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**SPECIAL ISSUE** 2019 BLACK BELT HALL OF FAME

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Photo by Patrick Sternkopf

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Destinations: Silat Under the Volcano in Bali

Photo Courtesy of Antonio Graceffo



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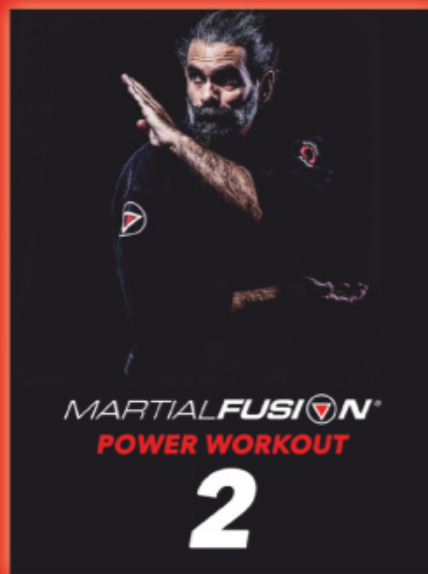


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# FULL SPEED AHEAD — NOT!

Aristotle said the best way to learn an art is to imitate great art. He had a word for it: *mimesis*.

Vince Lombardi took that notion one step further when he said, “Practice does not make perfect. Perfect practice makes perfect.” Just repeating something won’t make you a master of it; you have to repeat it without error.

This is a powerful combination for learning. Find a master, perform his or her movements over and over, and do them slowly enough so that they’re exactly the same. Simply put, never practice a mistake.

Most martial artists, in their eagerness to advance, move too quickly. The real secret to improvement is practicing what you already know — perfectly.

Learning is the biological process of creating neural pathways in the brain. Every perfect repetition builds a good path, one you can travel on later. Every incorrect repetition builds a parallel but incorrect path, one you can easily slide onto if you aren’t careful.

The more you practice perfectly, the deeper the memory pathway becomes. The trick is to make the correct pathways as deep as possible and the incorrect pathways shallow or nonexistent.

The faster you perform a movement, the more likely it is that you’ll make a mistake *unless* you have cut only one path for it — a perfect one. Likewise, when you perform a task under stress or along with other tasks, it’s easy to bungle it *unless* you have no neurological way to screw up.

A martial artist’s greatest enemy is rushing, learning new techniques rather than performing them well. The student figures that the faster he or she can learn more moves, the more quickly rank can be earned. The truth is quite different.

Boy, have I made this mistake in the past! I would learn a new technique and then want to learn another immediately. Instead of taking each one slowly and surely, I rushed. The result? I made a lot of mistakes.

“You can spend the entire second half of your life recovering from the mistakes of the first half,” said Saul Bellow, a Pulitzer Prize recipient.

The moral: Don’t spend the second half of your training correcting the mistakes you made in the first half. For now, slow down and practice everything perfectly. You can always add speed later.

Most things worth learning are complex. That’s why it’s easier to learn them in pieces. Whether it’s a dance, a piano piece or a *kata*, the ultimate performance is a complex combination of simpler tasks.

Ed Parker once said, “Combinations are no more than the multiplication of simple, basic moves.” So to make the performance perfect, you need to perfect each simpler task. Most learning systems are based on this understanding.

Slow down and make each movement as close to perfect as you can. Go as slowly as you need. Don’t worry: Doing a repetition at half speed doesn’t make the learning process longer. It makes it faster because you’re creating just one neural pathway, one that won’t allow you to deviate from the correct course.

Do it right every time, and you’ll learn faster and perform better.

This worked for me in 1980 when I took third place and first place in forms at two tournaments. Yet years before that, I did terribly. Fortunately, my instructor was old school. He told me to break down each move and master it. The stance, the strike, the execution, everything. Then he said to connect it all in a good flow.

During the six months before the competitions, I did just that. And within one year, I went from losing to winning. There was one more bonus: All my other forms and techniques started to look better because I’d mastered the individual moves of one complex form.

I’ve come to believe that the secret to being a master at anything is not some mysterious pre-existing capacity for a particular skill. It stems from an inclination to practice it correctly.

Motivational speaker Tony Robbins put it this way: “If you want to be successful, find someone who has achieved the results you want and copy what they do, and you’ll achieve the same results.”

Pretty simple, right? Just find and imitate great martial artists. Get good coaching from someone who can show you the perfect way to do a move the first time. By learning perfect form and practicing it perfectly, you’ll significantly shorten the time it takes to master your art. 🙏

— Jim Brassard, 10<sup>th</sup> degree  
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BLACK BELT

# TIMES

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

## FIGHT SMARTS FROM JOHN HACKLEMAN



**A**s soon as a developing self-defense situation is detected, a wise martial artist thinks about quickly removing himself or herself from the situation, says John Hackleman, a master of Hawaiian *kempo*. “If you can, talk your way out of it. Use verbal judo or de-escalation. Or get in your car and lock the door — that’s the best-case scenario. If you have to, use stun and run.

“But you need to train for the worst-case scenario. If somebody punches you in the face for no reason, the de-escalation period is over. That’s the scenario I’m interested in. I’ll let the psychologists deal with everything else.”

Some instructors recommend trying to instill fear in an attacker, but Hackleman is not a fan of that tactic. “If he’s on crack, there is no logic,” he says. “And you could kick a person in the groin, and he could still manage to attack you. You’ve got to separate him from his consciousness.”

Hackleman, who appeared on the cover of the December 2017/January 2018 issue of *Black Belt*, identifies several methods for achieving that goal. They include blunt-force trauma to the head from a strike or kick, interruption of the blood flow to the brain from a choke, and loss of blood as a result of a knife wound or gunshot.

“When you’ve done one of these, then and only then are you safe,” Hackleman says. “If you’re an adult, this is what your training should focus on.”

Photo by Cory Sorensen



# RECENTLY POSTED ON BLACKBELTMAG.COM



## ► **Being Comfortable With the Uncomfortable**

Carlos Machado discusses the Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* way of life — and demonstrates four precision BJJ techniques step by step.

## ► **2019 U.S. Open Karate Tournament**

You are about to enter the highlight zone! Find out what went on at the premier martial arts tournament, which has been operating continuously since 1973.

## ► **Black Belt Columnist Moves to Mongolia**

Antonio Graceffo, Ph.D., author of *Black Belt's* popular Destinations column, recently moved to Mongolia to polish his wrestling skills in preparation for his MMA comeback fight.

## ► **The Bruce Lee Lineage**

Enjoy this exclusive Q&A with Andrew Kimura, son of Taky Kimura and the leader of the Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute of Seattle.

## ► **Even Monkeys and Kappa**

“Even monkeys fall out of trees’ is a familiar Japanese proverb. One related in sentiment yet less well-known is that *kappa* can be swept downstream.” What is Dave Lowry talking about? Get the whole story.

## ► **Is Karate in Need of a Makeover?**

One experienced martial artist thinks so, and he says “combat *shotokan*” is the answer. Learn how he’s altering Gichin Funakoshi’s art.

## ► **5 Ways to Make Your Students Better at Kata**

Whether you’re a strict advocate of “three years, one *kata*” or you teach a new *kata* every other month, you want your students to get the most out of the time they invest in their forms.

## NEWS BITES

• **Black Belt Books** released **Tao of Jeet Kune Do: New Expanded Edition** to celebrate the most influential book in the martial arts. The **one-time printing** features a hard protective case bearing embossed red-and-gold foil of the *jeet kune do* insignia.

• Michael Feeney, Leonard Hill and Geneva Hersom **won** our *Tao of Jeet Kune Do* **giveaway**. (Watch for more giveaways on our Facebook page.)

• NJ.com posted a piece titled “Man brought **sword** to Newark **airport**, thought he could carry it on flight because it’s **valuable**.”

• *Black Belt* has partnered with video-content-producer **Combat Go TV**, which has resulted in uploads of **new videos** on the magazine’s social media outlets, including segments featuring **Bill Wallace**, **Michael Jai White** and **Billy Blanks**.

• Hot question of the day posted on *Black Belt's* **Facebook** page: What **inspired** you to take up the martial arts? More than **330 people** commented.

• The original **Karate Kid** movie is now available on **Netflix**.

• Officials in Tokyo successfully tested the facilities and infrastructure that will deliver **karate** and **judo** competition to the world during the **2020 Olympics**.

• FoxNews.com posted a story titled “Olympic bronze medal **fencer** resorts to **fundraising** as she aims for **2020 Tokyo games**.” It focused on American fencer **Monica Aksamit**.

• **Black Belt Streaming** got a major **update** to its website. It now features even **more videos**, as well as a **dedicated app** that lets you watch all your favorite martial arts videos. A seven-day **free trial** is available at **madrills.com**.

• News.AVClub.com posted an article titled “Kung fu queen **Angela Mao** is alive and well in New York.” **Bruce Lee fans**, of course, will remember her from **Enter the Dragon**.

• It was reported that the **Hong Kong home** in which **Bruce Lee** lived has been **torn down**.

• The **UFC** announced that it’s offering fans the ability to **bet on bouts** via sites that will provide comprehensive fighter stats.

• **Kourtney Kardashian** posted photos of her **son** practicing **karate**.

• **Robert Garrison**, who played Tommy in **Karate Kid** and on the YouTube series **Cobra Kai**, passed away. **He was 59**.

• **USA Judo** suffered a loss when team member **Jack Hatton** died. The *judoka* was 24.

• A **Spanish-language version** of *Black Belt* has been **released**. Translated by *aikido* instructor **Guillermo Gomez**, it contains some of our most **popular stories** from the past. Order at **blackbeltmag.com**. 🙏





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## COMMUNITY

### On Our Previous Issue

**Terry L. Kovacks:** I loved the mix you squeezed into your last issue. Ueshiba and *aikido*, Machado and BJJ, Kelly McCann who is always good and even *John Wick 3*. Respectful suggestion ... how about an article on Keanu Reeves? We would love to know more about his *jiu-jitsu* and firearms training. You can tell from his work in the *John Wick* movies that he has some serious chops.



Hee-Il Cho (right)

### On a Link to a Black Belt Web Post

**BLACK BELT:** [Go here to read about taekwondo and the WTF/ITF unification problem.](#)

**Kenneth Baillie:** TKD has changed over the years. WTF changed to traditional TKD at our school because our chief instructor didn't like the Olympic status. He said the sport detracts from the tradition. We had a certain rivalry even back then with ITF.

The two can merge, I believe. There are differences but anything can be achieved. Positives are easy to find here!

**Boston George Legaria:** I'm not a TKD practitioner but I've been in martial arts for 26 years (*kyokushin*, *muay Thai* and *krav maga*), and from what I can see, a solution is for those two organizations to come together and reform the art so it can stay relevant. In combat sports, a lot of people leave TKD in favor of BJJ or *muay Thai*, while in self-defense people leave TKD for styles like Russian *sambo*, *krav maga* or Keysi Method. As for a business model, they need to leave the black belt mill because even though that gets parents interested so they can show their little one's "progress" on FB, in the long run, TKD loses its credibility when people see a 6 year old "master."

**Michael Watson:** Follow grandmaster Hee Il Cho's lead — he does both styles and without the negative of the Olympic sport aspect. I studied ITF growing up, but I also researched a lot on grandmaster Cho and I love his way.

### On a Link to BlackBeltMag.com

**BLACK BELT:** [Go here to read about Sean Kanan, the bad boy from Karate Kid 3!](#)

**Danny Singleterry Guevara Jr.:** Really hope he makes a return in the *Cobra Kai* series.

**Steve Hodson:** Yeah, Mike Bad Boy Barnes needs a cameo for sure!!!

**Michael Mckenna:** We need more than a cameo. 🙏







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# The Sword Behind the Smile

In Karate Way, often I've discussed the many Japanese idioms and sayings that refer to the sword. This aspect of colloquial Japanese reminds one of how deeply the sword and the warrior influenced the culture of that country.

BY DAVE LOWRY



**T**HINKING ABOUT THESE figures of speech, I remembered one that I heard as a child: *umi no uchi no katana*, “the sword behind the smile.” This is a curious saying. How should one interpret it? A smile behind the sword would seem obvious in meaning. You are ready, even eager to use the weapon and happy to do so. But

the other way around? We associate smiles with politeness and friendliness. The sword hiding behind that seems incompatible.

Much has been written about the politeness of the Japanese people in general and the samurai in particular. In Japan, the emphasis supposedly placed on manners is so pronounced that it's almost a


caricature. Old cartoons used to show the smiling Japanese bowing to his attacker before unleashing a judo throw or karate “chop.” Early accounts of martial arts in Japan detailed the conventions and etiquette that were supposed to be essential to the warrior spirit. Fights between samurai were thought of as a more pretentious version of Western



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dueling, with all sorts of conventions and rules.

**IN REALITY**, combat for the samurai on the battlefield had virtually no rules. Studies conducted on the skeletal remains of those killed in battle have revealed that a significant percentage died from being struck by rocks. Other fatalities were inflicted

by the edges of helmets that were used to bash skulls.

In duels, which became popular after 1600 among the warrior class, the principle concern wasn't adhering to protocol. It was satisfying strict governmental regulations about such things. The samurai were, after all, chattel. They were the property of their lords. Killing one in a duel could leave the killer open to a lawsuit for depriving the dead man's lord of his property.

So we should not place too much weight on the whole "politeness" aspect of the samurai's behavior. The samurai were not necessarily courteous because it was nice to be so. They were mannered, at least in part, because it was a martial advantage to do so.

**IF YOU'VE EVER WATCHED** a boxing weigh-in, you know that scowling, grimacing and glowering can play a big role in pre-fight strategy. Similarly, confrontational displays like the famous Maori *haka* dances were once common in many societies. Displays meant to intimidate are central to much of the activity that precedes conflict, whether in a neighborhood bar or at the United Nations.

The samurai indulged in this, to some degree. You can see it in the fierce, elaborately fearsome decorations on their armor. For the most part, however, trying to intimidate had limited effectiveness. Professional warriors are not easily frightened. The samurai didn't do a lot of posturing because they didn't want to give away any clues regarding their intentions. The more seriously you took your enemy, the less information you wanted to give him about your plan of attack. That included giving him any ideas about how tough you might be.

There is a lot in the 2003 Tom Cruise film *The Last Samurai* that's wrong. (For example, assassins in medieval Japan did not carry Okinawan *sai*. And country folk, like those depicted in the movie, did not eat pure white rice. Their bowls were filled with rice mixed with millet and other grains because rice was too expensive to be eaten alone by the lower classes.) The portrayal of the samurai leader in the movie, however, is dead on. He smiles almost constantly, whether he's angry or happy, plotting or relaxing. He

doesn't give any clues. He is smiling — with a sword always at the ready.

**SOME YEARS AGO**, a behavioral scientist did a study that revealed that while Americans tend to look at a person's mouth when trying to read his mind, Japanese are more likely to look at the eyes. The notion in Japanese culture is that the mouth is easier to control; the eyes can reveal more. This may be a clue as to why smiling — which Westerners often look at in one way — can mean something entirely different on a Japanese face.

(Not incidentally, this has led to many problems in business negotiations between Westerners and the Japanese. Western businessmen complain bitterly that because their Japanese counterparts were smiling engagingly during talks, it was assumed everything was great — and they're surprised that those smiling Japanese were completely opposed to the proposals on the table.)

Certainly, we see this in the behavior that's encouraged in a traditional *dojo*. Posturing, menacing expressions — these are not a part of training. Not serious training, anyway. Instead, the focus is on *heijo-shin*, the "everyday mind" that reveals nothing and gives an opponent no clue as to our intentions. In fact, the enigmatic smile actually can be confusing to an enemy. "What's he smiling for? What does he know that I don't?"

A glowering face is easy to read in a conflict. A smile? That's tougher to decipher, and the time and energy my opponent spends doing that is to my advantage. So what the casual observer may interpret as a friendly smile may be something entirely different.

You may not think about it, but your facial expression is part of your technical skill set. In real-life situations or in competition, there's usually face-to-face contact before the action begins. The face you present to your opponent or your enemy can play a role in your strategy. Can a smile hide your own sword? 🗡️

*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 into the search box.*





**FIGHTBOOK**



## BEHIND THE SCENES: **Martial Arts in Saudi Arabia**

INTERVIEW BY RICARDO LIBORIO

Photo by Cory Sorensen



**I****N 1932** the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was unified, after which it became recognized as a nation. Although young, the country has deep roots. Part of those roots is the warrior culture that was created by a series of battles. With such a history, it comes as no surprise that Saudi Arabia is now establishing itself as a top breeding ground for martial artists and combat-sports athletes.

In an effort to foster that and to boost the health and fitness of his nation's youth, Prince Abdullah looked for inspiration to the United Arab Emirates and its promotion of Brazilian jiu-jitsu. That's when he decided to invest in the martial arts in Saudi Arabia. In 2010 two advisers from the Arena Group traveled to the United States to conduct research and network with various American martial arts teams. That led to the decision to join forces with me to build the largest martial arts facility in the world in Jeddah. Known as Arena Saudi, it spans more than 100,000 square feet, and its construction is recognized as a milestone in advancing martial arts, combat sports and fitness.

In 2014 Arena merged with an entity known as 22. Mohammed Fayez, who worked as a banker and owner of 22, took over the administration of the martial arts facility. Now the CEO of the Arena Group, he's vowed to continue to improve the quality of life for all Saudis through the martial arts.

— Ricardo Liborio

### **WHAT IS YOUR HISTORY WITH THE ARENA GROUP?**

**Mohammed Fayez:** Arena began in July 2014, concentrating mostly on martial arts. I was running my own facility. Ultimately, we merged with Arena, rebranding 22 to be Arena. This allowed the facility to become more of a specialized functional training center and offering martial arts like BJJ and *muay Thai*.

In Saudi, we aim to get people off the couch and bring them in. We have established different branches across the city. There is an investment in the sport of MMA. You are not allowed to use weapons, so martial arts is a source of combat and

self-defense. We are producing more fitness programs and now the first program for women.

### **IN GENERAL, HOW ARE THE MARTIAL ARTS PERCEIVED IN SAUDI ARABIA?**

**Fayez:** The government wants to increase the percentage of active citizens. There was a survey which reported [that] 13 percent of the general population in Saudi is physically active for 20 minutes per week. There is an initiative to increase this to 20 percent by 2020 and then 40 percent by 2030.

The government is catering to a new generation. Martial arts is a fun activity. Outside of the business perspective, it's important to introduce sports activities to children at a young age. This will improve their level of activity overall, not only for boys but for girls, too. The students will improve in discipline, respect, self-esteem and development of character through *jiu-jitsu* and other martial arts.

### **WITH THE GENDERS BEING SEPARATED, WHAT DOES THE TRAINING LOOK LIKE — FOR FEMALES AS WELL AS FOR MALES?**

**Fayez:** We have separate facilities for each gender. As you get older than 7, it is culturally accepted to segregate.

Islam promotes brotherhood and being respectful — a lot of what the *jiu-jitsu* program is about. It teaches you to be respectful to the coaches and colleagues and practitioners. Regardless, you practice nonaggression. You have that power, but it does not mean that you bully people around and use them for your advantage.

You try to instill the level of maturity. You have the background and training to hurt someone, but you don't need to use it. It's not necessary unless you are physically attacked. That discipline and culture is Islam.

### **WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE SPORT FOR CHILDREN IN YOUR NATION?**

**Fayez:** Growing. The feedback from the youth site produced very positive results in character. On the social and family level, you help develop a better version of the child that already exists. A child has better self-esteem

and self-confidence. Women are proud of their sons' accomplishments and see major changes through the sport. They ask what we have done to their child and how he has completely made a turnaround. I think it is something that the country is looking for.

### **WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF ARENA?**

**Fayez:** We want to grow in all aspects of the business. We run various facilities [now]. Martial arts with kids has been the most profitable, and it only makes sense. Socially, we get to help develop and grow the next generation of youth — instill the proper foundation and lead them through.

We are establishing after-school programs and increasing the buy-in. I want to grow the sport while concentrating on growing the business until we can venture off into more initiatives. BJJ has not been around for a very long time, so we bring in top talent. Finding the trainers and convincing them has been challenging. Running the business is challenging in finding the talent and keeping the talent.

### **COULD YOU EXPLAIN YOUR CONNECTION WITH THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE?**

**Fayez:** The Olympic Committee has put in a lot of effort to restructure and introduce reform into [different] areas. There are a lot of areas to develop and set new standards. I am good with micro-level, targeting-specific federations — specifically judo and *jiu-jitsu* with you [Ricardo Liborio] in Abu Dhabi and the Asian Union and the UAE Jiu Jitsu Federation. From the micro-level of the committee, we reached out to establish how to overcome hurdles in participation for women. There is a foundation of framework for coming in and requesting a license. There is an education front, federation front and reform front. We want to improve and concentrate on mass participation and its benefits with the rationale to have more people active. A lot of people don't understand the benefits of doing an activity [like martial arts] and how it affects your happiness and general life. 🇸🇦





## DESTINATIONS



# Silat Under the Volcano in Bali, Part I

The island of Bali is part of the Indonesian archipelago. While the rest of the nation is Muslim, Bali traditionally has been populated by Hindus. It was a Hindu, a traditional wrestling master named Putu Witsen Widjaya, who originally invited me to this tropical isle to try my hand at *mepantigan* wrestling. (See the December 2018/January 2019, February/March 2019 and April/May 2019 issues of *Black Belt*.) He explained to me that his life's ambition is to meet and organize all the martial arts masters in Bali in an effort to preserve the culture.

BY ANTONIO GRACEFFO, PH.D.

**O**N MY SUBSEQUENT VISIT, Putu introduced me to several local martial artists, including masters of *san da*, judo and *silat*. That last style, in particular, intrigued me because on a previous visit to Malaysia, I'd studied *silat kalam* and *silat tomoi*, in addition to having documented a few other variations of the art.

On that trip, I learned that one significant difference between Malaysia and Bali is that in Malaysia, silat is seen as a Muslim martial art and most silat masters are reluctant to teach non-Muslims. In fact, I was the first non-Muslim to be permitted to study silat kalam.

In contrast, Bali harbors no religious divide. Balinese silat is open to Hindus, Buddhists and Christians

Photos Courtesy of Antonio Graceffo



alike. For example, Komang, the lead instructor of mepantigan, is a Hindu who has studied and competed in *pencak silat* for years.

**THE FIRST MASTER** that Putu introduced me to was Mas Aan, a teacher of *silat tapak suci*. The meeting took place at the mepantigan headquarters, a jungle camp replete with bamboo huts, making it the perfect place to document a Balinese martial art. Komang acted as translator, and Mas Aan's 20-year-old, 175-pound student Akbar was my training partner and opponent. Unlike other silat styles, in which elements of traditional clothing are worn, silat tapak suci has students train in a red *gi* with colored belts to denote rank.

Before practicing, Mas Aan and Akbar stood side by side at attention, and on the master's command, they both stepped out. On the next command, they windmilled their arms in front of their bodies, stopping with their left arms across their chests, palms open and facing downward. Komang explained that this symbolizes the suppression of bad thoughts while practicing.

Their right hands were at shoulder level, palms facing out as if taking an oath. Komang explained that this position is a show of respect for the student to the teacher and vice versa.

Next, they knelt and prayed. Although their prayers were Muslim, they told me that Komang could do a Hindu prayer and I could do a Christian prayer if we wished. Of note was that prayer was regarded as a show of respect and purity — regardless of the religion. The two stood up and touched their open hands to their faces. Then it was announced that we could begin stretching and training.

**MAS AAN** was overweight. His best fighting days were far behind him, but he still possessed an ancient knowledge that he's vowed to pass

down to the next generation. As he took Akbar through a *kata*, I was reminded of the words of my Ph.D. adviser. Dr. Dai Guobin, dean of the *wushu* department of Shanghai University of Sport, once told me there were two significant differences between Eastern and Western martial arts. Western arts such as wrestling, boxing and fencing, he said, required an opponent. Eastern arts, in contrast, could be practiced alone.

Dai continued, explaining that Western martial arts have no performance component. For example, in boxing, wrestling and fencing, your purpose is to train to defeat an opponent who's schooled in the same art. On the other hand, Eastern martial arts often contain a fighting component *and* a performance component — and sometimes just a performance component with no fighting component at all.

While in both endeavors, the end goal is to master yourself, in the West, this is achieved by overcoming your opponent. In the East, there may never be an opponent. Eastern

martial arts are about you overcoming yourself. Little did I know that my silat training would be all about overcoming myself.

**THE FIRST SET** of moves that Mas Aan taught were similar to self-defense techniques I'd learned in other arts. Akbar kicked, and the master sidestepped, caught the leg and countered. Interestingly, most of the counters involved strikes to the groin. Holding Akbar's leg in midair, Mas Aan — rather than sweeping the base leg — simulated a back kick aimed at Akbar's crotch.

In another routine, Akbar punched at the master's face. Mas Aan blocked and controlled the punching arm with his left hand, then uncorked an overhand right to the bridge of the nose that was followed by a looping downward shot to the groin with the same hand. It was the second of many strikes to the family jewels.

When I'd practiced judo, I empathized with junior *judoka* who allowed themselves to be thrown over and over. That, however, was nothing compared to the groin shots poor Akbar was enduring. 🦊

(To be continued.)

Antonio Graceffo's book *Warrior Odyssey* is available at [blackbeltmag.com/store](http://blackbeltmag.com/store).

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# Surviving a Suicide Bombing

The very nature of the environments chosen for the majority of suicide bombings – which is to say, crowded venues – and the added aspect of the scum not caring at all about being able to leave the scene of the crime make specific measures and predictions tough to implement.

BY MARK HATMAKER

**T**HERE ARE, however, a few general guidelines that all martial artists should keep in mind. To simplify, I will divide them into three tiers.

**80/20 SCANNING:** If you're in any crowded venue — be it a sports arena, a concert hall, a farmers market, an airport or a mall — you know that bad things can happen. Of course, I'm not advising you to shun every event that's liable to draw a crowd. Living scared is no way to live. I am urging you to use a bit of vigilance. Pay attention to everything. Put 80 percent of your attention on the fun at hand and use the other 20 percent to scan what's around you.

Treat any event you're attending

as if you're a springbok at a watering hole in the Serengeti. You're at a place to slake your thirst, mix with others and maybe get a cute person's phone number, but you always need to remember that a lion might be hiding in the bushes or a crocodile in the shallows. Drink the water, mingle and have fun — but stay awake.

*Scanning Rules:* Pay attention to backpacks and large bags. Many venues ban them, but many do not. Your job is to look for such bags and, if you spot one in a place that prohibits them, report it. If they're permitted, you still can do some profiling of the owner. Look for suspicious behavior and intention signaling.

Allow your 20-percent scan to include any odd behavior even if it

doesn't involve a bag or backpack. Awareness is and always has been the key in all survival situations. Stay awake and aware, and that means putting your cellphone away. It's impossible to be in the here and now when your tiny screen has you captivated. Staring at your phone means not only that your snowball's chance in hell of spotting trouble is decreased but also that you are less than fully present at the event you chose to attend. Keeping the phone stowed is a win-win.

**ALARMED BUT UNCERTAIN:** Obviously, if you see something, you say something. But this is where things get a little difficult. Let's assume you see something a little odd but not



quite odd enough to raise an alarm. It's something that gets your gut going but gives you no real actionable "tell" that you can point to. That's a sign you should pay closer attention — better safe than sorry.

It should be obvious here, but I'll say it anyway: The farther you are from a bomb blast, the less severe the injuries usually are. No-brainer, right?

Consequently, you should begin removing yourself from the immediate area once you determine there's a tangible threat. By all means, keep your eye on what's causing your concern. If the tell escalates, give the alarm to others. If it diminishes, nobody but you and those in your charge will ever know that you were silently putting distance between yourself and a possible explosive device.

**FULL ON:** You're in hell here. You didn't have an opportunity to spot the bomber far enough in advance to flee, and you're fairly close to what will be the epicenter of the blast. If you have a split second between your "this is going down" realization and the actual triggering of the device, the following is your snowball's-chance-in-hell protocol.

Hit the deck immediately. These devices are designed to fragment and send projectiles through human flesh. Whether the material is nuts and bolts or ball bearings, your job is to create the smallest profile in the dispersion path.

With that in mind, get flat on the ground. Ideally, the soles of your feet will be pointed toward the bomber. This will create the smallest profile while your shoes will potentially protect your body from anything emanating from the blast zone. If possible, cross your legs to further minimize your profile and decrease the likelihood that the blast will catch a splayed leg and shear it off.

Lie facedown with your hands over your head and ears. Tuck your elbows against your ribs to protect your vitals. Close your eyes tight. Open your mouth. This last one may seem counterintuitive, but it can help equalize the pressure during the blast, thus reducing the chance of ruptured eardrums and lungs.

**Drills:** People say, "Never do anything for the first time in combat." The same notion applies to bombings. It's not enough to merely read an article and nod your head while

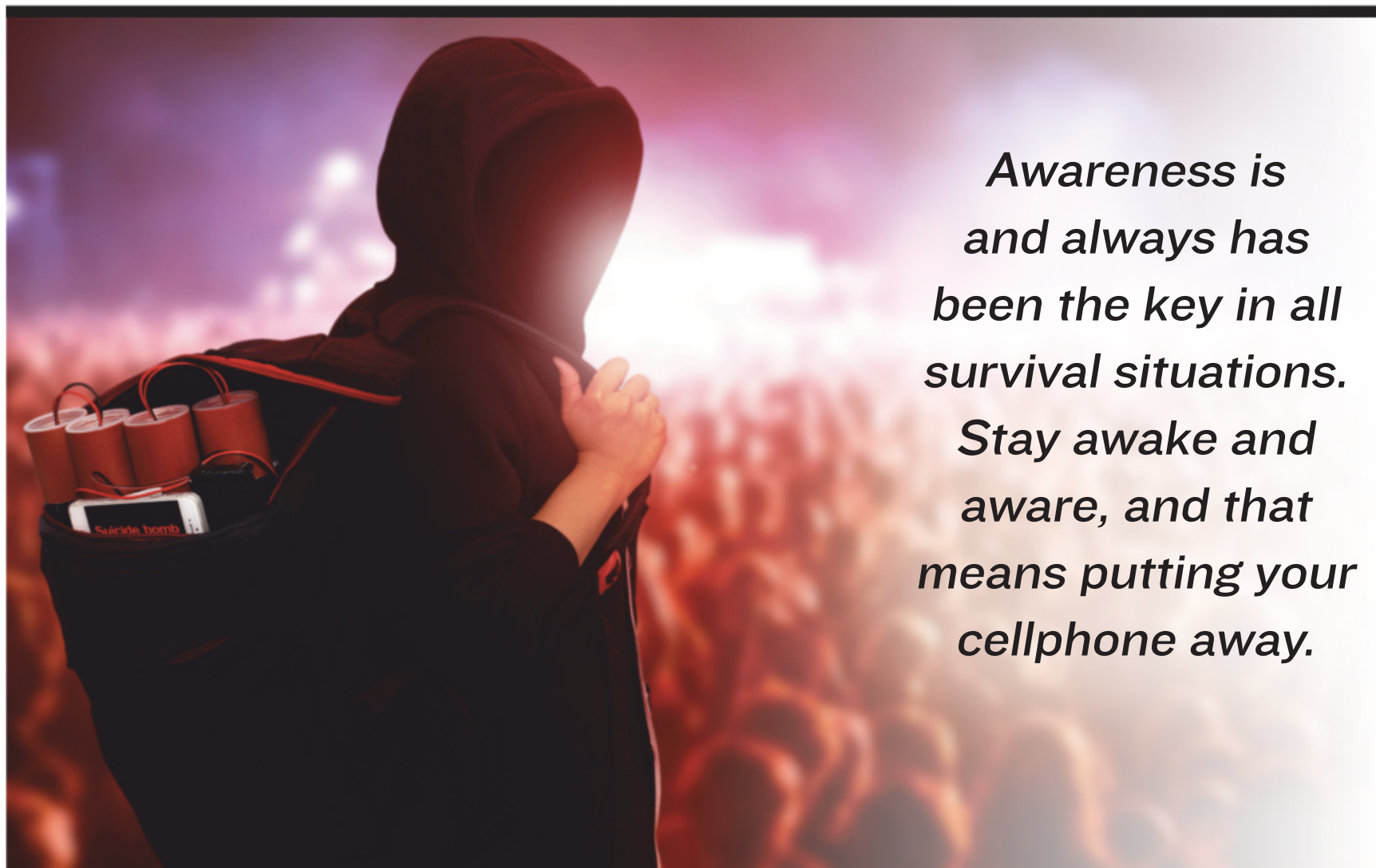
thinking it's a good idea. You must put the knowledge into practice. At a minimum, strive to exercise your awareness and alertness every day of your life.

When it comes to the full-on survival posture, however, I recommend doing it right now. Hit the deck and assume the position! If you're really serious, over the course of the next week, request a favor from a family member: Ask him or her to toss a tennis ball onto the floor of the room you're in a couple of times each day. This should be done when you don't appear to be thinking about the subject.

The thrower's goal is to catch you unaware. Your job is to treat the spot where the ball lands as the bomber's location, then immediately hit the deck and assume the position.

If you're lucky, two things will happen. One, your family members will be entertained as they cause you to lunge for the ground for seven days straight. Two, you will never need to use the skills you're practicing. 🙏

*Mark Hatmaker's website is [extremeselfprotection.com](http://extremeselfprotection.com).*



***Awareness is  
and always has  
been the key in all  
survival situations.  
Stay awake and  
aware, and that  
means putting your  
cellphone away.***





## COMBATIVES

# Sudden Violence

My Kembativz organization recently ran its Sudden Violence course for the second time this year. The intensive training session puts students in some very unfamiliar and uncomfortable situations with drills that require ferocity and legitimate performance. The focus is on developing enough skill to deal with situations that suddenly – and unexpectedly – become critically violent.

BY KELLY McCANN

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don't know the attribution for the following quote, but it applies perfectly to our course: "You can't hide what you don't know in here."

**THE SUDDEN VIOLENCE** course is genderless. Female students are not partnered exclusively with other women. Instead, they're expected to perform to an acceptable standard regardless of who their training partner is. Men and women are paired with each other at various times with no regard to size, ability, strength, speed, agility or athleticism. The course, which I created in the late 1980s and have run ever since, is where the rubber meets the road.

The first day and a half of instruction prepares participants for the final drills but also includes some full-contact sessions to test skill accumulation, preparedness and the will to fight. It's all about fighting: punches, knees, elbows and low-line kicks against fully animated and combative training partners.

Each time we run the course — over the decades, it's been experienced by military special-operations and special-mission units, three-lettered agencies, and police and civilian groups — we see many of the same critical failures in the beginning. They're important to note because they reflect common performance faults that occur under duress, and few people are even aware that they commit them because they've never submitted to such extreme conditions in training. The learning curve is steep, and each successive exposure to the drills and scenarios improves personal performance exponentially. The following are some of the more common problems I've noticed when the course begins.

- **The arms are extended as if to hold back the attacker.** Faced with a vicious, overwhelming attack — when they're actually being struck in the head and face because their guard failed — people tend to extend their arms forward instead of recovering an effective guard or attacking. This failure to keep the elbows down and tucked, the chin down and the forearms perpendicular creates exploitable vulnerabilities.

- **Ineffectual and inaccurate looping strikes are used.** Swatting at a vicious assailant just won't get the job done. Nevertheless, people have a tendency to swing wildly instead of settling in and keeping their strikes straight, accurate and powerful.

- **Body shots are ignored and head-hunting is favored.** Despite the body being wider, easier to hit and less evasive, people often ignore liver shots, blows to the solar plexus and other body strikes that would be very effective.

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*Instead of realizing that a hand that's attached to you is not a threat and that striking in retaliation should be the priority, people often grab the grabbing hand.*

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- **Angles are not used.** People will stand directly in front of the person beating on them and not use angles appropriately for movement or striking purposes. Examples of the neglected options include using "up angles" with a palm heel, delivering an uppercut and using side-step pivots.

- **The grabber is grabbed.** Instead of realizing that a hand that's attached to you is not a threat and that strik-

ing in retaliation should be the priority, people often grab the grabbing hand. It's the difference between clinching with the clincher and tying up or shucking the clinch to escape or reattack.

- **Too much focus is placed on a weapon.** This often means that people don't think about simple avoidance, and they seldom strike back. Instead, "victims" will chase the weapon, always staying one step behind the armed attacker and ultimately succumbing to the attack.

- **A choke is attempted.** The tendency to close with an attacker too much leaves no space in which to work and renders strikes ineffective. This results when you fail to get range right and then overreact to the attack.

- **Breathing is neglected.** When attacked suddenly and unexpectedly, people usually take in a big gulp of air and hold it while they flurry back, then defend and gulp another big breath to hold when they attack again. In the sprint or ATP-PC (adenosine triphosphate and phosphocreatine) energy system, this causes a rapid decline in performance.

- **Edged-weapon attacks are not recognized.** It is what it is. This is difficult even under the best circumstances.

- **People forget to use all their personal weapons.** Despite training to throw effective elbow and knee strikes, they often forget to use them at all. This amounts to a failure to identify the most effective weapon for a given range.

**THE OVERARCHING LESSON** here is that you'll never get to experience these faults if you don't subject yourself to extreme situations in training. That's because if the intensity isn't there, there's no adverse and immediate consequence for failure.

Hitting pads or merely pushing and shoving a training partner around won't reveal your critical faults. It's crucial to get in there and pressure-test yourself and your skills. **✚**

For information about Kelly McCann's Sudden Violence course dates, visit [kembativz.com](http://kembativz.com). To see drills from his most recent course, find his Facebook page under @KembativzBrand.





## SCREEN SHOTS



# Ne Zha and Wu Assassins

BY DR. CRAIG D. REID

**N**E ZHA: With an elegantly constructed allegory that mirrors William Ernest Henley's 1875 poem *Invictus* — which asserts, "I'm the master of my fate; I'm the captain of my soul," — the Chinese animated feature *Ne Zha* is loosely based on a martial arts legend from the Ming-dynasty novel *Creation of the Gods*. With earnings that topped \$650 million in 30 days, *Ne Zha* clearly rivals the glitz of any production from DreamWorks or Pixar, and it's appealing to audiences everywhere.

The plot revolves around a god named Yuan, who splits Chaotic Pearl into Spirit Pearl and Demon Pill, then traps them inside a lotus blossom. Since Demon Pill is dangerous and indestructible, Yuan casts a curse that a lightning bolt will kill it in three years. He tells a Taoist monk named Taiyi to make sure Spirit Pearl reincarnates into Lord Li and Lady Yin's third son. When that

occurs, the son will be called Nezha. (Note: The spelling used in the film to refer to the character is different from that used in the movie title.) Fate goes awry as Spirit Pearl winds up in the villainous claws of Dragon King and Demon Pill becomes Li and Yin's son Nezha.

The only way to prevent Nezha's evil nature from wreaking havoc and slaughtering folks is for Taiyi to place the Qiankun Ring around Nezha's neck. If Nezha learns how to release the ring, the world is screwed. Taiyi and Li hope that by balancing Nezha's personality, heaven might reverse the curse. Regardless of the outcome, Li swears he'll die by Nezha's side while helping him to the bitter end.

The animation in *Ne Zha's* fights is exquisite. Virtual cameras move



Photos Courtesy of Well Go USA





in, out and around, creating martial arts action that's beautiful. In part, that's because the filmmakers pay meticulous attention to ensuring the postures, skills and weapon wielding are flawless. It's an ability that few outside the Chinese movie industry have mastered.

**WU ASSASSINS:** In the past, 1,000 monks battled the five elemental Wu warlords (Earth, Water, Wood, Fire and Metal), beings that tried to rule

China but were eventually thwarted. In the present, the Wu converge on San Francisco's Chinatown, which prompts the spirits of those monks to enter a human being named Kai (Iko Uwais) so they can lend him their powers to become the last of the Wu Assassins.

Iko's *Raid* films are renowned for their fierce fights, so as soon as I learned that he's the star of and fight choreographer for *Wu Assassins*, visions of wild action materialized in my head, with characters that possess

millennia of martial mayhem in their blood. Against that backdrop, I envisioned Kai battling to prevent the Wu from disrupting the balance between heaven and earth.

Even though early reviews dissed the show for its dull writing, lack of humor and bland personalities, they emphasized the action and the fights. My analysis revealed that each 47-minute episode averages three minutes of combat. Most of the fights are stylized street brawls spiced up with Iko's *pencak silat*. Legit martial arts stars like JuJu Chan and Lewis Tan throw in a few of their personal skills. They end up looking quite similar, except that Kai's moves are faster and crisper than everyone else's.

That speed disparity is particularly obvious during the casino duel involving Uncle Six (Byron Mann) and Kai. It uses intercut shots of Christine Gavin (Katheryn Winnick) battling various thugs. In contrast, Iko's fights are four- to six-second takes that feature wide-angle, less-shaky camerawork. His character's signature skill of delivering rapid-



Iko Uwais





fire punches for three seconds to show his speed and aggression is shown in a long take. Uncle Six's flame-throwing ability is cool, yet there's a disconnect because the fight always returns to simplified fisticuffs, which makes the superpowers seem pointless.

Winnick's fight, which is standard for most non-Kai action, uses dimly lit spaces, close angles, shifty camera-

work, delayed panning movements and quick cuts. These serve to hide things and make it easier to insert stunt doubles.

That's in stark contrast to the scene in which Iko takes on a bevy of bad-dies using a formula Jackie Chan popularized in the 1980s: blocking, punching, spinning and kicking them at the same time while being shot by a roving camera.

Overall, *Wu Assassins* could benefit from increasing the variety of techniques and combinations that are used in its fight. It is, however, still fun to watch. 🥋

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 at [blackbeltmag.com/store](http://blackbeltmag.com/store).

## UP CLOSE: IKO UWAIS

► As a boy, Iko Uwais lived in awe of friends who would don black uniforms and colored belts in preparation for their martial arts classes. At age 10, he was sufficiently

emboldened to begin training in *silat betawi*. (Betawi refers to the ethnic group that inhabited the region near Jakarta starting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.)



His instructor was his grandfather. The gym, called School of Tiga Berantai, belonged to his uncle.

Although young Iko was a promising soccer player, he was content to relinquish his cleats so he could immerse himself in the martial art. In 2005 he won first place at the National Pencak Silat Championship, where he was named best performer in a demonstration.

During the ensuing two years, he continued to refine his skills — and then crossed paths with a Welsh filmmaker named Gareth Evans. Evans traveled to Indonesia to scout schools for a documentary he was making about the indigenous art, and one of the chosen ones was School of Tiga Berantai. Turns out the camera loved Iko — so much so that Evans offered him the lead in a feature called *Merantau*.

When it was released in 2009, *Merantau* was a hit. The first major Indonesian martial arts movie in more than 15 years, it enjoyed positive reviews and won two festival awards.

In case you missed it, here's the scoop: *Merantau* tells the tale of Yuda (Iko), a Sumatran country bumpkin who undergoes a rite of passage that entails learning how to survive in the big city. When things go awry, Yuda swaps the "u" in his name for an "o" and transforms himself into a "silat Yoda" who's tasked with defeating

the dark side of Jakarta. The plot is moving, and the action is top-notch.

For his next project, Evans wanted to craft a psychotic martial arts grunge epic called *Berandal*, but because of budgetary limitations, his vision veered a little. The result was 2012's *The Raid: Redemption*. Inspired by *Die Hard*, *Raid* follows a band of Indonesian cops who bring their form of martial mayhem to a drug kingpin's 15-story apartment complex. In that setting, Rama (Iko) uses his silat to pummel the pill pushers. It was another hit for Evans and Iko.

(Trivia note: Five months after the release of *Raid*, Lionsgate premiered the big-budget *Dredd*, starring Karl Urban. Although it used essentially the same plot and very similar shots, it flopped.)

With Iko Uwais now a bona fide star, Evans scored financing for the *Berandal* concept, which now bore the title *The Raid 2: Berandal*. In the 2014 release, Rama dispenses with all manner of lowlifes, and surprisingly the film doesn't suffer from sequel-itis. In part, that's because Iko manages to exploit his comprehensive combative skill set to create dynamic moves that crush criminals in novel ways. The icing on the cake comes from the plot and acting, which do not disappoint.

Thus was launched the career of a martial arts superstar.



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**01/24/2020**

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# DEMETRIOUS JOHNSON

**MIXED-MARTIAL  
ARTS SUPERSTAR  
TALKS ABOUT BEING  
A SMALLER FIGHTER  
IN A COMBAT SPORT  
RULED BY GIANTS**

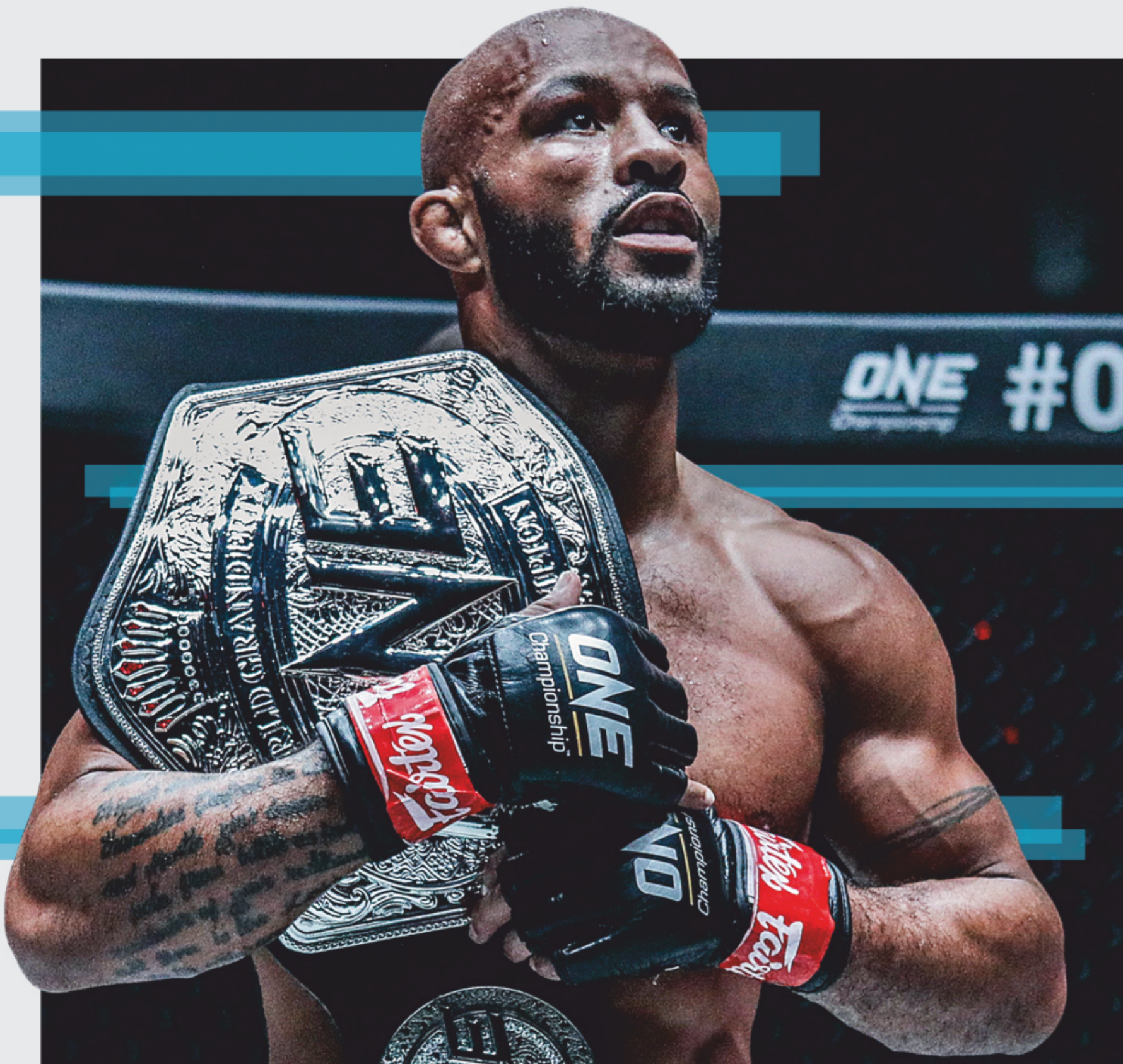
BY MICHAEL DILLARD  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PATRICK STERNKOPF  
EVENT PHOTOS COURTESY OF ONE FC











**A**t first glance, most people — most martial artists, even — will zero in on the smaller person in any fight and deem him or her to be at a distinct disadvantage. It's a natural tendency to draw this conclusion based on obvious attributes such as height, weight and reach. However, that tendency does not always lead to accurate conclusions.

This should not come as a complete surprise given the underlying premise of the martial arts, which were created to overcome inherent physical advantages bestowed at birth. Some fighters have capitalized on this aspect of the arts and gone one step beyond — by learning how to use their smaller stature as an advantage. This encompasses not just using the speed advantage that's enjoyed by fighters with smaller physiques but also altering the techniques themselves to make them more functional against a taller foe.

Demetrious Johnson is a master of these tactics. The 12-time flyweight world champion has built his combat career on being a smaller fighter who isn't slowed down by size. At 5 feet 3 inches, the 125-pound Johnson — who goes by the nickname "Mighty Mouse" — holds the record for the most UFC title defenses (11 in a row) and is considered by many to be the best pound-for-pound fighter on Earth. Many regard Johnson as the first lightweight superstar to emerge in the sport of mixed martial arts.

*Black Belt* recently had the chance to sit down with Mighty Mouse and learn about his views on being a winning fighter who's never hampered by size.

*Demetrious Johnson is a master of these tactics. The 12-time flyweight world champion has built his combat career on being a smaller fighter who isn't slowed down by size.*



**FIGHTING STYLE** Johnson attributes much of his success to his background in *pankration* and wrestling, a foundation he laid before he embarked on a career in MMA. Both styles emphasize the strategic use of leverage, which makes them ideal for smaller fighters.

“I try to find my opponent’s weakness and exploit that,” Johnson said. “Being well-versed and competing in several types of martial arts in my amateur career allows me to find that weakness, take [my opponents] there and then put them in that realm where they can’t survive — and beat them there!”

This strategy, inspired by the teachings of *pankration* and wrestling, has proved a viable solution for Johnson time after time. In fact, it’s his proficiency in both systems that’s enabled him to excel in MMA. Consider the following:

Any observer of the fight sport will tell you that plenty of practitioners are proficient in one discipline, which they often augment by cross-training in techniques

extracted from other styles that are believed to help them round out their skill set. These fighters tend to lean on their adopted techniques for setups and fakes designed to engage their opponents. Unfortunately, when fatigue sets in, they frequently fall back on their primary skill set in an effort to gain the upper hand — or, in some cases, just to survive.

This isn’t the case for Johnson. He represents a new breed of combat athlete who’s gained extensive experience in a variety of fighting disciplines. Being well-versed at executing a mass of moves, fighters like him need not rely on their primary martial art, which winds up making them more adaptable and unpredictable in a match.

Johnson’s record of 30-3-1 offers tangible proof of his ability to exploit his opponents’ weaknesses. Those 30 wins consist of 12 submissions and five knockouts via punches, head kicks and knee strikes, a testament to his proficiency in all the ranges of combat.



**BODY JAB TO HOOK PUNCH TO HEAD KICK:** After squaring off against his opponent, Demetrious Johnson (right) uses his lower stance to launch a jab to the man’s exposed abdomen (1). When the opponent drops his hands in response to the body shot, he inadvertently gives Johnson a clear path for a right hook to the jaw (2). Capitalizing on the position he’s in after the hook, Johnson shoves the man backward (3). He then controls the opponent’s right arm and finishes with a Thai kick to the head (4).







1



2



3



4

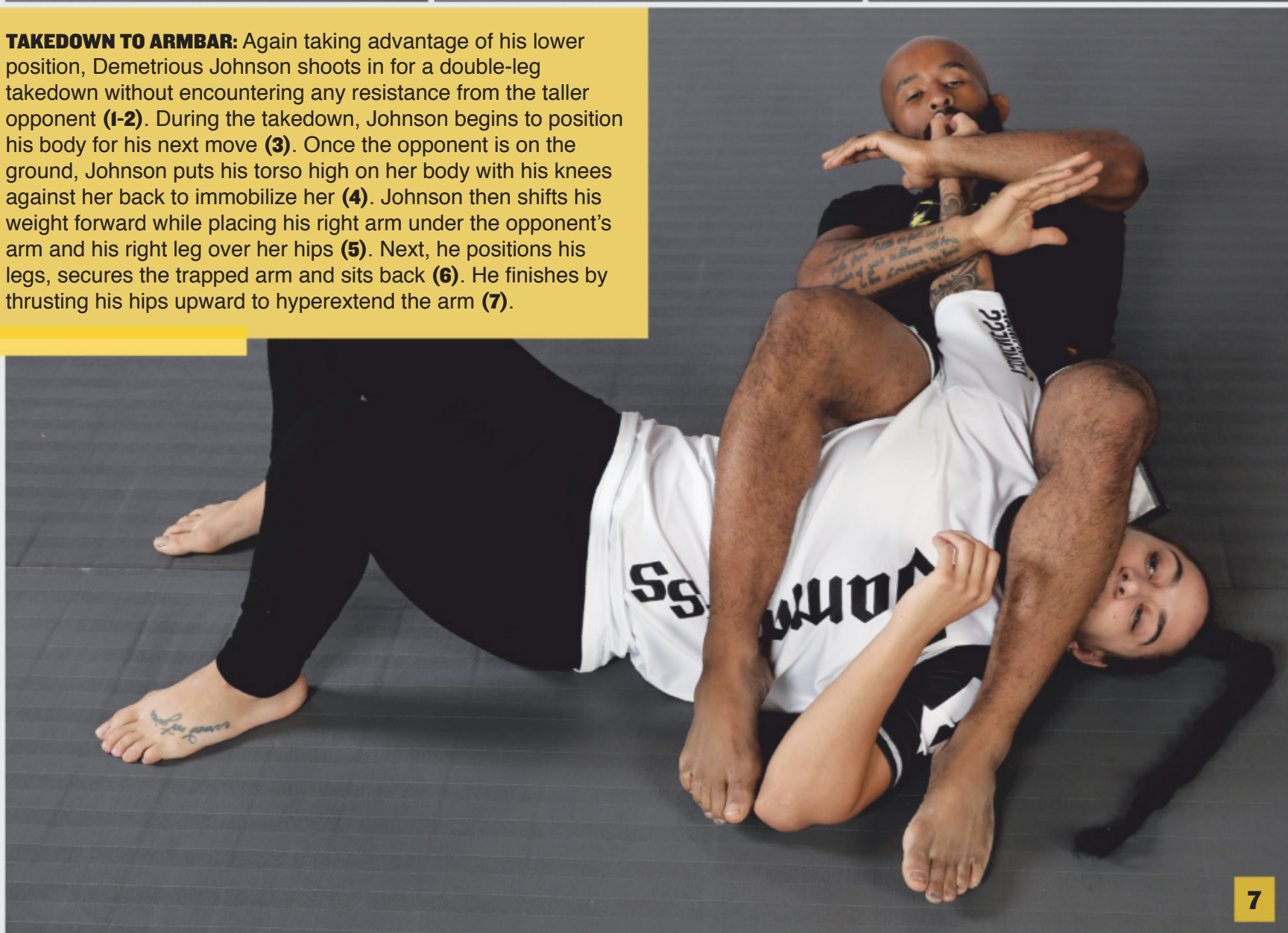


5



6

**TAKEDOWN TO ARMBAR:** Again taking advantage of his lower position, Demetrious Johnson shoots in for a double-leg takedown without encountering any resistance from the taller opponent (1-2). During the takedown, Johnson begins to position his body for his next move (3). Once the opponent is on the ground, Johnson puts his torso high on her body with his knees against her back to immobilize her (4). Johnson then shifts his weight forward while placing his right arm under the opponent's arm and his right leg over her hips (5). Next, he positions his legs, secures the trapped arm and sits back (6). He finishes by thrusting his hips upward to hyperextend the arm (7).



7



**TECHNIQUE ALTERATION** With the right coaching, almost any basic martial arts move can be altered to make it work better for a shorter fighter, Johnson said. He brought his point to life as he walked through setups for his combinations and takedowns designed to fell taller opponents during his *Black Belt* photo shoot. He started his explanation with the simplest punch of all.

“When a jab is thrown from someone at a lower angle, you can fit it between [the opponent’s] arms and into this wide-open gap to the body,” Johnson said. “[The opening] just isn’t there with guys the same height as you.”

He went on to say that this observation can allow you to elicit reactions from your opponent as he defends himself. That, in turn, can open other areas for you to target.

The same logic, Johnson noted, applies to takedowns. Here’s how: Against a taller opponent, the conventional double- and single-leg takedown normally do the job. A shorter fighter’s size, however, enables him to shoot in at a lower level, which makes the techniques harder to defend against and the shooter harder to grab. Furthermore, the shorter person’s often-superior speed permits

him to transition to a follow-up grappling technique before the pair even hits the ground.

“By grabbing the right spot on the wrist during a single-leg or starting to climb up their body as they fall during a double-leg, you can put yourself in the right position,” Johnson said. An expert at such tweaks, he noted that advanced concepts like this have allowed him to dominate in the cage despite disadvantages in height and reach.

**NEW CHALLENGES** Johnson’s decision to join ONE Championship in late 2018 means that his previous success as a flyweight in other fight franchises may be in jeopardy. That’s because the Singapore-based promotion touts a strict “no weight cutting” policy that will force the American to take on heavier opponents in his normal 135-pound weight class.

The new challenge is nothing he can’t handle, Johnson said confidently, because he’s well-versed in using his size to his advantage. On top of that, he has years of







experience on the North American MMA circuit to back up his skill set.

Nevertheless, Johnson admitted that a fight is a fight and therefore unpredictable, and that his opponents from the Far East will not be easily conquered. In fact, because ONE is based in a part of the world where fighters tend to be smaller than in the West, he likely will have his work cut out for him.

"I'm fighting guys who are a lot taller," Johnson said regarding his ONE Championship opponents. "In my last fight, I fought [Tatsumitsu Wada], who is 5 feet 9 inches tall, and when he took my back, he was able to get a triangle on my body so easily." That feat, he added, is rarely accomplished on a person who is equal in stature.

Johnson's solution? When preparing to take on a taller opponent, he likes to abandon the "fighting tall" mentality that's so common in his sport. It revolves around the urge to strike the taller person's face while squaring off. That tactic is simply not an option in such situations, Johnson said.

Instead, you need to focus on your strengths as a smaller fighter, he said. Get low and use your leverage for offense and defense. Take advantage of the gaps that exist in the taller person's stance. When you strike, do so with intent. Get in, execute and get out. Don't get caught in between, taking your time — because sooner or later that mistake will catch up with you.

**FUTURE FIGHTS** Whenever you're the first person to gain fame for achieving something, it means you have to pave your own road to success. When Johnson entered the martial arts in 2007, he found no prominent examples of smaller fighters who consistently saw success in the cage. Consequently, there was no one he could turn to for inspiration.

"When I jumped into martial arts, there was no avenue for me to go," Johnson explained. "[I was] sitting there as a kid, watching these guys who were all heavyweights in boxing and MMA. With me weighing a buck twenty-five, I never thought those were the professional athletes I wanted to be like."

The fight sport is different now. As Johnson enters his 13<sup>th</sup> year as a professional mixed martial artist, he serves as an exemplary lightweight role model — precisely the kind of person he failed to find early in his career.

As scores of smaller martial artists scramble to follow in his footsteps, Johnson has inadvertently secured the future of his weight division on the global stage. For an athlete as disciplined as Johnson, the notion carries no added burden.

"I'm at a point in my career where I'm just focused on the grind of putting on great performances," he said. "That way, when I'm done with this sport, that's it. I'm good. I can be done with it and with no regrets."





**SIDE CONTROL TO MOUNT TO ARMBAR:** Demetrious Johnson begins in the side-control position (1). He maneuvers to the mount and initiates a ground-and-pound attack (2). Johnson then positions his legs for a triangle sweep (3) before rolling onto his back (4). From that position, he can effect a triangle choke or an armbar (5).







# 2019 MMA FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

## “MIGHTY MOUSE” Demetrious Johnson

▶ When he hit the MMA circuit in 2007, Demetrious “Mighty Mouse” Johnson was a human tsunami. An immediate force to be reckoned with, he dominated the bantamweight and featherweight divisions of the sport thanks to his lightning-fast fists and his arsenal of grappling techniques. Like a true martial artist, he hasn’t let his success go to his head.

“I am very happy with where I’m at in my career,” Johnson stated. “The martial arts have given me and my family a wonderful life. If I were to stop fighting today, I’d be satisfied with the way everything has turned out.”

That said, Johnson has no plans of bowing out of the

ring anytime soon. In fact, he’s gearing up for his next big fight, which will have taken place in Japan before this issue of *Black Belt* hits newsstands.

“I’m training for the World Grand Prix — ONE: CENTURY in October,” Johnson said. “It’s a big event! This is the 100<sup>th</sup> time [it] has been held, and I’m very excited to be part of it. I grew up watching Japanese MMA, and now I get a chance to win one. It’s awesome!”

From the moment Johnson first came to grips with an opponent in the cage, it was apparent that he was a rising star. Now, with a string of victories under his belt and numerous awards and

honors bestowed on him, he’s been dubbed one of the greatest mixed martial artists in the world. In a sport abundant with talent, Johnson has achieved rock-star status with legions of fans glued to his every move.

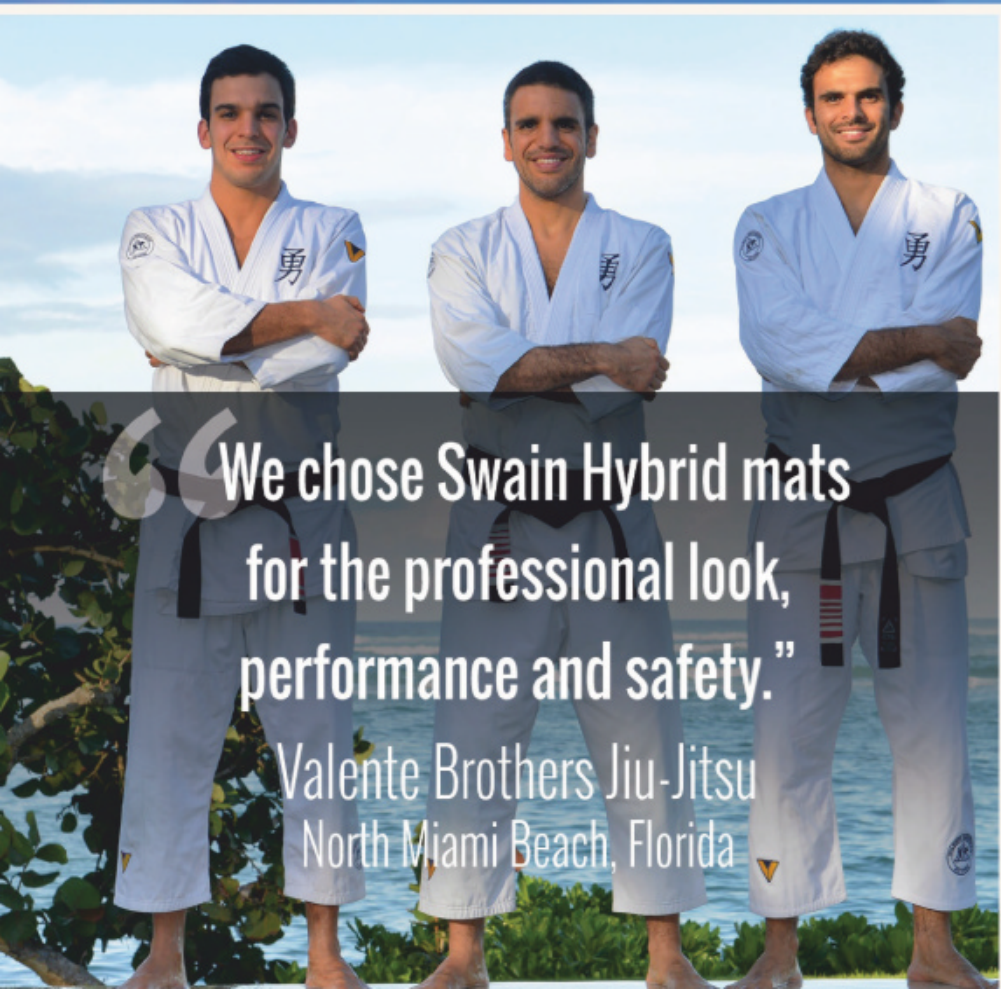
Why are they so devoted? A glimpse into Mighty Mouse’s makeup comes from one of his most-talked-about fights in which he squared off against Miguel Torres. After breaking his fibula when he checked a leg kick in the second round, Johnson continued to wage war. He ignored the pain and concentrated on his grappling skills to survive. In the end, he won a unanimous decision.

“The key to winning, and sometimes the key to surviving in order to win, is having the ability to stay focused and take care of the task at hand,” Johnson said. “That is how I approach my fights and my personal life. I know what I really want out of life, and I stay focused on that task — whether it’s winning a fight or taking care of my family. My wife Destiny and my three children are the most important things in my life.”

Because of his past accomplishments, his bright future and his pervasive martial mindset, *Black Belt* is pleased to make Demetrious Johnson its 2019 MMA Fighter of the Year. 🏆

— Terry L. Wilson





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# 2019

# BLACK

*As you've no doubt noticed, this is Black Belt's annual Hall of Fame issue. Presented here are five inductions for 2019. Appended to the Demetrious Johnson cover story is the sixth. Watch for additional coverage of these talented martial artists in future issues of Black Belt.*

# BELT

# HALL OF FAME

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Chatri Sityodtong • Rondy McKee • Dave Kovar  
Kelly S. Worden • Mackensi Emory



# 2019 MAN OF THE YEAR

## Chatri Sityodtong

► The martial arts gods are smiling down on Chatri Sityodtong and ONE Championship. Either that or Chatri is a genius because what he and his crew are serving up is resonating not only with fight fans in Asia but also with traditional and eclectic martial arts practitioners around the world. As evidence, note that ONE is seeing consistently growing audiences, and it's the subject of weekly stories in mainstream outlets touting its unparalleled success and preaching the gospel of Chatri.

The following quote sums up the philosophy of the man and the org rather nicely: "The word 'MMA' is now synonymous with martial arts, [and] the general public thinks of MMA as blood sport, violence, hatred, controversy. Literally from day one, my mission for ONE Championship [has been] to unleash the real-life superheroes who ignite the world with hope, strength and inspiration."

In a nutshell, that's why ONE is riding a rocket into the stratosphere. Not surprisingly, the path along which Chatri is guiding the promotion grew out of his 34-plus years in the arts. "The biggest misconception about martial arts is that it's about fighting or violence," he observed in a *Black Belt* interview. "In actuality, martial arts is the warrior way of life, of inheriting these incredible values that allow you to release your potential as a human being. It gives you so many skills, so many values to apply to the rest of your life."

More and more people — martial artists as well as business leaders — are listening to what Chatri has to say on a variety of subjects. As the CEO of Asia's largest global sports entity, he possesses a gravitas that's rare in the martial arts, one that's refreshingly in line with the principles all practitioners hold dear.

Of course his philosophical bent doesn't preclude him from growing ONE. His expansion plans don't stop with MMA, however, and what he has in mind could be even more intriguing for traditional martial artists everywhere. That's because Chatri intends to feature on his cards — and eventually organize events around — other combat sports, including karate, kung fu, *taekwondo*, *lethwei* and submission grappling.

"I view ONE as the bridge between the new and the old," he told *Black Belt*. "I want to preserve the old in the sense of the history, the culture and the values of what traditional martial arts brings. But I want to present it in a way that millennials can enjoy genuinely, hence allowing martial arts to become truly mainstream."

Few are doing more to propagate our traditions in a format that appeals to the next generation of fans and practitioners than Chatri Sityodtong. Which is why he is *Black Belt's* 2019 Man of the Year.

— Robert W. Young



# 2019 WOMAN OF THE YEAR

## Rondy McKee

▶ When taekwondo master Rondy McKee gives a keynote speech, it's standing

room only. Her tips on marketing and advertising are worth their weight in gold. Consider this update *Black Belt* received right before going to press:

"I just got home from Germany," McKee said. "In addition to teaching several classes, I was the keynote speaker at a large seminar in Munich, training attendees on marketing strategies and in how to implement new programs for martial arts schools.

"For the past 10 years, I've been advising and teaching various marketing groups and schools. I provide different services specific to the needs of the particular school or organization. One of the issues I worked on this morning in Germany was that many martial arts schools there can't get into public schools, so what can they do? I provided them with details and materials outlining how I overcame that same problem at my school in North Carolina."

McKee is savvy enough to know that different countries impose different rules on the martial arts, which is why she advises her clients to review her presentations and then choose what works for them. It's a strategy that would make Bruce Lee proud.

Attesting to the depth of her knowledge, she recently conducted a clinic on how to build your own building using her school as an example. History: Seventeen years ago, McKee created one of the largest and most successful schools in the world. It is an immaculate 24,000-square-foot structure with a koi pond in the sitting area, situated on 3.5 acres. It became the headquarters for the 2,000 students of her über-successful White Tiger Taekwondo & Martial Arts.

McKee's journey to Germany wasn't the only update she had. "My husband and I decided to sell the building," she announced in her best news-anchor voice. "I had some realtors come in and tell me what they thought it was worth, then I added another million and it sold in three days. We downsized to a smaller school I'd built a few years ago.

"But I have more breaking news! My husband and I are moving to an exotic beach in Mexico. We decided that if my senior students can run the school, I can oversee them and run my marketing business on the internet. So why couldn't I do all that while sitting on a beach?"

McKee's new home is an old resort that resembles a castle perched atop a mountain surrounded by jungle, and it's accessible only by boat. She aptly dubbed her new digs "The Jungle House." The facility also boasts a gym with mats, making it perfect for training and private lessons.

"I've always said that someday I'll retire on an island," McKee said. "Now is that time. I don't think anybody ever regrets enjoying life early, but you will regret it if you don't enjoy life until it's too late."

Despite her apparent emphasis on running the business she built, the martial arts don't get short shrift under McKee. Her taekwondo students are certified through Kukkiwon, South Korea's headquarters for the art. And her *hapkido* students are recognized by the Korea Hapkido Federation, the nation's most respected organization for the style. If you're wondering how she crafted those Korean connections, know that she used to live in the East Asian nation, where she taught English while studying martial arts.

A few months from now when she isn't chasing pumas off her deck, you'll be likely to find McKee sprucing up the place in between teaching beach-view classes, all while overseeing her school and her clients on her laptop — and watching the sun set on a perfectly executed exit plan. As of today, that exit plan includes being named *Black Belt's* 2019 Woman of the Year.

— Terry L. Wilson



Photo Courtesy of Rondy McKee





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▶ A seasoned black belt, Dave Kovar competed in forms and fighting at more than 200 tournaments held between 1974 and 1989. In addition to holding black belts in 10 arts, he's one of the most successful school owners in the United States.

"My philosophy is martial arts first, teaching second and business third," Kovar said. "I run a chain of nine martial art schools in the Sacramento Valley [of California]. We have 3,000 members and 90 employees, with more than half of them full time."

Kovar is no stranger to operating a *dojo*. "Six months out of high school, I started my own school," he said. "That was in 1978, so I've been doing this for 41 years. I fully believe in the positive impact that the martial arts have on people. I believe it has a cure for every ailment that faces the world."

Kovar's passion for the curative benefits of martial arts training prompts him to regularly remind all his instructors of a crucial concept: "We have an obligation that [people in] other sports don't have. We're teaching kids to be potentially violent, teaching them to hit and kick and to hurt somebody. That obligates us as instructors to swing the pendulum to the other side by teaching them self-control, courtesy and respect. [We also must give them] the confidence to walk away from a fight with the knowledge that, if push comes to shove, they have self-defense alternatives and don't have to be the victim."

Known internationally as a teacher of teachers, Kovar was a pioneer in the making and marketing of how-to martial arts videos. "In 1981 I came out with a VHS training tape," he said. "In fact, I may have been one of the first schools to advertise in *Black Belt*."

Kovar's tapes eventually became the building blocks of an innovative method for propagating the arts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. "Mr. Frank Silverman brought me in to speak at an event and said, 'We're creating a company called the Martial Arts Industry Association, and we want you to be our monthly drills guy,'" Kovar recalled. "For the first three years, [mine] was the only instructional video in

their monthly package. And that was the beginning of our relationship."

Eventually, that partnership changed the face of teaching martial arts, ushering in new ideas, creative platforms and support teams for countless schools around the world regardless of style.

Although managing his martial arts empire keeps Kovar busy, he still finds time every day to train and teach. "At ProMac — the Professional Martial Arts College — we coach other martial arts schools doing instructor colleges and business events," he said. "Our premise is that you don't have to be slick to teach really good martial arts and to charge a fair price."

Kovar is known for many things, but at the top of the list, he's renowned as an innovator who puts ethics before profits. That, coupled with his track record in the industry, is why *Black Belt* has named him its 2019 Instructor of the Year.

— Terry L. Wilson

# 2019 INSTRUCTOR OF THE YEAR

## Dave Kovar



Photo Courtesy of Dave Kovar



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**Shane Tassoul MAIA Consultant**



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► Born and raised on a farm in Tacoma, Washington, Kelly S. Worden is the son of a disabled World War II veteran who supported his family on his meager Army pension. Necessity forced young Kelly to pitch in when he could by taking odd jobs — when he wasn't scrapping with bullies, that is.

"It was a rough area — lots of aggression and violence throughout my school years," Worden said. "People ask me when I got into martial arts. I tell them, 'Right after some guy beat the crap out of me!' That was in the early '70s."

Those childhood experiences with violence motivated Worden to develop his martial skills in a manner that addressed real-world scenarios using a no-nonsense approach. "I dedicated my life to the study of martial arts," he said. "I evolved the many styles I trained in, keeping the useful and discarding the useless. So I created renegade *jeet kune do*, the Worden Defense System and the brotherhood of Natural Spirit International.

"For me, it's always been about spreading the arts and connecting the systems," Worden said. "Sport martial arts have little to do with true self-defense. It's a lot of fun, socially rewarding and great exercise. Just don't expect the techniques learned in a cardio-kickboxing class to protect you on the street."

In the mid-'80s, the U.S. Army saw the value of Worden's brand of combatives and enlisted him to teach the Special Forces. "Gen. Colin Powell's son-in-law, an Army Ranger, asked me to teach him and his troops *arnis* and knife fighting," Worden said. "I'd taught similar courses at Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base. By then, I'd given up doing any kicks because I'm a close-quarters guy. I focused on freestyle and adaptability and spontaneous fighting, so I wasn't concerned about kicking in those situations."

Worden imparted his weapons skills to elite operators from 2000 to 2006. He accepted subsequent short-term contracts for instruction until 2014. Because of his clientele, he never looked to belts to quantify the contributions he made to his students' development. He measured his success in lives saved.

"I recently ran into an Army Ranger that I'd first met several years ago when I was training the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Group," Worden said. "To be honest, I didn't remember him, but he remembered me and started telling his co-workers about how the strategies and tactics he learned during my training of the 1st SFG saved his life."

Although his military gig is up for now, Worden continues to teach his version of reality-based self-defense privately in Washington while conducting seminars around the United States. To maximize his reach, he also spreads his weapons wisdom via the internet.

It's for his work with the military and his ongoing commitment to enabling civilians to better defend themselves on the street that *Black Belt* is naming Kelly S. Worden its 2019 Weapons Instructor of the Year.

— Terry L. Wilson

# 2019 WEAPONS INSTRUCTOR OF THE YEAR

## Kelly S. Worden



Photo by Rick Husted



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# Mackensi Emory

## 2019 COMPETITOR

## OF THE YEAR

► With her feet planted firmly in the air, 23-year-old Mackensi Emory has a knack for flying, flipping, flopping and twisting her way toward stardom. She's been doing just that since she was 6 years old.

Before she turned into a teen, the youngster from Sacramento, California, owned a roomful of trophies taller than she was. Also a champion gymnast, she became an expert at blending the two sports into exciting routines. And for the past eight years, she's ridden a winning streak that sets the bar high for anyone wishing to follow in her footsteps.

"Things really changed for me in 2018," Emory said. "That year, I won every single overall grand championship and dominated my divisions, and that had never happened to me before. At the U.S. Open, I won all my divisions. I won the NASKA overall women's forms and weapons, then at the ISKA, I won both forms and weapons for women.

"Topping a perfect record didn't seem possible — but I did it again this year!"

Although she's still a competitor and a sought-after seminar personality, Emory has her eye on the big screen. "For a while, I couldn't decide if I wanted to continue martial arts and keep competing or pursue doing stunts in the movies," she said.

Encouraged by her sport-karate coaches, Emory took a leap of faith this year and moved to Los Angeles to seek employment as a stuntwoman. "I'm working with a lot of great people, including *Wonder Woman's* stunt double," Emory said. "She's teaching me swords, and

some of my sport-karate mentors are working with me on how to sell a fight on camera. Doing movie stunts is very different from what I'm doing in sport karate, but I'm loving it."

Showbiz may have gotten into Emory's blood, but sport karate is still in her heart. In fact, she plans to remain in that arena as long as possible while pursuing a career in film. "I've won everything I want to win," she said. "What means the most to me now is being able to give back. Knowing that I am an inspiration to others, girls and boys, is what drives my passion now."

Specifically what type of inspiration is she striving to impart? "You don't always see a lot of positive attitude in tournaments, especially when someone loses," she said. "My goal has been to present a positive attitude, and hopefully that will inspire the next generation."

The staff of *Black Belt* could think of no better martial artist than Mackensi Emory to be our 2019 Competitor of the Year. 🥋

— Terry L. Wilson



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# 화기포





# Martial Arts Worldview

*Training in Hapkido, Watching Billy Jack  
and Becoming a Sheepdog*



*By James D. Brewer*





Hapkido master Bong Soo Han

Photo Courtesy of International Hapkido Federation



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As a 23-year-old graduate student in Middle America in the early 1970s, I was hungry for whatever I could learn about the Asian martial arts.

On the East Coast and West Coast, schools had been emerging and multiplying since the mid-1960s, but those of us who lived in “flyover country” had few opportunities to broaden our understanding of arts like karate, kung fu, judo and *taekwondo*.

At Union University in my hometown of Jackson, Tennessee, I'd been fortunate to train from 1969 to 1970 in the then little-known art of *hapkido*. In a field-house basement, a Korean student and former captain in the ROK Army known only as Mr. Suh organized and taught the system to a small group of dedicated students. Suh ran a no-nonsense traditional class, and for 10 months, we couldn't get enough of his instruction. Despite the bruises and the blood, we always looked forward to our next session.

Fellow student Ivy Scarborough put it this way: “Mr. Suh was trained in an environment that was very much ‘real world’ and where survival was at stake. I am very glad we had the benefit of that mindset.”

When Suh unexpectedly returned to Korea in the fall of 1970, we were devastated. How could we continue our training? Kang Rhee had a taekwondo school in Memphis where Elvis Presley and Bill Wallace had studied, but that was 80 miles away. As a young man working his way through college, I could afford neither the time nor the tuition. Without an instructor, I turned to books, magazines (*Black Belt* being the primary one), television and movies to learn about any style I could find.

Around that time, a seminal movie appeared, and it compelled me to wrestle with some tough questions about my future. I ultimately wound up re-evaluating my career choice.

# Cinematic Inspiration

After conceiving of the storyline, Tom Laughlin began filming *Billy Jack* in 1969, and the movie hit theaters in 1971. The moment I saw it, I was impressed by the fight scenes. Apparently, many others were, as well — the movie grossed an unprecedented \$40 million. For me, though, *Billy Jack* carried a special meaning for several reasons.

First, the hero's techniques were nearly identical to the ones Suh had taught us. Until that point, few Americans even knew what hapkido was. Stunt adviser/coordinator Bong Soo Han changed all that when he brought the art to the big screen via Laughlin.

Second, *Billy Jack* made an impression on me for a much deeper reason, one that I suspect was the opposite of what the producers had hoped for. In the movie, we see

a communal Native American school in the desert Southwest operated by what can best be described as “make love, not war” hippies left over from the ’60s. Being pacifists, they’re constantly besieged by bigots and racists who insult them, demean them and assault them. (Laughlin did an excellent job shining a light on the abuse and poverty that many Native Americans faced at that time and, sadly, that many still do.)

Fortunately, the Native Americans have Billy Jack, a former Green Beret Vietnam vet, to watch over them. Throughout the movie, he employs his hapkido skills to deliver a series of well-deserved beatdowns to the redneck lawmen and bullies. The irony of the situation is that the movie is supposed to be a call for peace and nonviolence, yet the only way the school and the pacifists can survive is if Billy Jack uses violence to protect them.

I found myself relating more to Billy Jack and his violent solutions to the problems than to the peaceful, nonviolent folks. Given that I was majoring in religion, psychology and theology, that said a lot about the path I was laying out for my life.

# Literary Inspiration

In their book *On Combat*, Lt. Col. Dave Grossman and Loren Christensen talk about three kinds of people in the world: sheep, wolves and sheepdogs. Most people are sheep, they explain: “kind, decent people who are not capable of hurting each other except by accident or under extreme provocation.”

The authors also recognize the existence of wolves, or people who behave as predators and “feed on the sheep without mercy.” Pretending the wolves don’t exist or failing to prepare to deal with them condemns the sheep to slaughter. Fortunately, there are sheepdogs: police officers, soldiers and others in society who protect the sheep from the wolves.

In the movie, Billy Jack is a sheepdog. His willingness to use measured violence guarantees the peace-and-love crowd the opportunity to exist.

Just as I drew a different conclusion from the movie than the producers likely intended, I also had an alternative view of the movie's theme song, *One Tin Soldier*. A 1960s anti-war tune written by Dennis Lambert and Brian Potter, it delivered a message of nonviolence that seemed to fit well with the movie's concept — or, at least, with the pacifist half of the story. In *One Tin Soldier*, the aggressive valley people (wolves) demand the treasure



owned by the mountain people (sheep), who kindly offer to share with their brothers “all the secrets of [their] mountain and all the riches buried there.” But being wolves, the valley people are not satisfied with that, so they mount up, draw their swords and butcher the peaceful mountain people. When they uncover the treasure, it simply reads, “Peace on earth.”

*There won't be any trumpets blowin'  
Come the judgment day  
On the bloody morning after  
One tin soldier rides away.*

It's a beautiful song with a lovely melody and a sentimental message. Sadly, it addresses none of the realities of the world. You see, after I watched *Billy Jack* and listened to *One Tin Soldier*, it seemed that the problem in the song was not so much the valley people/wolves who were behaving according to human nature. The problem was the mountain people/sheep who, in their naiveté, failed to protect themselves. A basic distrust of their “brothers” below, along with a little preparation and training to defend themselves, would have saved lives and preserved the peace they held so dear.

Not coincidentally, that notion serves us well in the real world, too.

## Historical Inspiration

I doubt Tom Laughlin, who passed away in 2013 at age 82, would have liked my conclusion about *Billy Jack* and *One Tin Soldier*. Yet I felt like I was in good company with my interpretation of both. Consider what author George Orwell said: “Men can only be highly civilized while other men, inevitably less civilized, are there to guard and feed them.”

A similar concept, most likely derived from a Rudyard Kipling poem, reads, “People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf.” (*People Sleep*)

After contemplating *Billy Jack*, I decided that they could keep the tie-dye T-shirts and misplaced pacifism. I would take the hero's hapkido, indomitable spirit, and sense of duty and justice every time. In a nutshell: If a person has no capacity for violence, he or she is a healthy, productive citizen — and a sheep. If a person has a capacity for violence but no empathy for fellow citizens, he or she is a sociopath — a wolf.

But what if a person has a capacity for violence and a deep love for other citizens? Then that person is a sheepdog, a warrior. Someone who's walking the hero's path. Someone who can walk into the heart of darkness, into the universal human phobia, and emerge unscathed. (Grossman and Christensen, 181)

## Real-Life Inspiration

By 1974 I wanted to walk into that darkness far more than I wanted to stand outside in the light and applaud others who dared to enter. So I became a soldier.

During the next 30 years, the nomadic lifestyle of a soldier made training in a single martial art impossible. So, from a cold *dojo* in Alaska to the steamy jungles of Central America and the gritty sand of Southwest Asia, I determined to make a virtue out of necessity.

In Colorado during the 1980s, I trained in judo and taekwondo. The 1990s found me under the tutelage of a taekwondo grandmaster in Kentucky. While living in Virginia, I was fortunate to train in the direct lineage of Ip Man's *wing chun*. Today, I teach self-defense in Florida and, of course, I continue to train.

A few years ago, after a rather intense “light contact” sparring session, my opponent observed the following about me: “You kick like a Korean, punch like an Okinawan, grapple like a Japanese and move to engage like a Chinese.” Being a purist when it comes to style, he meant it as a veiled insult. I chose to take it as a compliment.

In his poem *Ulysses*, Alfred, Lord Tennyson wrote, “I am a part of all I have met.” How true. I owe so much to all those who have guided me on my martial arts sojourn. As I stealthily maneuver toward age 70, it's been more than 50 years since the first night I bowed in to Suh's hapkido class in that musty basement. Despite all the training I've experienced, my thoughts often harken back to him.

If I ever encounter Mr. Suh again, I will thank him for introducing me to hapkido and the warrior way that led me to the life of a sheepdog. 🐶

*James D. Brewer is a retired U.S. Army officer, writer, lecturer, teacher and lifelong warrior. Over the past 50 years, he's trained in hapkido, shorin-ryu karate, judo, taekwondo, Army combatives and wing chun. A former instructor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, he teaches writing at Polk State College in Florida. This article is excerpted from his upcoming book Seeking an Indomitable Spirit: Lessons Learned From My 50-Year Sojourn in the Martial Arts.*



*George Orwell said: “Men can only be highly civilized while other men, inevitably less civilized, are there to guard and feed them.”*





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# HOW TO TAME YOUR DRAGON

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**LEARN THE MECHANICS AND DO  
THE DRILLS, THEN UNLEASH THE  
BEAST THAT IS YOUR ROUND KICK!**

**BY SIMON SCHER**









**B**ECAUSE OF ITS VERSATILITY AND POWER, the round kick — known to some martial artists as the turning kick, the saber kick or the roundhouse kick — is one of the most common leg techniques in our world. No matter your particular interpretation, the basics are the same: You swing your leg along an arc until your foot or shin strikes the target.

Unfortunately, that very simplicity can have negative consequences. When teaching students to spar, I often find myself thinking, *I get it — you can throw a round kick! How about some variety? Try something else!* And when I watch *taekwondo* in the Olympics, it often seems like I'm observing a round-kick marathon.

Despite its popularity, many martial artists don't have a deep understanding of the round kick. That can prevent them from training properly, using the technique appropriately and maximizing its potential fully. Oblivious to its intricacies, they throw it merely because it's quick and easy to execute.

This article will attempt to remedy that. In the paragraphs that follow, I will break down the round kick and offer insights into the technical details that are necessary to make progress on the path to mastery.

## MECHANICS

The round kick can be executed in many ways, and as long as it's powerful and fast, there's a good chance it will be effective. The version I prefer derives its power and speed from a precise sequence that starts with the kicking leg being propelled by the hip, then has the knee of said leg extending with a snap as the hip turns over and contact is made.

The most common error I see in the *dojang* involves students not practicing the kick with a full range of circular motion. Instead, they consistently execute what amounts to a 45-degree round kick. That flies in the face of the philosophy that we all should train to develop maximum power and speed in the full range of motion for a given technique. When that's your default, it's easy to adjust in real time and perhaps throw a shorter-range round kick or one that entails reduced angular travel. Doing less than you've trained to do is easy. However, if you always train for less and occasionally need to do more, you'll likely fall short.

The type of round kick I'm describing can be broken down into four parts, each of which should follow the previous one as quickly as the situation warrants:

1. Lift your leg with your knee bent.
2. Pivot on the foot of your support leg so your hips can turn over.
3. Strike the target by extending your kicking leg while turning over your hips.
4. Re-chamber your foot, then return to a fighting stance.

The reason you should re-chamber your foot before putting it back on the floor is twofold. One, it affords you the opportunity to throw a second kick or even a third if the first one fails to get the job done. Two, it removes your kicking leg from your opponent's reach, thus preventing a leg grab.

## POWER

In the martial arts, we often use the word "power" to refer to what scientists call kinetic energy. The relevant for-

mula is: kinetic energy =  $\frac{1}{2}$  mass x velocity<sup>2</sup>

This formula from classical mechanics tells us that if we want to make our round kick more powerful, we can increase the mass of the object that makes contact or increase its velocity.

How do you up the mass factor? One way is to move forward while kicking. That puts more of your body-weight behind the technique. Another way is to rotate your body toward the target as you kick — in essence, that does the same thing. For the rotation to happen, the foot of your support leg must pivot fully. I tell students to envision a spike holding the ball of their foot in place on the floor. Thus, they must rotate on the ball of the foot with the goal of getting the back of the heel pointing toward the target.

The two most common mistakes I've seen with respect to generating power in the round kick are as follows:

- Students don't rotate the support foot sufficiently. This leaves the back of the heel several degrees off the line that leads directly from their hips to the target.



**RIGHT:** The author demonstrates his preferred method for executing the round kick. From a ready stance, he chambers his leg in a neutral manner while making sure his hands are in a defensive position (1). He then pivots on the foot of his support leg and turns his hip over (2). He extends his leg, which causes his foot to swing horizontally into the target (3).



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**WRONG:** Don't kick past the target because it makes you more vulnerable to a counterattack, Simon Scher says.



- Students rotate on the support heel instead of the ball of the foot. This results in the body moving away from the target, which reduces the power of the kick.

For the velocity portion of the equation, it's essential to examine hip rotation. The pivot of the support foot should cause the hips to turn over so the buttock of the kicking leg points toward the ceiling. This serves to swing the kicking leg more quickly than it otherwise would move. In effect, the hips act as the fulcrum for the lever of the leg while powering its angular motion.

Velocity, of course, is defined as distance divided by time. (It also includes a direction component, but that's irrelevant here.) Time depends on the rotation of the body and the extension of the leg. Distance is how far the kicking foot travels during that time to reach the target. It follows that if you make a larger arc with your kicking leg in the same time it takes you to execute a normal round kick, you'll create a more powerful blow because your foot will be moving more quickly — although you'll sacrifice the element of surprise to some extent. You can mitigate this by setting up the kick so your opponent doesn't notice it until it's too late or simply by making a slightly smaller arc and thus saving time.

## DETAILS

Now that your round kick is powerful and fast, you should consider several other elements in your pursuit of mastery. The first involves your upper body. Many people thrust their lead hand behind them when they throw a round kick — I'm not sure why. That hand cannot

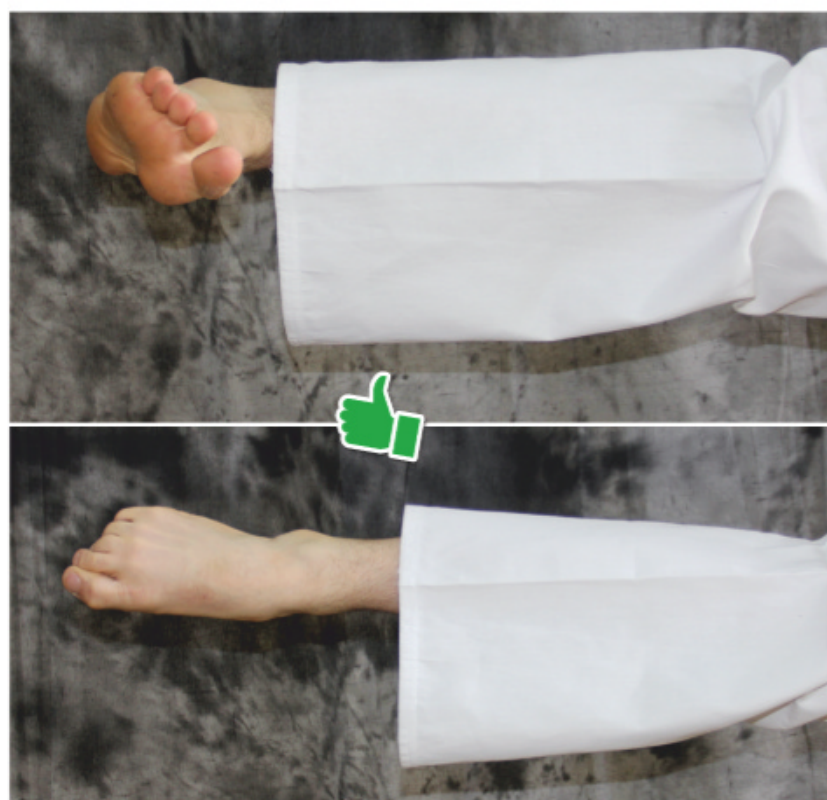
be used to defend or to strike when it's dangling there. Some believe that throwing the hand back helps with the maintenance of balance and the creation of momentum. This, too, seems like a poor reason because both can be achieved with proper core training. For these reasons, I believe that the lead hand should remain near your head — between you and your opponent — so it can be used for attack and/or defense.

The next element is the position in which your round kick ends. When executing it, your pivot pulls your hip around, your hip pulls your leg around and your knee pulls the striking tool around. If the striking tool travels more than 2 feet past the imaginary line between your hip and your target, you'll expose your back. That means your opponent can counterattack — or push the leg to spin you around, making you even more vulnerable. Consequently, I encourage students to stop the round kick when their foot is directly between the hip and the target. This forces them to focus the energy of the kick outward toward the opponent, as opposed to around and past the opponent.

A second danger in letting the kick travel too far past the line between your hip and your opponent is that you'll be tempted to stick your buttock out and sit away from the kick. Doing so not only pulls your mass away from the kick but also disturbs your balance and inhibits your ability to deal with the rebound force. This is why I frequently tell students to avoid performing a "big booty kick." Instead, thrust your pelvis forward at the moment of impact to lock your body into the kick.

## FOOT POSITION

Crucial in the effective execution of the round kick is foot position. If you're breaking a board with the kick, I recommend flexing your ankle and toes so the ball of your foot strikes the board. In self-defense, this foot position



**RIGHT:** The two main foot positions for the round kick are the ball-of-the-foot position (**top**), which is frequently used for breaking boards and self-defense, and the instep position (**bottom**), which is commonly used for sparring and self-defense.





**RIGHT:** The best place to position your hands during the round kick, Simon Scher says, is near your head.

**WRONG:** Avoid swinging your arms into positions that don't lend themselves to immediate offensive or defensive use, the author says.





## CLEARLY, THE ROUND KICK IS A VERSATILE TOOL THAT'S RELATIVELY EASY TO THROW. HOWEVER, IT REQUIRES PLENTY OF PRACTICE, ESPECIALLY IF YOUR REPERTOIRE INCLUDES SEVERAL OF THE VARIATIONS DESCRIBED ABOVE.

is useful if you want to break your opponent's bones or hook your foot around a blocking tool.

A different foot position is used in the pointed-foot round kick. This is recommended when striking pads, bags or people you don't want to injure — although it can still cause damage. The pointed-foot round kick strikes with the instep or the shin, depending on your art, your target and the amount of hip rotation you use. Examples: For a 45-degree round kick, you likely will make contact with the instep. For a baseball-bat break, you most likely will elect to use your shin.

Clearly, the round kick is a versatile tool that's relatively easy to throw. However, it requires plenty of practice, especially if your repertoire includes several of the variations described above. To that end, you should develop a training regimen that hones the attributes needed to execute the round kick through the full range of motion.

### DRILLS

The following are some drills that I've found useful in my students' pursuit of round-kick mastery. You are, of course, free to modify them to suit your specific needs.

- Hold a wall or a chair for stability. Assume a fighting stance and repeatedly perform a fast pivot toward the target and then back to the starting position. Your kicking leg should be lifted and your knee flexed. In addition to polishing your ability to pivot, this will enable you to see for yourself how a quick, snappy pivot can move the kicking leg dynamically. Caution: You may be surprised at how sore the muscles of your core and the calf of your support leg will be the day after.
- Bolster your balance as described above if you so desire. Pre-pivot the foot of your support leg and lift your kicking leg to the round-kick chamber position. Set a metronome to 120 beats per minute. Set a timer for 30 seconds. Try to execute a round kick every time you hear the signal.
- Set up a small target; I suggest a pingpong ball hanging from a string. Execute a predetermined number of full-power, full-speed round kicks at the target. Attempt to make contact only with your chosen striking tool — for example, the ball of your foot or the instep. If you hit with the wrong part of the foot or miss the target, start over.
- Position yourself in front of a heavy bag. Throw a round kick at the bag, but don't put your kicking foot back on the floor immediately. Instead, focus on mitigating the rebound of the kick using only your core. This not only will strengthen your core but also will build your balance.
- Secure a spacious area where spilled water will not be a problem. Stand at one end of the area with a cup



**RIGHT:** Hold a chair or other stationary object for support while polishing the various component moves of the round kick.

**RIGHT:** The author demonstrates the pingpong-ball drill he uses to improve the accuracy of the round kick.



of water in your hand. Execute a series of round kicks while traversing the area. Your goal, of course, is to not spill the water. The result will be improved balance, superior control and enhanced body awareness. 🙌

*Simon Scher holds a seventh-degree black belt in taekwondo and has trained extensively in aikido, tai chi, capoeira, jiu-jitsu, karate, kali, kyudo and sado. His book *The Martial Arts Manual* is based on his longtime project of creating a line-by-line commentary on Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*.*





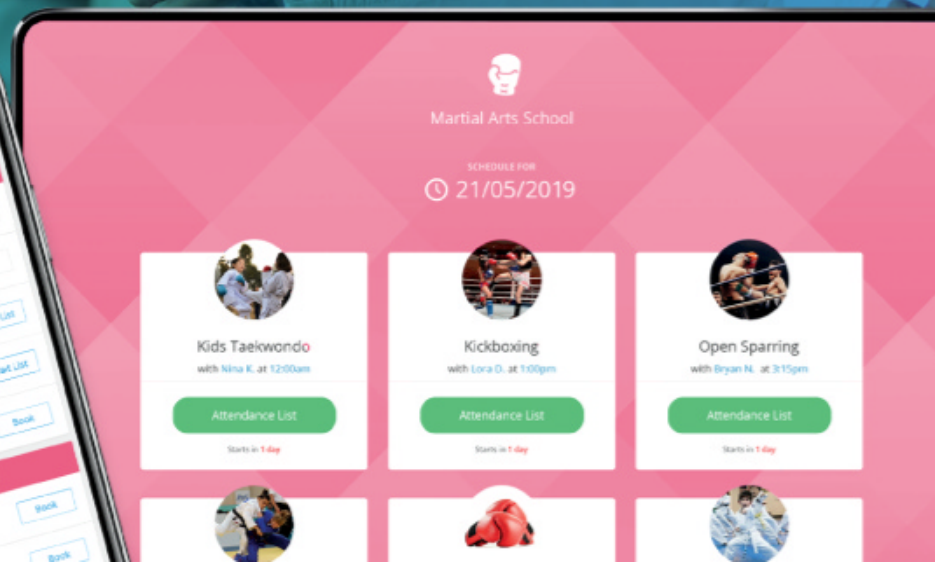
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# Power

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**PUNCH**

How It Stacks  
Up Against 3  
Other Go-To  
Responses to  
an Attack

by Tommy Cowan







n hand-to-hand combat, you face a constant and undeniable danger. Among other injuries, you can sustain broken bones, torn cartilage and ruptured organs. You also can be knocked unconscious or killed.

Over the millennia, various cultures have developed their own techniques and strategies for dealing with such threats. One of the most pervasive is punching. That's the case because in most unarmed encounters, a properly thrown punch is the most efficient and effective tool a martial artist can use.

## Options

While engaged in battle, your objective is to remove the threat as quickly as possible. No responsible martial artist would suggest that killing an attacker is the optimal solution, but people do get killed in street fights, and if your life is on the line, dispatching a violent criminal may be the best option for threat elimination.

The second best option is rendering the assailant unconscious. The third best is immobilization (broken leg, shattered kneecap, etc.). The fourth best is dishing out so much hurt that the person retreats. The fifth best is temporary immobilization, which affords you sufficient time to escape.

Before you select any of these options for use in a self-defense situation, however, you must consider the three criteria of efficiency: the time it will take to administer

the technique to full effect, the energy you will expend doing so and the situation you'll be left in should the technique fail.

I call that third criterion the defaulting scenario because it's the position you end up in if your technique doesn't function as intended. This is very important, but it's often overlooked because people tend to focus on how *well* their move will work in a fight. This fails to take into account three possible outcomes: Your opponent dodges your strike, he blocks your strike, or he weathers the technique and the two of you become entangled.

I mention all these possibilities because I'm about to argue that a punch is often the best way to effect any of the five options for threat removal. Furthermore, if your punch fails, you'll be left in better hands, pun intended, than you would if you had tried one of the other techniques discussed here. Those other techniques, which were chosen for the sake of comparison, are quite common in the martial arts: kicking, choking and eye gouging.

Before I begin, it must be acknowledged that proper punching is not as natural as some martial artists think. Developing a good fist strike requires a fair amount of technical instruction and physical training. But once you invest the time needed to ingrain the correct mechanics and condition your fists and shoulders, you'll have a punch that flies fast, hits hard and leaves you relatively safe in the event of a shortfall. Such a blow, delivered to the jaw, the temple or the occipital region of an oppo-

nent's skull, can do serious damage, including a knockout that instantly eliminates the threat.

## Kicks

No one, including this writer, would advise any martial artist to forgo learning kicks for use in self-defense. Leg techniques are more powerful and have greater range than hand techniques. Furthermore, the best strikers know how to blend kicks with punches to form seamless combinations. That said, when it comes to threat removal, kicks fall short according to the aforementioned three criteria of efficiency.

My observations result from the fact that, with the exception of leg kicks, a kick is fairly easy for an opponent to detect. Therefore, a kick is typically harder to land and has a higher rate of failure. And when a kick fails, it leaves you

When a kick fails, it leaves you in a more vulnerable position. Often, you're standing on one leg momentarily while you struggle to regain your balance.





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in a more vulnerable position. Often, you're standing on one leg momentarily while you struggle to regain your balance. At that moment, you're more susceptible to being knocked down by a strike or taken down with a throw. In contrast, if your punch misses, you still have both feet on the ground.

If your kick is blocked, you're also left off-balance. Making matters worse, you're at risk of injuring your foot or leg the moment it impacts the blocking tool. Of course, the same risk is present when your punch is blocked, but it's better to injure a hand than a foot in a fight. Why? Because if you hurt a hand, you still can punch and grab with the other one. But if

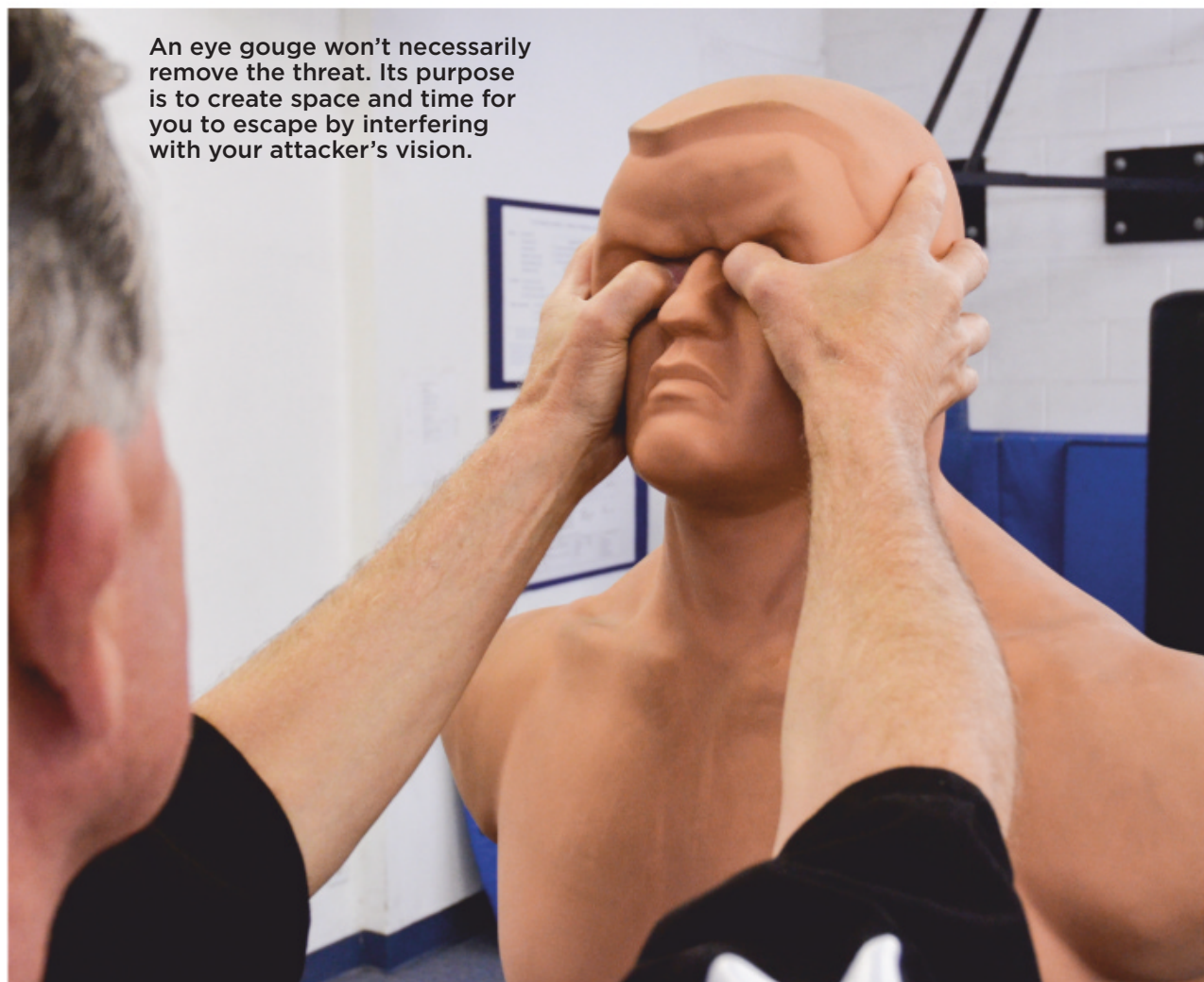
you hurt a foot, you probably won't be able to kick with your other foot/leg because that action will entail posting on the injured limb. What's more, an injured foot/leg also makes it difficult to maneuver for a punch, move out of the way of a strike and run away if you need to.

The likelihood of a punch being caught midthrow is not very high, assuming it's executed correctly. However, a good grappler can catch even a fast kick that's aimed at a target higher than knee level. Additionally, if you find yourself being grabbed by the arm, you'll still have two feet under you, which facilitates throwing a punch with your free hand and wrestling the captured arm away. In contrast, if your kick is caught, it will leave you standing on one leg while your foe has the other leg tucked under his armpit. This is not good at all.

Final kick comment: If your opponent has your kicking leg trapped, forget about countering with a fancy technique that entails jumping and then kicking with your free leg. It will work only against an inexperienced, extremely fatigued or totally untrained opponent. Against anyone else, it will land you on your back. And despite the success Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* practitioners enjoy when they find their foe in their guard in a match, in a street fight, your back is the last place you want to be, mostly because said foe might have friends nearby.

## Chokes

When you're seeking to render an opponent unconscious, chokes are a great option. They're easy to learn, and opportunities to use them while grappling are numerous and frequent. All martial artists who are interested in self-defense should master basic grappling, which includes choking techniques. However, you shouldn't let the success of chokes in MMA competition



An eye gouge won't necessarily remove the threat. Its purpose is to create space and time for you to escape by interfering with your attacker's vision.

convince you that they're always the best choice in self-defense. In reality, there are multiple reasons why punching is superior on the street.

As mentioned above, despite the effectiveness of grappling in some one-on-one encounters, street fights seldom unfold with a balance of power. Although it's true that most fights end up on the ground, that doesn't mean it's where you should choose to be. When you're on the ground, you have no idea who's going to step up and stomp on your head. This is especially true when you're lying on your back, trying to effect a choke. Yes, some chokes can be executed while standing, but the majority are finished when both parties are horizontal.

Another monkey wrench is introduced when you consider that a choke requires more time and a relatively large amount of energy to complete. It's widely taught that even the best choke takes at least four seconds to render a person unconscious. Meanwhile, a perfect punch can do the same in the blink of an eye.

And if your chosen choke fails? Well, you've spent a fair amount of time and energy on something that didn't work, and your opponent is very close to you — perhaps even on top of you — raining down blows. Not good.

A popular adage holds that the best way to beat a striker is to grapple with him. The reverse is also worth remembering: The best way to beat a grappler is to strike him. And when it comes to striking, punches are faster, safer and more useful from a greater variety of positions than any other technique.

## Gouges

An eye gouge is simple to execute and quick to take effect. Capable of blinding an opponent, the technique can be administered by anyone, regardless of age, gender



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or body size — which makes it a staple in most self-defense courses. But it's not perfect, especially when compared to a punch.

Yes, it takes time and effort to develop an effective punch, but the same can be said of the eye gouge. While a gouge may seem so basic that anyone can learn it in five minutes, it will require regular drilling for speed, timing and accuracy.

If an eye gouge fails to achieve the desired effect, the defaulting scenarios are less than desirable compared to the punch. With the gouge, your hand will be open, whereas with a punch, it will be in a closed fist, which is comparatively safer. That stems from the fact that if the attacker evades the gouge by ducking — the most common way to avoid a strike — you're likely to jam your fingers into his forehead. If he blocks the gouge with his hands, you run the risk of having your fingers grabbed. With your fingers in his grasp, you won't be able to escape and, even worse, you might suffer some broken digits. The latter will make it hard to throw an effective punch or apply an effective choke.

Furthermore, an eye gouge won't necessarily remove the threat. Its purpose is to create space and time for you to escape by interfering with your attacker's vision, but the technique won't put him to sleep. You may still have to close the gap to accomplish that — unless you're carrying a defensive weapon like pepper spray, which I recommend. A gouge can result in permanent blindness, but in most cases, it only blinds the person temporarily. And if you're in a clinch, an eye gouge won't guarantee your escape while a knockout will.

Additionally, the eyes present much smaller targets than do the zones that are typically punched (the jaw, temple, ribs, kidneys and solar plexus, among others). For this reason, accuracy with the eye gouge is more difficult to achieve in comparison to the punch.

## Considerations

By no means is punching the be-all and end-all of self-defense. A good martial artist strives to master a variety of strategies, techniques and delivery methods with the goal of being able to choose the right one for any situation in a heartbeat.

It is my opinion, however, that based on the achievable outcomes versus the rates of failure and taking into consideration the defaulting scenarios that are probable if failure occurs, punching is the superior self-defense tool in most situations. Clearly, it can remove a threat with greater efficiency and safety than kicks, chokes and eye gouges.

Surely, this is why karate, *taekwondo*, Western boxing, *muay Thai*, *savate* and numerous other martial arts emphasize the punch as a primary component of self-defense. It's why your training should emphasize it, as well. 🥋

*Tommy Cowan has studied the martial arts for more than 20 years. He's competed in taekwondo, wrestling and MMA, and he's worked as an MMA journalist. Born in California, he recently completed his master's degree at the University of Amsterdam.*



## THE OPTION TO RUN

► In a life-threatening situation — which any street fight can morph into in a split second — there's no shame in running. While this option is often the first one that's suggested by self-defense instructors, especially if the defender is unarmed and facing a weapon, I rank its value in hand-to-hand combat low. This stems from the three criteria for efficiency outlined in this article.

There are, however, other reasons. Unless you're a good runner, it's likely that an attacker who wants to catch you will manage to do just that. Furthermore, if you don't have knowledge of the area you're in, panic might cause you to run into a dead-end alley — in which case you'd better have the skills to defend yourself.

I'm not arguing that running should always be avoided, for there are many situations in which it's the best option. However, in terms of threat removal, it ranks at the bottom of the list, in part because of the aforementioned possibility that a quick sprint can lead you in a direction that has no exit and because it likely will boost the confidence of your attacker. And, as any experienced fighter will attest, confidence is key.

If running is your preferred option, consider preceding your escape attempt with a little physical damage. A quick strike is a fine way to increase the odds that your getaway will be successful, and a punch, of course, is a great choice in such circumstances, both because of the injury it can inflict and because it will leave your attacker with doubts about whether it would be a good idea to pursue you.



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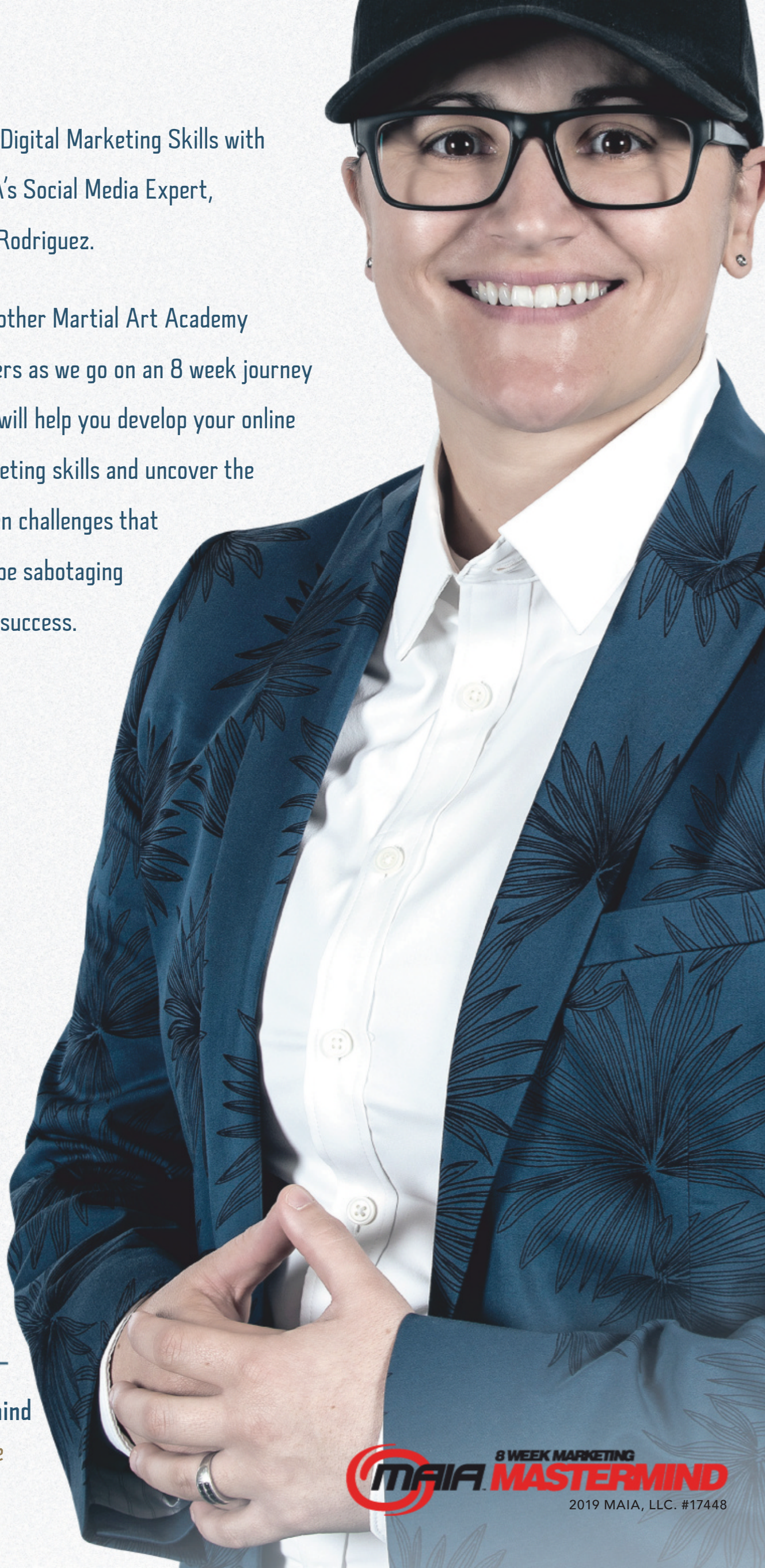
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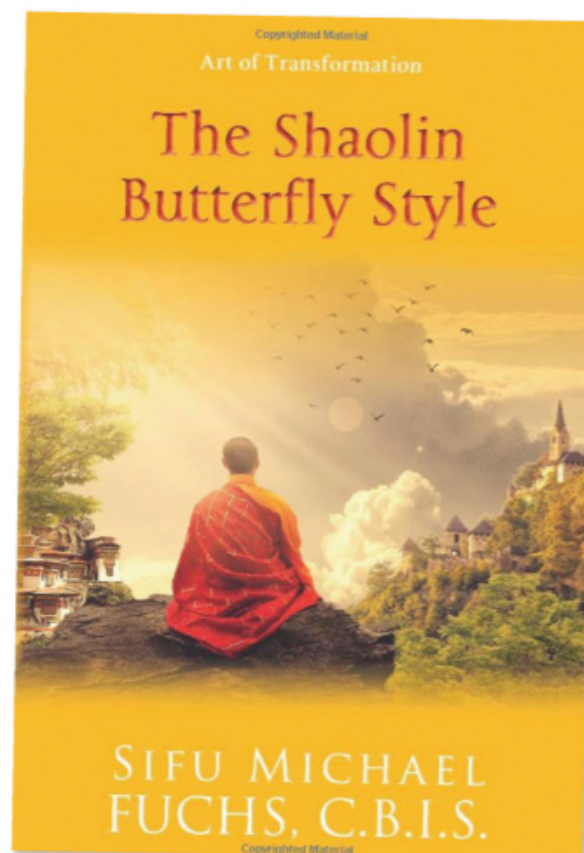
With keto being all the rage, it's no wonder FBomb has released these energy boosters. The "F" in the product name, of course, stands for "fat." Each packet delivers about 200 calories, and the ingredient list is refreshingly simple: dry-roasted macadamia nuts, sea salt, raw pecans, organic coconut and organic dark chocolate, depending on the flavor. Speaking of flavor, all taste almost too good to be good for you.

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# Take Your Dojo to a Higher Rank in 3 Easy Steps!

I've run martial arts schools for many years. Like most school owners during the days before Google and Bing, I depended on listings in the White Pages, which I augmented with paid ads in the Yellow Pages. To stay near the top, I used the alphabet, making sure my *dojo* names started with "Burk" or "American." When coupled with the occasional display ad in a local publication, this strategy worked well for decades. The phone would ring regularly with calls from interested parties, and those leads often turned into new enrollments.

BY FLOYD BURK



**T**HEN CAME THE INTERNET. At first, people interested in learning martial arts would use search engines to find local schools and proceed to check them out — which was fine because everyone was on a level playing field. That didn't last long, however.

One day, I woke up and found that, according to the search engines, my academy's ranking in our city had dropped from the top of the first page to a position with virtually no visibility. That left us completely out of the running. It shouldn't have been a surprise, but it was. I'd been asleep at the wheel, oblivious to the low ranking that had been secretly hampering us. Over time, the phone calls slowed

even more, and fewer walk-ins were showing up. I had no choice but to go on the offensive.

**STEP 1:** I took a hard look at our website, which a former student had built years before. Although it seemed fine to me, I quickly learned that it had become outdated and was decidedly not user-friendly. In my defense, not one student or parent ever walked into my office and said, "Sensei, our website sucks." If anyone had, I would have listened. Nonetheless, I should have identified the deficiency before it became a serious problem.

I asked the original web developer for help. She moved my site from its private hosting platform to a com-

mercial hosting service. As soon as the migration was finished, I knew I liked it because it was very modern and user-friendly, which meant I could post content without needing to ask someone else to squeeze it into their busy schedule. I also liked the fact that the hosting was still free. (Even so, I plan to upgrade to a paid account soon because more options are available and the annoying pop-ups will end.)

A third benefit of the switch is that people can view my site on their smartphone or tablet. No longer is a laptop or desktop needed to use all the site's features. A fourth benefit is that the new platform is designed for search engine optimization, or SEO.

Photo by Robert W. Young



That surely will bring in more traffic, I figured.

Once the bugs were worked out, I posted a large eye-catching photo at the top of the home page, where the old site used to feature collections of photos. I began swapping out the main photo regularly because search algorithms rank pages with activity more highly than they do static pages.

To make the text more accessible, we switched to a larger font and concentrated on using sentences that were shorter and easier to understand. Nobody wants to tackle long paragraphs while reading on a cell-phone. In essence, the central message became “martial arts training in a family-friendly environment — call now or come in and start today!” Of course, our phone number and email address are prominently displayed right there. It’s essential to make it easy for prospective students to initiate contact, especially when you consider that most people will make a decision to dial before they get past the lead photo and highlighted information.

For those who might want additional info, I added a few sentences about the benefits of training with us. Then I inserted a graphic that includes other perks we provide, like tournaments, training camps and seminars.

The website ranking and traffic started to improve noticeably.

**STEP 2:** Several months later, my son Jeremy, who works in social media, came to visit. In a discussion of website ranking, he said that I needed to do a better job with our dojo’s Facebook page and that I needed to have a YouTube channel, both of which should have links to the site. When I confessed to disliking social media, he asked why. I said, “I don’t know.”

Pulling no punches, Jeremy replied, “Dad, either you’re lazy or you’re just being stubborn — or both.” He argued that doing a better job on our school’s social media would improve our ranking and overall visibility even more. I promised to work on it.

Soon afterward, I asked the person who started our Facebook page a few years back to change a setting

to allow followers to post comments. (Another one of my errors was that when the page was created, I didn’t want to see or hear anything from anyone. Even though that mood passed, I got what I wanted: a pretty unsocial social media page.)

Next, I asked him to give administrative access to two other trusted instructors. That way, we could work together to make more frequent posts. We went from posting once every few weeks to posting almost every day, including week-ends and holidays.

I set some ground rules such as not listing names with photos when the subject is a minor. Instead, we post a photo with a caption like, “This fine martial artist earned Student of the Month honors.” We also emphasize dojo-related news and announcements while avoiding posts that are polarizing or that have no business being on a business page. We do, however, put up information about promotions, tournaments, class activities and dojo road trips. Example: When high-schoolers take their senior trip to Washington, D.C., we encourage their parents to send photos of the students doing a side kick in front of the Washington Monument or the Library of Congress, which we promptly post.

Much to my surprise, creating content for social media turned out to be fun. It’s also funny — mostly because when I’m working on the posts, people think I’m goofing around. In reality, it’s a lot of work, but it’s work that needs to be done. The payoff for the time investment is that my dojo’s Facebook page has grown tremendously, and that translates to better traffic for the site because the URL

for the school is listed on the Facebook page.

**STEP 3:** The next task was to conquer YouTube. I asked one of our black belts to bring his video camera and record some classes: drills, sessions on the heavy bag, workouts with the body shield, cardio training and so on. After some simple editing, he cre-

ated a YouTube channel for the dojo and posted the videos.

Next, I crafted a belt-tying video and a couple more that pertained to *kata* training and had them posted. We put up several others that feature our demo team in action. The number of views was a surprise to all of us. People seem to enjoy the clips.

**MAKING IMPROVEMENTS** to our website and Facebook page, coupled with creating a YouTube channel, have been a good defense against getting run out of business. There certainly are other things that can be done, but these have been a good start. They worked for my business, and they can work for yours, too.

Final word: If you’re not a do-it-yourself kind of person when it comes to technology or if you’re just too busy running your school, there is still hope. Plenty of companies are waiting to help with this, and chances are the cost will be less than what you used to pay for those Yellow Pages ads. A great place to start your search for such a company is in the pages of *MASuccess*, the leading trade journal for the martial arts industry. 🏆

*Floyd Burk is a San Diego-based 10<sup>th</sup>-degree black belt with 50 years of experience in the arts. To contact him, visit Independent Karate Schools of America at [iksa.com](http://iksa.com).*

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*I set some ground rules such as not listing names with photos when the subject is a minor.*

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# Navigating the Maze That Is the Japanese Language

Those giant mazes, made of hedges or carved from cornfields and designed so that you have to wind your way through, are a simple stroll compared to the maze presented when working your way through the Japanese language.

BY DAVE LOWRY

**T**HE WORD **EMPI** presents a good example. Many *Black Belt* readers will be familiar with it because it was Gichin Funakoshi's name for a karate *kata* originally — and, in Okinawan *dojo*, still — called *wanshu*.

That original name referred to an expatriate Chinese martial artist who taught in the Tomari region of Okinawa. Funakoshi changed the name when he introduced karate to mainland Japan in the 1920s. Why? Probably because *wanshu* sounded

Chinese to Japanese ears. Given the era, a time when Japan was becoming fervently nationalistic, it would be more patriotic to have a Japanese-sounding name, so Funakoshi wrote *empi* using the characters for “flying” and “swallow.”



Of course, empi also can be written with different characters to mean “elbow.” Some *karateka* know this term and so confuse it with the kata’s real name. But that’s just the tip of the iceberg. The two characters that are pronounced empi also can be written to mean “flying monkey.” You might think this would be a word largely confined to the inhabitants of Oz, but it’s actually the name of one of the oldest kata in any school of traditional Japanese swordsmanship.

**EMPI NO TACHI**, or “the sword of empi,” is a kata that was already being practiced by members of the Kage ryu back in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Its roots may be Chinese, and it’s mentioned in the ancient text known as *The Bubishi*.

Kamiizumi Nobutsuna was a student of the Kage ryu. In the mid-1500s, he embarked on a period of travel during which he challenged other warriors and learned all that he could. Among the results of these years was his inspiration to create a new school called Shinkage, or New Kage ryu.

At this time, Nobutsuna changed the characters used to write empi to “flying swallow.” Why? Nobody knows. Today, more than four centuries later, we still use these characters when referring to the Shinkage ryu kata. Oh, and just to make it more interesting: In the Tenshinsho Katori Shinto ryu, another classical school of martial arts, there’s a kata also called empi, but this time the name is written with characters that mean “flying circle.”

**THE VARIATIONS IN KATA NAMES** occur because most of the characters can be homonyms, or words that are pronounced the same but written with different characters that have different meanings. More important, it occurs because the martial arts, like all arts in Japan, were traditionally taught in small, closed groups. You knew your teacher, and you knew — and often were related to — others in the group. There was little need for writing. Your teacher and your seniors were right there. They said,

“This is the kata empi,” and they showed it to you. It didn’t need to be put on paper.

Most of the written references to ancient martial arts were confined to *densho*, or scrolls that granted teaching authority to those for whom they were written. Instructional scrolls tended to be vague, often deliberately so to preclude secrets from being stolen.

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When it came time for a teacher to write a *densho* for a student, he might, for the first time, be faced with having a document related to the art other than the one he’d received from his teacher.

“Hmm,” the teacher might say, reviewing his own license. “*Sensei* used the characters for the basic principles of our art that mean ‘the sword without equal,’ or *muso-ken*. But he always said the meaning of *muso* here was written with the characters that mean ‘acting spontaneously without any thought.’ So which way do I write it?”

That is one reason the *muso* of Muso Jikiden ryu, a popular school

of modern *iaido*, is entirely different from the *muso* of Muso Isshin ryu, a traditional school of swordsmanship.

**ALTERNATELY, A TEACHER MIGHT** decide to write a word so it was pronounced the same way but used different characters for a different meaning. *Seigan* can be written with characters that mean “directly at the eyes,” a reference to a posture in which the tip of the sword points right at an opponent’s eyes. However, the teacher, a devout Buddhist or one who wished to add some deeper level of meaning to the art, might choose to use the characters for *seigan* that refer to vows taken by someone aspiring to attain Buddhahood.

Three or four generations later, who would remember which one was the original?

Then, too, some instructional scrolls were written from memory. The writer might be trying to describe the position of the sword as it was held with the blade up, tilted over the user’s shoulder. *Hasso kamae* is a common term for this.

Hasso, though, can be written to convey “going through eight stages,” which can mean one is protected from all eight angles. Or it can mean “brushing aside grass,” which can describe the sweeping kind of cut that originates from the posture. In one famous school of classical swordsmanship, some scrolls write it one way and some the other.

Here’s another example: *Isshin-ryu* is a popular form of Okinawan karate. The characters for *isshein*, however, can be written at least three ways. All three are used in more than a dozen Japanese martial disciplines.

A Western student can say that he or she doesn’t need to be able to understand Japanese to learn a martial art, and to some extent, I would agree. It is good to know, however, that if you don’t understand how and why your art means what it means, both in the written form and the spoken form, you might eventually be a little in the dark about it. ㊦

*Dave Lowry writes Black Belt’s Karate Way column.*



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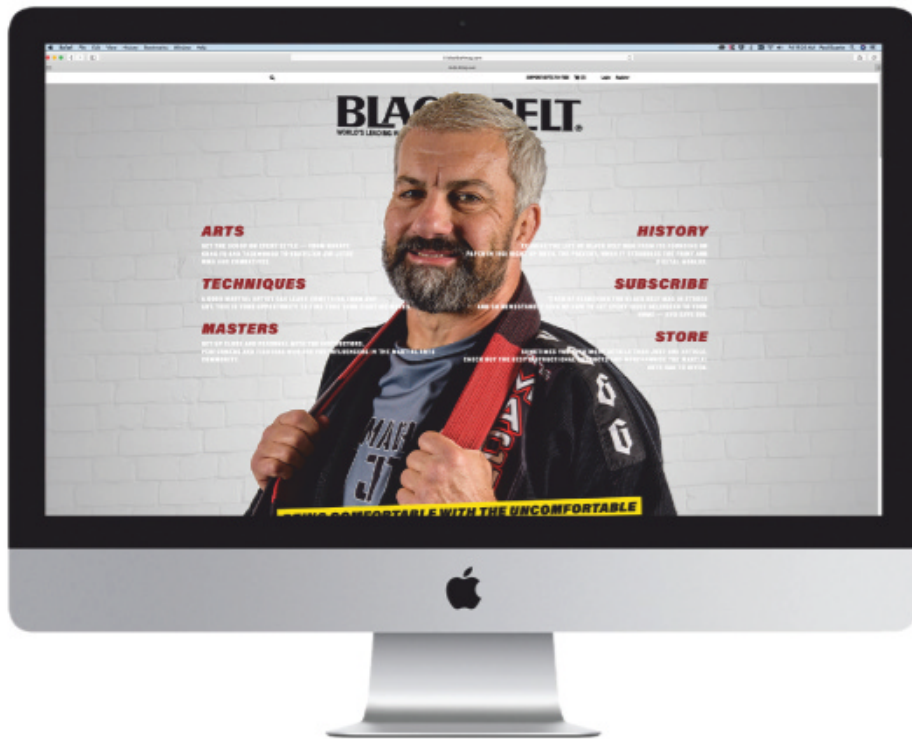
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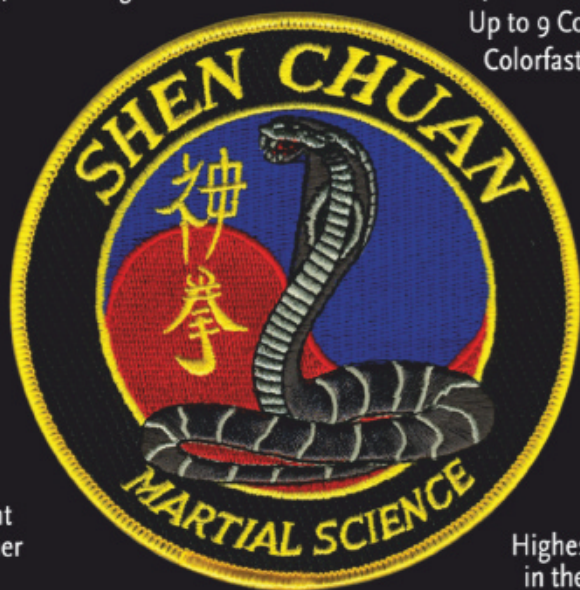
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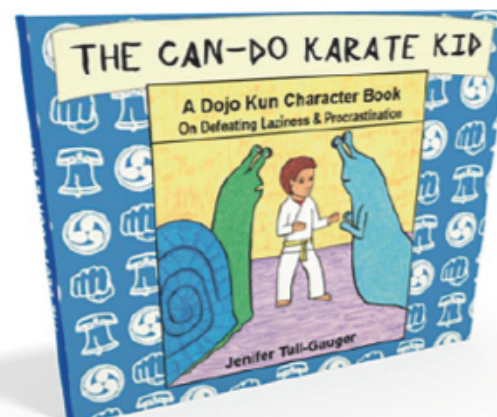
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A. Total No. of copies printed	24,313	23,547
B. Paid Circulation		
1. Mail Subscriptions Outside-County	3,906	3,663
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3. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	5,236	4,355
4. Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail	231	248
C. Total Paid Distribution	9,373	8,266
D. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution		
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3. Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes through USPS	87	100
4. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside The Mail		
E. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution	87	100
F. Total Distribution	9,460	8,366
G. Copies Not Distributed	18,506	14,581
H. Total	27,966	22,947
I. Percent Paid	99%	98.8%

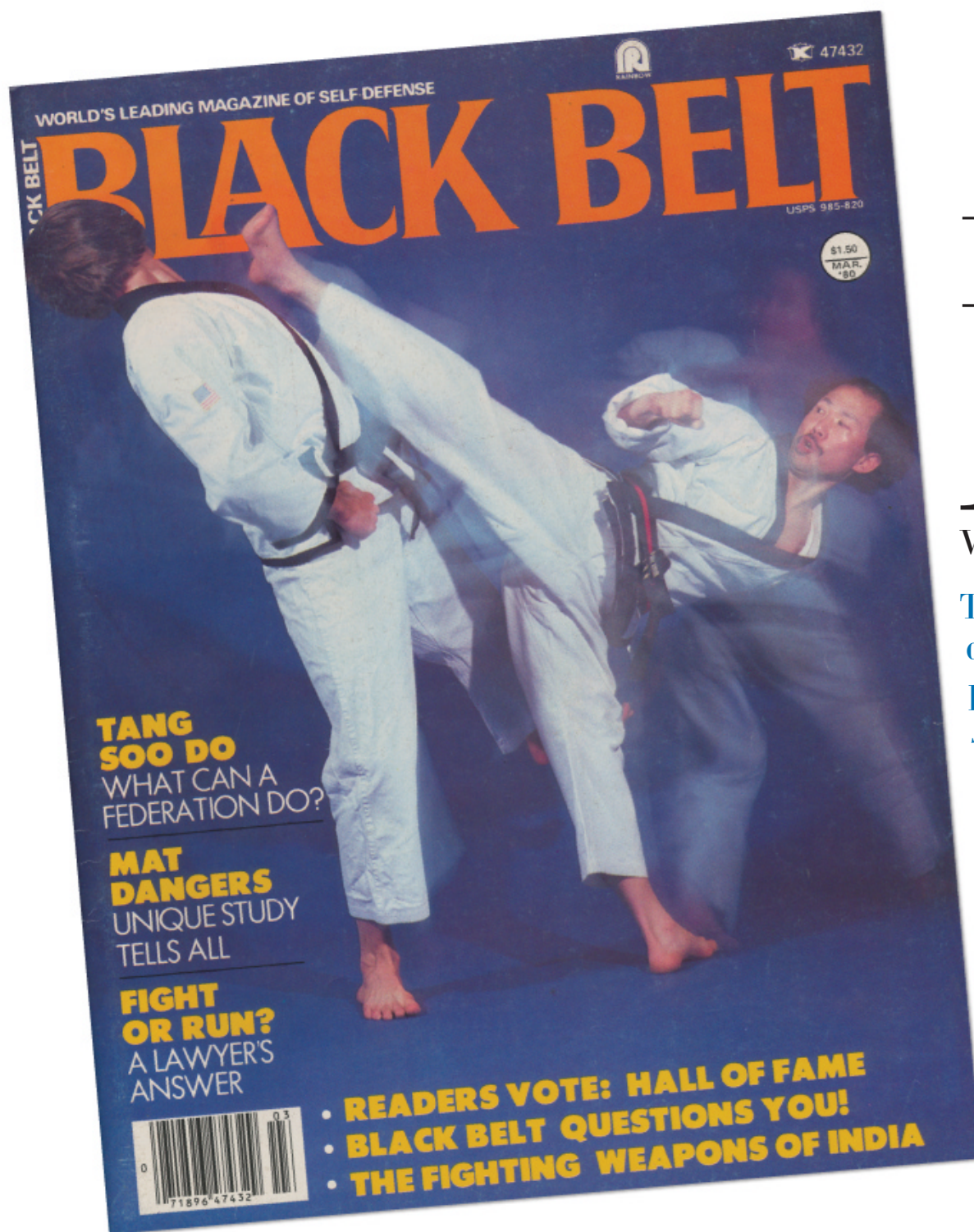
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C. Total Print Distribution + Paid Electronic Copies	9,373	8,266
D. Percent Paid	99%	98.8%

17. I certify that the statement made by me above are correct and complete.  
President: Michael A. Dillard  
Date: October 1, 2019

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# From the Archives

Vol. 18, No. 3, \$1.50

The 195<sup>th</sup> issue of *Black Belt* was dated March 1980. It was 76 pages long and featured *tang soo moo duk kwan* master H.C. Hwang on the cover.

- H.C. Hwang extolls the virtues of the *pyong ahn* (peaceful confidence) form of *tang soo do*: "People learn to control their pyong ahn. They don't lose their tempers. Also, you learn to move with pyong ahn, you learn how it feels. Sometimes when you move with one leg, you lose your balance. But when you can stand on one leg without losing your balance, then you can begin to sense the feeling of pyong ahn."
- Voting begins for the 1980 *Black Belt* Hall of Fame.
- The editor opts to print a number of names and addresses of readers in search of martial arts-loving pen pals. No word on whether their desires were satiated.
- Jhoon Rhee unveils a new generation of Bionic Chop protective gear for 1980.
- Sister publication *Karate Illustrated* revamps its renowned rating system for martial arts competitors and competitions. The rankings also will be published in future issues of *Black Belt*.
- Have a hankering to sew your own *gi*? You can buy a pattern for as little as \$4.95.
- A 17-year-old girl in Southern California is grabbed by a male assailant and dragged from her car. A *karateka* for just five months, she promptly knees him in the groin and is able to escape.
- Dennis Hanover, creator of *hisardut ju-jitsu* (August/September 2018 issue of *Black Belt*), is profiled in "Israeli Karateka Remember a Hero."
- Timeless advice from a story about martial arts and the law: "Karate techniques can be deadly, and the use of deadly force is justified only when there is an obvious threat of great bodily harm."

- Interesting ... "It must be remembered that years ago, a master would search for a student whose body was right for the style being taught. Consequently, all of the students of that style had a tendency toward the same body type, and techniques could be perfected with that body in mind. Most styles today, however, have students of every body type."
- Robert G. Zepecki and a master known only as Mr. John teach Westerners about the wide variety of weapons in the Indo-Pakistani martial arts.
- Cool connection: In a piece titled "Instilling the Fighting Spirit," Martin Buell, chief instructor at Walter Godin's School of Self-Defense in Hawaii, is profiled. In the December 2017/January 2018 issue of *Black Belt*, John Hackleman credits Godin with giving him his base in the fighting arts.
- *The Ancient Martial Art of Hwarang Do, Vol. 2*, written by Joo Bang Lee and published by *Black Belt*, goes on sale.
- Long before the internet arrives, it's common for advertisers to charge \$1 to send a catalog to a prospective customer.
- An ad for Kesco Kickers and Kesco Punchers proudly proclaims, "used in the movie *A Force of One*." (That's a Chuck Norris/Bill Wallace actioner, in case you're too young to know.) 🥋

(Note: Back issues are not for sale.)



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