. This is when you should begin thrusting both hips forward in a stomping movement. Envision your foot hitting the target at the same time your

hips, and therefore your bodyweight, reach the apex of their movement.

With this kick, it's OK if your base foot pivots slightly to increase the flexion in your legs, allowing more height for the technique. Note that this will send your kicking hip farther forward, as well, thus slightly increasing your range. As before, your hips will be far enough forward on impact that from a profile position, it might look like you're bending backward. However, this shouldn't be the case. Your upper body should still be a counterbalance and in a good relationship with your base leg, allowing for a kick recovery in any direction. It also will help you avoid being bounced backward by the attacker's momentum.

### NEXT STEP

With these three basic, yet versatile, techniques in your arsenal, you can increase the number of targets that are

available to your foot strikes in most self-defense situations. No matter which one you select, be sure to get your kicking foot back on the ground as quickly as possible so you can move or strike immediately. And remember that a kick should always be part of a comprehensive combination that overwhelms your attacker and keeps him on the defensive.

Oh, yeah, the guy with the knife in Hawaii? Well, as luck would have it, I didn't need to use any of these front kicks. At the last moment, a police officer cruised by and slowed down to see what was going on. As soon as he hit his lights, the perp bolted. He was caught ditching the knife and eventually went to jail. ✂

● **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** James Hiromasa runs the Colorado Krav Maga Regional Training Center in Broomfield, Colorado. He's also the author of *How to Be a Super Hero*, available on Amazon.com. His website is [coloradokravmaga.com](http://coloradokravmaga.com).



# WEAPON







**2 Cable TV Shows Focus on Weapons of War,  
Depend on Martial Arts Experts for Analysis**

Every once in a while, the stars align and we're treated to something on television that's different from the usual fight flicks yet still of interest to those of us who devote our lives to the martial arts. This time, the entertainment-industry entities doing the cooking are the History channel and the El Rey Network, and the dish they're serving up is weapons. Although History's show came first, we'll start with El Rey's because our contact there is a woman and, if nothing else, historical weapons make us feel ... chivalrous.

— Editor

## Crystal Santos

### MAN AT ARMS • El Rey Network

#### How did you get started in the martial arts?

I come from a fight family. My dad was a boxer, and this is the environment we were raised in. However, my current path in the martial arts began about 20 years ago with Eric Lee. We would meet in a park and train on the concrete — no mats, no studio, just outside no matter the weather.

#### You're also a student of Gene LeBell, Samuel Kwok and several other masters, right?

Yes. I trained with Gene LeBell and Gokor Chivichyan. They're straightforward instructors and don't candy-coat anything. Both have a practical, no-nonsense approach. They had me train with men to prepare for real-world circumstances. *Sensei* Gene was instrumental in training me in stunt fighting to cross over from the practical martial arts to the cinematic martial arts.

Samuel Kwok is a great *sifu*, as well. He demands intensity and focus, constantly reminding his students that *wing chun* is not a game. At first, it was hard to learn the wing chun punches, as I was used to chambering [like] in boxing. One day, I got the idea to practice while I was running on the treadmill, so I couldn't chamber. I called Sifu Kwok [and said I was] very happy about my discovery as my chain punches had improved.

There is one more teacher I must mention, although my training with him wasn't very long. *Taekwondo* grandmaster Simon Rhee was the first

person to demonstrate to me the difference between stunt fighting and real-life fighting.

#### You featured prominently in the first season of *Man at Arms: Art of War* as a weapons master and expert. When did your weapons training start?

I was a very strange child — it was natural to always have a knife on hand as my dad always does. We're comfortable with knives and have a natural blade awareness from always being around them.

I was fascinated by swords, ancient weapons and war. It stemmed from the moment I learned how the conquistadors conquered the Aztec nation. My family is from Mexico and descendants of Aztecs, and it was of great interest to me to understand how so few [people] traveled so far and conquered an entire civilization without the advanced weaponry we have now. Of course, my mom didn't approve of my interest in weaponry, warfare and fighting, [but] this did not deter me.

When I started kung fu, the first weapon I worked with was the staff, but I prefer bladed weapons and my bullwhips. I also train in tactical weaponry; my favorite gun is the AR-15. There are breathing techniques from kung fu I employ when I do a lot of my weapons training. Some of my favorite hobbies are archery, ax and knife throwing, and using my bullwhips. I practice with some sort of weaponry every day. It's great to stay alert and maintain an increase awareness and reflexes.

#### What was it like working with all the weapons on *Man at Arms*? Do you have a favorite episode?

It was a dream come true. Most of those weapons aren't in existence anymore, and we had only read about them. It was an honest fangirl moment to get to hold them, to handle weapons that conquered civilizations, to examine the creativity and practicality of each one. It was interesting to take theory and put it to the test.

I thoroughly enjoyed all the episodes, but it's a tie for my favorite. "African War Blades" was an ultimate experience for me as I really had fun performing the anti-cavalry test with the *shotel*.

The other episode was "Weapons of the Pharaohs." The *khopesh*-to-the-mummy test was so much fun, and the result was epic. I can honestly say that even if I wasn't in *Man at Arms*, I would watch this show. Everything about it is exciting and action-packed, and there is an educational quality that's presented so well.

#### What was your favorite weapon to wield?

My absolute favorite was the *shotel*. [Using it] was like being the Grim Reaper. That weapon was [designed] to get around armor, to keep a good distance from the opponent, and to pierce the opponent and hold him in position, creating total control. When that weapon is removed from the body, it creates immense destruction to the vital organs. It would be surprising to me if anyone survived a *shotel* [strike].

One of my other favorites was the *haladie*. The one on the show was beautifully made and had a variety of uses. I liked that it was made with a smooth edge and a serrated edge and that it had a hand guard, which made it a good close-quarters weapon that's easy to carry.

I have to admit that all the weapons were beautifully made — like the Egyptian battle ax, which was gorgeous. It would have been heartbreaking if that ax broke in our tests. But thankfully, due to amazing craftsmanship, it stayed intact and did one heck of a job.

#### You mentioned doing movie work. How did that begin?

I never intended to have a career in stunts or entertainment. I was happy



with my job at Mattel toys in international market research. Then I volunteered for an organization called Girls Inc. There was an event for the inner-city girls to attend on a variety of career paths, and one of the speakers was stunt-car driver Georgia Durante. When we were talking, she discovered that I knew a lot about cars. I was racing cars and practicing *muay Thai* and kung fu at the time, so I was extremely fit. She convinced me to contact Rick and Lori Seaman to mentor me in stunt driving.

I've always believed the universe will show you your path, and it honestly took a lot of meditation and bravery to trust in the universe as I loved my job and had a good future

and benefits. But I quit and went to work as an immigration paralegal, which had more flexible hours [so I could do stunt work].

My mom disowned me for almost two years. She didn't support her college-educated daughter jumping off buildings, racing cars, fighting and lighting herself on fire. [Everyone] thought I had lost my mind, and no one supported me. I'm happy they were not supportive; it gave me the gift of knowing how to trust myself, my intuition and my opinion.

### **How much have the martial arts contributed to your success?**

Martial arts are my life. They've taught me discipline, resilience, kindness,

extreme focus, awareness, character and strength. They've prepared me for the most amazing and wonderful journey of my life: being a single mom. As a parent, kung fu gives me compassion, kindness, peacefulness, patience, awareness and the ability to demonstrate life lessons in a kind and gentle way, as well as to discipline through communication and understanding.

Martial arts are my passion, and that passion translates on-screen and in everything I do. I never feel threatened as I am capable of protecting myself, so it enables me to be open, get to know people, and experience many adventures and cultures. I am extremely grateful for this and always will be.

— *Chris Massari*



Beach Photo by Aaron Sanchez • Inset Photo Courtesy of Man at Arms

# Doug Marcaida

## FORGED IN FIRE • History Channel



He's that guy you see on *Forged in Fire*, the show that has people making all kinds of weapons from things like leaf springs and old tools. He's the one who doesn't say much through the first half of each episode while the smiths are discussing the intricacies of turning scrap metal into sharp blades. But then you get to the second half of the show, and Doug Marcaida steps forward as the official tester, the guy who starts slicing and dicing objects with swords, knives, axes and whatever other razor-sharp implements the contestants have crafted.

Marcaida expertly hacks a pig carcass in half here and stabs an armored dummy there. If the weapon passes muster, he graces the contestant with his trademark judgment on the creation: "It will cut. This will kill."

**BORN AND RAISED** in the Philippines and now known as an expert in that nation's weapons styles, Marcaida ironically never studied the Filipino martial arts while growing up. Instead, he chose to study imports like karate, kung fu and *taekwondo*.

"It's what I call a colonial mentality," he said. "You think everything else is better than what you have in your own country. So I never did Filipino martial arts as a child."

But when Marcaida moved to America to be near his mother, who had immigrated here, he decided to join the Air Force so he could serve his new country. That's when he got his first real exposure to the fighting arts of his homeland.

"There was a group that did martial arts, and I started learning these cool empty-hand moves from them," he said. "I didn't know what it was — I thought it was *aikido*. They told me it was known as *kali*, but I'd never heard of that. When they said it's also called *arnis* or *eskrima*, I said, 'Wait a minute!

That's Filipino. Where are your sticks?'

"Then they told me I didn't know anything about the martial arts of my own culture."

**MARCAIDA WAS HOOKED.** He began traveling from his Air Force base in New Mexico to El Paso, Texas, to train in *lameco eskrima*. When Edgar Sulite, head of the *lameco* system, spoke highly of the *pekiti tirsia* style, Marcaida started training in that art, as well. There was something in *pekiti tirsia*'s aggressive nature that resonated with Marcaida, and he became obsessive about practicing it. Sometimes he'd spend up to six hours a day working out in the backyard of his instructor Omar Hakim.

When Marcaida was transferred to New York, a stronghold of *pekiti tirsia*, he availed himself of the opportunity to learn from some of the art's leaders. "I trained with Bill McGrath, who was very technical and precise," Marcaida said. "And I trained with Tom Bisio. He was concentrating on Chinese arts at that point, but I told him I'd drive down six hours from Rochester and pay him \$90 for a private lesson [in *pekiti tirsia*]. He didn't think I'd do it, but I did. Then I said I wanted to come back the next week. He told me if I'm crazy enough to do that, he'd teach me what he knew. He was true to his word. After two years of training, he introduced me to *San Miguel eskrima*."

**MARCAIDA EVENTUALLY** decided that to further his understanding of the Filipino martial arts, he needed to go to the source, which meant returning to the Philippines. His brothers, who by that time were also training in various Filipino styles back home, were able to connect him with the head of *pekiti tirsia*, a man named Leo Gaje Jr., as well as several highly regarded instructors in other systems.

"I studied everything and made it

work for me," Marcaida said. "I tell people to learn from everyone. Don't just try to learn from people you think are great fighters. Go learn from the worst fighters, too, because maybe you can make what they're doing better."

Marcaida's open-mindedness and desire to acquire knowledge and skills from everyone was not always well-received in the Philippines, where training tends to be clannish and secretive. His brothers even advised him to place a large bandage across the *pekiti tirsia* tattoo on his back when he went to work out with non-*pekiti tirsia* masters.

**PEKITI TIRSIA** and some of the other arts Marcaida focused on, like *kali ilustrisimo*, are very blade oriented, and that fact prompted Marcaida to note how easy it is to find yourself falling into the tough-guy mentality that can accompany knife-focused martial arts. He admitted to being guilty of a bit of that — at least until the last instructor he formally studied under, Jun de Leon, founder of *kali de leon*, pulled him aside.

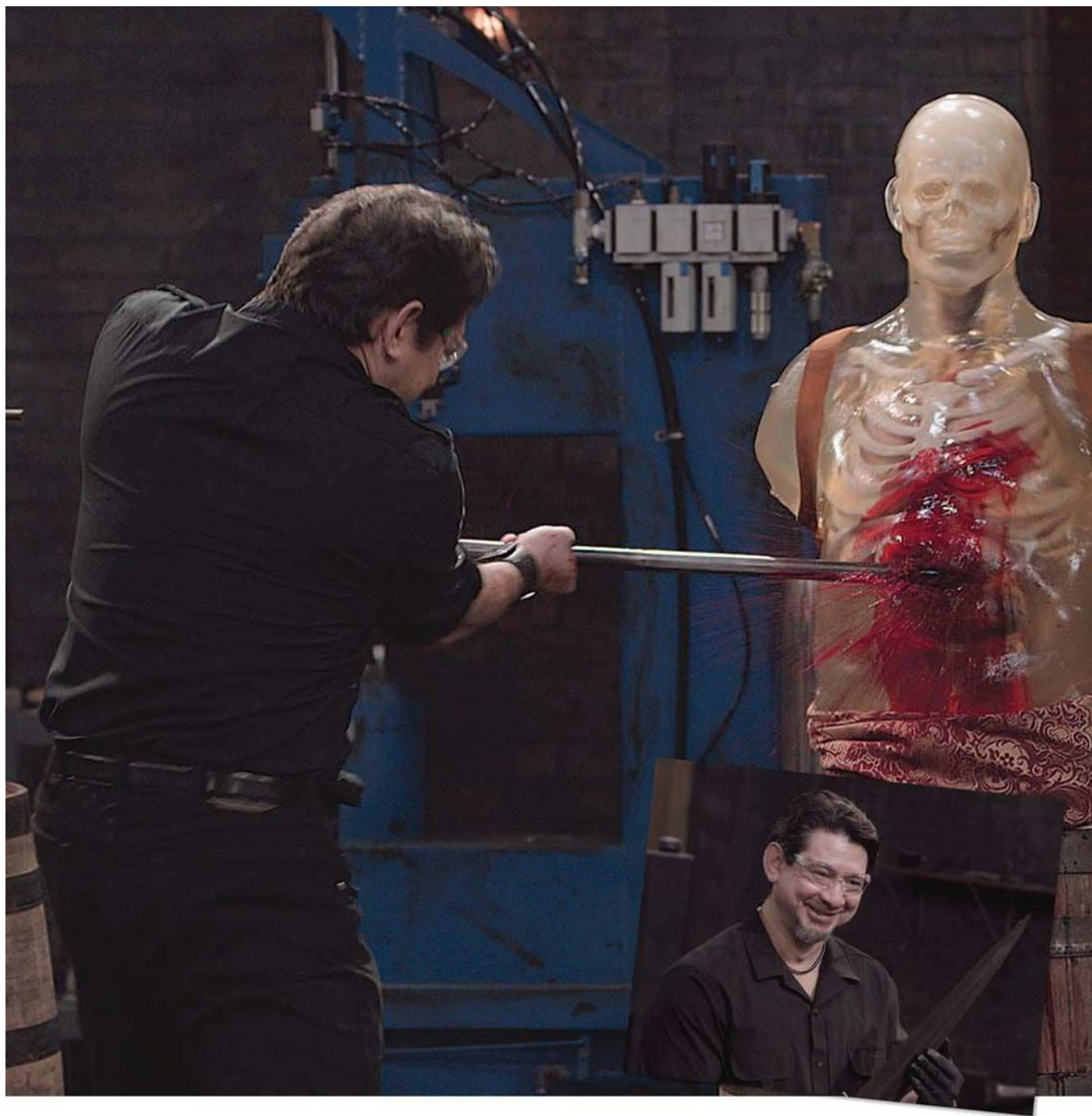
"He said I shouldn't try to be one of these tough guys walking around with 10 knives," Marcaida said. "They all think they're killers, but they're not. He made me realize I'm not a killer; I'm a martial arts teacher. My philosophy is, 'It's not about how many you hurt but how many you protect.'"

**MARCAIDA IS QUICK** to point out the difference between a martial art and a real fight, saying you don't need martial arts to hurt someone.

"Look at jails," he said. "They're filled with people who have killed and never studied martial arts in their life. What works on the street is ambush. So I tell people to just enjoy the art and stop thinking they're superman. It's about developing spiritual ability through the medium of martial arts, although that medium could really be anything."

Marcaida's spiritual way of practicing the martial arts is still tinged with some sharp-edged practicality. He's served as a contractor, teaching courses in edged weapons to military and law-enforcement units. It was through his popular YouTube videos, posted under the username Kalisong1, that he came to the attention of the developers of *Forged in Fire*. They were looking for an expert end user to





test the weapons that the contestants on the show would be making. Finding him not only skillful with a blade but also well-spoken and personable, they offered Marcaida the gig.

**NOW IN ITS FOURTH** season, *Forged in Fire* has made Marcaida a minor celebrity while allowing him to learn more about the ins and outs of the knife world. A blade designer himself, he takes his role on the show seriously,

particularly when he steps up to test the weapons.

"The first time I pick up a weapon on the show is really the first time I use it," he said. "I do my best to make sure that ... I maintain a certain kind of swing for each test. The smiths put so much of their hearts and souls into this, I wouldn't want to let them go home thinking I did it wrong."

Marcaida said working on *Forged in Fire* has brought his martial arts jour-

ney full circle. After learning how to use a knife, he learned how to design one. Now he's gotten to understand the processes involved in fabricating those weapons.

He's also discovered that there's as much romance in knife making as there is in knife wielding. "It's a centuries-old art," Marcaida said. "The people who made the knives, they were the magicians of their time." ✂

— Mark Jacobs



# **An American Explores Grappling in Mongolia During Its Biggest Wrestling Competition!**

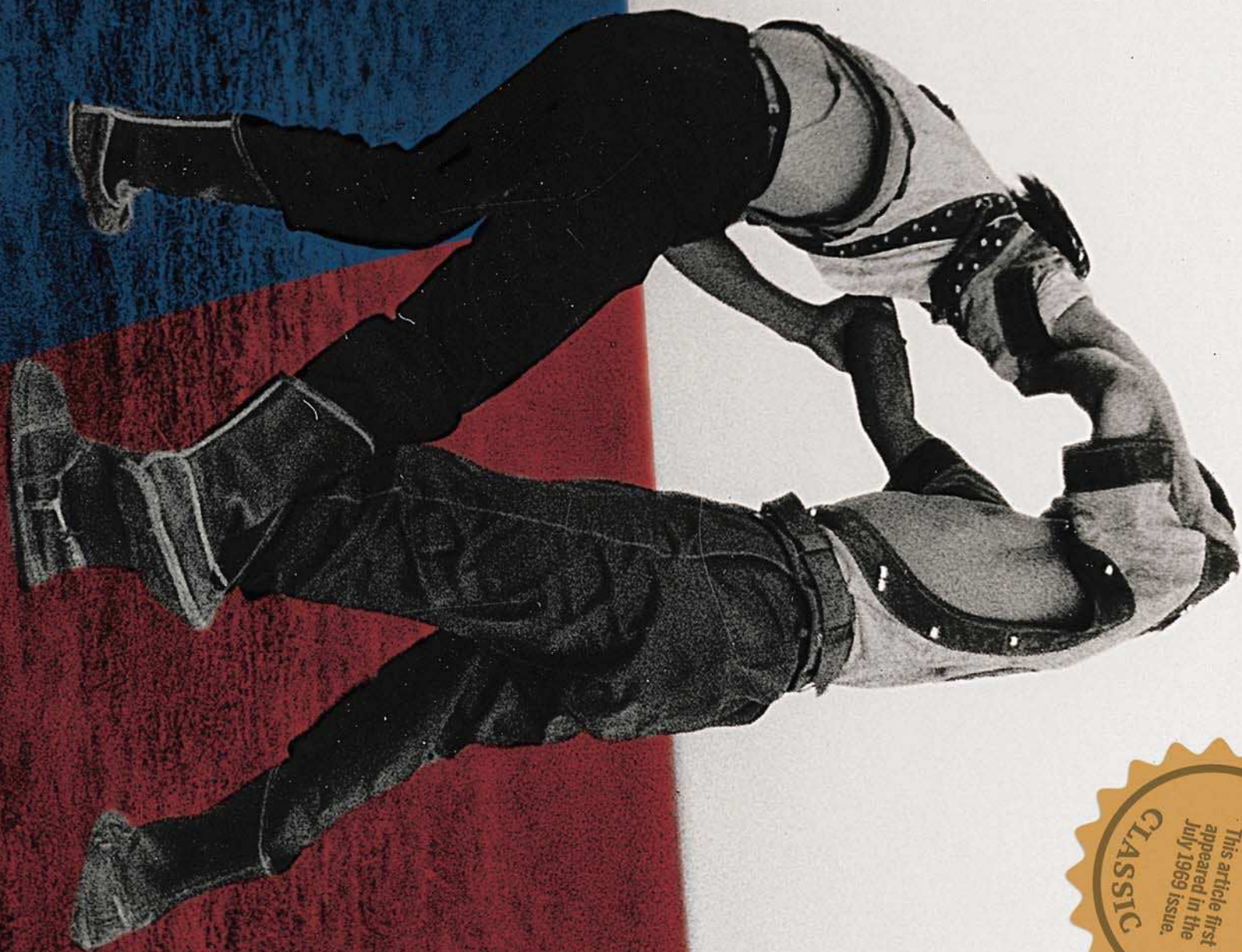
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STORY BY ANDY ADAMS • RESEARCH BY ALBERT AXELBANK





Photo by Robert W. Young







*This report, which was published in the July 1969 issue of Black Belt, is being reprinted here for three reasons: One, everybody loves a travel story. Two, everybody loves a travel story that offers a glimpse into the past, when gaining entry to nations like Mongolia was extremely challenging for Westerners. Three, the piece provides a fascinating cross-cultural comparison involving Mongolian wrestling, sumo and judo. We hope you enjoy it.*

— Editors

**S**even and a half centuries ago, the Mongolian horde thundered out of the vast reaches of the Gobi Desert and conquered half the earth. For three generations and more, Genghis Khan, his sons and his grandsons ruled over an empire that extended from Beijing to Baghdad and from the Ganges to the Volga.

When those fierce warriors were not engaged in their favorite pastime — waging war — they were conducting winter-long hunts covering hun-

dreds of miles. At the same time, they developed a passion for their own brand of martial arts: archery, horse racing and wrestling.

An American in Mongolia is about as rare as a Mongolian in America. They just “ain’t.” But by some stroke of amazing good fortune and dogged persistence, an American correspondent in Japan named Albert Axelbank secured a visa to Mongolia while he was traveling in the Soviet Union. During his visit to the land of Genghis Khan, he managed to film some seldom-seen wrestling matches despite veiled warnings not to. Prints made from frames taken from that 16mm film appear in this article.

In Mongolia, nearly every boy wants to be a wrestler when he grows up. More than that, he has his heart set on becoming a lion (*arslan*), the victor at the three-day wrestling tournament held in July. Indeed, the winner of this annual contest is a national hero much as sumo grand champion Taiho is in Japan.

Not content merely to dream about it, boys everywhere in Mongolia challenge each other to wrestling matches almost from the time they’re able to stand. They pretend to be famous grapplers in a seemingly endless series of rehearsals they hope will prepare them for the day when they come face to face with a real *arslan* wrestler.

In case you’re wondering, the runner-up at this tournament of tournaments is dubbed an elephant (*dzan*), while the wrestler placing third is called an eagle (*nachin*). Thus, Mongolian wrestlers in their pre-bout rituals imitate the actions of this honored trio of animals.





## Top Ranks

Those three ranks are roughly equivalent to the *sanyaku* ranks in sumo: *ozeki* (champion), *sekiwake* (junior champion) and *komusubi* (sub-junior champion). And like the *yokozuna* (grand champion) in sumo, there is special rank in Mongolian wrestling above all others. This peerless grappler is called a titan (*avrag*), a title awarded to a man who wins the national contest two years in a row. Needless to say, titans are a breed apart, and tales of their prowess are told and retold until they become legendary.

The grandest day in all Mongolia is July 11. For one thing, it marks the founding of the modern communist republic. But for most Mongolians, it goes deeper than that — several centuries deeper, in fact, for on this eventful July day, the national sports meet is held to determine the new champions in wrestling, archery and horse racing.

More than 500 wrestlers representing the finest male specimens in the country converge on the bustling capital. The festivities open with a huge parade, with both soldiers and civilians taking part. All file by the nation's leaders arrayed on the typical communist-style viewing stand in Sukhe Bato Square.

For the past couple of days, the preliminary wrestling matches have been run on a sudden-death-elimination basis — one loss and you're out. Winners advance pyramid style until the two finalists confront each other.

The big day finally arrives. All 15,000 seats of Ulan Bator Stadium are taken, and thousands of people gather at the far side of the field, which is roped off to keep nonpaying spectators from getting in. Soldiers, serving as policemen, do their best to keep order.

Just as in any contact sport, the two wrestlers approach from opposite sides. But before the action gets underway, they go through a ritualistic dance similar to the *shikiri* (salt-tossing ceremony) in sumo. At this time, each imitates the actions of the animal that indicates his rank. Thus, they swoop and soar and flap their arms like an eagle, stomp their feet like an elephant or thrust out their chest like a lion.

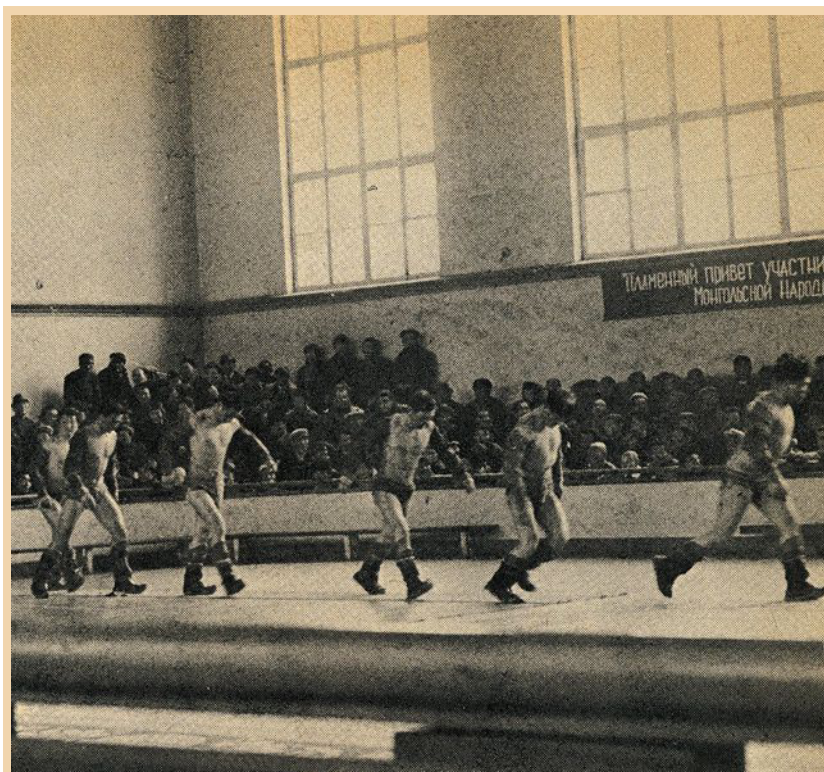
## The Rules

The referee announces the rules: No kicking, punching, chopping, gouging, hair pulling or pinching. Twisting and reverse joint bending are also prohibited. Although brute strength is essential in Mongolian wrestling, it has been called "the most peaceful kind of body-contact sport in the world."

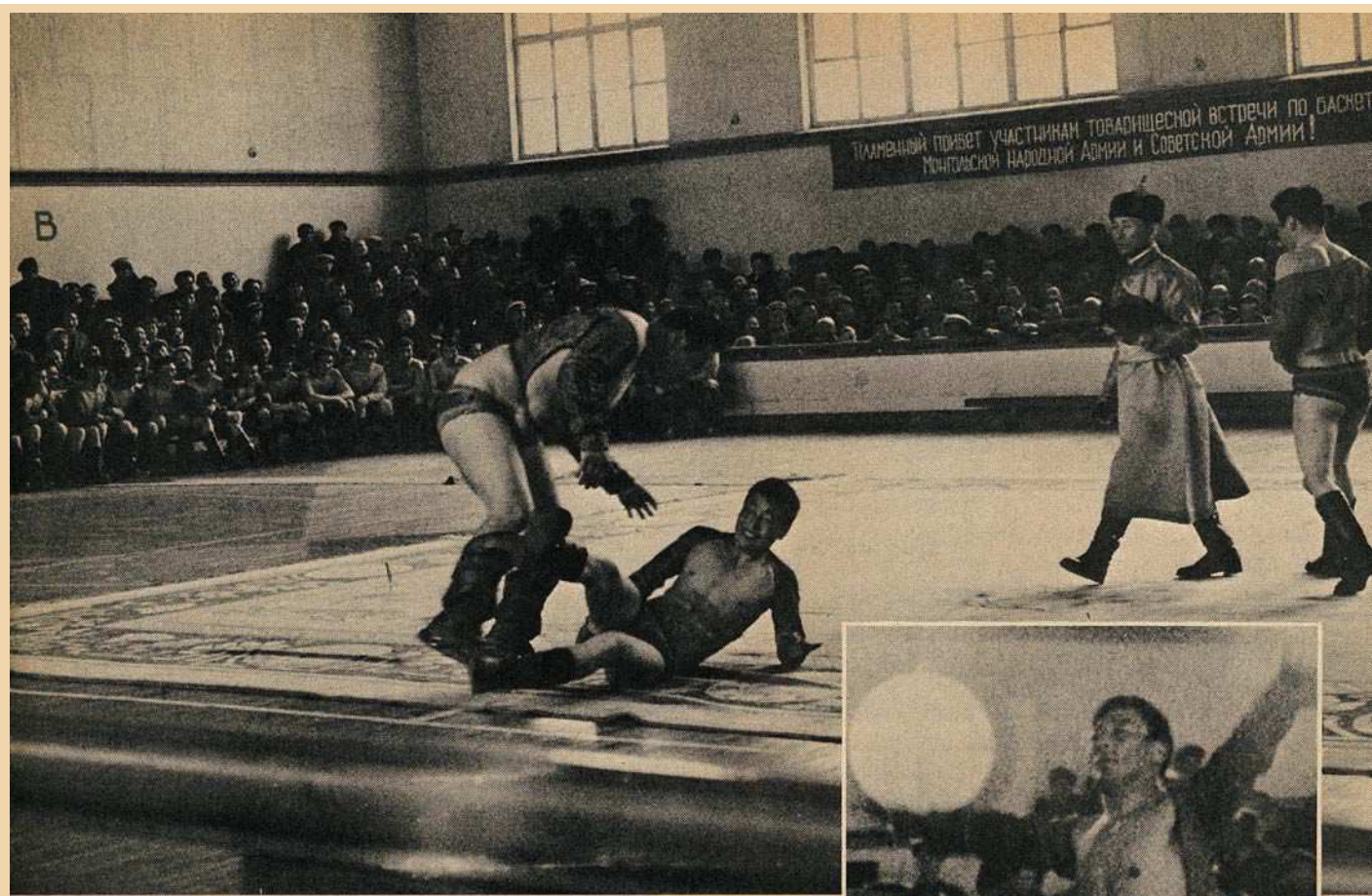
Wrestlers are not allowed to grasp their opponent's trunks or boots. They usually grip him by holding on to the leather strap he's wearing or the lower corners of his jacket. When two wrestlers grip each other in this manner, their torsos extended forward and their hips back, they look for all the world like sumo wrestlers latched onto each other's sash.

Victory is decided much as it is in sumo except that there is no precise boundary to the competition area. The object is to spill your opponent so that any part of his body except the bottoms of his feet or his hands touches the ground. (Touching down with the hands is disallowed in sumo.) The area in which they grapple is roughly circumscribed by the seconds and officials gathered to watch. If the wrestlers stray too far afield, they are brought back to the center, as in judo.

Mongolian-wrestling techniques







bear a similarity of sorts to those of sumo and even judo. They are based on throwing, ripping, pushing and pulling tactics. Tripping techniques, especially, remind one of the *sotogake* and *uchigake* of sumo, as well as the *ouchi-gari*, *kouchi-gari*, *kouchi-barai* and *kosoto-gari* of judo.

The arm throws and the pushing and pulling techniques are more like those used in sumo. For example, there is an over-arm throw remarkably similar to the *uwatnage* of sumo. There is also a pulling tactic very much like the *hikiotoshi* of sumo and a pushing technique resembling sumo's *oshitaoshi*.

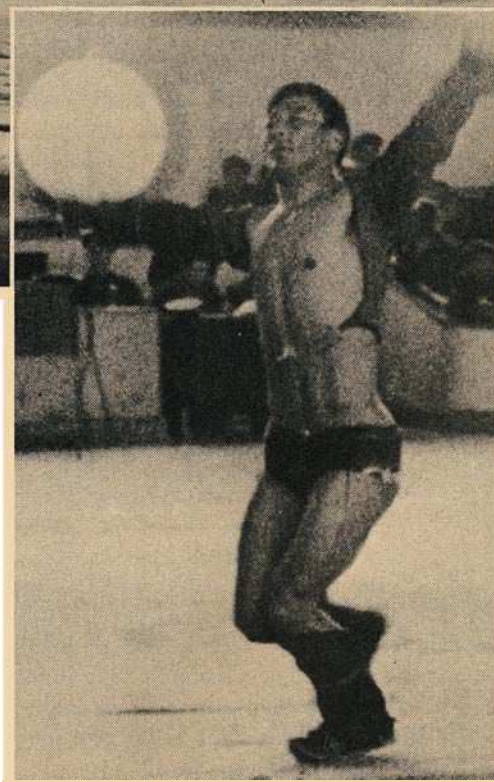
Some Mongolian-wrestling bouts are over in seconds, as in sumo, but the matches can last longer than those in judo — up to 40 minutes. But such drawn-out affairs are rare, and the average bout is usually decided in less than 10 minutes.

Excitement builds steadily in the audience as the final is reached. By the time the last eight wrestlers fight their matches, each pair has the field alone. Thus, all eyes are focused on the

finalists, a pair of husky brutes with phenomenal endurance and strength who have survived a grueling series of bouts for three days running. And now everything comes down to these last two grapplers to decide the nation's new lion.

They circle each other warily at first, probing for weak spots and feeling out the strong points. Gradually, they move closer, gripping each other's hands and then securing holds on each other's jacket. Once again, they are content to bide their time, as each pushes and pulls his opponent back and forth, waiting for the other man to make a mistake. But these two veterans don't make mistakes, and now begins the real test of strength and endurance after some five minutes of preliminary grappling.

One suddenly drives his opponent back as cheers go up from the stands, but the defending lion is on the alert and quickly counters with an arm throw. Both survive this furious exchange. The arslan tries to pull his rival forward and around in a half-circle, but his opponent hangs on grimly.



The would-be lion attacks again with renewed fury, driving back the arslan. At the crucial instant, he seizes one of the arslan's legs behind the knee, and last year's lion staggers backward amid gasps and cries from his devoted fans. But just when it seems he has fallen, the arslan steadies himself with one hand and miraculously regains his balance.

Before his powerful opponent has a chance to attack again, the lion deftly slips a leg between his rival's



legs and trips him. As his opponent reaches out with one hand to block his fall, the defending champion twists him over and sends him crashing to the ground. There's pandemonium in the stadium as spectators rush onto the field.

Now the newly crowned titan stretches out his arm to touch the shoulder of his second. By prescribed custom, the loser must circle the winner and pass beneath his outstretched arm. The two-time lion now beats his chest like a conquering gorilla, after which he goes into his ritualistic eagle dance as thousands of onlookers hail their mighty hero.

The winning wrestlers now parade to the front of the stadium, where they are proclaimed the new titan, elephant and eagle by government officials and other dignitaries serving as judges.

The grapplers return to the scene of victory, where they are treated with kumiss, or fermented mare's milk. Most can down 2 or 3 quarts of this national drink without much trouble. Sweets are also passed out, and some are thrown to the crowd. Young boys scramble after the bits of candy since one is supposed to share in the bravery and strength of the winner if he gets hold of a piece.

## **National Tournaments**

In Mongolia, there are two national wrestling tournaments, one on Independence Day and the other in midwinter. There are also several regional and local contests. The winter tourney is held in the 5,000-seat Central Sports Palace in Ulan Bator. When wrestling events are presented here, a large Persian rug is laid on the floor. It serves to soften the blow when falling and to roughly mark the boundaries of the ring.

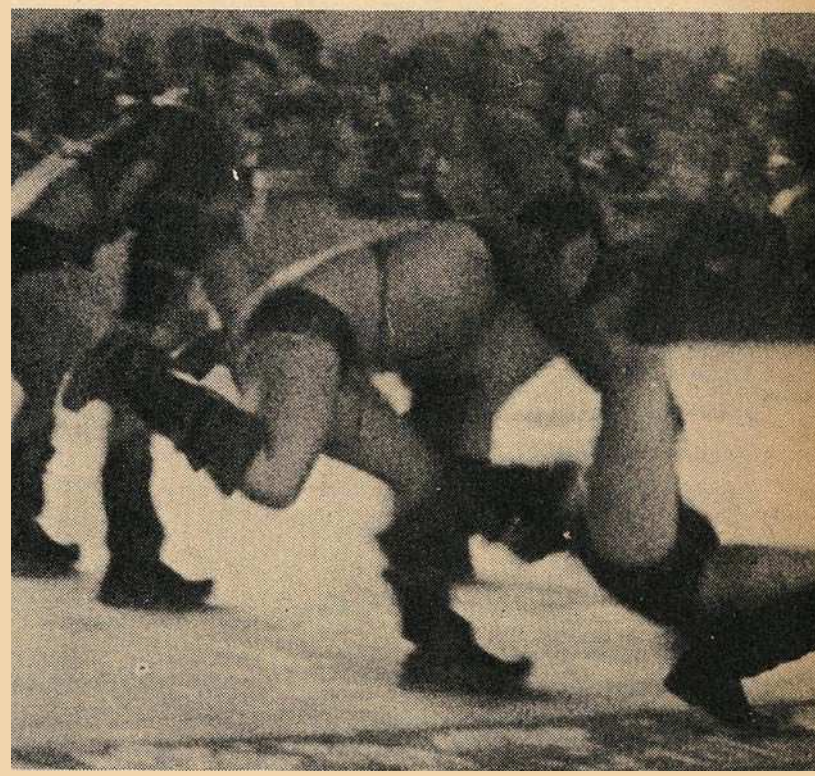
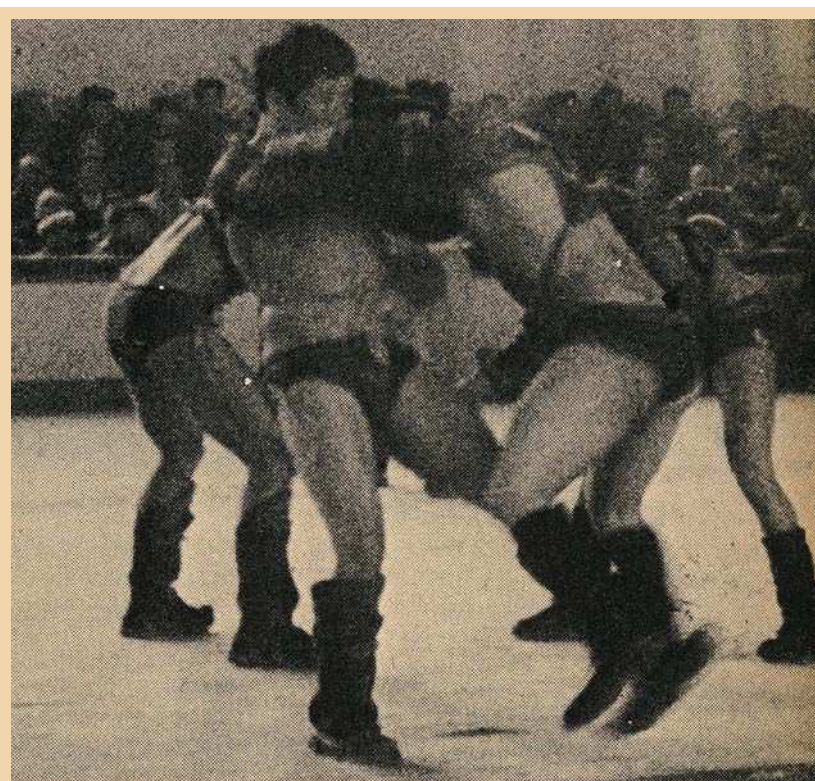
Chinese travelers to Mongolia witnessed similar contests in this ancient land as long ago as the seventh century. The Franciscan friar Carpini, who visited the Mongolian capital of Karakorum in 1246, mentioned the sport. Some of the matches were so rough that it was not uncommon for the wrestlers to suffer broken bones.

Genghis Khan himself was the leading wrestler in his own tribe when he was a youth. Although spare in build, he was tall, strong and high-

shouldered but had a terrible temper. Ogatai, his third son and successor to the empire, also had a fondness for watching wrestling matches.

Mongolians are not ones to dwell on past glories, however. Only when

two powerful wrestlers battle for the honor of becoming the new lion are the people happy because they are reminded once again of the priceless heritage handed down by Genghis Khan and his Mongol warriors. ✕



**PART 2**

# SHOT ACROSS THE BOW, KUK **국술원** SOOL STYLE

**5 Kuk Sool Strikes** Designed to Daze an Attacker  
Long Enough for You to Escape! *(And as With the  
Kicks You Learned in Part 1, You Can Amp Up the  
Power If the Situation Warrants)*

BY ROBERT W. YOUNG • PHOTOGRAPHY BY CORY SORENSEN





*In the first half of this analysis of the kuk sool approach to using pressure points for smarter self-defense (see the October/November 2017 issue of Black Belt), Sung Jin Suh, the ninth-dan su suk kwan jang nim of the World Kuk Sool Association, discussed six leg techniques you need to know. Here, he delves into four essential hand techniques and one elbow strike that also target the body's most vulnerable areas. Before we get into the moves themselves, it's worth examining why the arms, which are obviously shorter and weaker than the legs, are so effective — and actually preferred — in many self-defense situations.*

— Editor

**BLACK BELT:** In a fight, how do you decide whether to use your hands or feet?

**SUNG JIN SUH:** In *kuk sool*, we teach “hands first” because the hands are easier to use, you don’t lose your balance when you use them and you’re not adversely affected by tight clothes you might be wearing. Also, you can do multiple hand techniques without losing stamina. In other words, they require much less energy than kicking does.

**BB:** Is it easier to hit a specific pressure point with your hands because you have better control over them than you do over your feet?

**SUH:** Yes. It’s also true because you have better balance when both your feet are on the ground. And there’s another thing: Most people like to develop their upper body during exercise, so they usually have very good power with their

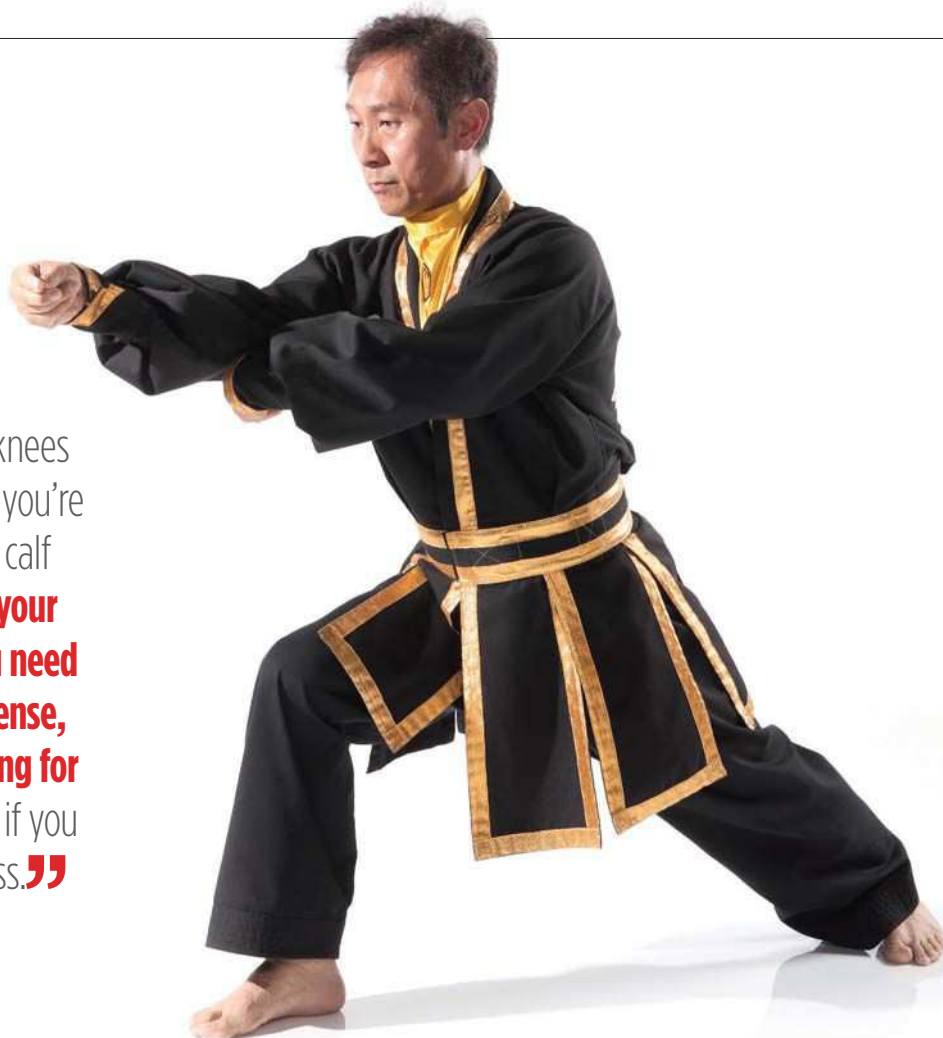
hand strikes. Actually, that’s a problem we try to fix in *kuk sool* class; we want those students to become stronger below the belt. We believe it’s important to develop overall fitness and not let one part of the body become stronger than the other.

**BB:** When doing a *kuk sool* hand strike, how important is stance?

**SUH:** Stance is very important. One of the first things we teach new students is *hyung* because *kuk sool* forms focus on strong stances. When you bend your knees to make a deep stance, you’re using your thigh and calf muscles. That builds your base so that when you need your skills in self-defense, your stance is still strong for effective striking even if you feel the effects of stress. Having better balance and more strength always helps.

“

When you bend your knees to make a deep stance, you’re using your thigh and calf muscles. **That builds your base so that when you need your skills in self-defense, your stance is still strong for effective striking** even if you feel the effects of stress.”







After maneuvering to get direct access to the side of his opponent's face, kuk sool master Sung Jin Suh executes a straight punch that ends with his first two knuckles making contact with the *dae young* pressure point on the jaw.

## TECHNIQUE: STRAIGHT PUNCH

**TARGET:** The jaw just below the ear. "We call that pressure point *dae young*," Suh said. "When it's hit with medium power, it causes a lot of pain and will stun the attacker. Make just enough contact to convince him that he's making a mistake. Using too much power with a straight punch to the *dae young* point can dislocate or break the jaw."

**TOOL:** The knuckles of the first and middle fingers when formed into a fist. "The bones of those fingers are stronger than the bones of the ring and little finger," Suh said. "Everybody knows how to make a fist, but not everybody knows that they shouldn't strike with the two [weaker] knuckles."

**TUTORIAL:** The two prerequisites here are stance and distance. You need to be in a stable position, and you need to be close enough to reach the target. Because that target is on the side of his head, either his head will need to be turned or you'll need to position yourself off to his side.

"When you punch, keep your wrist straight," Suh said. "A straight wrist is much stronger than a bent wrist. The main thing to remember is, like with the kicking we covered in the first article, you're not trying to break somebody or kill them. You want to give them a warning, not cause permanent or serious damage. It's not about *self-offense*; it's about *self-defense*. Use medium power to give them a warning and give yourself time to escape."

Because martial artists are only human, there's always a chance that you'll miss the pressure point, most of which have an effective diameter of about 1 inch, Suh said. "After all, you'll be stressed and your target will be moving. Just remember that a punch to the general area of the *dae young* point will still be effective and should give you a chance to escape."

## TECHNIQUE: PALM STRIKE

**TARGET:** The *yum chun* pressure point at the top of the throat. "This is a very sensitive area because a strike to it can hit the jaw, as well as the throat," Suh said. "If you hit it with even a little power, it hurts a lot. A more powerful hit will knock the person down."

**TOOL:** The heel of the hand, which is fairly impervious to damage even when hitting a hard target. "Some people spend time strengthening this part of the hand, which is fine, but what they really should focus on is the fingers," Suh said. "You can't really strengthen your fingers [to keep them from hyperextending], so you have to concentrate on not letting them make contact with [anything] when you're hitting."

That said, the palm is much safer than the punch, Suh said, because your knuckles aren't at risk.

**TUTORIAL:** "When Kuk Sa Nim made kuk sool, he learned a lot of hard-style techniques like the punch, knifehand and so on," Suh said. "The palm strike is different. When people get angry, they automatically make a fist. They don't automatically make a palm, which means it's a more advanced technique that you have to develop. Of course, doing exercises like push-ups can build your strength for the palm strike, but it really depends on *ki* power. That's why we open our fingers when we do it."

Another reason the palm strike is often superior to the punch is the palm is less likely to leave a bruise, draw blood or break a bone, Suh said. "After you defend yourself, it often looks like nothing happened to the attacker's body."

Sung Jin Suh makes sure he has a clear path to his opponent's neck, which means no limbs are positioned where they might bend his fingers backward. Once clear, he sends a rising palm strike into the pressure point just above the man's Adam's apple.







Following any trajectory that's convenient, the kuk sool master's strike slams the tip of the elbow into a pressure point near the temple. If he's slightly off target, the technique likely will hit the slightly larger "extra point," which is the temple itself.

## TECHNIQUE: ELBOW STRIKE

**TARGET:** *Gaek joo in*, a pressure point located in a depression between the temple and the ear. "It's very small but also very deadly," Suh said. "The effectiveness of a strike to this point is well-known in the martial arts. It causes the person to automatically fall down. If you use too much power in your elbow strike, it's likely to break a bone on your opponent's head."

Kuk sool teaches an alternative target, or "extra point," that actually is the temple. Called *dae yang*, it has a larger size, which makes it somewhat easier to strike with the elbow.

**TOOL:** The elbow, one of the body's hardest natural weapons. "Using one of your best striking tools to hit a weak part of a person's head means control is very important," Suh said.

**TUTORIAL:** "In kuk sool, the elbow strike can go up, come down, come across to the left or come across to the right," Suh said. "The best choice for a strike to the temple depends on where you are in relation to your opponent."

The advantage associated with using an elbow strike involves weapon location with respect to target location, he added. "When you're standing, your arms are high, and when they're standing, your opponent's temple is high, so there's not a lot of distance that you have to cover. That makes it a very fast technique."

Distance, however, is crucial to success with the elbow strike. "If you're an inch too far away from the target, your elbow might pass their face altogether," Suh said. "Often, the best response is to double up on the technique. That means if your inside elbow misses, adjust your distance and follow up with an outside elbow."

"Of course, if you misjudge distance and wind up missing the pressure point but hitting the eye socket, you probably won't need to follow up." (laughs)

## POWER AND PRECISION COME ONLY WITH PRACTICE

As Sung Jin Suh explained in this article, a *kuk sool* technique should be precise enough to make contact with the target, usually a pressure point, and powerful enough to get the job done. Using more force than is necessary means you're not following the teachings of the martial arts.

With respect to power generation, you need to start by concentrating on good form. Without it, you won't have proper body mechanics (optimal alignment of joints, ligaments, tendons and muscles plus efficient movement of those components), and that will make it nearly impossible to execute the techniques efficiently and effectively. You also should pay attention to your breath. Breathing is the root of internal power in the martial arts, which is why it's considered a fundamental aspect of *kuk sool*.

Two other basics are necessary for achieving power and precision in striking. The first is practice. Through physical training, your body will become accustomed to the movements. Practice sessions also include stretching, which while not so crucial for the hand techniques described in this article, is essential for the kicks taught in Part 1.

The second basic is conditioning to build strength and speed. As you strive to reach that goal, the seemingly endless repetitions you do also boost your precision. Note that part of conditioning is making contact. You must strike an actual target — be it a heavy bag, focus mitt, training dummy or human being — to gain a feel for what it's like to use your techniques for real. Because we're talking about self-defense and not cage fighting, control should be maintained in all contact situations in the *dojang*.

— R. Barry Harmon

*Kuk sool* teaches that one of the best targets for the knifehand strike is the side of the neck. It takes only a moderate amount of power to render the opponent unable to continue to attack, Sung Jin Suh says.



### TECHNIQUE: KNIFEHAND STRIKE

**TARGET:** *Hohn soo*, a point located on the side of the neck. "It's very delicate," Suh said. "As soon as you hit it, your attacker falls down. It makes him dizzy and disoriented, and his balance is temporarily affected. Plus, it hurts the neck! The next day, his neck will feel stiff, like he slept on the wrong pillow in a cheap hotel."

"If you hit *hohn soo* harder, it can lead to a knockout — just like most pressure points used in the martial arts."

**TOOL:** The knife edge of the hand. "You can also use your forearm if you've trained long enough to condition the bones for striking," Suh added. "When using the knife edge of the hand, some people bend their fingers, but in *kuk sool*, we teach students to keep their fingers straight. We believe that once you bend the joints, your *ki* energy stops flowing to the next joint. That's why we keep our fingers straight and open."

**TUTORIAL:** The mechanics of the *kuk sool* knifehand are the same as in other arts. The strike can travel in virtually any direction to accommodate the relative positioning of the weapon and target. Like several other techniques described here, it benefits from proximity.

What happens if you miss *hohn soo* with your knifehand? You may still be in luck. "If your strike is off a little, it will still hurt a lot, which will give you a chance to escape or follow up," he said. "If you miss completely, you have to try again." (laughs)





The backfist can be delivered to a variety of targets, but perhaps the most natural one is the temple. The keys to successful delivery are speed and the avoidance of telegraphing, Sung Jin Suh says.

## TECHNIQUE: BACKFIST

**TARGET:** The temple area. "Although you can strike other points on the body with the backfist, hitting the temple is probably most effective," Suh said. For a description of the aftermath of a blow to this area, refer to the elbow strike (Page 63).

**TOOL:** The middle knuckle on the back-of-the-hand side of the closed fist. "To make it as strong as possible, keep your wrist straight," Suh said. "As I mentioned, a bent wrist is not as strong as a straight wrist."

**TUTORIAL:** The backfist is slowed by the need to chamber it before striking, but its proximity to the temple can make up for that. Some martial artists avoid the backfist because they think it's easier for their opponent to block. "It can be, but it depends," Suh said. "If you have developed good hand speed and know how to strike without telegraphing, it can be an excellent self-defense technique."

Just don't get carried away and attempt a spinning backfist in a fight. "We do the spinning backfist while training to strengthen the body and increase speed, but in self-defense, I always tell students to stick with a straight backfist," Suh added. "It's much more direct. Remember that self-defense is sometimes different from what you do in practice." ✕

For more information about the World Kuk Sool Association, visit [kuksoolwon.com](http://kuksoolwon.com).

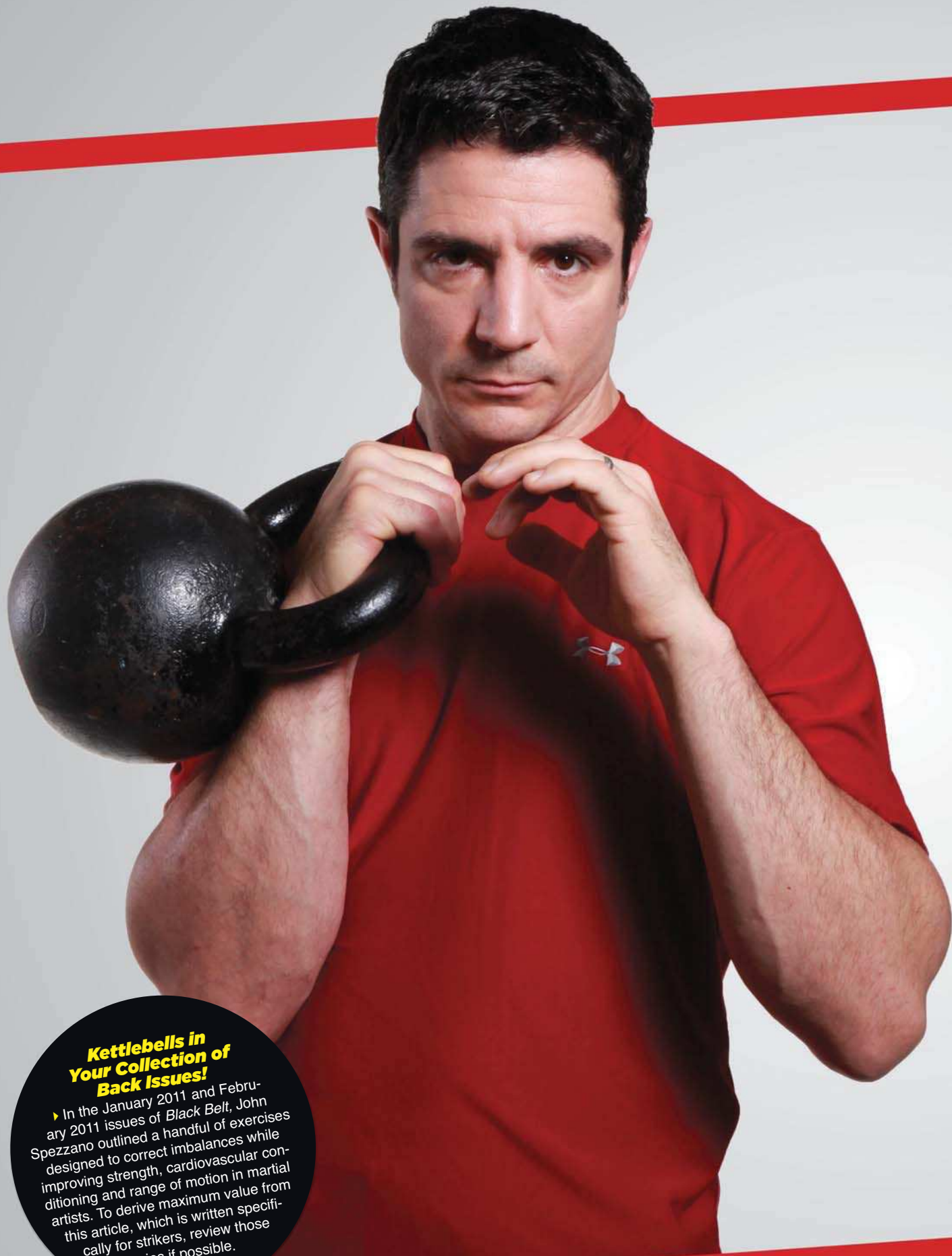
## DON'T JUST PUNCH — AIM! ➤

Punching is the most common technique people use to protect themselves. It's natural and, when practiced, can be quite effective. There is a drawback, however: It's fairly easy to break your hand when you hit something. If you blindly punch at an attacker's head, you'll probably hit his skull, which greatly increases your chance of fracturing a bone in your hand. That's why *kuk sool* advocates aiming for two sensitive spots on the head.

As Sung Jin Suh explained, the jaw has a pressure point called *dae young*. In the past, people used to explain a knockout that occurred after a strike to *dae young* as "He has a glass jaw." Kuk sool practitioners know that even a moderate-power strike to this point can result in a knockout.

The second is the temple region. People from all walks of life know about these indentations just to the outside of the eye sockets. What not so many know is that a strike to one of them can cause serious injury, especially if the blow is hard. This is one reason baseball players wear a helmet.

— R. Barry Harmon



**Kettlebells in  
Your Collection of  
Back Issues!**

► In the January 2011 and February 2011 issues of *Black Belt*, John Spezzano outlined a handful of exercises designed to correct imbalances while improving strength, cardiovascular conditioning and range of motion in martial artists. To derive maximum value from this article, which is written specifically for strikers, review those stories if possible.



# BELL- IGERENT!



**6 Kettlebell  
Exercises That  
Will Make You a  
Stronger Striker**

BY JOHN SPEZZANO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSH ZAMUDIO

**W**hen you need to punch or kick — whether in competition

or self-defense — you want to generate maximum power with minimal effort. That requires proper body mechanics with respect to your hips. To create force, you certainly need a solid connection between your feet (or foot) and the ground, but the only way for power to flow from your fist or foot is through the efficient transference from your lower body to your weapon via your hips.

Without the full recruitment of your hips, you're simply hitting with the weight of your limb — "arm punching" or "leg kicking," if you will. In contrast, when your hips are involved, you put your entire bodyweight behind your technique, which makes it the preferred method for striking.

But hip movement alone is not enough. Slow hips won't do the trick when you need to deliver power on

target; you have to move them explosively. How do you facilitate explosive hip movement? With ballistic kettlebell exercises. Below are six moves that will polish your techniques and build your technical base.

## OVERHEAD LUNGE

**In a Nutshell:** It improves your hip and shoulder mobility. Because it hits one side at a time, it builds strength and range of motion equally on your right and left sides. That helps correct any imbalances you may have, which is essential for optimal martial arts performance.

**Keep in Mind:** Although the overhead lunge is a relatively simple movement, it takes a concerted effort to execute properly. It is, for all intents and purposes, the second-to-the-last step of the famed Turkish get-up kettlebell exercise. That means if you're comfortable with the TGU, you already know the mechanics of the overhead lunge.

However, because now you're going for repetitions with your loaded arm

in an overhead and locked-out position, the overhead lunge challenges not just your stability but also your strength endurance. Be sure to maintain that locked elbow with your shoulder pulled down into the socket.

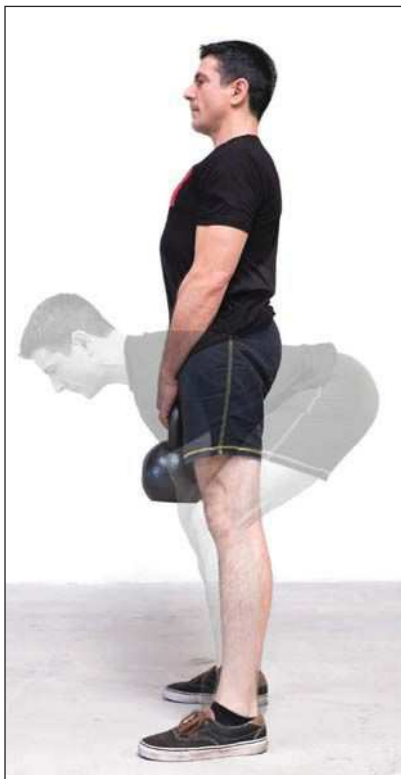
**Step by Step:** Assume a normal stance, which places your feet far enough apart to fit your shoulders in between. Using proper kettlebell movements (see next section), lift the bell to your shoulder and then overhead. While paying careful attention to the overhead positioning of the bell — balance is crucial — perform a slow lunge until your front thigh is horizontal.

**Rep by Rep:** If you're new to this exercise, aim for 10 reps on alternating legs (five on the left and five on the right) with the kettlebell in your right hand and another 10 with it in your left hand. It may not sound like a lot, but it's not easy. If you have to rest in the middle of your sets, that's OK.

**Bell Weight:** 16 kilograms for men and 8 kilos for women.







## DEADLIFT

**In a Nutshell:** It's a hinging movement that serves as the foundation for all ballistic kettlebell exercises.

**Keep in Mind:** Although you won't lift anything exceedingly heavy with the deadlift, it's regarded as the foundation for a reason. Done properly, it will allow you to minimize risk of injury when training, which translates to safe lifting in everyday life.

**Step by Step:** Stand over the kettlebell in a squat stance with the handle in line with your ankles. Bend enough at the waist and knees to grab the handle. Your chest should angle forward and your face downward. Your shins should remain as close to vertical as possible while allowing for some hip and knee bend. Once you have a firm grip on the bell, contract your lats and pull your shoulders back and down into the socket. While maintaining a tight midsection, push your feet "through" the floor and come to a standing position. As you lower the bell to the ground, pull your butt back, keep your shins vertical and allow your chest to face downward. Don't push your knees forward.

**Rep by Rep:** Do three sets of 10 reps. Take your time.

**Bell Weight:** 16 kilos for men, 8 kilos for women.

## TWO-HANDED SWING

**In a Nutshell:** It forces you to generate maximum hip explosiveness to move the weight against the pull of gravity while encouraging full-body tension during the bell's flight. The explosiveness facilitates more powerful kicking, and the lack of rest within the set pushes your cardiovascular conditioning.

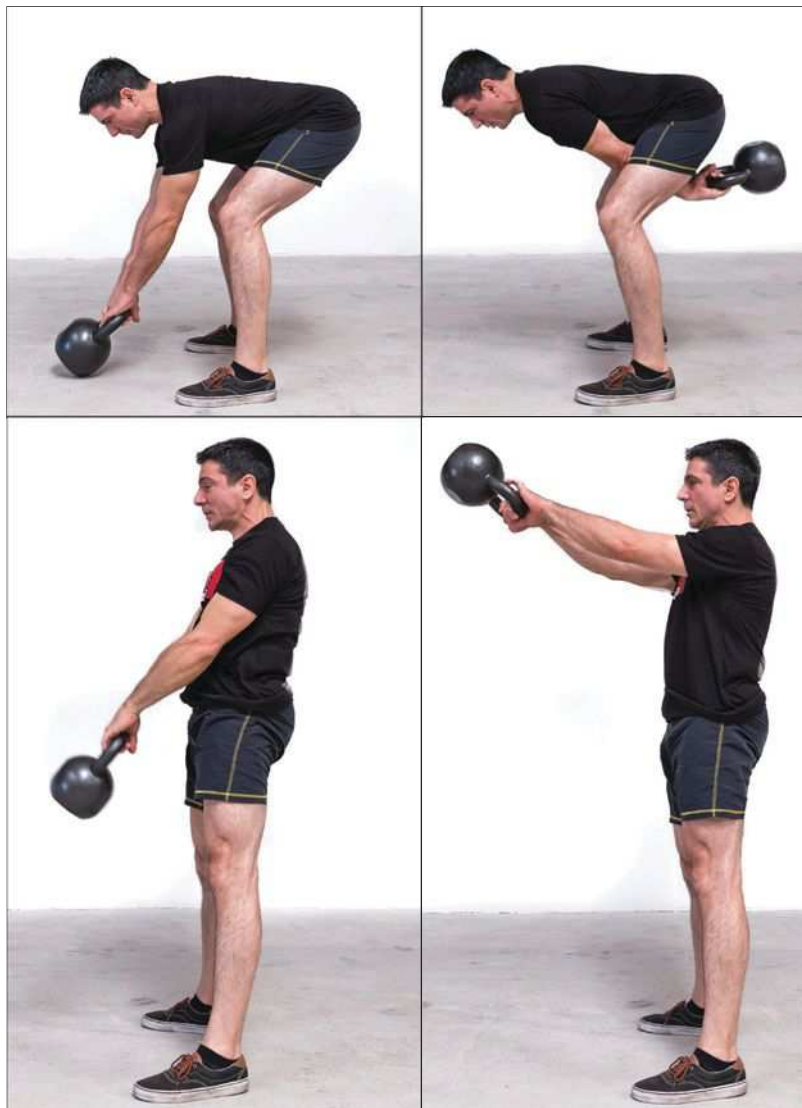
**Keep in Mind:** The isometric tension you maintain while the bell is moving means you're working a lot during your reps. Most people who are new to the kettlebell swing release their body tension as the weight descends. This may be instinctive, but it should be avoided.

**Step by Step:** Assume the normal stance and bend forward at the waist to grip the kettlebell with both hands. Tense your body and focus on holding that tension throughout the movement. Hike the bell back behind you, then

stand up explosively. The weight swings upward as a result of you straightening your torso; don't lift it with your arms. As the bell descends, don't pull yourself down into your squat for the next rep until the last moment, when your wrists are about to hit your inner thighs. At this point, release your lock and then hinge backward and down quickly because you have limited time to prepare for your next swing. Ballistic movements like this aren't meant to be done slowly. Doing so will minimize the benefits and increase risk of injury.

**Rep by Rep:** Do 25 reps while paying attention to the aforementioned timing of the descent — i.e., hinge quickly and stand back up with an explosive hip snap.

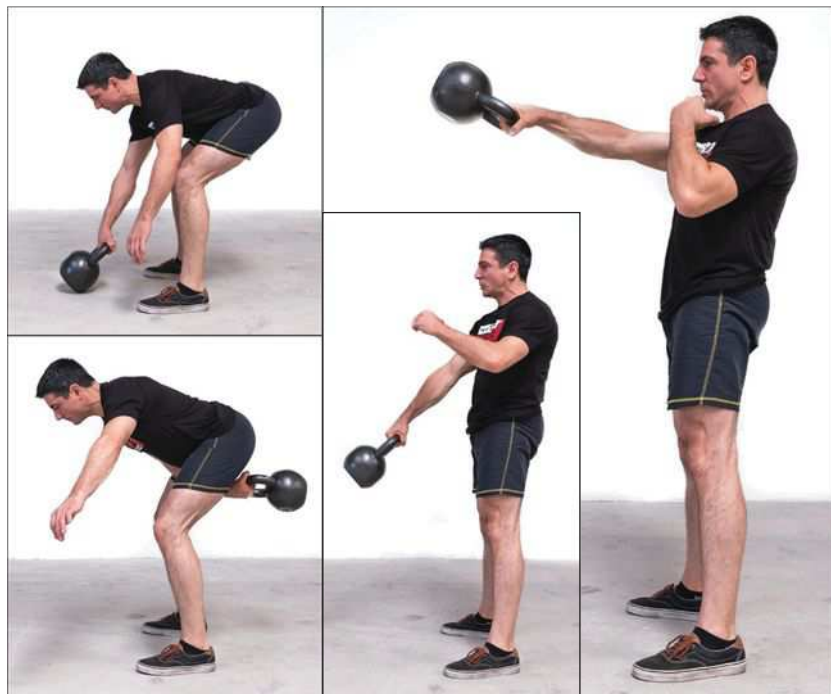
**Bell Weight:** 16 kilos for men, 8 kilos for women.



## ONE-HANDED SWING

**In a Nutshell:** It forces you to stabilize an asymmetrical (one-handed) load, increases your grip strength and boosts your grip endurance. Also,

because you're doing reps on one side at a time, you can switch hands whenever grip deterioration demands it and thus keep your workload at the desired level.



**Keep in Mind:** The one-handed swing, being a ballistic exercise, puts demands on the skin of your palms. If you're not used to gripping weights, you might experience discomfort until calluses develop. Don't let those calluses get too thick because they'll eventually tear, and that will force you to take time off from training while you heal.

**Step by Step:** The mechanics of the one-handed swing are the same as the two-handed swing except that you're using a single hand to hold the bell, so be sure to not let the bell side of your body get pulled forward at the top or bottom of the swing. Keep your shoulders squared up during the entire movement. You still need to focus on the timing of your descent and on holding tension in your body while the kettlebell moves toward the floor until the moment before your wrist hits your inner thigh.

**Rep by Rep:** Complete alternating sets of 10 (on your right side and left side) until you get to 100 reps. Take whatever rest is necessary to maintain proper form.

**Bell Weight:** 16 kilos for men, 8 kilos for women.

## CLEAN

**In a Nutshell:** It's a ballistic exercise that's performed with finesse — and one of the more difficult moves in the hard-style kettlebell system.

**Keep in Mind:** Now is a good time to fine-tune any parts of the exercise that cause pain. People often have problems landing the kettlebell on their forearm in the "rack" portion of this movement. That usually happens because they perform the swing before doing the clean, thus making them think the clean should have the same arc as the swing. Wrong. In fact, ouch!

**Step by Step:** From the normal stance, bend at the waist and grab the kettlebell. The next part requires you to "tame the arc" — in other words, move the bell so it travels almost vertically once it's past your groin. If you go big with the arc, you'll either beat up your arms or be forced to bend your knees to absorb the impact. Neither is good. Once the kettlebell clears your groin, bend your bell-side arm so the elbow goes slightly behind you. This "zip up your jacket" movement will allow you



to keep the weight close as it travels up. At the last instant, sneak your bell-side elbow back in front of your torso and under the weight to ensure a safe and gentle landing in the rack.

**Rep by Rep:** Do three sets of five reps on your right and left sides with enough rest between sets to ensure perfect form. Focus on achieving that near-vertical trajectory every time.

Don't execute the clean with as much vigor as the swing. While maximum explosion is required and expected on every swing, give the clean just enough power to get the kettlebell to its destination with a smooth landing. Be certain to maintain a straight wrist whenever the bell is in the rack.

**Bell Weight:** 16 kilos for men, 8 kilos for women.





## MILITARY PRESS

**In a Nutshell:** This is a grind, as opposed to a ballistic exercise, so hip motion is not used to get the kettlebell from point A to point B. Rather, the bell is moved by means of raw strength supported by a base of full-body tension.

**Keep in Mind:** The military press requires the same wrist alignment as the clean, which makes it a perfect addition to your punch training. Be sure to also maintain vertical alignment of your forearm under the weight. And when you “open” your elbow and shoulder, the joints should move in tandem. If one moves before the other, the bell will become unstable.

**Step by Step:** From the normal stance, rack the kettlebell. Press the weight straight up, then lower it back to the rack — always with control.

**Rep by Rep:** Do five sets of three reps per arm with sufficient rest.

**Bell Weight:** 16 kilos for men, 8 kilos for women.

## SUGGESTED ROUTINE

The following is a routine I recommend to people who are new to the kettlebell. It’s tailor-made for martial artists because it combines kettlebell exercises with bag work and/or pad work. Complete the warm-up at a steady but comfortable pace, making sure you do each exercise with proper form. Once you get to the actual workout, set your timer for three-minute rounds with one-minute rests in between.

### WARM-UP

- Shadowboxing — 5 minutes
- Overhead Lunge — 1 set of 10 alternating lunges with the bell in your right hand and then in your left

### WORKOUT

- Two-Handed Swing — 30 seconds of work and 30 seconds of rest for 3 minutes
- Kick the Bag — one 3-minute round, making sure you vary the type and height of your kicks
- Triple Clean, Single Military Press — Keep a constant pace for 3 minutes. Alternate hands after every press.
- Punch the Bag — one 3-minute round
- One-Handed Swing, Clean, Military Press — 3 minutes of work, switching sides after every fifth military press
- Kick and Punch the Bag — one 3-minute round

### COOL-DOWN

- Shadowbox at a slow, easy pace for 10 minutes. Stretch while you’re still warm, being sure to open your hips and chest. Think about everything you just did to build your body for your art, then look forward to your next kettlebell workout. 🐯

● **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** A 36-year veteran of the martial arts, John Spezzano is a full instructor of Jun Fan gung fu/jeet kune do concepts and Filipino martial arts under Dan Inosanto. Spezzano is also qualified to teach maphilindo silat, wing chun, muay Thai and savate. A brown belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu, he’s a StrongFirst team leader and level-2 kettlebell instructor under Pavel Tsatsouline. For more information, visit [source1maf.com](http://source1maf.com).

### Ultimate Kettlebell Resource

John Spezzano, the author of this article, addressed the subject of martial arts fitness in detail in a text titled *The Martial Arts/Kettlebell Connection*. Published by Black Belt Books, it’s available on Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com.



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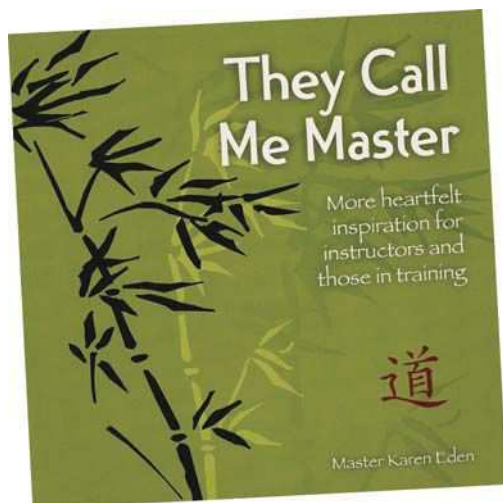
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This book comes from Karen Eden, a fifth-degree black belt in *tang soo do*. It's an engaging collection of inspirational essays on her favorite subject: martial arts training. 194 pages

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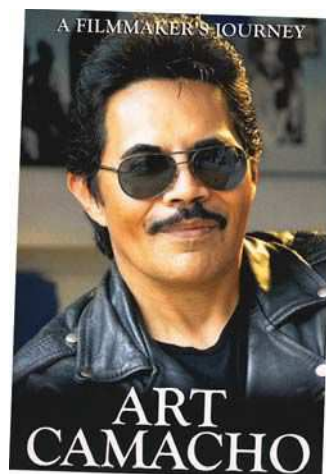


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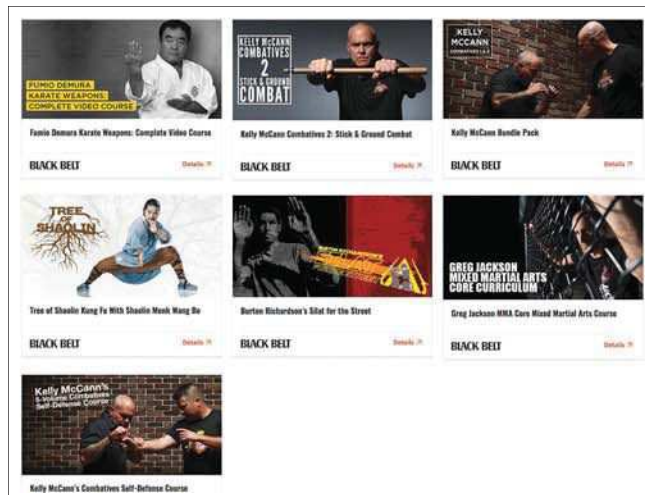
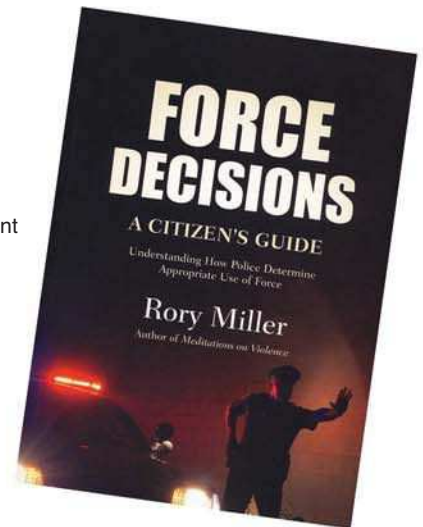


## FORCE DECISIONS ▶

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# In XMA, the Focus Is on Life Skills

by Mark Jacobs

If you ask kids why they decided to take martial arts, you will get a variety of reasons, but perhaps the most common is they saw someone throwing a cool kick or punch in a movie. Of course, real martial arts don't resemble what we see in the movies all that much, but if Mike Chaturantabut, aka Mike Chat, has anything to say about it, the definition of "real" martial arts might change to more closely resemble "reel" martial arts.

**A WORLD-CHAMPION** forms competitor and *Black Belt* Hall of Fame member, Chat first became interested

in the arts while growing up in Chicago watching kung fu theater on television. "Like the kids today, I saw people doing those moves, and it inspired me," he said. "I wanted to fly through the air and do what I saw in kung fu films."

His dreams came true when he moved to Hollywood and started getting film work, including a feature role in the *Power Rangers* TV show. That set Chat on a path that would see him regularly working as an actor, stuntman and fight choreographer, which put him in the unique position of being able to bring all three disciplines together at his XMA World Headquarters training facility.

When he opened 10 years ago, he had just a handful of private students; now the North Hollywood school boasts an enrollment of nearly 300 — including stuntmen, actors, would-be actors and normal kids just looking to learn from the Blue Power Ranger.

"We mix all styles of martial arts with dance, acrobatics and stunts," Chat said. "There's no other training facility in the world that combines all these facets. You don't see other martial arts schools with trampolines, foam pits and wire apparatuses. It's why we attract so many acting and entertainment professionals."

Photos by Rick Husted



**CHAT HAS SHAPED** the careers of several successful young actors and stunt people, including Taylor Lautner of the *Twilight* movies, who started as a private student. Lautner went on to become one of the top children's forms competitors in the country, then Chat helped him break into films.

But as with most martial arts schools, the bread and butter at XMA World Headquarters is still the average kid who comes in just wanting to learn some punching and kicking. Chat said he believes the secret to running a successful school is retaining the interest of those kids as they become teenagers, a time when walking around town in a white karate *gi* is no longer fun and might be viewed as a bit dorky.

To solve that perception problem, Chat attempts to make what he teaches more reflective of what kids see in movies and video games. In fact, he coined the term XMA, which stands for "extreme martial arts," to describe the dynamic, often gymnastics-based style he teaches. His XMA brand now has 1,500 affiliated schools around the world.

**"WHEN I STARTED** in martial arts, no one really had a program to teach people how to do or teach this stuff," he said. "The way you learned it was you'd go to a tournament and see someone do a fancy move you liked, then go home and try to copy it on your own. So originally, we put together this program for school owners to help them teach it."

While many traditional teachers might recoil at the idea of making backflips part of their martial arts curriculum, Chat counters by pointing out that push-ups, a staple of many traditional workouts, are no more realistic for fighting than flips. Both are done for training purposes. Learning to do a flip develops great muscle control, as well as making class more exciting for young students, he said.

**ACKNOWLEDGING THAT** XMA might not be to everyone's taste, Chat has developed a leadership program that focuses on life skills, and it can be applied by more traditional martial arts schools.

"Our programming has evolved," he said. "Originally, it was about teaching people how to do the choreography, but nowadays if you want to learn how to do XMA, you can go on YouTube and learn how to do a lot of that stuff for free. So we changed our focus."

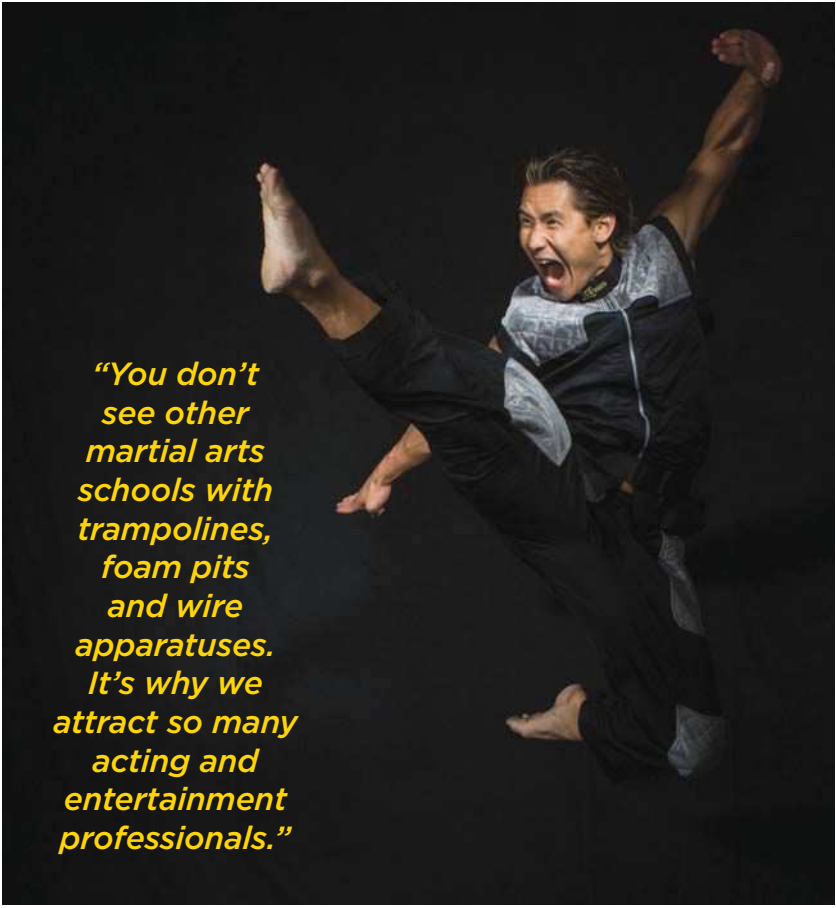
"Now we're not so much about what you do but more about how you do it. For example, I used to teach people how to yell for forms to make their techniques look and sound stronger. But instead of teaching people how to just yell for a punch or a kick, I now teach them to apply it as part of a strong and confident speaking voice."

The leadership program he developed in conjunction with the American Taekwondo Association now has 1,000 schools involved. Instructors who participate can choose what to teach so it meshes with their martial art, but the principles he espouses — teaching life skills through the arts — are for everyone.

**"AT THE END** of the day, throwing a perfect side kick is not that important," Chat said. "What's more important is, Can you change a person's confidence? The best martial artists don't necessarily have good social skills. They may have developed a high level of skill in what they can do as martial artists, but in other areas of life, they may not be that confident."

He's more interested in developing well-rounded people who can become leaders in other areas in life. "That's what martial arts are about to me — life skills," he said. "That is what keeps kids in a martial arts program. If parents look at it as just punching and kicking and their child doesn't want to do it anymore, they'll say, 'Go do something else.' But when parents hear it's about developing life skills, they'll encourage their child to stay with it." ✂

For more information, visit [xmahq.com](http://xmahq.com).



**"You don't see other martial arts schools with trampolines, foam pits and wire apparatuses. It's why we attract so many acting and entertainment professionals."**

# How Fear Can Drive Success

*I've never liked heights. As a professional stuntwoman, however, I've had to face and overcome my fear on many occasions.*

by Cheryl Wheeler Sanders

One of the most memorable times was during the filming of *Warlock 2*, one of those bad movies you can catch on HBO at 3 in the morning. It had a so-so script, but the lack of a plot was overcome by the awesome stunts.

The one I'm remembering was complicated, and I had reservations about it for days. It involved the lead stunt doubles — Mic Rodgers and me — leaping off the roof of a six-story building while the innards of the building and the rooftop exploded.

The special-effects crew warned us that the explosion would be deafening. They said it was crucial that we jump off and away from the building so we'd be in the air when it blew. Timing was everything because we'd be free-falling onto an airbag 60 feet below. If one of us hit the airbag ahead of the other, the second person actually could be bounced off the expanding bag. Because the landing zone was surrounded by concrete, such a mistake could mean serious injury or death.

As launch time neared, Mic and I began psyching ourselves up. There's a beautiful thing that happens right before a dangerous stunt, and all stunt people handle it a different way. It involves a sharpening of everything around you as your mind shifts into a meditative state that's almost Zen-like, when you focus on what's before you. Your adrenal glands go into overdrive, and the hormone they spit out is as addictive as any drug. It's what enables stunt people to perform those death-defying feats. It's during such moments when I feel strongest.

Over the years, I'd learned to welcome the arrival of this fear. Now I embrace it as an energy that can be transformed by sheer willpower into determination. It's also an anger of sorts, one I respect and use to my advantage. It fuels my muscles and mind while giving depth to my physical and mental strength.

As the director yelled, "Action," we started our run. That Zen state kicked in, and the entire world dropped away except for the stunt. We sailed off the edge of the building in perfect unison and hit the airbag dead center at the same time. It was a perfect stunt. Once again, I'd conquered my fear by facing it full on and defying it. I'd grasped that fear, harnessed it and turned it in to something powerful and positive.

**BECAUSE OF** its physical effects, fear has been described in many ways: gut wrenching, bowel loosening, stomach tightening, heart pounding and so on. Fear of physical harm causes anxiety, floods the body with adrenaline, and signals the pulse to race and the blood pressure to soar. It quickly can spiral out of control, leading to panic, which is even more detrimental. Elite members of the military, including Navy SEALs and Army Rangers, undergo intense physical and mental training to harness fear and overcome the physical and emotional side effects. Their ability to remain calm in dangerous situations is crucial to survival.

Despite what they're able to do, overcoming fear is far from easy. Yet when it's faced and subsequently mastered, fear can serve as a positive force that gives you an edge whether you're on the battlefield or in the office.

Mastering fear is tough because human beings are subject to so many kinds of it: fear of failing, fear of the unknown, fear of not being good enough, fear of losing, fear of getting hurt, fear of heartbreak, fear of poverty, fear of not being loved. That can leave people so afraid of challenges — and of failing to surmount them — that they opt to stay in their comfort zone and live a life of mediocrity and regret.

**I KNOW** all about this. I grew up filled with fear and insecurity — insecurity, in my opinion, being just a milder form

of fear. My five unruly brothers never wanted me around. Their solution was to tease and torture me. They'd gang up on me, lock me in our toolshed and shake the doors violently, rocking the entire structure. Wood roaches and daddy longlegs would drop from the rafters into my hair. I'd panic and hyperventilate in an effort to get them off me. That, of course, would make my brothers laugh.

Fears like this played such a prominent role in my childhood that I retreated into a world of animals and make-believe. I loved animals and felt comfortable with them because they never judged me and always loved me unconditionally.

By the time I was 15, my self-image was an average student with no particular skills. I played a little basketball, ran track, rode my horse, and endured the insecurities of being in ninth grade wearing braces and glasses. I saw myself as the skinniest, scrawniest, least shapely girl in my grade. My self-esteem could not have been any worse. Then came the sport that rocked my world.

**I DISCOVERED** the martial arts — specifically, karate and kickboxing — and my life changed. Although stepping out of my comfort zone was terrifying, I accepted a girlfriend's dare to accompany her to an after-school karate class taught by a black belt named Gerry Blanck. To my astonishment, I was hooked. *Yoshukai* karate quickly became my passion and my salvation. It blended personal challenges and personal goals with the team spirit and camaraderie I'd never experienced as a child. And I was good at it!

Blanck forced me to recognize my own potential. He wouldn't take "no" or "I can't" for an answer as he pushed me to be my best. The physical training of karate coupled with the mental discipline and the mind-over-matter techniques helped me find a strength I never knew I possessed.

Within months, I was competing in karate tournaments and winning trophies in forms and fighting. As I advanced in rank, I continued to win, making a name for myself all over the Southeast. For the first time in my life, I believed in myself. I was still fearful,





*Cheryl Wheeler Sanders, left, and Graciela Casillas.*

but I learned it was OK to be afraid. I learned that fear sharpened my skills as a martial artist, and I started to crave that feeling of overcoming it.

When Blanck started an amateur kickboxing team with some of his younger male students, I trained with them at Pensacola Boxing Club because I loved the physical workouts. Eventually, I was asked to compete against another female kickboxer, and the rest is history. I won — and never looked back.

I began fighting around the country, slowly building a reputation in the kickboxing community. I also continued my traditional martial arts studies and earned a second-degree black belt. Eventually, I won a world kickboxing

title as the WKA super-bantamweight champ and later parlayed my skills into a career in stunt work.

**DID I DESTROY** my fear? No. It was ever present, riding on my shoulder next to my self-doubt and my insecurity. It was poised to pounce the moment I faltered, which I did many times. My road in life has been riddled with potholes, and often I found myself taking one step forward and two steps back, but I never let fear stop me or incapacitate me.

I remained wary of fear, as well as respectful of it, but I realized long ago that everyone battles fear and insecurity and that the best way to do that is to face fear full on. It's not easy, but it's better than the alternative. Losing

a fight because I failed to rein in my fear was unacceptable to me as a warrior. Of course I didn't always win, but I did most of the time. And even when I lost, I tried to find positive lessons that would help me win in the long run.

These days, I live a comfortable co-existence with fear. Now in my 50s, I'm fortunate to be able to look back on a long career in kickboxing and continue a career in moviemaking and public speaking. Much of this I attribute to my fear — my acknowledgment of it, my acceptance of it, my decision to face it every day in some way or another, and my ability to transform it into a powerful commodity that contributes to success inside and outside the *dojo*.

Fear is power. Embrace it. Own it. ✕



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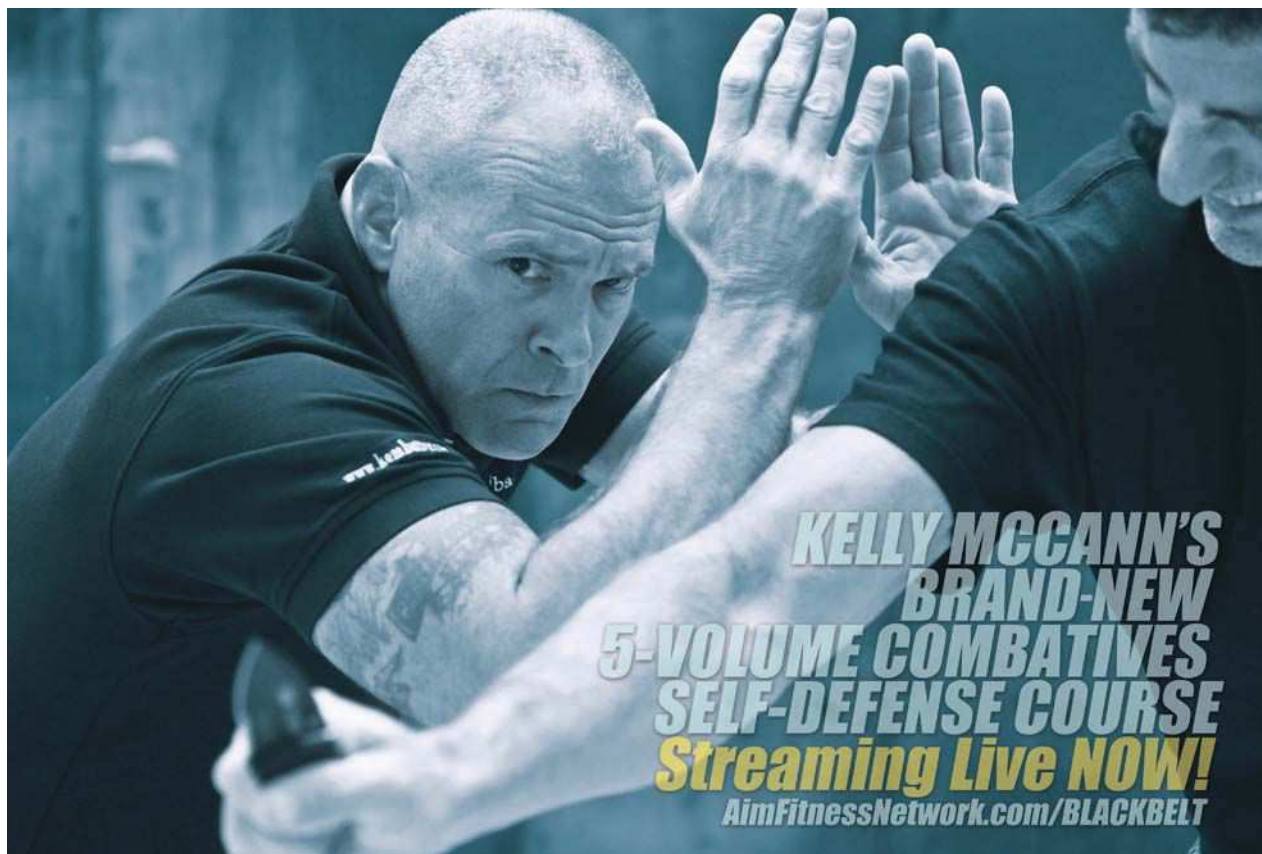
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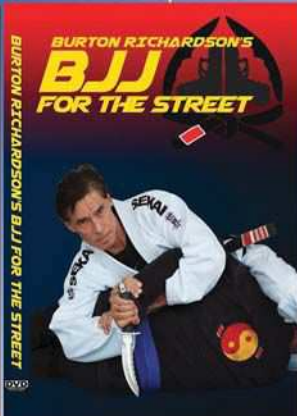
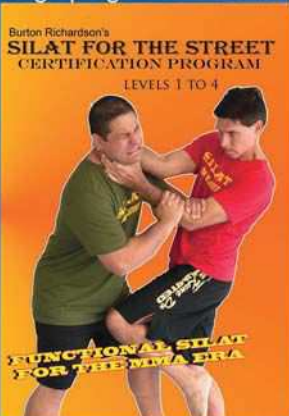
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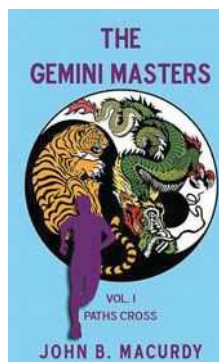
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**About the Author:** John B. Macurdy grew up in Stamford, Connecticut, the son of a world-renowned opera singer and an accomplished pianist. He has been an elite gymnast, diver, decathlete, and a martial arts master. His next book will be volume 2 in the series. He currently resides in Los Angeles with his wife Michelle.



**THE GEMINI MASTERS: VOL. 1: PATHS CROSS (ISBN: 978-1-68181-721-7)** is now available for \$17.95 and can be ordered through the publisher's website: <http://sbprabooks.com/JohnBMacurdy> or at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com).

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**BONUS!** You get instant access to a story titled “The Shaolin Whole-Body Workout.” You also get “A Concise Guide to the Tree of Shaolin,” along with the original article that accompanied Wang Bo’s induction into the *Black Belt* Hall of Fame.

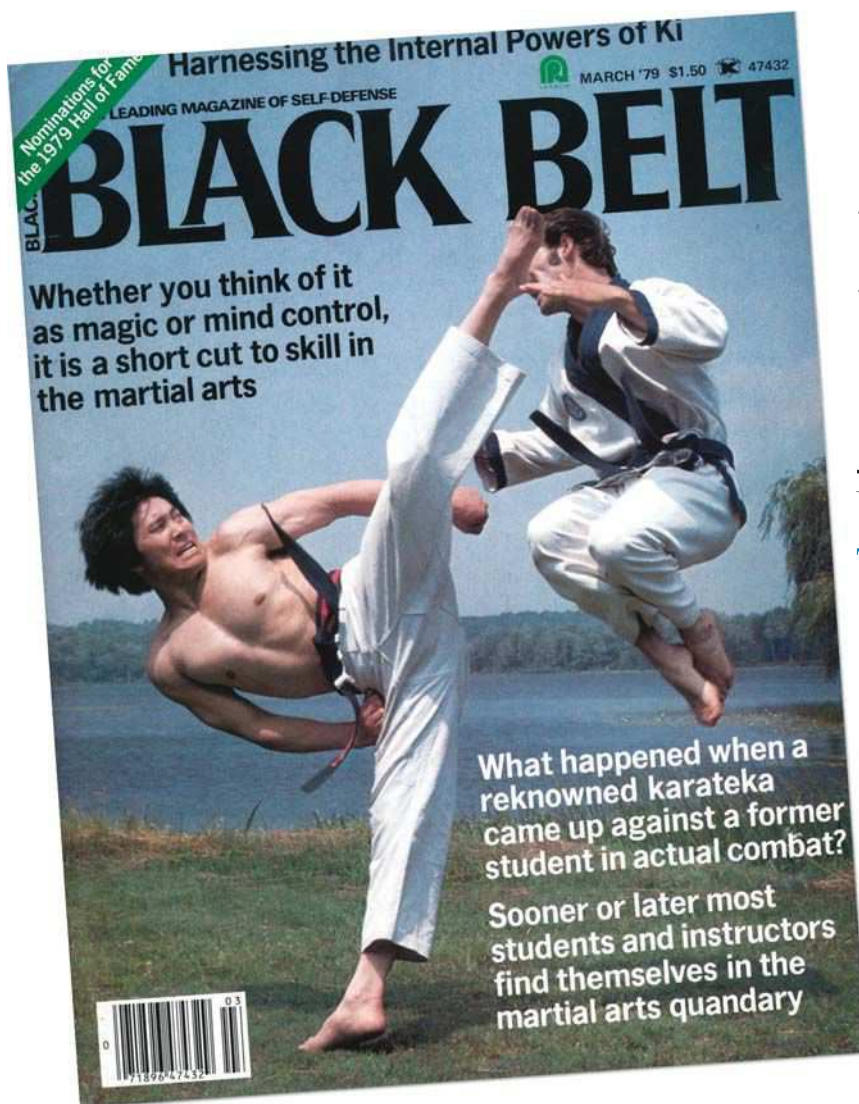
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# From the Archives

Vol. 17, No. 3, \$1.50

The 183<sup>rd</sup> issue of *Black Belt* was dated March 1979. It was 76 pages long and featured *tang soo do* leader C.S. Kim on the cover.

- "I teach my students exactly what I learned from my instructor and what my instructor learned from his instructor," says *tang soo do* master C.S. Kim. "No one changes anything. We teach people a true form of martial art. We do not mix techniques because if everyone teaches what they think is best, no one will recognize an art in its original form."
- In his editorial, Richard Zimmerman postulates that the subject of greatest interest to *Black Belt* readers may be the development of *chi* (ki) power.
- A medical doctor named Millard Seto weighs in on ki: "The *kiai*'s [true] value is in the resultant tightening of the voluntary muscle groups, thus strengthening the stance and stabilizing the body, particularly the upper body, against the player's moves."
- "If you want to increase your mind and your power, you must understand what already exists around you," says Dr. Lily Siou, a *chi kung* instructor based in Honolulu. "It's just a matter of how you can adapt to the environment, how it can enter into you and how to take that power to use for a certain time when you need it."
- An Asian World of Martial Arts ad showcases half a page of Bruce Lee posters. That's 24 images to choose from! They're \$1.50 apiece, in case you're wondering.
- Leaders in the Soviet Union decide to promote karate as a "contactless sport." That means no contact at all.
- French judo champ Yves Delvingt reveals one of the secrets of his success: "We go [to Japan] in the winter. At [the University of] Tenri, there are walls that open along one side, and they keep them open. And there is ice on the mats. The Japanese don't warm up much but go directly to *randori*; maybe that's

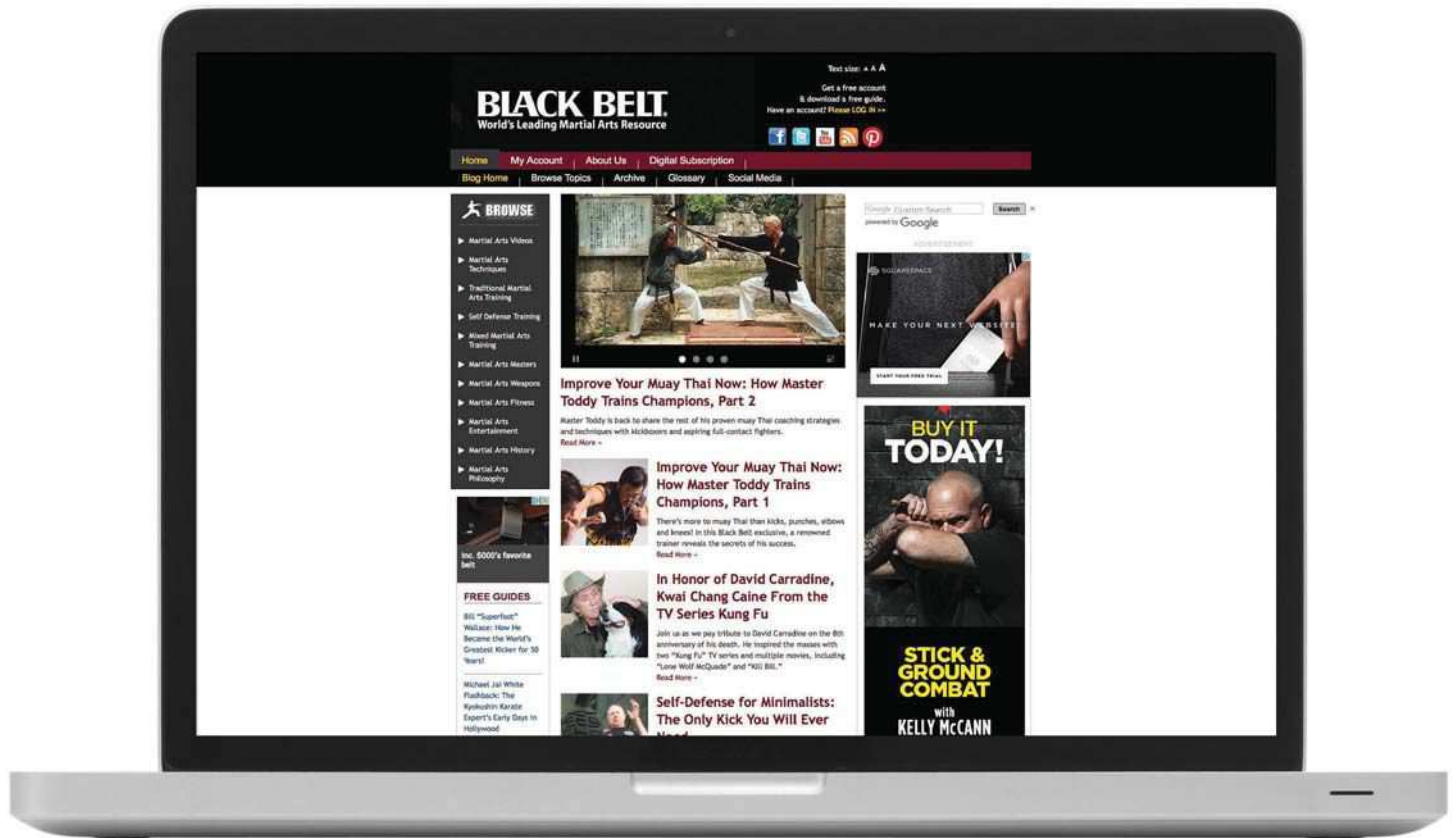
why they're always hurt. But they develop a fighting spirit that is almost mean."

- Speaking of mean ... could that explain why, in his analysis of injuries in the martial arts, Harvey Kurland observes that the injury rate for women is 21.0 per 1,000 hours of training, while the rate for men is 18.2 per 1,000 hours? More likely, it's because women don't hold back when they compete.
- *Bruce Lee's Fighting Method*, a set of four books usually sold as paperbacks, debuts as an all-in-one hardcover. The 448-pager is priced at \$24.95. (Fast-forward to the present: *Bruce Lee's Fighting Method: The Complete Edition* is available as a hardcover with an introduction from Shannon Lee, digitally remastered photos and bonus content from Ted Wong.)
- Kickin' Jeans score a full-page ad placed by Century Martial Arts, and it's in color. Meanwhile, most of the mag is black and white. (Fast-forward to the present: Century has revamped and relaunched those fancy pants, now called Kicking Jeans, and they're a best-seller.)
- When available, back issues of *Black Belt* go for \$2 each. That's a jump up from the old days when back issues sold for a buck apiece.
- Many of the smaller display ads and classifieds in the magazine include only a mailing address. Meanwhile, the larger ads from bigger companies include a phone number and make mention of their ability to accept a relatively new payment method: credit cards. ✂

(Note: Back issues are not for sale.)



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